

ARTIST STATEMENT
STAN WELSH
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These larger- than- life portrait heads belong to a centuries- old tradition of portraiture in Western art. Like many painters and sculptors who have come before me and evolved the tradition, I use portraiture as a visual lexicon to evoke mankind's shared human condition and experience in the world. I started this project about 4 years ago, the goal was to teach myself to render the human head in an attempt to explore a range of facial expressions, emotions and states of being such as denial, greed, contemplation, sorrow, anger, joy, pleasure, pain, and confusion. I think of the party hats as beacons of denial, pointing to the arrogance of fools, the idea of "party on" or "end of empire" or "empire burlesque". These heads with the crowns, the Mickey Mouse hats, and the classic pointed party hats, allude to a "superficial" state of being. I refer to this series of pieces as "psychological profiles" or "snapshot's" of the human condition.

The heads are 2-3 times larger than life scale ranging from 24"-40" tall. These pieces are wall mounted and float on fabricated steel brackets at aprox. head level or slightly above eye level, depending on the height of the viewer. Along with the large scale, I want the height to give these pieces a heroic quality that will emphasize the notion of the anti-hero or the representative man. Floating these pieces on the wall gives the work a separate but complete context in which to be viewed, a location if you will, without the need for the whole figure. The floating aspect seems to empower each head. Some of the work is presented as separate, isolated, with a lot of space surrounding them. Others hang as triptychs, with aprox. 18" between each head, as seen in this triptych with "Wince" "Dunce" and "Patriot". In this context a viewer is asked to make associations between these characters. My hope in all the work is that they will be slightly disturbing or awkward to create a psychological tension. I don't want the work to be overtly political but I do want the work to point out emotional conflicts and contradictions that exist in our complex modern world.

Recently I have been intrigued by the work of the Baroque sculptor, Franz Xaver Messerschmidt (1736-1783). In graduate school I did my thesis on the writings and research of Jean Dubuffet and what he called "Art Brut", the art of the mentally ill. I have also been interested in the work of the "Harry Who" a movement out of Chicago in the 70s that included artists such as Jim Nutt and H.T. Westerman. The New Image paintings from the late 70s and early 80s impacted my art, in particular the work of Phillip Gustin. My undergraduate work at Kansas City Art Institute in the early 70's introduced me to the Folk art and self-taught art of the south and the mid-west, the directness and the urgency of this work captivated me. Throughout my career I have always been equally interested in folk art and the art of indigenous peoples as I am interested in mainstream art.