

Scene Unseen: Viewing Notes

exhibitions, studio visits, images coming my way

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“Intersections: Women, Leadership and the Power of Collaboration” at MCAD in Minneapolis

02/26/2012 [2 Comments](#)



Prints made collaboratively by Sara Downing, Stephanie Hunder, and Elizabeth Jacobson

I just saw the exhibition “Intersections: Women, Leadership and the Power of Collaboration” at Minneapolis College of Art and Design. I wrote the catalog essay for this show when it was forming. I learned about all the artists’ works through their written statements and preliminary drawings, but only saw the show last weekend when I was in the Twin Cities for work.

The central theme of the show is collaboration. What sorts of things happen –or can happen–when artists work together over a period of time instead of keeping separate and relatively isolated in their own studios? What happens when dialogue between artists becomes a central component of art-making practice?

Karin Wirth, the exhibition organizer, invited a group of experienced artists (leaders, mentors) to work collaboratively with younger artists who they have met and worked with in the classroom. Teams of artists–sometimes two, sometimes more–worked for about a year to develop their own collaborative strategies and to prepare works for this exhibition.

The gorgeous prints by Sara Downing, Stephanie Hunder, and Elizabeth Jacobson (shown above and below) are the product of an unusual collaborative process. Each of the three printmakers worked on the set of large prints independently over the course of months. One artist at a time worked on each print, then left it in the print lab for the next artist to pick up and work on later. Each artist worked independently, but together they created the heavily layered print-collages over the course of months.

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installation view

Mary Griep and her student Adelyn Rosenwinkel who share a interest in the landscape around St Olaf College in Northfield MN, worked somewhat independently to create their large piece (see below). Passing each section of the gridded work back and forth, they wove together a palimpsest of quotes from readings the two shared, maps found doing library research, and plant studies drawn from the prairie.



Mary Griep and Adelyn Rosenwinkel, *Intersections*, based on the land around St. Olaf College.



detail Griep and Rosenwinkle

Another interesting piece came from the group organized by Elaine Rutherford working with her students from St Benedict/St Johns University. Their installation uses slide projections and a selection of found and constructed symbolic objects (below). I like the way this group worked together to create field of images that suggests the idea of memory, or the idea of their memories woven together. They created a kind of illuminated field of nostalgia for viewers to step into.



Installation created by Cloe Briggs, Nate Burbeck, Steven Lemke, and Elain Rutherford



Also very interesting were the collaborations that involved two artists with similar interests. Two artists –usually a mentor and mentee–made the commitment to talk and share readings with the goal of seeing what developed out of the cross-pollination. Painter Kim Benson and artist Valerie Jenkins delved into their shared interest in representing the body in pain (below).



Kim Benson, Coming Spring, oil on canvas, 36" x 36", 2011.

The links between their work can be seen in the exhibition display which puts works by Benson and Jenkins side by side. The pink and red pallet and the blur in Benson's work makes me think of twisted flesh.

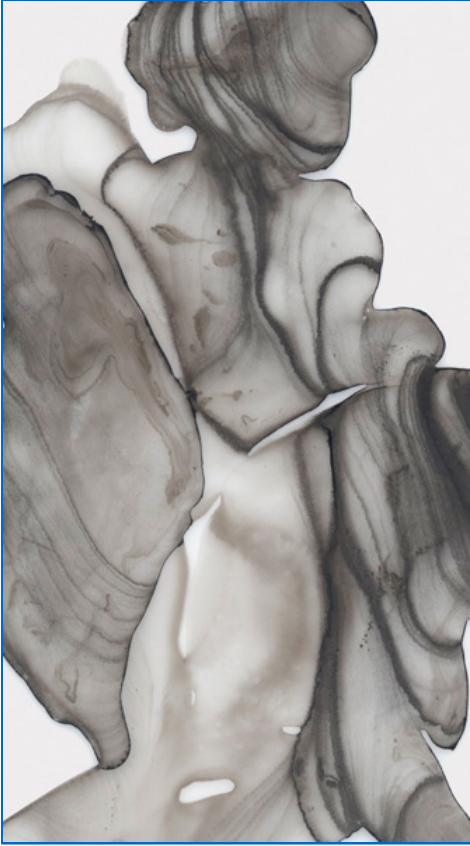


Benson and Jenkins exhibited side by side.

Inspired by Benson's treatment of the disturbing subject of the war injured, Jenkins did a series of drawings devoted to prisoner torture at Abu Ghraib, a project she had earlier abandoned in frustration. Very abstract, these elegant black and white wash drawings suggest flesh, bodily fluids,

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emotion materialized into plumes of smoke. I like the idea that artists can learn from each other, be inspired by each other, and celebrate that in an exhibition.



Val Jenkins, *Harbinger 1*, digital print on rag paper, 45" x 24", 2011.

Pat Olson and her student Roxi Swanson are both painters. And they embarked on an interesting game of art historical trading places in the series of paintings they exhibited in *Intersections*. These figurative painters switched places with models featured in famous portraits from art history as a way of metaphorically getting inside the skin of inspirational masters. Olson represented herself as Max Beckmann in his 1907 *Self-Portrait in Tuxedo* (below).



Patricia Olson, *Self-Portrait at 60* (after Beckmann), oil on board, 55" x 37", 2011.

