

Regional art and artists are showcased at Havu and David B. Smith

By **Michael Paglia** Thursday, Nov 7 2013



"Early Winter Morning: Genesee Park," by Don Stinson, oil on panel.

The work of another Colorado artist is on view at the David B. Smith Gallery. **Don Stinson: The Road to Valentine** is a collection of large contemporary-realist views of the American West.

Stinson is probably best known for his diptych at the Denver Art Museum titled "The Necessity of Ruins." Though the piece is not currently on display, it's familiar to many, since it's a popular attraction of the Western collection. "Ruins" is a depiction of an abandoned drive-in movie theater; the scene is anchored by a weathered movie screen in one panel and by the natural landscape in the other, and the two paintings have been tied together with a drive-in speaker stand. In this piece, Stinson lays out the key to his chief interest: exploring the way society has intruded on nature.



Questions Raised by a Foaming Sea and the Long Swim South from Rozel Point (2013)
oil on linen
80 x 88 inches (203.2 x 223.5 cm)
by **Don Stinson**

Most of the paintings in this show were done in the last year or two and are set in Colorado, Utah or New Mexico; nearly all of them include buildings or other structures as significant elements. When I ran into Stinson at the gallery, he remarked that everything was set in the morning — shortly before, during, or immediately after sunrise. He also noted how important it was for him to be part of a longstanding tradition — the landscape — in regional art, saying that it helps to define what's special about an artist living in this part of the country. It was Stinson who remarked during a panel discussion in 2007 that the Rockies were a celebrity landscape — and he's right. And it was our scenery that created a nascent art world in this part of the country more than a century ago, even if the landscape is now just one of many approaches being taken by artists around here.

Stinson's technique in oil on linen seems to come out of the classic realist tradition, with the paint applied smoothly and brushmarks kept to a minimum. Though he's best known for his depictions of rural ruins, Stinson also does renderings of other artworks. The first of two in this show is a view of the famous "Spiral Jetty," by Robert Smithson, that juts into the Great Salt Lake. In the Stinson, the jetty is in the foreground, with the curving clouds in the background creating a marvelous pictorial balance. And what more can you say about a traditional depiction of a conceptual object? It's brilliant.

Also great is the diptych "Early Winter Morning: Genesee Park," in which Charles Deaton's famous "Sculptured House" is illuminated before dawn in the panel on the left while the one on the right catches the twinkling lights of early morning in Denver.

Don Stinson at Smith is the first solo the artist has had in years, and it's a majestic offering.