

While Michael Thompson's work typically illustrates casual everyday experiences and objects, the subject matter almost always conveys a sense of ambiguity, containing within a multitude of hidden symbols and possible meanings.

According to Tom Smart (2015), Thompson's artistic practice continued the legacy of contemporary Canadian realist artists, such as Alex Colville, Mary Pratt and Jack Chambers.<sup>1</sup> Thompson's realism simultaneously combines Colville's mysticism and Pratt's precision. Similarly to Pratt, Michael Thompson depicts ordinary things, yet imbues them with a plurality of possible meanings and a potentiality of metaphors. The artist borrowed Colville's elements of technique, adopting similar earthy graded tones, minimalist composition, soft lines and blended edges.

In both his paintings and drawings, Thompson does not merely portray familiar Toronto streets and places, but endows them with allusiveness, making them look mysteriously imaginative. His depictions of an empty Queen Street West neighborhood (*Queen Street Café*, *Early Morning (Ossington Avenue)*, *Laneway Morning*) suggest an impending entrance without a body in sight on the canvas. The viewer is invited to remember somewhat familiar spots whilst imagining a storyline. The serene and static scenes become anticipatory for the viewer. The *Lincoln Street Laneway* painting is a perfect example of the thrilling moment before something happens. Although the dog portrayed is still, his eyes are energetic, suggesting movement. There is a hint of uneasiness and precipitating danger in the air — the kind of excitement that keeps the viewer engaged.

Michael Thompson's drawings reveal more softness and sensibility than his painted pieces. The drawings provide a space wherein the viewer can escape by feeling the mood of the piece, rather than simply witnessing the visual representation.

Michael Thompson's realism is heightened by the nostalgia of the viewer observing his works. The untroubled stillness of the drawings and paintings establishes the calming mood that brings comfort and undisturbed peace, while familiarity of the subject matter allows the viewer to connect with his work.

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Smart, *Michael Thompson. Drawing*, Mira Godard Gallery, 2015, p. 4.