

BETWIXT AND JUDE DANA
BETWEEN GRIEBEL HOLST

25 September - 4 January 2015



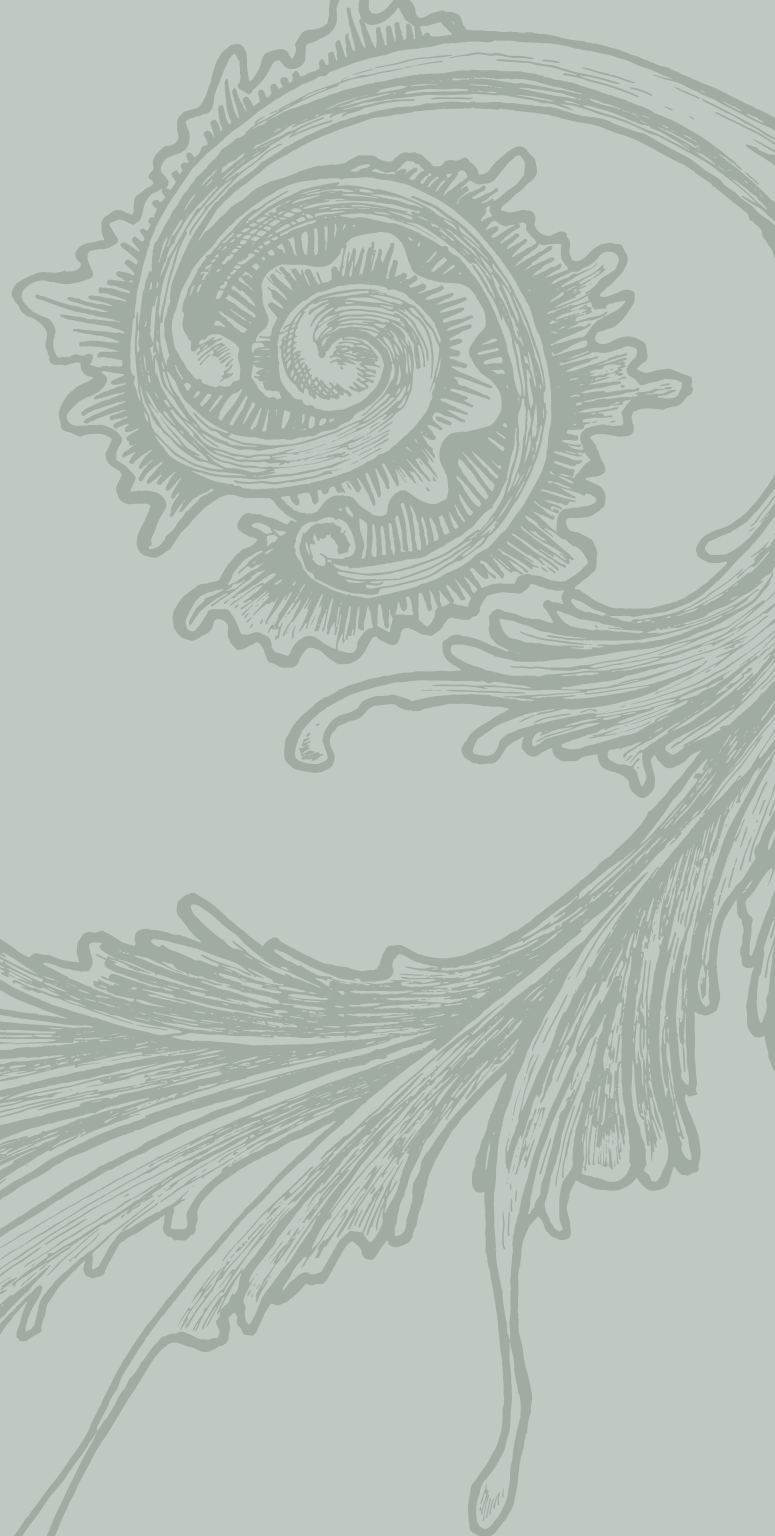
BETWIXT AND JUDE | DANA BETWEEN | GRIEBEL | HOLST

The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford
25 September - 4 January 2015

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Gallery Museum
Abbotsford



PROLOGUE

With a lush, rich blend of oil painting, papier-mâché sculptures and delicate sketches, *Betwixt and Between* offers macabre scenes that portray unsettling mysteries set in a kind of vaudevillian stage. It's a blend of fairytales, melodramas and human tragedies.

