

Deborah Thompson works in a studio space that is alive with sketches and stencils and numerous paintings all in progress together. A body of work evolves as she pushes through experiments in continued exploration of abstract concepts like transcendence and melancholy. In *Between* Thompson presents a number of paintings and a collection of new works in mixed media. With these newer works she has employed stencils in various, evolving ways, resulting in an evolution of her use of line, negative space, and monochrome composition. The works represent an engagement with ideas and feelings arising from Thompson's interest in critical theory, mythology, and psychology, and her compassionate curiosity about the complex human experience.

Her process in the studio begins with a series of now-ritualized preparations to set the scene and to send the message to her thinking, analytical mind that it's time to step aside and make way for her intuition and instinct take over. Small but meaningful, gestures like changing from her street clothes into her studio clothes and turning on her chosen music, help her to move out of her everyday, practical thinking into a more intuitive and open, curious mindset. She sometimes has many works in progress all at the same time, and on any given day, she might make marks on all of them, or be entirely focused on a process drawing where she's working out material considerations or compositional elements, with no intention of that drawing ever being included with the finished body of work.

The use of hand cut paper stencils has shifted the focus for Thompson from the critical and thoughtful process of drawing onto a more responsive mode of composition, allowing her to make considered marks more spontaneously. Because the drawing part of the process is done separately when she creates the stencil, well before she approaches her blank canvas or fresh sheet of paper, once she brings the stencil to the fresh page, a different kind of mark-making is possible, and a new lexicon of expression is available. As the process evolves, Thompson has found that the stencil itself becomes a very interesting element which works its way into the finished piece in many ways, sometimes being adhered to the drawing surface and then incorporated into the drawing altogether.

Experimenting with different paper and drawing surfaces allows for an ever-broadening vocabulary of mark-making and a great deal of flexibility with the intensity or subtlety of the pigments. Thompson's tendency to hoard drawing papers of all sorts has recently resulted in her active and dynamic experimentation with achromatic mixed-media drawings, some of which are included in *Between*. Yupo paper is very resilient and extremely smooth, and lends itself readily to a broad range of marks from very loose and subtle washes of diluted ink to intensely saturated blacks, which can then be worked over once they're dry. These smaller black and white drawings represent a departure for Thompson from the vibrantly coloured, large scale paintings that were the primary focus of her practice for many years.

In *Between* Thompson shares a triptych entitled *The Nightmare: Fear and Hope*, in which faces and bodies emerge in outlines and fragments from a deeply saturated blue field. In these and other works, the imagery suggests an intangible, dream-like vision while simultaneously capturing in very arresting detail the unique gesture or expression of familiar human emotions. As contemplations of concepts like madness, melancholy, and transcendence, the works in this exhibition endeavour to communicate an otherworldly experience with line, colour, and composition. Thompson remains keenly aware that this is a relatively impossible task, and yet, the works speak glimpses of raw truth; they exist in a space in between the artist's own private inner world and the mundane, material world we all share – not entirely otherworldly, not entirely concrete, but somewhere in *Between*.