

PORTRAITURE BEYOND LIKENESS

JO LAURIA



FOREWORD

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Wayne Art Center

JO LAURIA, Guest Curator

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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF

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Front Cover: Kim Simonsson,
Lucky Girl (detail), 2007



Portraiture Beyond Likeness

The intent of this exhibition is to challenge conventional notions of portraiture. The artists selected represent a distinct group who travel in this genre, boldly making their mark in this crowded landscape. They are recognized for their ability to poignantly manipulate the well trodden traditions of the portraiture domain. Through the medium of clay and the sculptural format, the artists reveal the human condition and explore the multiple personality traits that comprise identity. Fabricating portrait heads, full-scale figures, anatomical fragments, and disconnected components of the human body, these artists create individualized portraits that animate attributes, emotions, attitudes, and alter egos.

Collectively, these "portraitists" employ methods of representation as diverse as hyperrealism and symbolic abstraction. Their evocative portrayals range from the heroic to the grotesque, from the actual to the mythological; they go beneath the skin, exposing the raw nerves and emotional texture of personal psychologies, inner fantasies, and private fears. Using visage borrowed from human, mineral, or animal, these portraits trade classical neutrality for spectacle and render both individual identities and universal archetypes.

Common themes and cultural currents are revealed in this corpus of work. Most notable among them are the role of hair and costume in defining identity; historical references to classical sculpture and popular figurines; and the proliferation of hybridized forms--human and animal--that are equal parts magic and menace. It is clear from this assembled group of sculptures that all the artists have strong convictions they feel compelled to convey through the malleable material of clay. Ultimately, their realized portraits, bracketed by the gallery walls in which they are exhibited, act like permeable membranes that absorb and leak meaning depending on the context and the object to viewer relationship. In sum, these profound, commanding sculptures present portraiture beyond likeness, celebrating the embrace of intention, interpretation, and disclosure.

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March 2010

Esther Shimazu, *Do As I Say, Not As I Do*, 2007. Stoneware, porcelain, 11.25h x 8w x 9.5d inches.













