The directors of this play are artists Dana Holst and Jude Griebel, a first time collaboration for these Alberta based artists. Their art practice stretches out 28 years combined and both have exhibited extensively within Canada and for Jude, internationally.

Griebel first approached Holst in 2010 when she was curating his exhibit *Afterwards* in Edmonton, Alberta. Their art practices shared many commonalities, both say it was “instinctual” and “aligned” them as artists who connected thematically and aesthetically; both were eager to collaborate. As Dana says “our work was cohesive in the many ways we deal with mystery. For me it is the mystery of the human condition... With Jude's work the mystery for me lies partially in a dichotomy of human desire to meld with but somehow remain separate from nature. I guess it's a sort of itching mystery to understand things, like what happens to our physical bodies after death.” Jude adds, “We also both use distinct historical references, many stemming from the Victorian period, that are blended with autobiographical elements.”

Betwixt and Between opens at The Reach with an element of nostalgia; appearing downstage the fairytale characters appear stuck, neither here nor there and are shown in a gruesome but strangely playful way. I am reminded in some ways of photographer Dianne Arbus, in her circus freaks photo essays. It's that feeling of squeamishness or perversion but you continue to look, to be drawn in. The intention is never exploitation but an invitation to discover something real and something beyond the surface.

Griebel and Holst often too pose their figures as portraits as Arbus often did in her work. They invite you in with enticing views that demand a second take, the colour palette is almost tender and warm, such an appealing way to soften the dramas depicted. The viewer must consider something more, to examine beyond the between and to regard the human condition, self-hatred and the sometimes comical way Griebel and Holst set this stage.

This collaboration of Griebel and Holst, is a three year project that is neither here nor there but a strong passionate pairing that delves succinctly into fantasy and fears, pushing the boundaries of understanding the human condition that culminate in this dynamic premiere exhibition at The Reach Gallery Museum Abbotsford.

kate bradford, curatorial assistant.

SEARCHING THE IN-BETWEEN

RECENT WORK BY JUDE GRIEBEL
AND DANA HOLST

Our minds are full of rooms; theatrical stage sets that illustrate our understanding of the natural and mythical world. Some rooms are locked, others open but each shows us different representations of ourselves and our projected understandings of the afterlife and alternate existences. In their recent exhibition *Betwixt and Between* artists Dana Holst and Jude Griebel explore these interior rooms through lush oil paintings and paper-mache sculptures. With one foot in one room and another in the next, Griebel and Holst show us the transitional and dual-nature of our existence. Shown together, their work gives a focused view on how our imagination negotiates abstract notions such as growth, transition and death through experience and metaphorical exploration.

Drawn to the macabre and vaudevillian, each artist sets the stage for an absurdist theatre. Using the surrealist tropes of material transformation, Griebel and Holst recycle ordinary objects to create new forms of fragmented human creatures. Pursued by their own shadows, the stylized figures are stuck in the in-between, the *betwixt*, either from their own vindication or redemption or a literal transformation of their original form. In both, seemingly troubled youth are portrayed within fictitious worlds based on memories and daydreams.

Whereas Griebel's settings are often taken from the artist's childhood homes and familiar landscapes, particularly the Canadian Prairies, Holst's stages are more allegorical in nature. Within her paintings seemingly detached young women act out unsettling scenes amidst menacing stage sets and Victorian interiors with lush and rigid decorum. In both *Self Loathing*, 2011 and *Maids of the Mist*, 2012

Holst's girls stand with their backs to the viewer, by means of certain punishment or apparent disinterest; their surroundings, painted in vivid colour, offset the despondent nature of the subjects' projected state of mind. In each work, there is a sense of unknown mischief; an unsettling end to the story. In *Great Expectations*, 2012, the girls teeter a top a tight wire, nonchalant about the danger below them; while the young woman

in *Running Home*, 2013, returns home to the uncanny, hiding in the bushes. The pageant performer in *This Magic Moment*, 2012, literally holds her smiling head in her own hands, as she blesses her magical act with her wand.

