

HAW/CONTEMPORARY

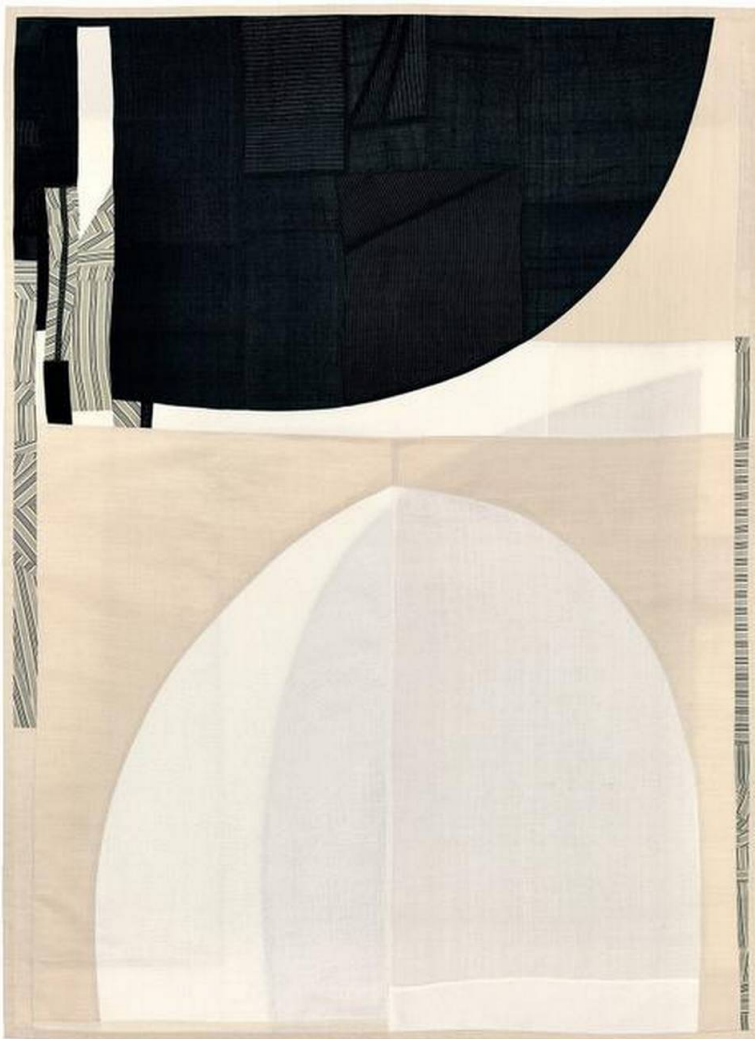
Debra Smith, Lisa Grossman explore new directions in exhibits at Haw Contemporary

Elisabeth Kirsch, Kansas City Star, September 18, 2014

Debra Smith's new textile artworks look to London's Savile Row, minimalist drawing and cubist masterworks. An element of menace that is new for this artist lets us in a little more to the center of the storm, to powerful effect.

Smith has been making art for 20 years and exhibits her work around the country. As always, her meticulously layered and stitched surfaces breathe poetry, but this time she has challenged herself in unexpected ways.

Smith recently had access to a large studio space, which allowed her to pump up the scale of some of her textiles to mural size; she also reduced her palette to black and white, which adds to the drama.



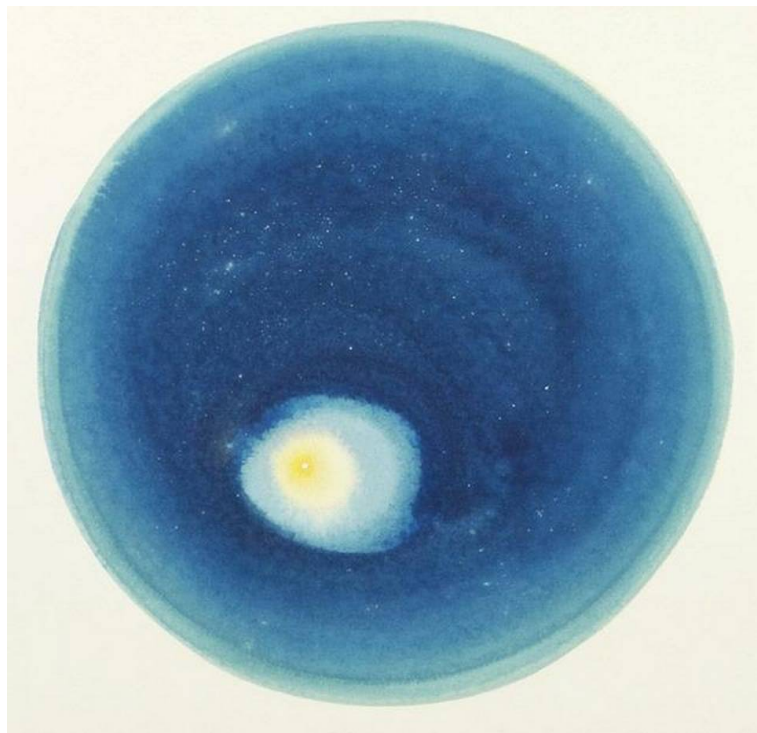
Piecing together parts from vintage kimonos and men's suit linings, Smith deliberately emulates painting strokes and drawing with her fabrics while also playing notably with the proportions of the different cloth elements.

In "Shifting Territory," which is more than 7 feet tall and 5 feet wide, a large black boulder erupts from the bottom of the frame. Smaller vertical fragments climb up the middle and the sides, while larger arcs of black and white ticking shore up the bottom and top. While volcanic in appearance, "Shifting Territory" also recalls the architectural cubist work of Fernand Leger, in particular his abstract works from the 1920s such as "Composition in Blue."

Other large works, such as "I am the S***," are more minimal. The cavelike form in the center of this piece is open to the point of being threatening, and it possesses an elegant but gothic feel. This work makes us more aware of the layering in Smith's art, which always adds a strong psychological component. It conjures up barely clothed skeletal

structures and hidden agendas lurking beneath beautiful facades.

In the series “Restructured #1-5,” Smith uses only black and white lining from men’s suits to form understated, minimalist fabric works that resemble fields of conjoined drawings. It’s really a stunning group, and very witty.



Lisa Grossman: Reach

Another area artist who is moving in a new direction is Lisa Grossman. Well-known for her landscapes of this region, in her show “Reach,” Grossman has created paintings and watercolors that are entirely abstract.

Grossman also has changed her palette, substituting pastels of blues and pinks for the more earthy colors she used before.

Particularly noteworthy are her watercolors, both her “Sky Arc” series of delicate blue discs and her intimate, minute depictions of landscapes.