

The New York Times

TRAVESS SMALLEY

Through Dec. 23. Foxy Production, 2
East Broadway, Manhattan;
212-239-2758, foxyproduction.com

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Travess Smalley starts by drawing loosely arboreal forms on paper, simple networks of tapering strokes that curl out from one or two central nodes. He achieves two distinct tones of gray and black with a single ink, simply because the mark gets darker where the strokes overlap. Twenty-seven of these old-fashioned drawings, hanging in a grid, constitute a mesmerizing meditation on that deadly post-internet idea, "content generation." Each unique pattern has roughly an even split between inked image and blank paper, and they're all as interchangeable as fresh dollar bills.

Instead of becoming infatuated with the empty purity of his algorithm, though, Mr. Smalley remembers to treat it as a means to an organic end. In several large prints based on similar drawings, a complicated process of scanning, coloring, rescanning and controlled Photoshop degradation imparts a beguiling psychedelic life to misty digital pixelation. (There is still, however, the usual melancholy suggestion of a species rapidly outpacing itself with its own tools.)

The range of greens in "Toad-skep" evokes growing tendrils of some nonspecific variety before shading into molten orange and crimson. "Wigmaker," a kelp-like maze of lavenders, should be guarding some naiad's door, and the fiery violet and green curlicues of "Fool's Mythmaker" look as if they were lifted from Cardinal Richelieu's embroidered jacket for the Académie Française.

WILL HEINRICH