Playwright Antonin Artaud in *The Theatre and its Double* 1938, at war with a theatre bound to a narrowed idea of human meaning or purpose, was in search of a theatre of

**EVERYONE
CARRIES A ROOM
ABOUT INSIDE HIM
FRANZ KAFKA: THE BLUE OCTAVO NOTEBOOKS**

intensified embodied and magical gestures. Artaud imagined “the appearance of an imaginary creature made of wood and cloth, wholly fabricated corresponding to nothing yet intrinsically disturbing, capable of bringing back to the stage some faint breath of that great metaphysical fear that underlies all ancient theatre.” Something of these creatures can be seen in the work in *Betwixt and Between*. The figures represented by both artists impart a sense of puppetry, of being on stage and acting out various scenes in a metaphorical way. In a reductive way, the characters become allegorical stand-ins for our innumerable selves. While the puppet can remind us of our powers of animation, it may also remind us of our human tendency to turn ourselves, our thoughts and memories into fixed, frozen, inanimate or mechanical things. Adopting such tropes, Holst’s paintings and Griebel’s sculptures show us twisted imaginary worlds exploring cultural mythmaking and our fears about encounters with the unknown. Like a child, clown or mad person’s relation to objects, their representations of metaphysical life is unexpected and playful, while imparting a sense of underlying darkness.

The curious thing about these artists’ work is their liberal borrowing of public folklore and legend in combination with autobiographic moments or recordings from their own lives. The effect is a melding of truth and collective fiction, a truly literal weaving of the real and imaginary. As we follow them down the rabbit hole, only those who

know them personally will understand the subtle references between recurring characters and scenarios. In Griebel’s work the majority of the figures represented are portraits of friends and family. In Holst’s vibrant dreamscapes, Ada-esque characters stand in for Holst’s own self-expressing the artist’s past personal experience and observations in social behaviour. Echoing the nostalgia and melodramas of illustrations and narratives of fairy tales, youth novels and folk mythology Griebel and Holst’s images, like so many classic fables, are tales of power and control. Each imparts an element of the horrific, the type of horror that manifests itself in the beautiful, fabulous and fantastic. Playing with the effects of the uncanny, the horror in these images is mixed with sweetness and playfulness. In this manner both artists operate the biographical to question how our own imaginations negotiate abstract concepts, particularly those of mortality and change.

As Anita Schorsch explains in her social history of the images of youth, “child-like images first began as reflections of the supernatural world...children were portrayed as semi-mythical figures...like seeds of the devil mixed with seeds of the divine, children were willful and rebellious whilst being guileless and pure.” By the time the Victorian times came around, however, children and youth were considered evil until fashioned pure through custom and restraint. As Henri Rousseau declared, “all children have wicked hearts when they are born; and

that makes them so wicked when they grow up into life. Even little infants, that appear so innocent and pretty, are God's little enemies at heart." What's interesting is the comparison between Victorian imagery, which continued to influence visual culture until the Modern era and its relation to how the youth are portrayed in Holst and Griebel's work. Theirs appear to have more in common with medieval representation than the Victorian antecedent, embracing the 'little devils'. "The frequency with which children in their natural and sensual condition were portrayed in 15th century books...points to a remarkably casual approach towards human functions which many modern figures have been bad, sensual or private...These scenes were unselfconsciously portrayed because children were not then judged as either innocent or corruptible, their actions were part of the physical world common to every class and to every age group."

Within Holst's work the macabre is expressed through a sense of imminent threat, or uncanny sentiment- hers are scenes in which danger lurks around corners and nothing seems 'quite right'. While Griebel also imparts a similar sentiment in his work, it is often expressed through literal physical transformations. His characters are perpetually shifting in and out of animal forms; in *Surface Drifter*, 2012, for example, the figure has transformed into a bird, gliding across the floor as if a pond. The rapture of both artists' images is found in this fluctuation between good

and bad, real and unreal, physical and immaterial. One is never quite sure which side of the line the figures stand and this gives them a powerful sense of urgency. Both Holst and Griebel depict scenes in which things are allowed to be present in all their tremendous impersonal energy, playful transformations and shifts of vision. Their work opens a door into a magical, strange land in which youth are at center stage; puppets of our imaginations. Like in so many classic fables, as Seth Lerer remarks, "life may be one great garden party, but when you step away from candied peels and cakes, when you leave the comforts of your river cottage or jump out the window of the nursery, you may find yourself beached on an island Neverland, hosting a party run of far from strictly conventional lines."

