

Julian Opie

October 26, 2013 - December 7, 2013

Julian Opie's latest exhibition with Barbara Krakow Gallery succinctly engages issues of time, space and place. The new works are situated in the three spaces of the gallery, with each location giving the works opportunities for specific juxtapositions.

In the left gallery, a large vinyl wall mural of tree trunks has a dynamic relationship to scale. One can see it as the stems of flowers viewed at a large scale or perhaps large trees observed from a distance. The mural provides the opportunity for questioning of perspective, scale, size and location. Situated in front of this mural is an over-life-size (75 inches / 192 centimeters tall) bust of a young boy named Daniel. Daniel appears much younger than an adult, but wears a white dress shirt and tie and now commands space, on account of his size, like no child could. Opie created the sculpture by having a three dimensional scan made of his subject and then he had this scan cast in resin. He proceeded to hand paint it, but instead of painting with minute detail, the artist used his specific yet simplified swaths of color. Normally, he uses this technique to create the impression of three dimensions on a two dimensional surface, but this time, it's twisted. The object is already three dimensions, and so the 'shading' gives the sculpture a sense of expressionistic emotion through the high contrast, yet the subject's expression is one of stoicism. Stoic and expressionist, life-like and surreal, digital and handmade, large and small. And this is just the first space.

In the right gallery, a group of life-size busts, made with the same technique as the large bust of Daniel, rest on plinths so as to stand at the approximate heights of their subjects. The works are situated with space between them, yet by no other art being in the space, the busts become a group of sorts. If one walks among them, there is the sense of both looking at art and also intruding in an occupied space. This duality is furthered by the fact that most of the subjects of these busts originated in sittings arranged with Opie as commissions, yet he, having completed the commissioned works, continued to work with his subjects on his own accord. The busts, accurate in terms of form, have similar stylized areas of color as the large Daniel. The busts are traditional in form but are also surrogates for ancient busts (which, for most people, are

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primarily known through two dimensional images).

The largest gallery consists of four stone mosaic portraits, made by Opie in collaboration with a Roman mosaicist, flanked by digital portraits presented on custom built LCD screens. When one looks at the mosaics, one sees clearly that the subjects are contemporary people, yet the technique is age old. The digital portraits are slightly smaller and are seemingly motionless images, thus based in traditional portraiture. However, every so often a small amount of movement occurs, making a viewer understand the contemporary nature of the work. To juxtapose works in these two media provides the central gesture in the new body of work that engages viewers in asking questions of time, space and place, all through rendering images of the modern world in different materials, on different scales and in different pairings.

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