This dialogue with the past becomes denser yet when Swanson represented Olson in Egon Schiele's *Portrait of the Artist's Wife Standing*, and Olson placed Swanson—tattooed arms and all—in Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres's 1851 portrait of *Madame Moitessier* (below). Paying homage

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to tradition in such a literal way, without irony, is risky in an art world that values individuality and singularity above most things. *Intersections* offered Olson and Swanson the perfect opportunity to challenge these unwritten assumptions with a game of art historical time travel.



Pat Olson's portrait of her collaborator Roxi Swanson as a stand in for Madame Moitessier in Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres's.

Karen Wirth and her former student Isa Gagarin created a collaborative video, sound, text piece based on Virginia Woolf's 1931 experimental novel *The Waves*.

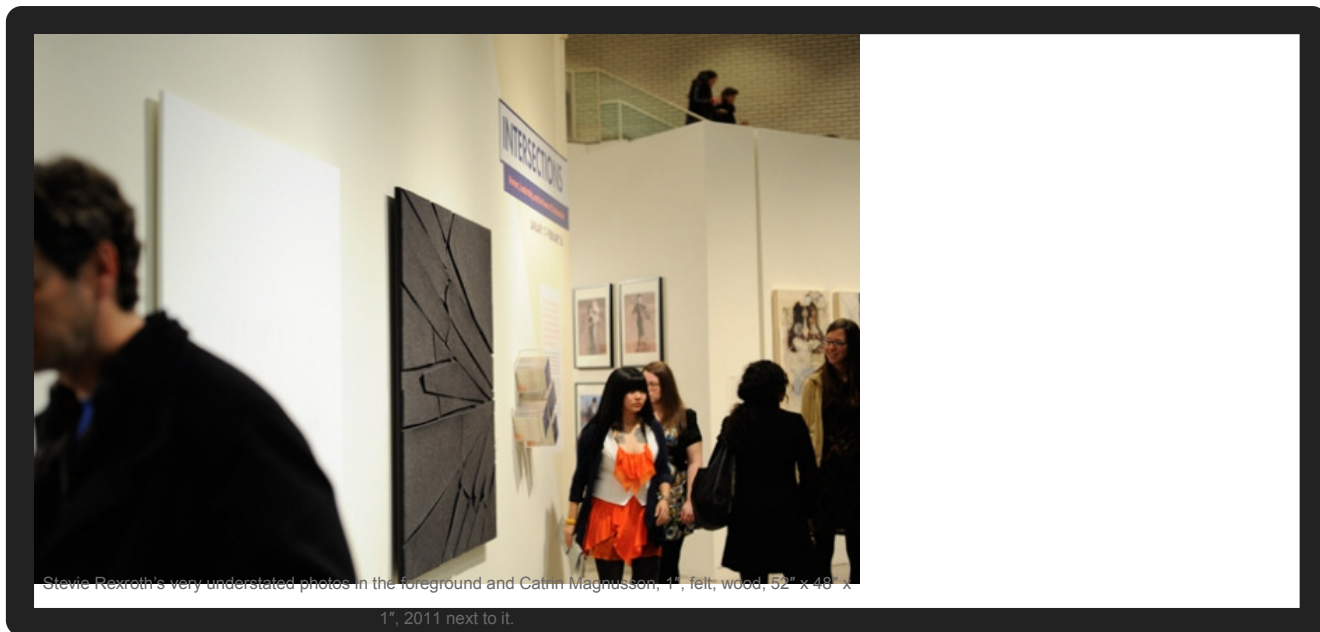


Karen Wirth and Isa Gagarin, video and book installation based on Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves*.

As I wrote in the catalogue essay “Narrating multiple streams of consciousness rather than a plot, Woolf offers the reader no “I” to attach to in the text. Inspired by Woolf’s example, Gagarin and Wirth present moving video footage, written text, sounds, and pictures as a web of crossing perceptual waves intended to unmoor the viewer’s rootedness in their sense of the “I,” their perception of themselves as separate and autonomous in the world.” This piece is compact and elegant, but delves deeply into the idea of identity that is spread out into the world and washes over and entwines with others. It seems very right for this exhibition about collaboration. I learned a lot by thinking through the issue presented by collaboration as a productive model for artistic production. I find the whole project very refreshing!

To read my catalogue essay which was published in the CD that is given away free at the shows click here: [PDF draft %22crossings%22 for Intersections](#)

There is a lot more in the show that I don’t go into here. See installations shots and individual works in the slideshow below.



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About Patricia Briggs

Patricia Briggs is an art historian and critic. She is the director and curator of the galleries at University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

2 Responses to “Intersections: Women, Leadership and the Power of Collaboration ” at MCAD in Minneapolis



1. [Laura M](#) says:
[02/27/2012 at 4:08 pm](#)

It really was an amazing show and wonderful experience also.
I am ever grateful for Karen’s invitation to participate. Anoka -Ramsey
was not only the one community college, we represented the entire MnSCU
system. Wow!

[Reply](#)



- [Patricia Briggs](#) says:
[02/27/2012 at 5:18 pm](#)

Great to hear from you laura! Are you a subscriber to my blog? Please sign up. Loved Intersections. The exhibition was great.

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