Stephanie Fielding



JUDE
GRIEBEL

Jude Griebel's art practice employs familiar and nostalgic settings as stage-sets for otherworldly events. These settings include rooms of houses and private spaces from his past which elicit dialogue between actual memories and invented narrative. Sunlit hallways, bedrooms and overgrown backyards are commonly referenced. Figures are depicted in various states of disappearance, suggesting altered states of reality, while remaining anchored to familiar settings. There is often a tenuous balance between the absence and presence of the figure on both a physical and subconscious level.

Jude Griebel is a Montreal-based artist, who obtained a BFA from the Emily Carr University. Griebel's work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally, most recently in Toronto and Tokyo. Griebel is the recipient of many awards and has worked as an artist in residence in Canada, Japan, Belgium and the US.



ARTIST STATEMENT

JUDE GRIEBEL

My artwork is driven by themes of psychological unease and transformation. Depicting bodies in various states of composition, it examines how our imagination negotiates abstract notions such as growth, change and mortality through metaphorical and experiential avenues. The sculptural bodies, created from papier-mâché and epoxy resin, become sites of fusion, in which physical anatomy is merged with allegorical counterparts. These altered bodies are then painted in a subdued oil palette. Their representational nature is reminiscent of museum dioramas, taxidermy and didactic science models, causing them to waiver between fact and a sense of disbelief and mystery. When exhibited together, the works produce an intertwining narrative of transition and longing.

The images and forms belong to a visual vocabulary developed through research into historical and mythological beliefs surrounding the body and its relationship to the natural world, art historical references and autobiographical experience of being raised on the Canadian Prairies. References are made to low-budget horror films from the 1970s and 80s, capitalizing on their and ability to incorporate foundational cultural mythologies and fears into a mainstream vernacular.

The expression of my concepts through papier-mâché acknowledges the subversive and adaptable nature of the medium and its history of use in Halloween costumes, amateur theatre, ritual craft traditions and design.

Projecting states of growth and ruin, my bodies are informed by cross-referencing historical source material and contemporary existential experience. Through the process of their formation, I reflect on identity in relation to physical and metaphorical beginnings and endings.







Jude Griebel, *Grandmother*, 2012.
Wood, textiles, polymer, human hair, oil paint, 13" x 19.25" x 17.75".

Jude Griebel, *Barn Skulls (Skull RR4)*, 2014.
Wood, papier-mâché, resin, hair, oil paint, 15.5" x 16.5" x 2".



Jude Griebel, *Barn Skulls (Skull RR1)*, 2014.
Wood, papier-mâché, resin, hair, oil paint, 15" x 14.25" x 2".



Jude Griebel, *Barn Skulls (Skull RR2)*, 2014.
Wood, papier-mâché, resin, hair, oil paint, 15.5" x 14" x 2".



Jude Griebel, *Barn Skulls (Skull RR3)*, 2014.
Wood, papier-mâché, resin, hair, oil paint, 15" x 17.25" x 2".



Jude Griebel, *Barn Skulls (Skull RR5)*, 2014.
Wood, papier-mâché, resin, hair, oil paint, 15.5" x 17.25" x 2".





Jude Griebel, *How You Were Made (yam)*, 2013.
Papier-mâché, foam, epoxy, wood, textiles, oil paint, 11" x 22" x 8".

Jude Griebel, *Melting Snow Figure*, 2012.
Papier-mâché, foam, polymer, human hair, oil paint, 20.5" x 16" x 12.5", 2012.



Jude Griebel, *Half Open Window Head*, 2011.
Wall mounted wooden form with oil, 28.25" x 13.5".



Jude Griebel, *How You Were Made (bees)*, 2013.
Papier-mâché, foam, epoxy, wood, oil paint, 13.75" x 9.75".



Jude Griebel, *Night Sky Fader*, 2011.
Wall-mounted wooden form with oil. 24.5" x 18.5".



Jude Griebel, *Surface Drifter*, 2012.
Wood, papier-mâché, epoxy, human hair, oil paint, 36" x 64" x 48".



Jude Griebel, *Planting and Weeding*, 2012.
Papier-mâché, foam, polymer, human hair, oil paint, 20.5" x 16" x 12.5".



