

For Immediate Release

Faces/Places/Traces

13 July - 17 August 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 13, 5-8pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present ***Faces/Places/Traces*** featuring three bodies of work that focus on portraiture, location, repurpose and history. The exhibition features the work of twenty-one of our gallery artists including **Barry Anderson, John Bankston, Carolyn Castaño, Colin Doherty, Doug Hall, Cynthia Ona Innis, John Jurayj, Hung Liu, Brendan Lott, Dean Monogenis, Rachael Neubauer, Maria E. Piñeres, Robb Putnam, Vojislav Radovanović, Lezley Saar, Nike Schröder, Katherine Sherwood, Lisa Solomon, Nathan Vincent, Jil Weinstock** and **Dana Weiser**. The show includes a variety of mediums and techniques such as oil and acrylic painting, ceramic sculpture, photography, embroidery, cast rubber and textiles.

The first group of works represent the Faces portion of the exhibition and is presented in Galleries 1 and 2. Lezley Saar's large portrait entitled *Are You That Somebody?* is named after the Aaliyah song from the 90s and is part of the *Color Me Bad* series. Influenced by 18th century New Spain Casta paintings, the portrait of the young woman reveals her bi-racial features with her light-skin complexion, hazel eyes and whitish blond afro hair, evidence of her status to achieve higher economic and class division. Similarly, identity takes the lead in Carolyn Castaño's work with her featured portrait, *Tropical Baby (Shirley)*. The figure portrays Castaño's early iconic style of pale white skin outlined in black set within a dark geometric pattern and yellow floral motives. Shirley stares at the viewer with a sense of flirtation showing off her coiffed hairdo made of black glitter and different-sized round mirrors. Hung Liu's portrait of two children is a depiction from a photograph taken in secret by Liu during her enforced time spent living in the countryside among peasant families during the Maoist Cultural Revolution. The image depicts the playful expressions of joy experienced by youth unaware of their demise. Their relationship appears close like siblings and their red scarves are an indication that they are students in a school. John Bankston's painting, *Safe* depicts a more animated figure affectionately cuddling within the embrace of a lion. The protagonist leans on the lion with complete confidence in contrast to the actual fear he would have in a real-life scenario. Colin Doherty's portrait, *Skye* reveals a young woman casually lying on a sofa fully relaxed. She appears to have just come in from work or an activity with her black shirt loosely tucked into her jeans, knees bent with her black boot pressed against the coffee table. In contrast to the spontaneity of Doherty's work, two constructed self-portraits by Dana Weiser raise questions about her experience as an Asian American and a Korean adoptee. Entitled *Enacting My Koreanness, (self-portrait performance)* each image shows Weiser with her face painted replicating different versions of traditional Korean folk masks assembled from kitschy items sold at tourist souvenir shops in Koreatown. Weiser questions the ways in which her identity can create a perceived culture by altering temporality and a native Korean narrative.

A selection of smaller figurative works are displayed in Gallery 1 that examine issues of identity and relationships. Lisa Solomon's self-portraits depict different versions of herself dressed in traditional garb from the countries that she has been misidentified as her cultural heritage. The works are done in layers with the portraits painted on the bottom page and different clothing and accessories pinned on the top surfaces to create a sculptural presence. Similar in style, a self-portrait diptych painting by Nike Schröder is included with simple areas of paint on raw linen to create each face and an overlay of nylon with stitched thread used to outline each figure. Portraiture takes the lead in Maria E. Piñeres's work with her portrayals of dear friends, Marcel and Charles done in embroidery, her signature medium. Both figures pose with opposite legs crossed over their knees and gesturing with one hand. Early portraits by Katherine Sherwood depict her versions of eager and slightly deranged *Insurance Salesmen* rendered in black and white exploring issues of masculinity and capitalism. The portraits were done over 40 years ago and include one female subject. An early portrait from the *Madwoman in the Attic* series by Lezley Saar is included with this group delving into the complexities of mental illness and limited options of treatment in Victorian times. The final image in this grouping is a photograph from Brendan Lott's series, *Safer at Home* and captures a sweet moment of a couple with the woman affectionately moving her face towards her partner with warm gesture. Lott continues to shoot images from his DTLA loft of his neighbors engaged in everyday life during and post pandemic lockdown.

