

## Face Off Exhibition Statement

Traditionally, portraiture has been viewed as an artistic representation of a person, focusing on the face and its expression. By offering the soap box to more idiosyncratic forms, FACE OFF expands on this historical notion. Sections of diary, intimate views of personal space, and the topography of the body take the floor in this contemporary survey of portraiture.

Wikipedia states the intent of portraiture as “to display the likeness, personality, and even the mood of the person.” This statement is the foundation of contemporary portraiture, which has learned to circumvent, bend, and reinterpret the historical connection between the portrait and the face.

The portraiture of Scott Inskip is a natural progression from the historical model. Utilizing both the face and the figure, his living room photographs focus not only on the physical characteristics of a person, but also utilize the living spaces that they have spent years creating to frame their individual. This method of portraiture is similar to Harris Johnson’s paintings. While the figure is less apparent or nonexistent, the creation of a portrait through an individual’s belongings and lifestyle is still a prominent theme.

This emphasis on objects is a running theme within FACE OFF, meandering into the paintings of Justin Will and the collages of Adrienne Slane. Will’s playful, constructed characters are defined as much by his style of painting as by their actions and the objects that they are interacting with. The joy that his characters have from the various food and drink they are entangled with speaks volumes about them as individuals. They love the little things in life, and their palates produce happiness. What a wonderful world to live in.

In a completely different manner, Slane’s compiled images of objects from the natural world into iconographic collages show a love for nature and seem to draw on the mysticism that nature has in the present day world. Her work also varies from most of the show in that they are private. Whether what a portrait shows you is factual or idealized, the work acts as a window into the life and world of its subject. Adrienne’s work acts as a heavily clouded window, you see get a vague idea of what is happening on the other side, but the details are left to careful examination or the imagination.

The personal is also a strong theme in Nikki Wood’s *Skull and Corpse* and Micaidez’s *Joquian and Melissa*. Both images depict a couple; one member stoic in their disposition while the other is in a more emotional state. This depiction of two characters and the interplay between them alludes to the varying ways of looking at a person, how their relationships both change them, and their context.

Erica Hoosic’s photographs are a different facet to this use of objects. These portraits are incidental, in that they are taken as documentation of her jewelry. Her work takes environments from the body’s landscapes that are often considered taboo, or disgusting and undermines the feeling by creating something beautiful to be worn on

the body. While the portrait is not the main purpose of each photograph, the ideologies that define her work come through in the images.

Portraits do not need to include the figure, or any other figurative element. Dave Shonk's silkscreened prints take a different approach to the portrayal of someone. Rather than focusing on their external possessions, he looks inside of people's darker emotions, bringing out inner dialogues, brutal fantasies, and diary-like confessions of serial killers.

Rachel Yurkovich's interactive sculpture, *Second Skin*, shows a different face, literally. Participants blur their own features through a mask of latex, forming partially recognized portraits that blur out the face and focus on form. Like a sculpted figure that has been weathered away by the elements, only traces of the features remain.

This concept of blurring out identity is also seen in the work of Robin Michelle Miller. Creating minute scaled paintings from images on google earth and from the photographs in her acquaintances facebook albums, Miller paints portraits that are almost completely unrecognizable as a specific person. Their voyeuristic nature highlights the impersonality of modern convenience and technologies.

FACE OFF is a survey of contemporary portraits that don't necessarily adhere to the conventional and historical standards of portraiture. Utilizing a broad range of medium, techniques and concept, portraiture today challenges the purpose, style, and reasoning behind the classical portraits of the court painters and documentary photographers. It is a means of exploring real, imagined and constructed identity through a focus on material possessions, relationships, the body's form and inner dialogue. - FORUM artspace 2013

This exhibition was on view February 15th - March 15th 2013 at FORUM artspace, Cleveland Ohio.

Curated by : Karl Anderson, Michael Abarca, Christina Day, Paul Woznicki