Jude Griebel, *Tired Bodies Grow*, 2010.
Wall mounted wooden form with oil, 31.5" x 28".

DANA
HOLST

Dana Holst (b. 1972, Kitchener, Ontario) is a mid career Canadian artist based in Edmonton, Alberta, working primarily in painting and drawing. Her work explores speculative narratives around bullying and the emotional lives of young women depicted in the process of building their identities, forming friendships, and learning about the world.

Upcoming exhibitions include *She's All That*, a solo exhibition at the AGA curated by Kristy Trinier for December of 2015. Her work is included in private collections in North America and various public collections including: Alberta Foundation for the Arts (Edmonton, AB), Agnes Etherington Art Centre, (Kingston, ON), Art Bank (Ottawa, ON) and Glenbow Museum (Calgary, AB).

For more information, please visit www.danaholst.com.







Dana Holst, *The Raft*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 15" x 22".

Dana Holst, *Self Loathing*, 2011.
Oil on panel, 16" x 16".
Private Collection.



Dana Holst, *Stage Fright*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 10.5" x 8.5".
Collection of Peter and Wendy Turner.



Dana Holst, *Bedtime*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 14.5" x 13".
Collection of Peter and Wendy Turner.



Dana Holst, *The Screamer*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 15" x 11".
Collection of Peter and Wendy Turner.



Dana Holst, *Sick Girl*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 15" x 11".
Collection of Peter and Wendy Turner.



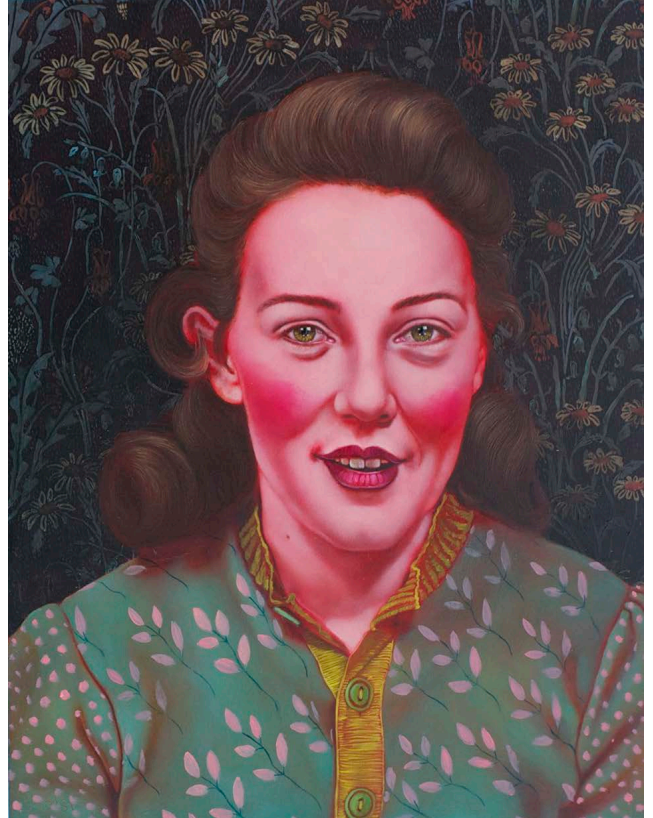


Dana Holst, *Vile*, 2012.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 15" x 22".

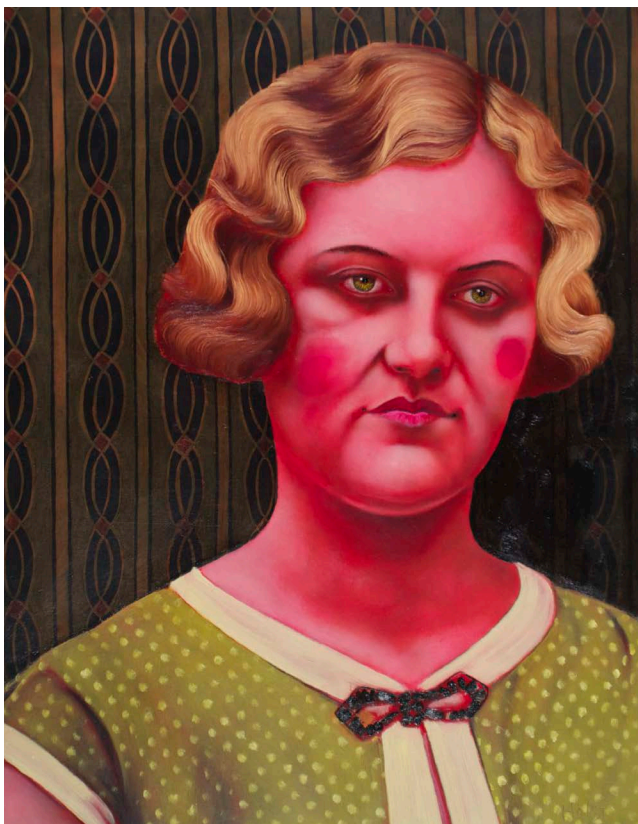
Dana Holst, *Maids of the Mist*, 2012.
Oil on panel, 16" x 16".
Collection of Louise Dirks and Arthur Fafard.



