

Art: Jeffrey T.Y. Lee

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Malaysian artist Jeffrey T.Y. Lee goes back to basics using pencils and wartime CCTV to question our obsession with the past.

Twisting through fireballs thousands of feet above Europe, primitive cameras bolted to the wings of fighter planes during WWII captured nauseating and chillingly beautiful black and white footage of airplane combat. Malaysian-born artist Jeffrey T.Y. Lee has used these grainy CCTV-like images as the basis for his eerie drawings that replicate the flickering pixellated stills with a deliberate return to the artist's basics: a ruler and a pencil.

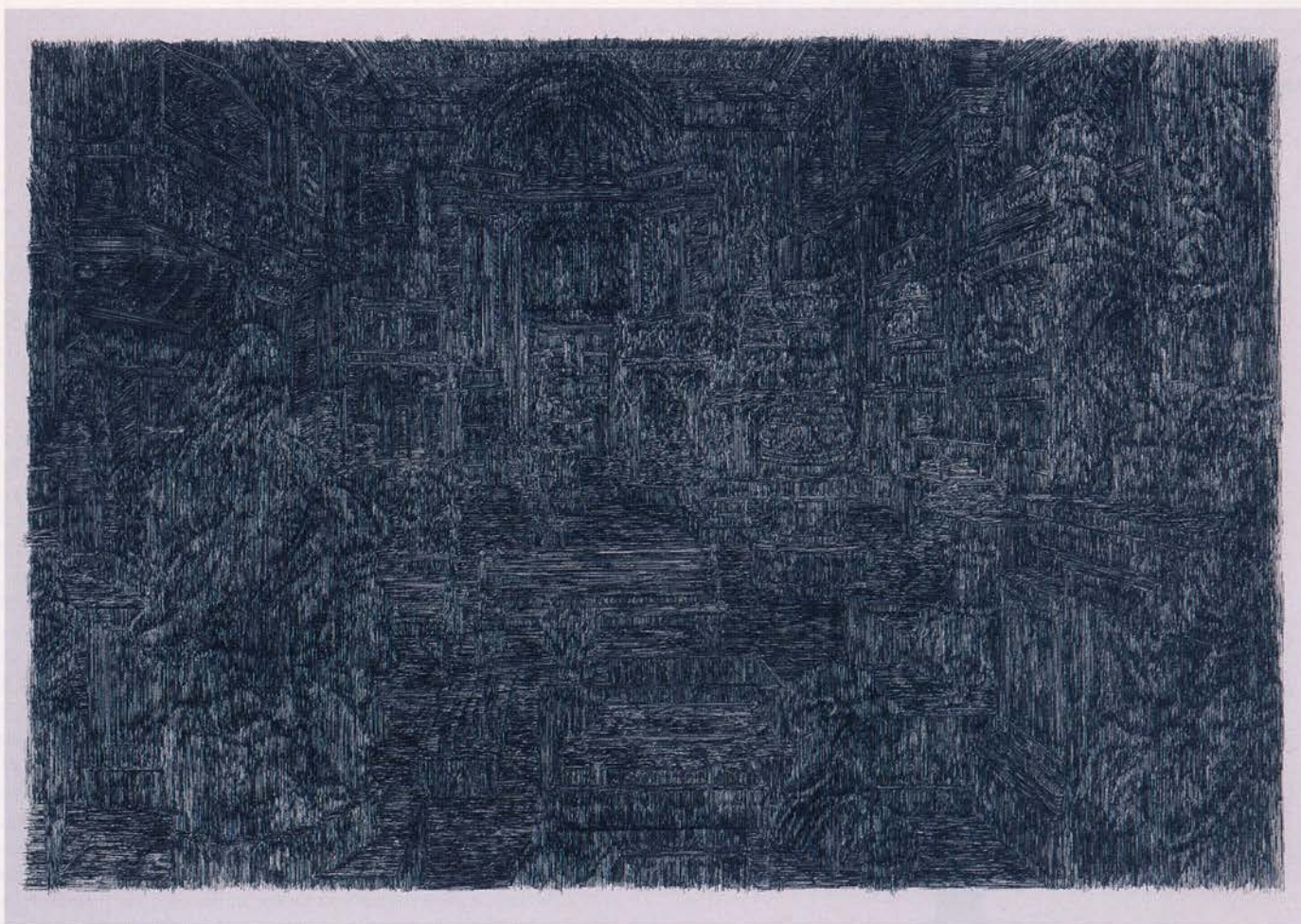
But his cinematic series creates a storyboard of its own. Painstaking layer after layer of graphite, reminiscent of 18th-century Japanese wood cuts with their flattened perspectives, cover a grid-like

architectural structure, which, over time, slowly begins to form the stormy curl of sublime skies, encased in the dark frames of a television screen. The image of a plane may carry loaded meanings these days, but T.Y. Lee seeks to subvert the accepted notions of the past, even to erase them, by breaking his pictures down into TV snow on our screens.

Contemplating the monochrome images taped to the walls of his Vauxhall studio, T.Y. Lee explains his work: "It has a lot to do with memory. I think what I do is quite cruel in a way, trying to censor or fragment something in time. I try to go against these images, and destroy them."

As with his rendering of the hallowed interior of the V&A Museum, with its crumbling statues and monuments to the past, into a dark abstract image, almost obliterated by his layered pencil marks, T.Y. Lee questions history, memory and humankind's obsession with the restoration and preservation of antiquity. "I find statues incredibly spooky," he laughs. "I find going to museums really spooky. All those dead things and lost eras that people idealise, but it's no longer the truth. Culture should be living."

Jeffrey T.Y. Lee is showing at Domo Baal, 3 John Street, London WC1 until December 23 www.domobaal.com



Untitled, Ink on Paper, 2006