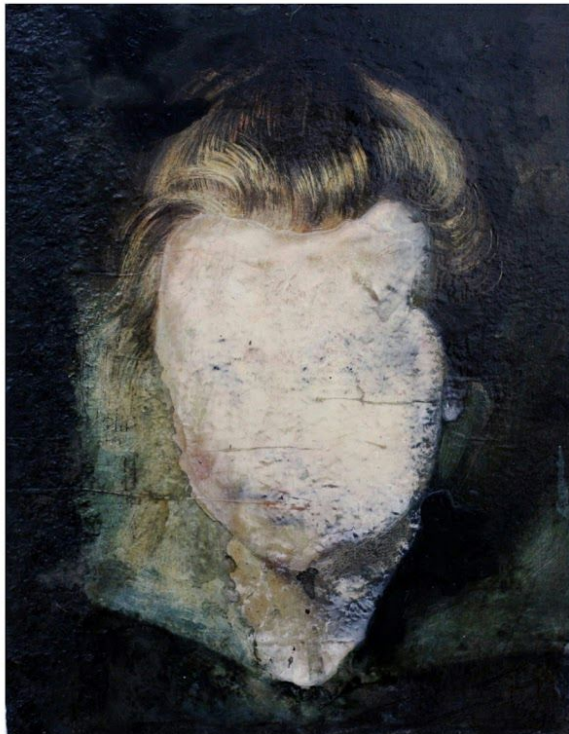
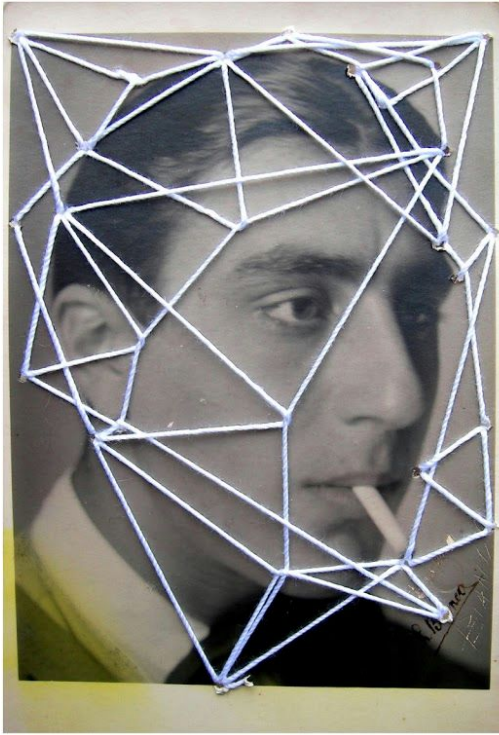


# HEAD



Curated by D. Dominick Lombardi

**Artists**

Eileen Claveloux  
Cynthia Consentino  
Brian Fekete  
Robert Fontanelli  
Rieko Fujinami  
Susan Halls  
Sol Hill  
Moray Hillary  
Steven Labadessa  
Nina Levy  
D. Dominick Lombardi  
China Marks  
Kosyo Minchev  
Outside-the-Line Collective  
Ivan Pazlamatchev  
Bradley Rubenstein  
Tomiyuki Sakuta  
Rossana Taormina  
Roman Turovsky  
Yoshikazu Yanagi  
Michael Zansky

# HAMPDEN GALLERY

University of Massachusetts Amherst

2015



Catalog Designed by Sarah Jung

## HEAD

Throughout the history of art, portraits and self-portraits have appeared in various forms to depict for better or worse, specific facial, financial, influential and indispensable characteristics of the individual(s) they represent. In many ways, these representations helped to shape our understanding not just of the subject but of the era in which that person lived whether it is the highly crafted and celebratory gold adorned mask that covered King Tutankhamun's head and shoulders; or the indelibly truthful and impressively oversized portraits of Chuck Close. The fact remains: through centuries of portraiture we have been continuously presented with a profoundly focused and often aggrandized view of a select few individuals.

If we look at these two aforementioned subjects more as an object from a specific place and time, despite their obvious identities, they start to become more iconic and informative in terms of aesthetics, content, media, technique and purpose. In this instance they become something closer to a head.

