



Eugene Lemay, *Navigator* Installation View, 2012. Courtesy of Mike Weiss Gallery.

## EUGENE LEMAY'S NAVIGATOR

BY MARY HRBACEK

At Mike Weiss Gallery the walls speak, in oscillating waves of energy that emanate from symbolic script, as the profound works by Eugene Lemay give voice to the departed Israeli soldiers, whose unopened letters have left a void in their communication with loved ones. Lemay delves into territory wrought with the unspeakable. The minute scrawled text that drenches the surfaces communicates touchingly, in eddying gray waves that subtly activate these dark voluptuous landscapes of the mind, in unspoken pleas that involuntarily stir the emotions. These digitally generated images convey universal implications by functioning as vehicles that transmit a somber but charged atmosphere. The seen and the unseen converge in a visual arena that functions as a conductor to the receptive viewer. The conjured lines of repeated script-like forms offer a sensitive message more potent than recognizable text. The reading process is by-passed as the lines engage the viewer by the sheer

power of their pale rippling rhythms within the dark landscape forms.

The diverse works present variations on the theme of the soldiers' last meeting place, with its attendant messages. It is significant that memory creates a forum that transmits the emotional content of their thoughts and feelings, if not the factual components, to an audience of art viewers. It is a heartfelt intellectual display of visual/conceptual art, whose sophisticated mix of commemoration, history, landscape and spiritual awareness creates an effective, universal tribute to soldiers fallen in the field of battle. Sentimentality is absent in these unfathomably deep portals to the unknown.

The six fascinating iPad video works installed in the back of the gallery employ the invented script as it surges and eddies, traversing along the screens in modulated dark to light tonal fluctuations. As the videos play themselves out to the inevitable conclusion, they seem

to mirror the growth of human awareness, from childhood to adulthood, of the non-physical world of spirit. A high stele-like structure stands in the antechamber of the gallery, creating a barrier that must be passed as one comes into the larger space, emulating the configuration of ancient tombs.

The works may be viewed as visions of a mythological underworld. They are tributes to all the dead, everywhere, who left without the chance to say goodbye. Their depth, mystery and profundity are not hidden or difficult to decipher; they are accessible. Their power lies in the strength of truth, of authenticity. The subtle variations in the dark tones move the eye around, transporting the viewer to the deserts, hills and rock formations where bitter conflicts took their inescapable course. They speak for all soldiers,

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everywhere, but especially for the Israeli soldiers, whose letters home were never received. These works ask us not only to commemorate the dead, but also to indirectly salute the living, in the realization of the preciousness of life that yields rewards as it challenges us to be positive and hopeful. □

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