

Art

Time Out New York / Issue 680 : Oct 9–15, 2008

Studio visit

Melissa Brown

The artist gambles on printmaking and the future.

By T.J. Carlin

Your most recently completed series of collages recycles scratched-off lottery tickets. Why that choice of material?

The collages are an experiment in fluctuating value. The individual tickets begin with a face value, somewhere between \$1 and \$30. They provide a speculative value; \$5,000 a week for life is one example. Believe it or not, a losing ticket has value as a tax receipt. I usually acquire the tickets at their tax receipt value from collectors. When the collages are complete, I calculate the total face value of the included tickets. As an artwork, my goal is to double the money that was lost in the purchases of losing tickets. The compositions are graphs of mathematical phenomena and ubiquitous natural geometry.

Printmaking is another approach you use. Tell me how it fits into your work.

Printmaking has taught me to construct images by using a series of efficient layers. I was initially attracted to the scratch tickets since they are a vernacular print with layered potential; they are also very seductive colorful objects. Most often I make woodcuts, which is the most archaic form of printmaking. I enjoy seeing contemporary symbols through the lens of such an outdated medium; I find it aesthetically compelling. The method can also obscure when a print was made. For instance, Capuchin monks could have made my woodcuts.

You're giving a performance on October 24 for the "Other Certainties" exhibition at the New York Center for Art and Media Studies. What's that about?

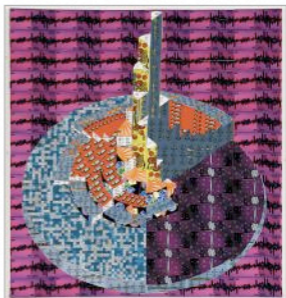
I've designed a deck of cards called the *Tabloid Deck*, where typical tabloid words are assigned to each card. And I use them to predict supermarket tabloid headlines. I'll be demonstrating how it works during the closing night of the show.

Is there something you've never done in your work that you'd like to?

Yes! I would like to host an event in a place like Foxwoods casino. It would feature presentations and performances by artists, lavish original artwork created for the occasion, and it would be open to the public. I think the performances would focus on making odds and sharing gambling secrets. The challenge will be presenting the idea as a win-win opportunity for the casino. In the meantime, I'd like to experiment more with video and animation.



IN IT TO WIN IT The artist makes collages out of lotto tickets, among other chance-related artworks.



Melissa Brown, *Waveforms Ascending in Octaves: \$1684 in used scratch-off tickets*