

## EXHIBITIONS Melinda Schawel *Traverse* 26th August 2014 - 13th September 2014

Using traditional media in unconventional ways, papers collaged onto wood are sanded, ripped away, covered in ink washes, written on, and waxed. Schawel's mixed media works are experimental iterations driven by a love of materials and surfaces and the search to find the optimum point where ideas, technique and media come together.



Melinda Schawel  
*Breaking Away* 2014  
 ink and graphite on torn & perforated paper framed  
 56cm x 76cm ,69 x 87 cm framed

Melinda Schawel has always been drawn to the physicality of creative process, and allowed the non-rational act of making to guide the development of her atmospheric imagery. Previously this affinity for process has led her to explore printmaking, yet over recent years she has expanded her repertoire to incorporate numerous techniques executed on paper and wood. Through scraping, sanding, painting, perforating, drawing, cutting, drilling and tearing, Schawel crafts her artwork in a manually intensive process that belies the graceful abstracted visions that result.



Melinda Schawel  
*Flutter* 2014  
 ink on torn and perforated paper framed  
 100cm x 100cm , 117 x 115 cm framed

Working with a pared back palette of neutral tones that are accented by bold reds and graphic yellows, Schawel's works appear both primordial and feather-light. The artist strikes a balance between control and chaos as she manipulates her medium and the ever-present element of surprise to create shapes and forms of a largely variegated nature. These compositional entities are always disparate, and each bears its own distinct topography. At times they appear continental, like islands and landmasses seen from an aerial perspective floating in an ocean of glacial negative space. At other times they might seem like matter enlarged under a microscope, or leaves drifting past on a pavement. Part of the appeal of this work is its ability

to slip so readily between the macro and the micro.



Schawel's forms hover on the surface, occasionally collide into one another, and act in dynamic tandem. There is a push and pull tension where some recede and others seem to come forward in the pictorial space, as she sets up a formal interplay between compositional elements. From aqueous stains to areas of hard-edged mineral density, the artist adapts her methods of application in search of a visual equilibrium within each image, and notes the importance of knowing when to hold back. This awareness translates in the successful and subtle evocation of atmospheric space.

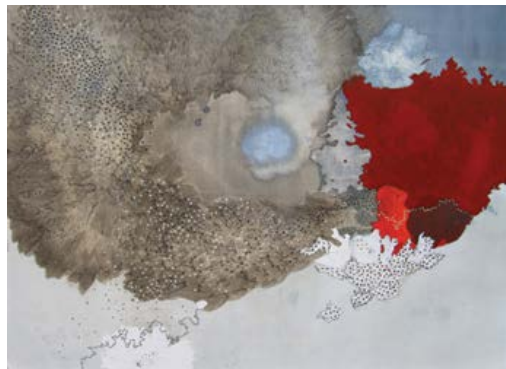


The three-dimensional quality present in many of Schawel's works reveals her somewhat sculptural approach to image making. The artist relentlessly scores and tears the heavy gauge paper that she works with, when wet or dry, so that areas stand out in relief. These are often tinted with watercolours to create unusual and intriguing textural effects that invite closer inspection to discern their materiality. In certain works numerous torn sections of paper, akin to feathers or small leaves are collaged together. Often surrounded by an inky black substrate they call to mind the intricate beauty of nests, as they draw together numerous seemingly random parts into an entity with its own intuitive order.

Schawel continues to push at the boundaries of what is physically possible with the materials she employs through perforating works on wood and paper with numerous small holes. These bring the viewer's eye back to the surface, as they wind a meandering path through each work. The points also contribute to the somehow cosmic quality within her imagery. Massed together they can appear like constellations or a smattering of stars, illuminating a bigger scheme. Trails of perforations exist in others, a metaphor for movement, journeys and migration.



Melinda Schawel  
*From Above* 2014  
ink on torn and perforated paper framed  
58cm x 78cm , 69 x 88 cm framed



Melinda Schawel  
*Adrift* 2014  
ink on torn and perforated paper framed  
56cm x 76cm , 66 x 87 cm framed



Melinda Schawel  
*Sky Full of Stars* 2014  
ink on torn and perforated paper framed  
56cm x 76cm , 66 x 87 cm framed





Melinda Schawel  
*Intertwined* 2014  
 ink and collage on paper  
 77cm x 140cm

Born in Illinois, USA, Schawel's personal history involves extensive travel and living in a number of different countries. Thus it is not surprising that the theme of migration found expression particularly in her earlier work, as she came to grips with crossing between different cultural worlds and physical locations.