In writing this essay, I am reminded of my first encounter with the paintings of heads by Francis Bacon. In looking at the works *Head I* (1948) and *Head III* (1949) you will easily see a far more focused presentation of an emotional state (torment or anxiety) than an actual depiction of a specific person, let alone any resemblance of the human form that we had come to know up to that point in time. Barbara Kruger's *Untitled (your body is a battleground)* (1989) is equally powerful as it takes an outward look at the human condition and the endless social injustices women face. In truth, you have individuals depicted here but the message and the meaning outweighs any significance personal identity would present.

The focus of this exhibition is to take a more prolonged look at how the head continues to evolve in contemporary art as a symbol for something much broader than any one individual.

Working with a basis in photography we have five artists: Eileen Claveloux, Sol Hill, Bradley Rubenstein, Rossana Taormina and Roman Turovsky. **Eileen Claveloux's** works signify a sort of mapping by way of the reconstruction of the head through segmented, albeit they rather precisely organized photographic transfers. As the head is reassembled, areas drop in and out slightly suggesting emotional or intellectual inconsistencies, while this lessening of any overall physical conformity or continuity in clarity and tone suggests the variability of facial recognition. Even the more controversial or problematic aspects brought on by generalized profiling comes to mind here. **Sol Hill**, like Kruger, reminds us that women continue to be objectified throughout media. In having their heads or 'individualities' visually cut out of the picture plane we become voyeurs seeing the body, albeit out of focus and somewhat abstracted, as an object of desire. Hill's use of movement to soften or blur the image adds life at times, and at other times more than a bit of frailty or flightiness. **Bradley Rubenstein** presents us with a headless form as well, only here we see a man oddly and extremely contorted,

yet somehow confident in his remaining anatomical mass. Are we looking at the future – a mutation set up for a specific task, or a mental eunuch poised and prepared for some invisible or imagined foe? Either way, we are left with a haunting form, a freak borne of science not nature reminding us that processes in physiology have their own system of checks and balances, and those rules, when set awry, have little to do with our own preconceptions. **Rossana Taormina** employs found, unidentified, sepia toned photo postcards of people as she laces them with hand-stitched synthetic thread. The geometric patterns created by the sewn-in fiber sometimes forms symbolic cages that oppress or inhibit the subject, and other times we see radiating accents that either coddle or caress the head suggesting import, or some sort of thoughtful mindset. In any case, by adding the string elements, the artist adds a new and enlivening narrative to a long lost individual. What I find most compelling with these works is the timelessness of the overall aesthetic and the freshness of these two very specific media. **Roman Turovsky** has spent the last 25 years compiling a series of profiles presented here as a DVD and prints. Turovsky feels that the side view of a head reveals the truest window into the personality of his subjects. In image after image we see a cornucopia of souls silently passing as the changing contours of each profile mark what can most easily be described as a study in timeworn lineage. Thinking further about his inspiration: the poem by William Blake *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794)<sup>1</sup>, one tends to better understand the artist's motivation and insights with respect to illuminating behavior and individuality quantified by the head's shape and contours.

The five sculptors in the exhibition are Cynthia Consentino, Robert Fontanelli, Susan Halls, Nina Levy and Kosyo Minchev. **Cynthia Consentino's** art falls somewhere between folk tale, storybook illustration and religious lore set inside a fear-provoking dreamscape. In each exquisitely formed and painted piece we find heads that defy reason – morphed species that create incredibly volatile mixed metaphors that bring forth hesitation and confusion, all while remaining compelling and mesmerizing. It is as if bits and pieces of any number of illustrated books were shuffled, mixed up and reset anew, coming to rest right in front of our eyes. **Robert Fontanelli's** art is an uncomplicated and rather fluid form of fantasy. Like Consentino, Fontanelli mixes meanings and symbols but irony and humor are at the core of his soft sculptures. And it is through biting wit and jest that Fontanelli reaches his goal covering everything from the intricacies and applications of design to the joy of simply running with an outlandish idea and having fun with it. In the end, we are left with surprisingly

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<sup>1</sup> A passage from William Blake's poem *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794) that Roman Turovsky points to in his argument that the profile reveals the essence of one's behavior and personality:

'Five windows light the cavern'd Man: thro' one he breathes the air;  
Thro' one hears music of the spheres; thro' one the Eternal Vine  
Flourishes, that he may receive the grapes; thro' one can look  
And see small portions of the Eternal World that ever groweth;  
Thro' one himself pass out what time he please, but he will not;  
For stolen joys are sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant.'

