



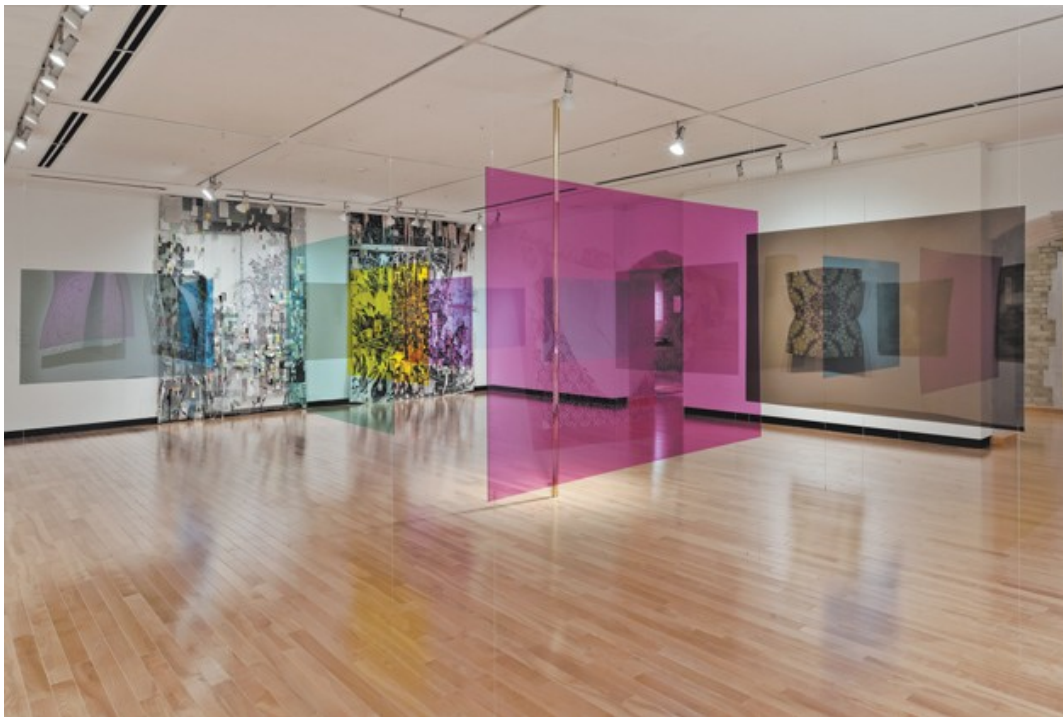
# Decor vs digital

Show probes creation in a new age  
By Fran Schechter



**SCREEN AND DECOR** at Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (7 Hart House), to August 17. 416-978-8398.

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Hanging Plexiglas rectangles re-frame the works at the fine Screen And Décor show.

If the title Screen And Décor makes you think decorative arts, think again. The screens that curator Rosemary Heather is referring to are not Chinese or Victorian, but the interfaces of the digital devices that are our current windows onto the world.

This is not a new media show either. Six Canadian, German and Danish artists, most based in Berlin, employ the vocabulary of historical ornament in conceptual artworks that question the meaning of art-making amidst the current barrage of digital images.

That might sound dry and cerebral, but these explorations of colour, pattern, space and frame have a surprising aesthetic richness that's enhanced by Rodney LaTourelle and Louise Witthöft's innovative exhibition design.

Some artists explore textile patterns and techniques, while others work primarily with photography.

Shannon Bool has a diverse practice that includes prints and canvases incorporating photo-collage, repeat patterns from carpets, figurative and abstract painting in media like oil on silk and batik. Space is nebulous in her murky, swamp-like vistas. (An enigmatic brass pole serves as an example of her sculptural work.)

Kirstine Roepstorff's quilt-sized collages also include landscape photographs with multiple geometrically arranged hanging bits of cloth. Simone Gilges sometimes overlays atmospheric images with diaphanous cloth to theatrical effect or just frames a piece of plain or painted draped fabric.

A lozenge-shaped kaleidoscopic collage of tiny photos of political figures from Sanaz Mazinani's *Frames Of The Visible* series organizes the chaos of the 24-hour news cycle into the geometry of Islamic ornament. Bernhard Kahrmann's black-and-whites include a folded photo depicting a pair of hands folding another photo of another pair of hands folding a page of a book. Meta!

Emily Skensved gives heraldic shields and other banal motifs a kick by her technique of collaging skins of dried acrylic paint onto canvas.

But it's LaTourelle and Witthöft's arrangement of eye-level floating Plexiglas rectangles in subtle colours that makes the show so enjoyable, not only extending the screen concept into the gallery space, but reframing and spicing up the art.