

ULTERIOR

Douglas Goldberg

Latency

Goldberg's **Portrait** series riffs on the sculpted motif of a frame draped in fabric. Each work represents a different moment in the artist's life, crystallized in objects both foreign and intimate. There is a sense of disavowal in the shrouded forms—as if the past were inaccessible and opaque, a carrier of fear. Perhaps it is not disavowal so much as alienation, the younger self unrecognizable to the body that houses these experiences and encounters. And yet, the frame's implied form remains uniform throughout the sequence, with only the nature and hue of the marble "fabric" varying across works. The *Portraits* oscillate between a refusal to confront the past and the impulse to protect one's most vulnerable forms, to cover them like furniture in a shuttered home, preserved and ossified.

Portrait at a Tender Age is carved from a fleshy pink marble. Striations resembling veins or bruises map a meandering trajectory of subcutaneous contusions imprinted on its vulnerable surface. One corner appears stained red as if gently dipped in blood—ossified, indexing the harms experienced by the ingénue, a fear that is learned. Here, the "shroud" illustrates its wounds even as the body underneath remains cloaked.

The *Portraits* oscillate between desire and fear. They invoke an almost unbearable longing: see me, but don't look; yank the curtains back, rip off the Band-aid; let me shelter here in the dark. **Portrait, Static** sits with this ambivalence, a plane of banded gray. The marble resembles a static-filled screen or a motion blur. There is no signal at play here, only noise, a denial of coherence which provides its own refuge. And yet—what truth is being obscured in the process?

By contrast, **Portrait with Neurons Firing** exhibits a sprawling network of veins and diffuse, rusty hues. It is as if the exposed flesh of *Portrait at a Tender Age* has oxidized, streaked now with vibrancy and activity. Pure flesh vivified by interface with a larger world, indeterminacies resolving and expanding.

The series' final work, **Portrait, Traveling by Night** turns to sobriety. The fuzzy indeterminacy of *Portrait, Static* appears resolved in a matte black finish. Fossils preserved in the marble offer a subtle punctuation, a coda to a journey reaching an inexorable conclusion. The object of avoidance has remained and now emerges like a single point of light in the night sky: something that was there all along, yet visible only amidst the evacuation of other stimuli.

Like the spindle on which Sleeping Beauty pricked her finger, **Spike** manifests a threat, the reverse of the inexorable pull alluded to in *Portrait, Traveling by Night*—ominous dark as opposed to velvety night. The draped "fabric" prophylactic does little to mitigate its sharpened point. Despite the distance created by time's passing, the shape of fear remains articulate. The black marble echoes a previous work, *Rotisserie Forks (Hell)* (2015), which references instruments of torture. Even as queer liberation offers itself on the horizon, a pillar of violence rises as if in consequence, perversely erect. And yet there is a certain tenderness to the way in which Goldberg chooses not to depict the spike's point piercing the fabric entirely, whether some gesture of subliminal protection, or an indication that this fear, too, originates from within. In this way, *Spike* also locates desire within the threat of harm, pleasure in pain. What might it feel like, to test the point of the spike? How deep will it penetrate the vulnerable flesh? The upward-looking spike elevates and martyrs, as if in defiance of a heavenly mandate.

The Kiss navigates queer visibility, blurring the distinction between hidden object and the shroud itself, both carved from a single body of bone-hued Turkish marble. Goldberg found inspiration in a 1988 Gran Fury poster

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depicting two young men kissing, captioned “READ MY LIPS.” The two shrouded skulls of *The Kiss* have no lips to read—a nod to anonymous desire, but also to a mortality that, at the time, appeared symptomatic of homosexuality. Despite the skulls’ barely-articulate features, they persist as a warning, a threat that survives the passage of time. Yet the element of danger infuses this tableau with its own seductiveness, the persistence of desire even in the face of death.