

Fine Arts



DOLPHIN GALLERY

"From Above" (2007) by Lisa Grossman is on display at the Dolphin Gallery.

ART REVIEW | 'Lisa Grossman, Cloud'

KEEP EYES ON THE SKIES

By SARAH MOTE
Special to The Star

These aren't the clouds from your art history textbook. You won't find Constable's rolling portents of personal doom or Maxfield Parrish's weighty puffs of sensual delight. These aren't Stieglitz's dramatic sheets of vapory gauze.

These don't even echo the moody interplay of land and sky from Lisa Grossman's own previous work.

This exhibition of Grossman's cloud paintings at the Dolphin Gallery, nearly two dozen new acrylics, oils and watercolors, are straight up clouds ... evanescent, transient, breathy whis-

pers.

And despite their minimalism — or maybe because of it — they make you want to listen to what they might say.

Grossman, known for her *en plein air* capture of east Kansas landscapes, takes a welcome departure with this new work. She

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still paints clouds, and apparently lots of them, but these clouds, many of them painted from aerial photographs instead of on location, are stripped of Grossman's rich palette, mediating horizon, and art history's tendency toward pathetic fallacy (the act of imbuing inanimate objects with human attributes).

'lisa grossman: cloud'

The show runs through Saturday at the Dolphin Gallery, 1901 Baltimore. Hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Thursday and Friday and noon-5 p.m. Saturday. Call 816-842-5877 for information.

"White Lines on Blue" (2007), for example, lures us with a bold expanse of cobalt blue, gently cut by wisps of cirrus clouds, as

if milk-soaked fingers trailed the surface of deep waters.

More clouds stripe the muskier and powder blue surfaces in "Cloud Shift III" and "Lined Pale Sky." And in "From Above and From Above, Cloud Streets," clouds trade in their emotional baggage for architectural motifs, becoming, if we follow the suggestion of Grossman's title, floating, disengaged cities.

But here, there's no horizon line to tether us to Earth or reality — or to provide a comforting reference point from which we can project our human concerns onto the heavens. Quite literally, Grossman's skylines lose their grounding and float away from representations of emotions, or even, really, clouds to become a meditation of paint on canvas.

Grossman's clouds aren't epic or cathartic, contrived or clichéd.

In canvas after canvas — and there's plenty, if not too much, to look at here — Grossman counters the baggage we might bring into the gallery with the whispers of quiet tranquility and ease. Her paintings are open and infinite vistas that can either defeat us with their cool detachment and limitless possibility — or remind us that it's the details, not the drama, that define us.



Another of Grossman's skylines is "Cloud Blocking, Blue and Gray" (2007).