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ID

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Gettysburg College

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ID

Description

The five sculptors in ID challenge the conventions of representational self-portraiture. In their selective and often abstract use of figuration, these artists engage the identification of self as it is situated socially and institutionally—one's "I.D."—as well as the psychoanalytic dimensions of the "id."

The exhibition's title introduces a kind of paradoxical conflict between public identification, found in various bureaucratic forms of I.D. (passports, drivers' licenses, and Social Security numbers, for example), and the id, a Freudian classification for the most basic and unconscious physical drives (sex, food, aggression).

All of these artists respond to the seeming incongruities of I.D. and id by exhibiting subtle awareness of the complicated construction of identity. Abandoning the tradition of simply mirroring one's outward appearance, they not only reconsider what it means to represent oneself as an art object, but also question the literal and figurative boundaries of the human form in sculpture. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

self-portraiture, public identification, id, identity, Anthony Cervino, Jason Ferguson, Ronald Gonzalez, Melissa Ichiuji, Rob Neilson

Disciplines

Art and Design

Publisher

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Comments

ID was on exhibition at Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College, August 29 - September 20, 2008.

ANTHONY CERVINO

JASON FERGUSON

RONALD GONZALEZ

MELISSA ICHUJI

ROB NEILSON

IID

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RONALD GONZALEZ

Ronald Gonzalez's sculptures show the psychoanalytic concepts of loss and trauma. His self-portraits only briefly evoke Gonzalez's external form; instead the focus is on conveying his emotional occupation with tragedy and mortality. A modern-day *memento mori*, Gonzalez's representation of his body would seem to both prefigure and remember his own death.

In apparent opposition to Gonzalez's mortality plays, Jason Ferguson removes the emotional context of self by fastidiously calculating the exact volume of his body and presenting an assemblage of objects equal to that volume. Ferguson appears to have eliminated a corporeal presence, but the constituent objects he offers in his stead evoke intense bodily labor. Handheld tools, a tool caddy, and a sawhorse, for example, evoke not just a human figure, but one engaged in focused, repetitive tasks of manual construction.



JASON FERGUSON

Repetition of form, as well as the allusion to the repetitive acts of both mechanical and manual assembly, are both fundamental to Anthony Cervino's sculpture. Rather than representing his body singularly, he playfully borrows the imagery of mass-produced toys to question one's sense of self as a unique entity. Despite the almost comical nature of his work, Cervino methodically and duplicitously analyzes how a capitalist society's inherent industrialization leads to a commonality of experience dictated by the mass production of ready-made goods.

Cervino's self-portraits appear to suppress the artist's personal presence through their commercial aesthetic. But closer scrutiny of the objects reveals slight flaws and discrepancies, allowing the sculptures to provide a broader analogy for the human experience: one made apparent in its difference from and sameness to others.



ANTHONY CERVINO



ROB NEILSON

Rob Neilson also merges his representation of self—a cast of his face—with an iconic object or persona, such as a yellow “smiley” face or John F. Kennedy. Altering these recognizable forms provides a puckish examination of the nature of identity in a consumerist and capitalist society. Both he and Cervino ask how one can preserve a unique identity—or even create a unique art object—in the face of mass-produced and mass-consumed culture.



MELISSA ICHIJIJI

Melissa Ichijui returns, like Gonzalez, to the fundamental psychoanalytic issues of the id and ego. Her doll-like bodies in *Forgotten Girl*, for example, play out the “mirror stage”: A roughly sewn and stuffed figure stares at a veined, bruised, and seemingly older version of itself. The difference between the two underlines the varied perceptions of one’s own sense of ego. Ichijui reminds the viewer that the notion of a “real” self, however illusory, is central to understanding the complicated nature of identity.

In this exhibition, the five sculptors explore both how a sculpture must become more than an object to achieve its status of a work of art, as well as how an object can convey a revealing examination of the self. The differences between object and subject merge in the form of a self-portrait as each artist considers his or her role as a corporeal, mortal, and artistic being. The resulting art objects are not bound by these physical restraints, but serve instead as symbols of the anxiety, labor, and individuality of one’s amorphous *ID*.

