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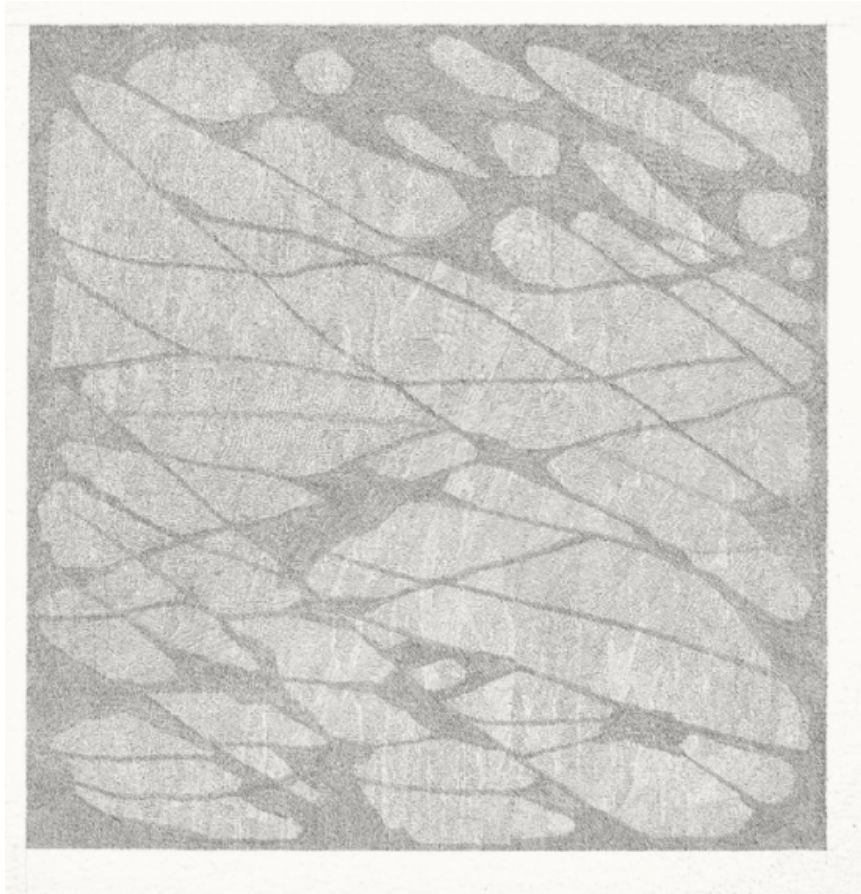
DEPARTMENTS [PICS](#)

Monday, October 2nd, 2017

Jacob El Hanani Linescape: Four Decades at Acquavella Galleries

by David Cohen

This was a featured item at THE LIST on Monday, October 2, 2017



Jacob El Hanani, Gray Skies, 2016. Ink on gessoed canvas, 15-1/8 x 15-1/4 inches. Courtesy of Acquavella Galleries

Scriptural injunctions against graven images and puritanical disdain for decoration or ornament for their own sake engendered an ingenious work around from medieval artists: micrography. Miniscule but nonetheless legible script is arranged into otherwise prohibited or discouraged forms, sometimes whimsical, sometimes expressive of the text itself. Fast forward to minimal art and its inherent iconoclasm and Casablanca-born, Israel-raised, Paris-educated, New York-based Jacob El Hanani pulls from his “portable ark of the covenant” (in R. B. Kitaj’s phrase, from First Diasporist Manifesto) the mind bogglingly ethereal feat that is his application of this ancestral technique to a contemporary abstract idiom. These days, however, there is a relative loosening-up of his approach, as the artist acknowledges in titles that evoke landscapes by Turner and cityscapes by Mondrian. As El Hanani explains, “For many decades, I was working under a self-imposed austerity, but many artists, as they get older, release themselves and tend to embrace a freer, more lyrical style.”

18 East 79th Street, between Madison and Fifth avenues, New York City, acquavellagalleries.com