

Nicholas Metivier Gallery

3 March 2021

SPOTLIGHT - Michael Smith: Font de Gaume

The Font de Gaume cave in Southwest France contains exceptional examples of prehistoric paintings and engravings. Michael Smith first visited this cave in the 1970s and was only permitted to take photos of the exterior. He recently returned to revisit these ancient sites, where he created watercolour studies and began his current series shortly thereafter.

In his exhibition, *Underland*, Smith recreates the experience of exploring these caves through the use of memory, materiality, personal history and the influence of other artists.

At 16 feet, *Font de Gaume* envelops the viewer and transports them into a world of Smith's creation.



Michael Smith, *Font de Gaume*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 68 x 192 in.



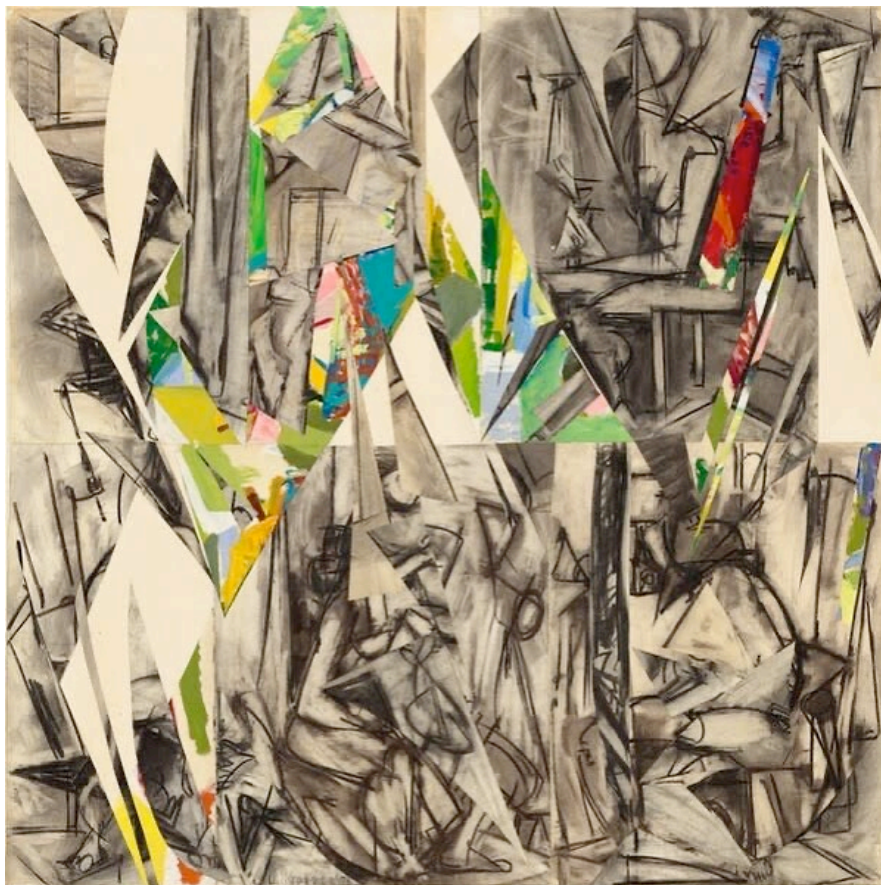
Giovanni Bellini, *St. Francis in the Desert*, around 1480, oil and tempera on panel, 55.8 x 49 in.

INFLUENCES - Though not directly referenced in Font de Gaume, works by Giovanni Bellini and Lee Krasner were in Michael Smith's 'mind's eye' while completing the triptych.

Throughout history, caves have had a symbolic connotation referencing dichotomies such as interior and exterior, and darkness and light (such as in the Bellini pictured) Smith's Font de Gaume explores these themes with colour, texture and depth.



Exterior photograph of caves in the Font de Gaume region of France and inspiration for Smith's painting



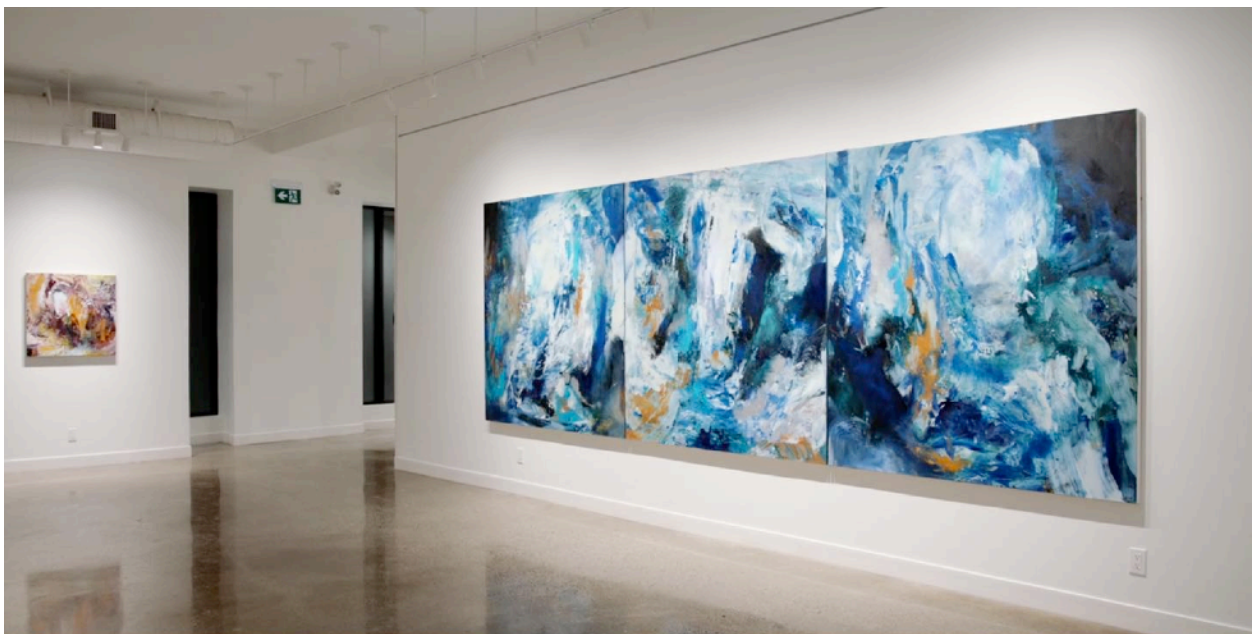
Lee Krasner, *Imperative*, 1976, oil, charcoal and paper on canvas, 50 x 50 in.

Lee Krasner is best known for her abstractions on canvas and paper. Krasner's very physical, visceral gesture can be felt in her collage work *Imperative* from 1976. This same movement can be sensed in Smith's work. Smith uses his entire body to paint

works like Font de Gaume, utilizing many tools and techniques to achieve a similar layered effect.



Watercolour study for Smith's Font de Gaume painting and Installation view of Font de Gaume in Smith's current exhibition, Underland.



Installation view of Font de Gaume in Smith's current exhibition, Underland.