

JIM SINGELIS: BEING, THE STORY

The paintings of James Singelis pursue their subject with a weathering intensity and kaleidoscopic imagination. Singelis has looked all around the world and settled on the one subject most worthy of expressive deconstruction: his own appearance. If art is about being creatively present, then what better medium than the surface of the artist's own face? Why fiddle with a world of constructed appearances when what needs affixing is the great mystery of self-identity? Each painting in Singelis' ongoing series is a progressive answer to each of these questions. It takes a simple yet universal theme and runs with it, making the face of the artist a world entire.

Picture a room filled with close-up portraits, seemingly of the same person, though each looking and feeling disparately different from the others. One feels a strong presence in them, a psychological intensity that requires a viewer's attention, as license to force a projected submission, like icons in a grotto, or statuettes or cenotaphs in a graveyard. There's something ancient in their eyes, the recollection of cultural memory that is eons old. To encounter this collective of visages is to feel the weight of their memory, and to falter under their expectation. Yet to take them one by one, to encounter each portrait and attend to it esthetically and formally in terms of its idiosyncratic nature, this then can become a productive experience with a broad range of context.

Looking at the many faces that comprise the creative context of Singelis' output, one is hard-pressed to imagine how they all leap from the reflection of one man's face. Yet this is in fact the absolute truth. His oeuvre's complexity strikes at the commonplace notion that a man is his features, and those features are set, as if in stone. That he is a "type" of person when in fact he is all men. Seeing all these images together is like walking through a house of mirrors, for what we see in him we also see in ourselves: impassiveness, fear, boredom, patience, fragility, saintliness, sadness, the bubbling up of an internal chaos, and so much more. Jim Singelis true subject is being, in and of itself, and his own being as the prime example. His face is an incubator for human emotion and its innate interiority. His faces are not the nameless crowd but are each characters in their own right, each reaching for a visual note of unique vibration. This symphony of self-expression is one that forever imbues us with its primal power. It's one we'll want to hear over and over again as it echoes the secrets of creation.