

CURATING THE COLLECTION: REBECCA ROY O'GORMAN

Clown Head, White Clown, Moon-White Mime,
Angel of Death, Holy Shroud

Mary Augustine Gallery

November 20, 2012 to December 15, 2012

Faces are fluid kaleidoscopes, absorbing and reacting to environments and affect. The face, as a coded and sometimes over-determined signifier of the body, holds the gaze of others and conveys not only vulnerability, but also agency. This exhibition, *Clown Head, White Clown, Moon-White Mime, Angel of Death, Holy Shroud*, considers the face as a site of recognition, communication, and obfuscation. The works in this exhibition interrogate the face and its function as an index of identity. Using Deleuze + Guattari's concept of the face as a type of material production, the works in this exhibition challenge the idea of the face as a hereditary or pre-determined given.

Theorists Deleuze and Guattari's, essay "Year Zero: Faciality" from their book *One Thousand Plateaus*, challenges the idea that the face is the primary marker of identity. Instead they name the face as the intersection of subjectification and signification. The image of the western white male, taken from European depictions of Christ, positions the face as an aesthetic object and thus, a projection of imagination and fantasy. Deleuze and Guattari name the process of facialization as a mandate for the subject to assume a specific face.

In Ron Terada's photograph *Maiko #1*, (2008) the figure confronts the viewer with her stare. Her painted face simultaneously emphasizes and disguises her own whiteness by performing the role of a geisha. In this form of racial cross-dressing, her over-determined whiteness makes visible the male fantasy of the Asian woman.

The figure of the magician is literally erased in Will Rogan's *Silencer #17*, (2010). This removal produces a figurative white void in the image, allowing for both an intensified absence of the body, and a heightened visibility through the contrast the form creates with the blue background. This simultaneous seeing and obscuring of the body produces a space for imagination and possibility.

David Joseph Martinez's Carrera marble sculpture *A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love or Where You Goin' With That Gun in Your Hand*, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton Discuss the Relationship Between Expressionism and Social Realism in Hitler's Paintings, (2005) outlines the silhouettes of Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. As a material, white marble highlights their historical presence and import, yet emphasizes racial binaries. The sculptures stand as a static and blank slate to be inscribed by our historical projections.

Masks have the ability to imitate, amuse, or terrify. But they can also provide a protective disguise. Paul McCarthy's 2010 print, *Mickey Mouse*, depicts an anonymous person costumed as the famous character. The mouse visage operates as a screen onto which the viewer can project a predetermined identity or narrative, preventing access to the face while allowing the suspension of fantasy. The mask then also allows the figure to strategically perform a familiar caricature, while concurrently protecting or concealing something more precarious.

Through these different encounters with the altered face, the covered face, the non-face, and the mask, the remaining collective visage becomes the site of a discursive and performed self. When subjectivity presents itself on the face in this way, recognition holds the possibility for an infinite number of new worlds.

Clown Head, White Clown, Moon-White Mime, Angel of Death, Holy Shroud was curated by Rebecca Roy O'Gorman.

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