

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette®

"Art Review: Kim Beck by Mary Thomas" (excerpt) / *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 11, 2006

Beck addresses the inhabited landscape, ignoring classical and picturesque elements to concentrate on the banal scenery one navigates while going about daily living.

Sometimes her observations are reductive and stark, as with the graphic series titled "Thing," in which meticulous, large charcoal drawings use as points of departure such items as road signs and power lines. Rather than representationally presenting them, though, Beck provides sufficient information for recognition but alters it, coaxing the effort required to connect the dots between what's visually provided and what's mentally stored.

Other works are almost manic, such as "Holymoley Land," a cacophony of signs, street lamps and architecture, cut from bright pink insulation foam and brown cardboard, that occupies three walls. The objects appear frenzied -- stacked and competitive for space -- the urban equivalent of a rain forest. Throughout, this exhibition is about drawing and line. Inherent in the cutouts, line also appears among them as marks on the walls. While essential to the works on paper in a supporting role, line is the featured character in an animation, "Ideal City," its alacrity a confirmation of the energy one suspects Beck applies while working.

The lack of figures in Beck's work, which so blatantly references congestion and populated areas, conveys an apocalyptic tone. Within the positive/negative gas station of "Thing," is there commentary about energy and oil and war? Within the multiples of the "Self Storage" series, is there commentary about the conspicuous consumption or the ever-mobile society that spawned them? Does the amalgam of signage that engulfs the occasional tree reflect environmental concerns? Whatever her intent, Beck provides fodder for a lively consideration of a world one frequently moves through only unconsciously.