The second subject of our exhibition explores Place with artworks depicting rural and urban landscape and interior architecture in Gallery 3. Doug Hall's monumental two-panel photograph of *Teatro Comunale, Ferrara* in Italy is part of a series from the early aughts that explored architecture and the effective use of public space. His approach is "cinematic" in that instead of time being laid out sequentially it is compressed into a single image creating the illusion of a moment in time through the early tools of digital manipulation. Interior space and digital technology take shape in Barry Anderson's prints from his series, *Fragments of Space* which are printed in odd shapes and mounted on sintra-board. Anderson composed digital renderings of arbitrary, nonfunctional architectural spaces, envisioning oblique, fleeting moments of both confinement and liberation. The images are fully realized using 3D modeling software and are not based on any existing photographs or real spaces. Colin Doherty's painting, *Annabelle Gives a Rose Crystal and Plant* depicts a playful image of a large plant and crystal sitting on a surface in front of a window looking out on the abstract landscape. In comparison, the relationship between architecture and landscape is obvious in Dean Monogenis's painting with Modernist architecture placed in harmony with the rocky terrain. Both a surrealist architectural model and a flat style contemporary house exist in the landscape commenting on the concepts behind urban and suburban development and its effects on the environment. These issues carry over into Carolyn Castaño's painting, *Volcan Santa Isabel* which show the effects of global warming on various glaciers in Colombia, Castaño's parents home county. The mountain is depicted behind layers of collaged watercolors of tropical foliage and bird life with added appliqués. Cynthia Ona Innis uses place as her main subject and interprets specific locations into abstract sceneries that are made from a process of poured pigments, bleached surfaces, stitched fabrics and collage. The painting, *Old Faithful* is an interpretation of the actual geyser taken from a series of works referencing Yellowstone Park and includes an obvious horizon line with poured washy pigments taking the form of the rising steam and vapors. In contrast, a small colorful painting by John Jurayj includes imagery of urban destruction in Beirut during the Lebanese civil war. Using oil on canvas, he develops surfaces that at first appear abstract but then resolve into scenes of bombed out buildings set within a royal blue background and lush landscape.

The final group of works represents the Traces portion in Gallery 4 with works referencing personal experience, history and technique. Katherine Sherwood creates modern versions of still-life paintings from important European female artists from the 17th century. Her paintings are done on the backsides of recycled art history reproductions and include areas of her brain scans printed on rice paper and cleverly collaged into the floral arrangements. Using historical images taken from the archives of American photographer, Dorothea Lange, Hung Liu paints her versions capturing the humanistic and emotive moments of life through her unique application of pigments. Lezley Saar sets her subjects within the Victorian era in her *Gender Renaissance* series using imaginary motifs and environs to explore issues of trans subjects based on her observations of her son's gender transition. Working from his memories growing up during the Yugoslav Conflict in Serbia, Vojislav Radovanović re-envision a normal childhood using painted iconography of popular American subjects like Godzilla and Star Wars to portray a reinvented vision of his past. He often uses actual toys collected from his partner's life treasures once played with as a boy growing up in the Midwest. Likewise, Nathan Vincent explores his childhood by creating enlarged versions of plastic toy soldiers that he cherished in his youth. Both a green and tan version are included in our exhibition and are knitted by hand over hard foam structures. Vincent explores gender norms working with the traditionally female craft of knit and crochet, a skill he learned from his mother after great hesitation. Jil Weinstock uses both personal and found objects to create artworks that tell a history of past life experience. She places the objects in liquid polyurethane which cures into rubber with the imbedded forms beneath the surface. Included in our show is a lightbox entitled *Mrs. J. Horwitz Crafting Drawer* which is part of an earlier series of works displaying random collectibles found at estate sales. Robb Putnam also collects materials, mostly different fabrics and plastics to shape his animal forms. Our show includes one of his bunnies which is hand-stitched working from an inner core and shaped with wire infrastructure for the gesture of the limbs. Lastly, intimate scratch drawings by Dana Weiser loosely mimic traditional Korean inlay pearl and lacquer artwork by utilizing black coated paper and scratching into the surface to reveal the holographic under layer. The imagery depicts aspects of her adaptive life and her newer situation of compromised health providing hope and positive gestures.

Please join us for our summer opening on July 13 or stop by before the close of the show on August 17.