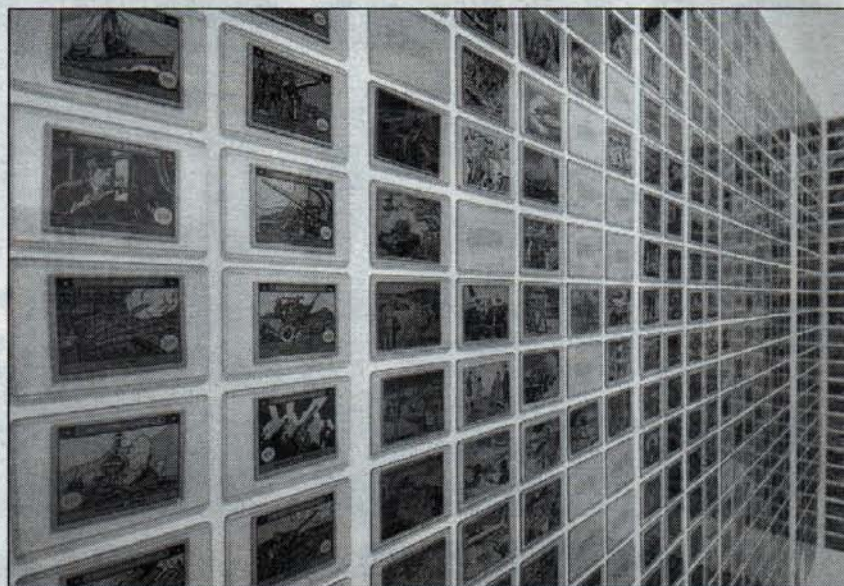


TO JULY 9



Cards

The "collection" installations of Siemon Allen are maddening. The most recent—following his surveys of South African stamps (2001) and of American newspaper clippings (2002 and 2003)—consists of hundreds of military-themed kids' trading cards issued between 1939 and 2001, hung chronologically over four gallery walls. By logical extension, does any schmuck who collects objects on eBay and hangs them in a gallery get to call them art? Still, it's hard to disagree that the project offers some compelling juxtapositions and transformations. In the grand sweep, Allen's project lays bare the glorification, commodification, and commercialization of war—and to kids, no less. From the dull black-and-white photographs of World War II to the campy cartoons of 1987's *Terrorist Attack Educational Cards* to the slick color showcases produced for more recent Middle East conflicts, the propaganda effort is hard to miss: Whether the general is MacArthur or Schwarzkopf, the steely manliness is hyped in much the same way, and, whether it's Hitler or Saddam, the evil of the enemy is always made plain. (The set made for 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan is notable for its over-the-top boosterism and for its unintentionally hilarious inclusion of cards for such key Bush-administration players as Norm Mineta and Joe Allbaugh, as well as a token combo card for New York Democrats Charles Rangel, Chuck Schumer, and Hillary Clinton.) Even so, it's the subtler semiotics gleaned from protracted wanderings that prove most fascinating, such as the realization that fiery explosions were common in World War II cards, only to give way in the past two decades to bloodless hardware pageants and patriotic rub-on tattoos. Also on view: Patrick Wilson's ultra-flat, rubbery-surfaced, minimalist-geometry paintings. The show is on view from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from noon to 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, to Saturday, July 9, at Fusebox, 1412 14th St NW. Free. (202) 299-9220. (Louis Jacobson)