Yet while this conceptual thread still exists, this body of work displays a shift toward a more universal and non-narrative significance. Schawel's smooth expanses of tone and colour, ambiguous forms, and nuanced textural details coalesce to create a visual harmony. These works have been wrought according to an idiosyncratic set of rules, illuminating experience and intuition, mapping an unconscious understanding that goes deep yet always comes back to the surface.'

Essay by Marguerite Brown, 2014.

**Brooks and Schawel Collaboration.**

'FLG artists Terri Brooks and Melinda Schawel have had a mutual admiration and respect for each other's work for over a decade. At the start of 2014, when the unique opportunity to exhibit simultaneously arose, both artists thought a collaborative project would not only be a tangible expression of this connection, but also an exciting and challenging one. For a collaboration to be truly successful, however, a lot of boxes need ticking. The artists must have time and a genuine interest in stepping into the other's shoes, blind trust, and a willingness to let go. There must be a common thread that underpins the work technically and/or conceptually. It's risky. It doesn't suit those who keep their cards too close to their chest. It therefore does beg the questions - what motivates artists to turn mutual admiration or connection into collaboration, and does it work?

At first glance there really are no obvious similarities in the imagery, palette or media of their current works. In fact, there is a more graphic, hard edged line and brushwork present in Brooks' pieces which one would rarely see in Schawel's more fragile, floating shapes and torn surfaces. Schawel's recurring blue grey tones accented with bold colours and created with water based ink on paper, are also in contrast with Brooks' large 'brown and bone, not quite black and white' oil and enamel works on canvas. Ironically it was exactly these differences that they brought to the table which kept it interesting and visually appealing. The work entitled *Division* is probably the best example of this with Brooks' distinctive stripes used in conjunction with Schawel's perforations. *Bouquet* showcases both artists' use and love of paper but in totally different ways, one employing papier-mâché and the other, collage.

The true motivation behind this project however, is both artists' process driven approach that is at the crux of their practice, where process defines the work. Their curiosity and strong desire to be present in each other's work, i.e. to engage in the other's methodology and the symbolic gestures that go along with it, overrode any potential pitfalls. So, did it work? The artists selected four final pieces out of the original eight which they considered successful and displayed them on the wall that divides the concurrent exhibitions. The viewer of course will be the ultimate judge but as far as Brooks and Schawel are concerned, the success of any



Melinda Schawel  
*Night Time Come Take Me* 2014  
 ink on torn and perforated paper  
 78cm x 58cm



Melinda Schawel  
*It Comes & It Goes* 2014  
 ink on torn & perforated paper  
 76cm x 56cm



Melinda Schawel  
*Ocean of Sky I & II* 2014

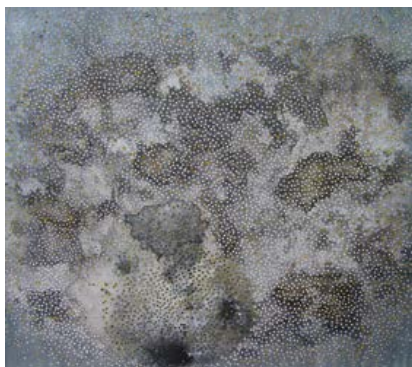
collaborative process ultimately lies in the process itself.' Written by Melinda Schawel 2014.

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ink and graphite on torn and perforated paper  
76cm x 112cm



Melinda Schawel  
*From Below* 2014  
ink on torn & perforated paper  
58cm x 65cm



Melinda Schawel  
See *What Happens* 2014  
ink, graphite and paper on perforated board  
50cm x 50cm



Melinda Schawel  
*Joining* 2014  
ink on torn & perforated paper cut out  
49cm x 27cm



Melinda Schawel  
*Nest* 2014  
ink and collage on torn paper  
62cm x 55cm , 64 x 58 cm framed without glass



Brooks & Schawel  
*Bands* 2014  
oil, enamel, pencil & ink on papier mache  
58cm x 41cm



Brooks & Schawel  
*Bouquet* 2014  
collage on papier mache  
64cm x 47cm



Brooks & Schawel  
*Perforated Dots* 2014

oil & enamel on perforated paper  
63cm x 39cm



Brooks & Schawel  
*Division 2014*

oil, enamel, ink, papier mache on perforated paper  
57cm x 39cm



Melinda Schawel  
*Joining II 2014*

ink on torn and perforated paper cut out  
54cm x 50cm