emblematic forms that prompt the viewer's imagination and input. **Susan Halls** combines molded clay and found objects, focusing her attention on the heads of animals. Looking mask like and a bit mangled, her heads give off a strong sensation of misguided thoughts and lost souls while the frailty of her media brings in a feeling of stillness. **Nina Levy** continues the multiple meanings in her two *Shirt Heads* (2009). Here, the humor runs a bit darker, as the covered faces hide all senses and truths. What we are left with are two rather vacated heads, silent and desensitized and not at all content to contemplate a future of darkness and restraint. On the other hand, there remains a playfulness to the narrative that has a sort of childlike sense of humor. **Kosyo Minchev** presents the head as thoroughly manipulated masses of shape punctuated by energy and packed with angst and emotion. This overt and abundant sensation of emotionally charged content in the form, finesse and feel of the works comes equally from experiencing the actual work itself, and what one imagines the artist to be carrying out, both physically and mentally, to create such intensely present and profound objects.

**China Marks** makes magic with various repurposed fabrics, buttons and the like, creating narratives that are as haunting as they are compelling. A little retro, and steeped in rich color, raucous design and reverberating textures her compositions sing the praises of limitless thinking and open-ended aesthetics making these works an out-and-out feast for the eyes.

Three artists: Brian Fekete, Rieko Fujinami and Tomiyuki Sakuta, and one artist group Outside-the-Line Collective comprised of Mary Citarella, Stephen Geiger, Alex Hutton, Mikey Monson, Lynn Muniz, Ivan Pazlamatchev, Siena Porta, Irina Portnyagina, Steven Purtee, Kathleen B. Purtee, Jane Snow, Dana Walker present work on paper or clear film. **Brian Fekete** creates with ink, gouache and acrylic sinuously contorted and manipulated heads of humans and animals that suggest the hallucinations one might experience during an acid trip<sup>2</sup>. The superlative classical hairstyles and steadfast head positions of his 'appropriated' subjects add a level of frosty formality while the distortion speaks of inflammatory antiestablishment thinking, freedom from inhibitions and the eradication of preconceptions. **Rieko Fujinami** enduringly makes lost, abused and forgotten souls as forever-floating heads. More specifically, the fluidity of the form seen in this purgatory-like state, combined with the spatters of thinned paint gives an 'other-dimensional' feel to the picture plane, an effect greatly enhanced by the work's placement away from the wall, which affords the observer two-sided viewing. **Tomiyuki Sakuta** brings his uniquely personal brand of Surrealism to the fore with intricately

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia, From the page on *Lysergic acid diethylamide*, in the Effects section, under Sensory:

Some sensory effects may include an experience of radiant colors, objects and surfaces appearing to ripple or "breathe", colored patterns behind the closed eyelids (eidetic imagery), an altered sense of time (time seems to be stretching, repeating itself, changing speed or stopping), crawling geometric patterns overlaying walls and other objects, and morphing objects. Some users, including Albert Hofmann, report a strong metallic taste for the duration of the effects.

detailed etchings. In many ways, the images he creates express a myriad of sensations such as inhibition, stagnation, hope and expressiveness leaving the viewer somewhat confused and maybe even a little anxious. This speaks to an unfortunate reality that reflects many artists' natural tendencies toward mood swings that bound between disturbing and pleasurable<sup>3</sup>. The **Outside-the-Line Collective** celebrates in a variety of media, styles and techniques the various ways in which artists see and experience the world around them. Here, the head becomes something of a visual battleground where competing visualizations run the gamut between precise representations to near total abstraction. The result is a fantastical, dreamlike array of expressions that reside in a multitude of dimensions and states.

The six painters in the exhibition are Moray Hillary, Steven Labadessa, myself (D. Dominick Lombardi), Ivan Pazlamatchev, Yoshikazu Yanagi and Michael Zansky. **Moray Hillary** eradicates with swaths and slashes of paint the faces of his subjects, while somehow maintaining enough visual cues or traits to piece together a 'personality'. In so doing Hillary, in one very important way, shows us how differently we can perceive, even communicate with others suggesting that it is more about what we do and how we act than our 'recognizable' facial features that make us different and individual. **Steven Labadessa** works through the concept of the individual quite differently from Hillary, as he plays up the explicit and wholly decipherable expressiveness of the face. Similarly, we don't have to know his subjects to 'know' their minds as everything we need to pick them out of a crowd is in the grins, grimaces and gesticulations they put forth. I placed myself (**D. Dominick Lombardi**) in this exhibition as a consistent and variable source of the head as subject matter. My most recent series of *Shift Paintings* feature a few heads that look at the transition from individual to preeminent social and political icon, to environmental omen or to a lesser-known religious symbol. For me, it is all about how individuals come to represent, misguided or

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<sup>3</sup> Psychology Today, *The Creative Personality*, By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, published on July 1, 1996 – last reviewed on June 13, 2011. From *Creativity: The Work and Lives of 91 Eminent People*, by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, published by HarperCollins, 1996. The following are a few excerpts from no. 10.

