

Myers, Holly. "Exposing paint's bare essence." *Los Angeles Times*, 12 August 2005, p. E27.



Margo Leavin Gallery

DIFFERENT STROKES:
David Smith uses distinct
brushstrokes in "Untitled."

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this and the video, not only an idea but a distinct physical sense of the nature of his desperation.

MC, 6086 Comey Ave., Los Angeles, (323) 939-3777, through Saturday.

Exposing paint's bare essence

The mid-1950s was a heady time for painting in America, and it's difficult to view a room full of works from that era — in this case paintings by Abstract Expressionist sculptor **David Smith**, on view at Margo Leavin Gallery — without a pang of nostalgia.

This is paint stripped to what was once romantically believed to be its essence, pursued for its own sake and applied with an assurance approaching religious zeal.

It's easy to see why Smith, best known for brawny works of welded metal, would have been drawn to painting as well. One senses him churning through sculptural concepts. The brushstrokes are thick and distinct and piled onto the canvas like so many bits of clay; step back and they congeal into heavy, interlocking forms, balanced against one another with architectural precision.

Unlike his sculptures, however, the paintings are light, quick and mostly small. It must have been exhilarating for the artist to shed so much weight.

It is in the show's dozen drawings, however, that Smith really takes off. Made with a mixture of black ink and egg yolk, they're delicate, wispy things, floating across the walls like so many tumbleweeds. The paintings deepen one's sense of Smith's career as a sculptor, but the drawings — the highlight of the show — lend it a whole new dimension.

Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, (310) 273-0603, through Aug. 20. Closed Sunday and Monday.