Dana Holst, *Awesome Jesus*, 2012.
Oil on panel, 40" x 30".
Collection of Rod Gregory.



Dana Holst, *Dreamer* 2014.
Oil on panel, 10" x 8".



Dana Holst, *Rich Girl*, 2014.
Oil on panel, 10" x 8".



Dana Holst, *This Awakening*, 2011.
Oil on panel, 16" x 16".
Private Collection.



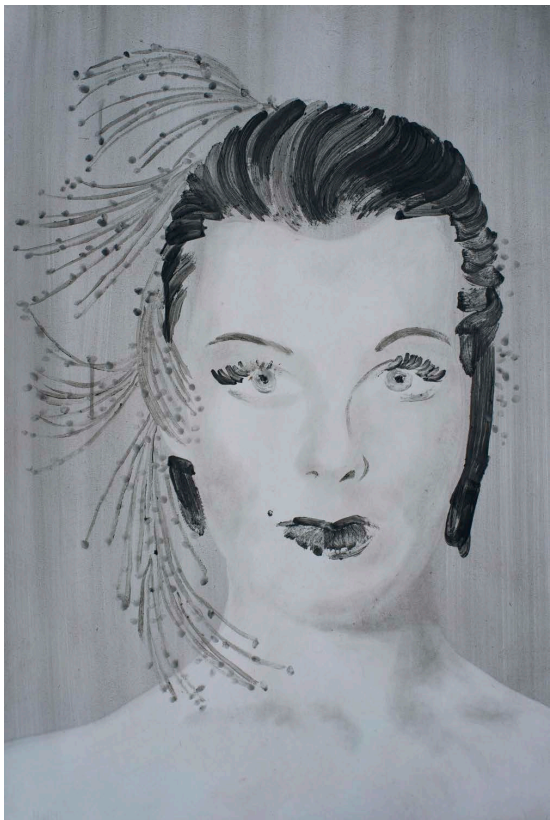


Dana Holst, *The Swing*, 2014.
Oil on canvas, 84" x 60".



Dana Holst, *Hungover*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 15" x 11".

Dana Holst, *Great Expectations*, 2012.
Oil on panel, 16" x 16".
Collection of Brian Stonehocker.



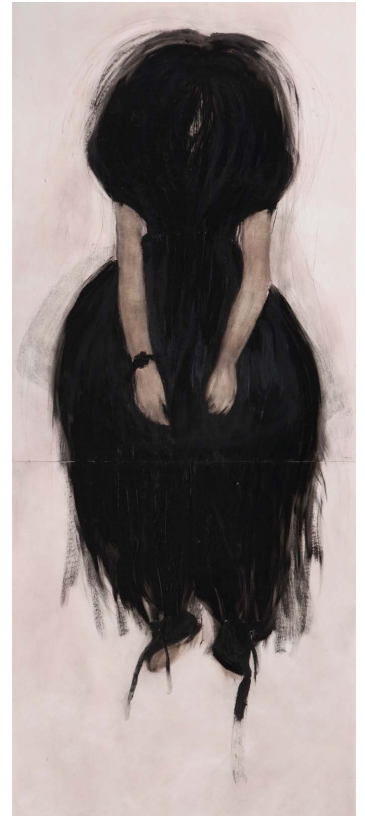
Dana Holst, *My Tiara*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 22" x 15".



