Dan Dudrow
Faux Portraits

Wednesday, December 3, 2014—Sunday, January 11, 2015

Maryland Institute College of Art
Bunting Center: Pinkard Gallery

RECEPTION: Friday, December 5, 5-7pm

Faux Portrait #12

Faux Portrait #5

TWO YEARS AGO I COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED
painting these pictures. For most of my life as a painter,
I've been an abstractionist—most recently culminating
in a one-person show at Stevenson University in
January 2013 called *Ercolano Series*. I still consider
myself an abstractionist in goals and strategy, but after
Ercolano seemed to have run its course, I felt I needed
something new to work with. I had not yet hit on the
idea of using the human figure as "available form."

In the fall of 2013, my wife and I were visiting the
painter Frank Rivera and his wife near Princeton, New
Jersey. At one point Frank took us to Grounds for
Sculpture, a large art park apparently modeled after
Storm King in upper New York State. There we saw
a wonderful, intimate show by the sculptor Jonathan
Shahn (who once taught classes at MICA). The pieces
were small wooden heads, carved carefully and yet
informally. Frank is a friend of the artist, who spent
a couple of hours walking us through the show and
talking about the pieces, which were all developed

Faux Portrait #19

from memory and/or imagination. It was soon after this experience that I developed the idea of painting heads directly from imagination without any form of reference. I wanted to keep a distance from realism but still have some vision of human form available to me, with a full range of color—which has always been central to my work whether figurative or abstract. This ruled out chiaroscuro in favor of the more shallow-space traditions ranging from Persian and Byzantine up through Piero della Francesca and numerous others all the way into 20th-century modernism.

Unlike Jonathan's heads, which tend to be classically, iconically mute, mine began early on to assert quirky identities with implied back stories, and I made the decision to go with it. None of the people depicted here has ever existed in real life, though some may spark a sense of recognition in the viewer, just as they did in me while I was inventing them. If there are stories in these pictures, they are stories that arose in the telling without planning or purpose. They are what they are— and whatever you choose to make of them.

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