Creative people's openness and sensitivity often exposes them to suffering and pain, yet also to a great deal of enjoyment.

Being alone at the forefront of a discipline also leaves you exposed and vulnerable. Eminence invites criticism and often vicious attacks. When an artist has invested years in making a sculpture, or a scientist in developing a theory, it is devastating if nobody cares.

Perhaps the most difficult thing for creative individuals to bear is the sense of loss and emptiness they experience when, for some reason, they cannot work. This is especially painful when a person feels his or her creativity drying out.

Yet when a person is working in the area of his or her expertise, worries and cares fall away, replaced by a sense of bliss. Perhaps the most important quality, the one that is most consistently present in all creative individuals, is the ability to enjoy the process of creation for its own sake.

not, an ideal, an injustice or a prophecy. **Ivan Pazlamatchev's** painting *DQ* (2008), like a picture card in poker deck, utilizes a mirror image to create a double head. The result: a not so subtle range of emotions executed with a slight adjustment of the eye angle, to a more upward, or in this instance downward position in the bottom head. As a result, Pazlamatchev paints a picture of pensiveness turned perturbed - a doppelganger's duel for space, attention and influence. Like Pazlamatchev, **Yoshikazu Yanagi** presents us with a double head, however in this instance, the two heads overlap to reveal a cacophony of embryonic forms that portray a state of mind or being. Emitting something like an internal light or energy, the eyes again become the central focal point feeling and looking like a glance into the future of a more controlling and selective type of human reproduction. **Michael Zansky's** art takes an alternate dimensional look at the narrative in greatly abbreviated segments where emotions run high, time collapses and species blend to the horror or delight of the inhabitants. Looking at these works, I am reminded of the discussions in the 1970s when I began to more fully understand that our own earthly television and radio transmissions might be 'picked up' by future viewers and listeners light years away<sup>4</sup>.

The HEAD, as it is in real life or applied in Contemporary Art, is a most essential vessel containing any number of ideas and emotions that will unquestionably continue to evolve through the coming ages. It is now, and will always be our primary conduit of communication not just through the common senses, but as a limitless symbol placed within a more potent stage for thought and expression.

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<sup>4</sup> BBC, News Magazine, page last updated at 12:21 GMT, Wednesday, 6 August 2008 13:21 UK.

*Can our TV signals be picked up on other planets?* The following three sentences were selected from various points in the article.

And yet the idea of sending messages to whoever is out there has been a recurrent theme over the years, whether it has been the plaques on Pioneer 10 and 11, Blur's call-sign for Beagle 2, the Arecibo message of 1974 or the Soviet "Mir" message of 1962.

Space scientist Dr Chris Davis, of the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, says it is possible that television and radio signals from Earth could be picked up on other planets, but it isn't easy.

"Of course, no one more than about 50-70 light years away will have yet heard from us, but I figure that our earliest broadcasts are washing over about one new star system each day. So the potential audience is growing."





Diasporan Portrait 2: Shahan (2006), photographic transfer on Acrylic, 26 7/8" x 32"

Eileen Claveloux



Wolf Woman (2013), stoneware, mixed media, 76" x 19" x 17"  
Wolf Girl III (2009), clay, mixed media, 39" x 21" x 17"

Cynthia Consentino





Encyclopedic Series No. 2 (2011), acrylic on paper, 22" x 17"

Brian Fekete



Knit House Mask (2012), wool, fabric, 8.25" x 16"

Robert Fontanelli





Japan/Beacon, NY, Isolation XIV-I (2014), painting on clear film, 94" x 46"