Shannon Egan, Ph.D.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Ronald Gonzalez | <i>Self-Portrait Burying Dead Cat</i> cast and sandblaster plaster, graphite, dried pigment, varnish, rust over welded steel 2002 |
| Jason Ferguson | <i>Volume Study</i> (detail) |
| Anthony Cervino | <i>Self-Portrait as a Craft Object</i> cast bronze and paint 2005 |
| Rob Neilson | <i>Self-Portrait by Switching Defining Facial Characteristics</i> Hydrocal, ceramic, wood, Formica, paint 2005 |
| Melissa Ichijui | <i>Forgotten girl</i> nylon stockings, cotton batting, thread, wire, latex, human hair, satin, wood 2006 |

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While there is appeal in referring to the self as a unique entity, I am fascinated with the strengths of sameness and commonality. The self-portraits I make dilute my sense of uniqueness through the production of multiples. Borrowing from a mass-made aesthetic, I compound this thinned sense of identity with instructions for further producing the figure—alluding to infinite numbers of ‘Cervino self-portraits.’ It has been my experience that, when presented with overwhelming sameness, viewers discern the minutest difference. A chipped surface, a poorly rendered eyebrow or any marker of difference then defines who ‘I’ am.”





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I am interested in creating an accurate, perhaps even scientific or mathematical, depiction of identity that is solely based on material existence. How can the “self” be isolated as unique through means that exist beyond representation or metaphor? In this work I have utilized scientific protocol, medical procedures, and the collection and analysis of measurable data to create a definable link between the tangible and myself.”



The art of sculpture is endlessly nourished by the desperation and doubt of the artist confronting the task of addressing the treatment of the body as a subject. These self-portraits are part of an ongoing series of works that place single and grouped 'selves' into tragic circumstances related to loss and fragility, with the theme of death moving in where life once was."

Ronald Gonzalez | *Self-Portrait with Starfish: The Sea (detail)* | cast plaster, sand, glue, starfish, wire | 2002





I make figurative sculptures that are reminiscent of dolls. They are personifications of internal struggles that define the human condition. I draw upon my background as a dancer and actor to animate the body in ways that reveal the subtext of the figures. Each work begins with a personal association and then expands to address a more universal theme often having to do with fantasies relating to power, sexual awakening, repressed anger and violence, and feelings of loss and mortality. My figures often appear to be at once infantile and aging, both disconnected and active. They are struggling to make sense of the world and the conflicting messages found within it."

“

The process of becoming self-conscious (in its most literal sense) is at the core of my art. I strive to create objects that refer to the self and the body in a way that forces one to address their own materiality and spatial existence, filtered through prevailing cultural influences.”

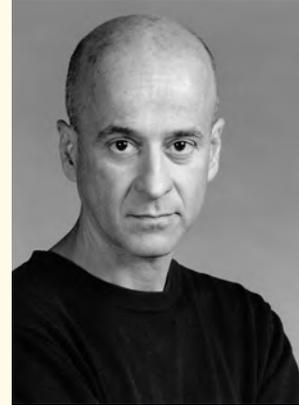


**ANTHONY CERVINO**

Cervino has been exhibiting in the mid-Atlantic for the past decade. He received his MFA from Towson University and is assistant professor of sculpture at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

**JASON FERGUSON**

An assistant professor of art and design at University of Idaho, Ferguson holds a MFA in sculpture from the University of Delaware. Ferguson has shown his work at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia and the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, among other venues.

**RONALD GONZALEZ**

Ronald Gonzalez lives and works in his native Binghamton, New York, where he is a professor of sculpture at Binghamton University. He has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and is represented in both private and public collections.

**MELISSA ICHIJI**

Melissa Ichiuji holds a BFA from the Corcoran College of Art and Design and is represented by Irvine Contemporary in Washington, D.C.

**ROB NEILSON**

Rob Neilson is an assistant professor of sculpture at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. He received his MFA in sculpture from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and holds a BFA from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

ID

August 29 – September 20, 2008

Gallery Talk:

Thursday, September 4, noon

Reception:

Thursday, September 4, 5 – 7 pm

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday – Saturday 10 – 4

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