Dana Holst, *Frigid*, 2014.
Oil and encaustic on paper, 14" x 14".



Dana Holst, *Study for Man Trap*, 2009.
Oil on paper, 14" x 12".



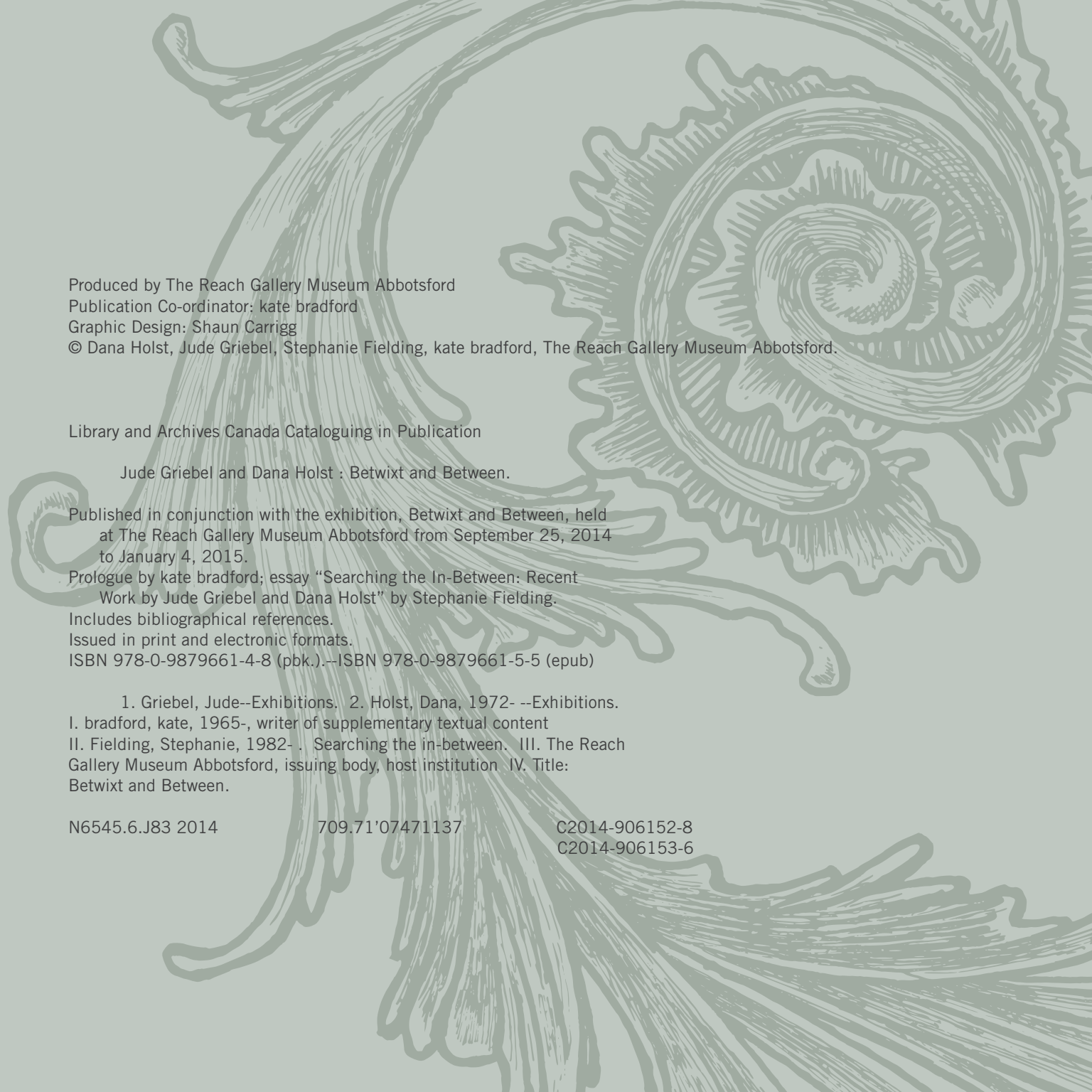
Dana Holst, *Down and Out*, 2009.
Oil on paper, 60" x 22".



Dana Holst, *This Magic Moment*, 2012.
Oil on panel, 16 x 16".
Private Collection.



Dana Holst, *The Swing*, 2014.
Oil on canvas, 84" x 60".



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