

**PEOPLE
ARE
TALKING
ABOUT...**

AMAZING GREYS

In Grace Knowlton's photographs, our sense of "insideness" is constantly being revised. White floorboards, shot close to floor level, stretch towards a baseboard the way farmland stretches towards a horizon; parallel or intersecting planes of white and off-white accented with dark lines—the cracks between the floorboards—become winter fields. In her photographs of stairwells or room corners, other transformations occur. Such passageways or backdrops, rarely paid much attention to by the rest of us, assume, in her photographs, an almost compensatory monumentality.

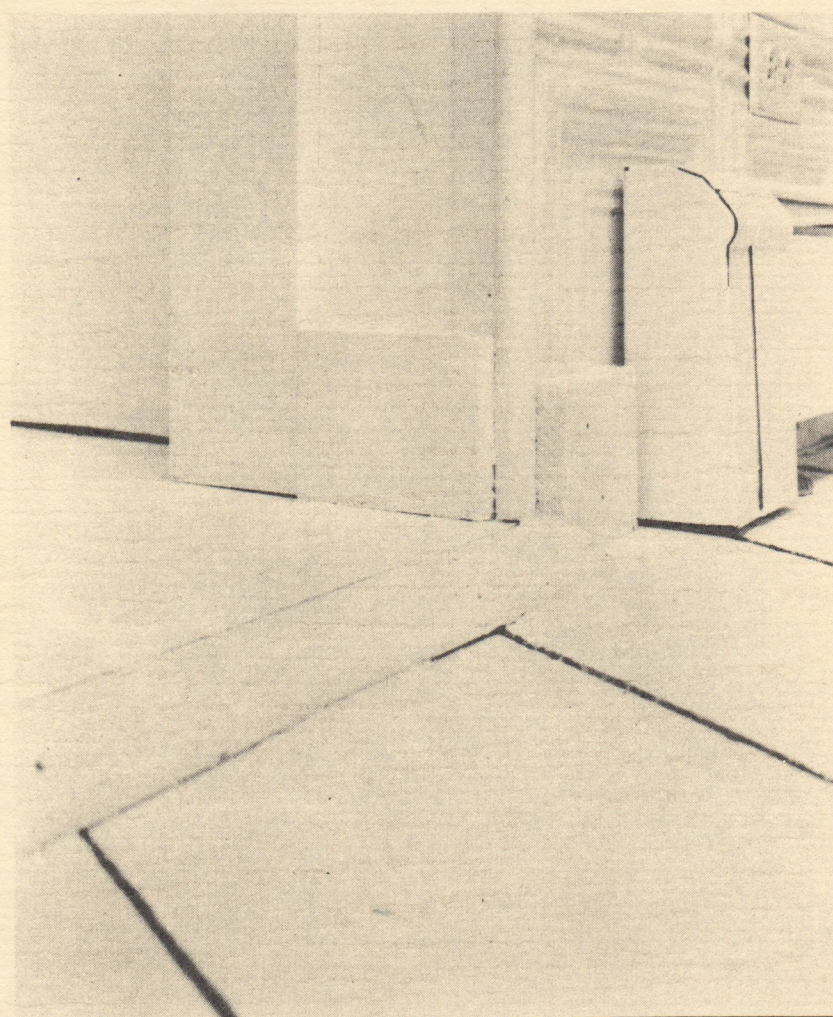
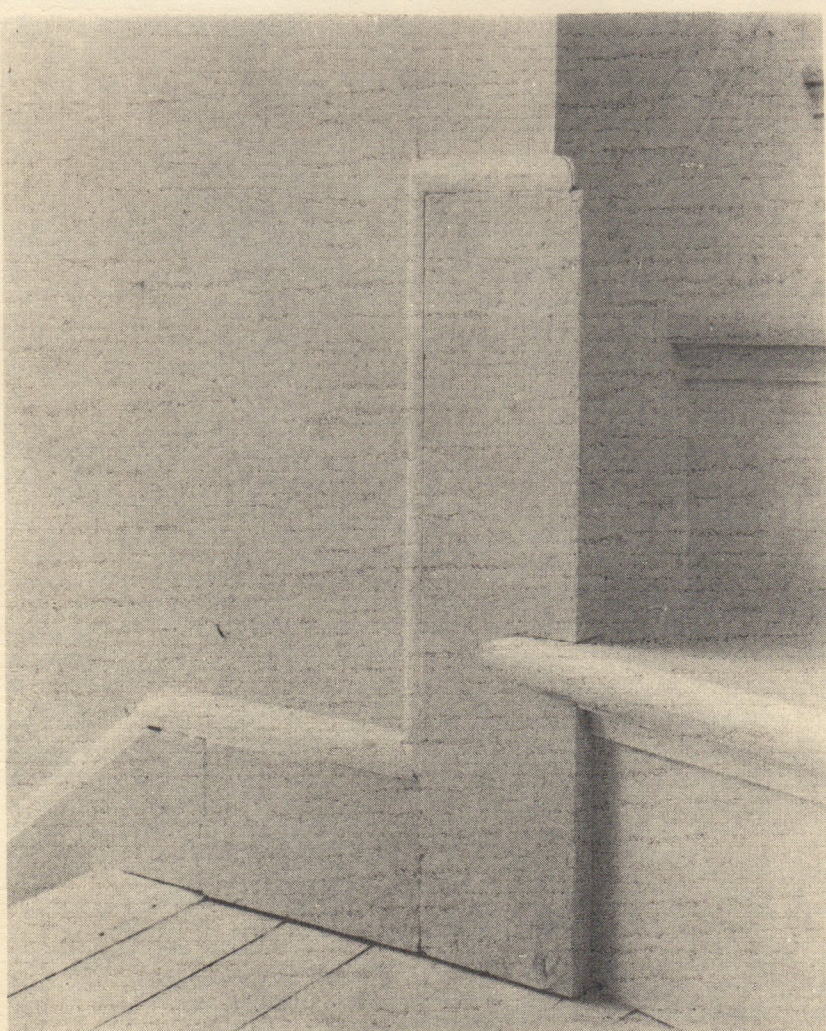
For Knowlton, a room is not a mere setting but a series of abstract relationships that undermine notions of enclosure, scale, and even utility. Her aim is to avoid literalness or dailiness. In a recent phone conversation, she said that she specially paints the parts of her house she chooses to photograph. In her pictures, wood cannot appear woody since that might interfere with the structural properties of floor, wall, and molding, as they apportion space and light. By painting her scenes white, Knowlton intensifies the structural elements in her photographs; and by permitting no decor, she makes it clear that space is her ultimate concern.

Her vision is rigorously minimal. The purity of her pictures is compromised only when a window, say, is presented in its entirety. In such cases—and they are very few—we identify the photographed object instead of visually constructing it. Delays in establishing the identity of objects or particular spaces are necessary. Without these delays, her work would not be so determinedly formal, nor so rewarding, and it would slip into the very literalness it seeks to transcend.

Lest it be assumed that such work is cold, it must be said that part of the triumph of Knowlton's enterprise is its warmth. Its depth and texture can be attributed to the hand-coated platinum paper the photographs are printed on—a paper highly sensitive to tonal nuance. The surfaces seem softened by shadow or washed by delicate gradations of dark or bleached into radiant planes by sunlight. And the cracks or the spaces between pieces of wood lend the photographs a graphic quality. The more one looks, the more the photographs betray Knowlton's career as a sculptor. (In December, she will have photography shows at Gallery Two Nine One in Atlanta and the Susan Harder Gallery in New York City, and a sculpture show at NYC's Twinning Gallery.) What they do not betray is that she has been taking photographs for only five years. There is nothing tentative about these unfailingly elegant pictures.

—MARK STRAND

Rigorous minimalism: Grace Knowlton specially paints parts of her house white, eliminates decor, to make it clear that space is her ultimate concern.



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