

Moray Hillary: *Pre-New Reflective* **Curated by Alison Pierz**

Pre-New Reflective represents the second collaboration between Glasgow-based painter Moray Hillary and New York curator Alison Pierz at Manhattan's Galerie Protégé. Hillary's most recent project, *Instability Inc.*, consisted of paintings on vintage automotive wing mirrors, each leaving a fragment of the mirror surface visible, thus bringing the viewer into the work and offering a moment of interactive reflection. The works in *Pre-New Reflective* are an extension of these. Painted on vintage record vinyl, they are literally "records" of faces. These portraits are incomplete, yet still recognizable as the individuals they represent.

Hillary's inspiration blends his mature painting style, clearly influenced by the seventeenth century Dutch masters, with traditional and contemporary Eastern concepts of face and self-identity. This series is specifically influenced by the writings of Stella Ting-Tromey on Face Negotiation Theory. Tromey's theory posits "face" or self-image as a universal phenomenon that pervades across cultures. In conflicts one's face is threatened and must therefore be restored. This is referred to as "face work". The artist himself relates to having different faces for different circumstances and encounters within any given day, as Tromey writes, "A face-threatening episode is an identity expectancy violation episode." One must restore the threatened identity.

Author Ruth Ozeki's memoir, *The Face, A Time Code*, was another strong influence on the project. These writings are observations made after staring into a mirror for the duration of three hours. Ozeki asks the question, "What is your original face." She was inspired by the Zen concept, "What did your face look like before you were born?" Ozeki, through her personal investigations and immersive observations puts forward the concept that identity is fluid and that it exists on a spectrum. Hillary explains that, "it is impinged upon us all to align ourselves with the hegemony."

In his artist statement he writes, "*Pre-New Reflective* is a renewed appraisal for me, at notions of identity through the face, or in these paintings, the lack of it. I would like to think that although the painted 'portraits', while being extinguished of any recognizable features, are in some way akin to notions of the Japanese Ko-omote, Noh mask which have specific carved sections that depict a precise set of complexities. There is also a reference to the Japanese term wabi-sabi, a key element of Japanese aesthetics, which describes the beauty of things that are imperfect, impermanent and incomplete. Like the masks, it was my intention to somehow convey a subtle range of emotions. In this way too, I hope that the paintings although 'featureless' are successful in expressing an essence of their personalities, all of whom I know to a greater or lesser degree."

Pre-New Reflective is Moray Hillary's second solo exhibition at Galerie Protégé and Ms. Pierz's fourth project with the gallery.