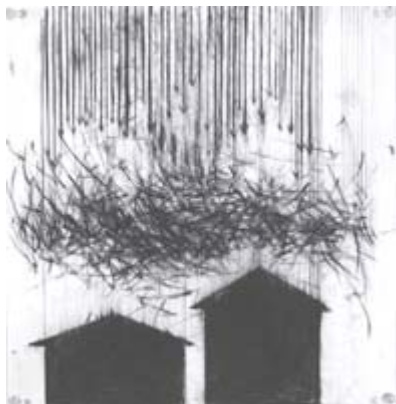


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Potential Accelerated, Douglas Smith,
graphite and pencil on paper,
2007, 13" x 12.5"

In his first solo show at Ken Segal Gallery, Winnipeg-based artist Douglas Smith looks at the almost mind-boggling precision behind movement and travel in the global age, and interprets it through the realm of fine art.

Inspired by several years spent living in Europe, when he regularly flew back and forth between Winnipeg, Toronto, and Rotterdam, there is a jet-setting consciousness in this show, a study of the complex network of global air travel as a work of art in and of itself, directed by skilled people and complex computer systems.

So, in a sense, Smith's creative act comments on another creative act - the building and maintenance of the vast network that enables millions of people to fly every year. Combining the accuracy of scientific or mechanical drawings with the loose edges of abstraction, the medium becomes the message in Smith's work without ever sacrificing aesthetic concerns. The result is a series of images, mostly graphite and acrylic on paper, where

every bit of the surface is densely worked without ever becoming too busy. In fact, despite the incredible abundance of lines, strokes and patterns, the works have a quality of restraint and spaciousness.



Entropic Transfiguration, Douglas Smith, graphite,
pencil and acrylic on two sheets of paper, 2006,
50.5" x 76.5"

Of the nearly two dozen works in the show, only a few contain strong, bold colours. The rest favor a subtle mix of greys, blues, and white. The precise patterning of lines often forms a background, painted or scribbled over with acrylic or graphite to poke out from behind a cloud of dripped blue acrylic, or fuse with geometric shapes.

Both in form and content, Smith's work seeks out the human and creative element in this network that at first would seem to be so inhuman, and that seems to require an abnormal, almost inhuman amount of order.



A work like *House*, for example, a tall vertical piece, shows the simultaneous contrast and harmony of the human and the natural with complex systems. A tiny house sits near the top of the image, along an opaque horizon line, with a whole world seeming to exist beneath. A series of long vertical lines run below the house and downward to some point deep in the earth - a suggestion of the life that goes on under our feet, perhaps, or out of sight along so many computer networks and fibre optic cables.

In a work like *Leaving Gander Air*, the view from out of an airplane window seems to mimic the curve of the earth, with both the earthly plane and the air-plane only hinted at in subtle details. Indeed, without the title, the work might at first seem to be a collection of abstract lines and geometric forms, although even then, there is an unmistakable element of aerospace technology emerging from behind it all.

In Times of Compression,
Douglas Smith, graphite
and acrylic on paper,
2007, 50" x 35"

Other works replicate the effect of pixellation, with abstract images broken up into tiny, grid-like squares that contain the show's few bursts of colour, highlighting again the creative impulse behind the systems that form the backbone of so much of modern life.

Skillfully blending form and content, Smith has created a show that seeks out the creative links between abstraction, geometry, and technical innovation, discovering beauty in what would seem at first to be the most artless of realms.

— BY Lorne Roberts



Rapture, Douglas Smith,
graphite and acrylic on
paper, 2007, 50" x 37"