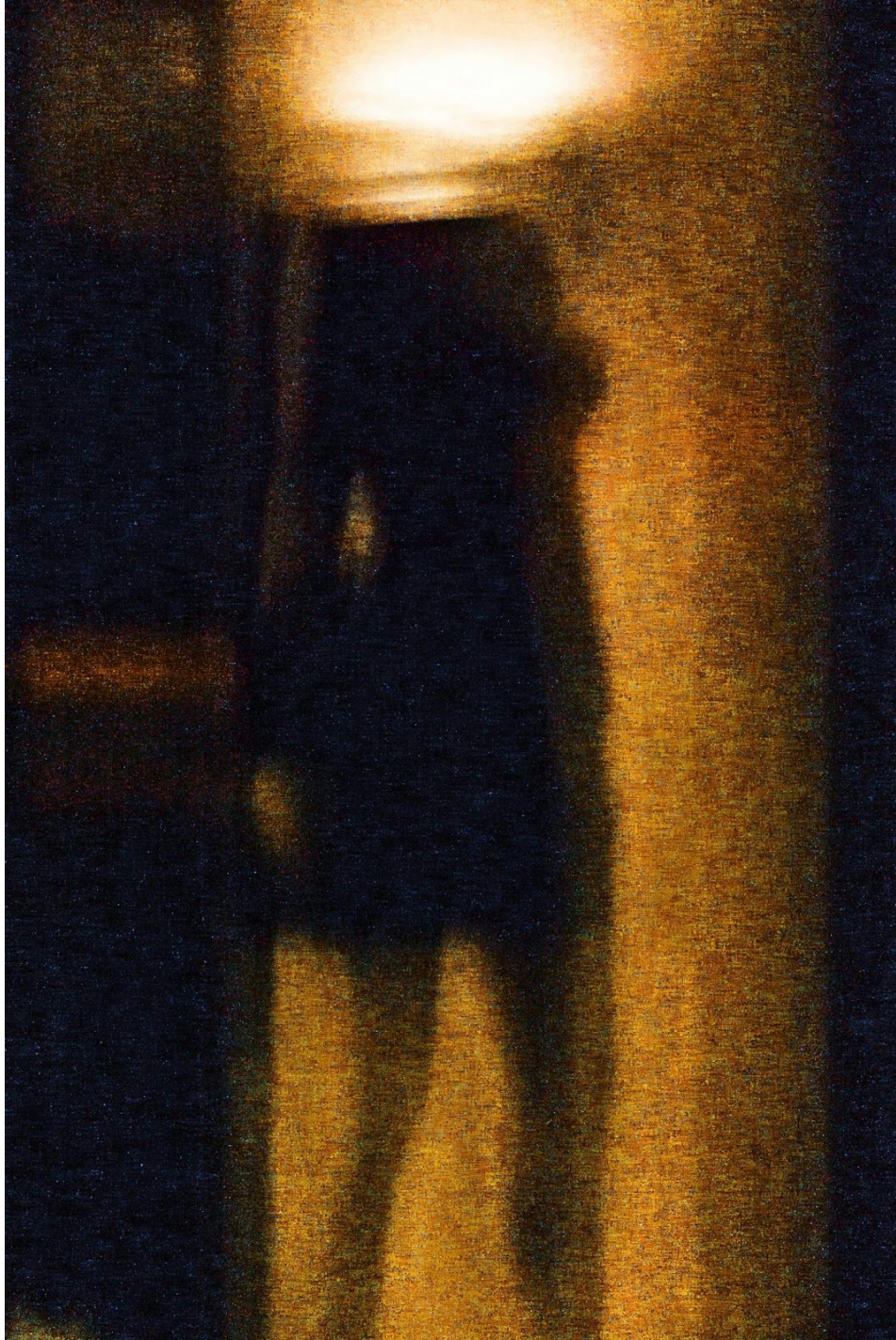
Rieko Fujinami



Goat head (bulb eyes) (2012), smoke fired ceramic with light bulbs, 5.5" x 4" x 3"

Susan Halls





Token Feminine #L9999425 (2013), photo based mixed media, pigment print,  
acrylic and varnish on canvas, 60" x 40"

Sol Hill





I just wish that you could see me (2010), acrylic on wood, 13" x 10"

Moray Hillary





Fairy tale 1 (2010), oil on paper, 12" x 9"

Steven Labadessa



Shirt Head (2009), cast polyester resin and automotive paint, 12" x 11" x 10"

Nina Levy





Sacco and Vanzetti (2014), acrylic and oil on canvas, 36" x 32"

D. Dominick Lombardi





Drive He Said (2003), fabric, lace, thread, silk-screen ink, fusible adhesive, 32" x 24"

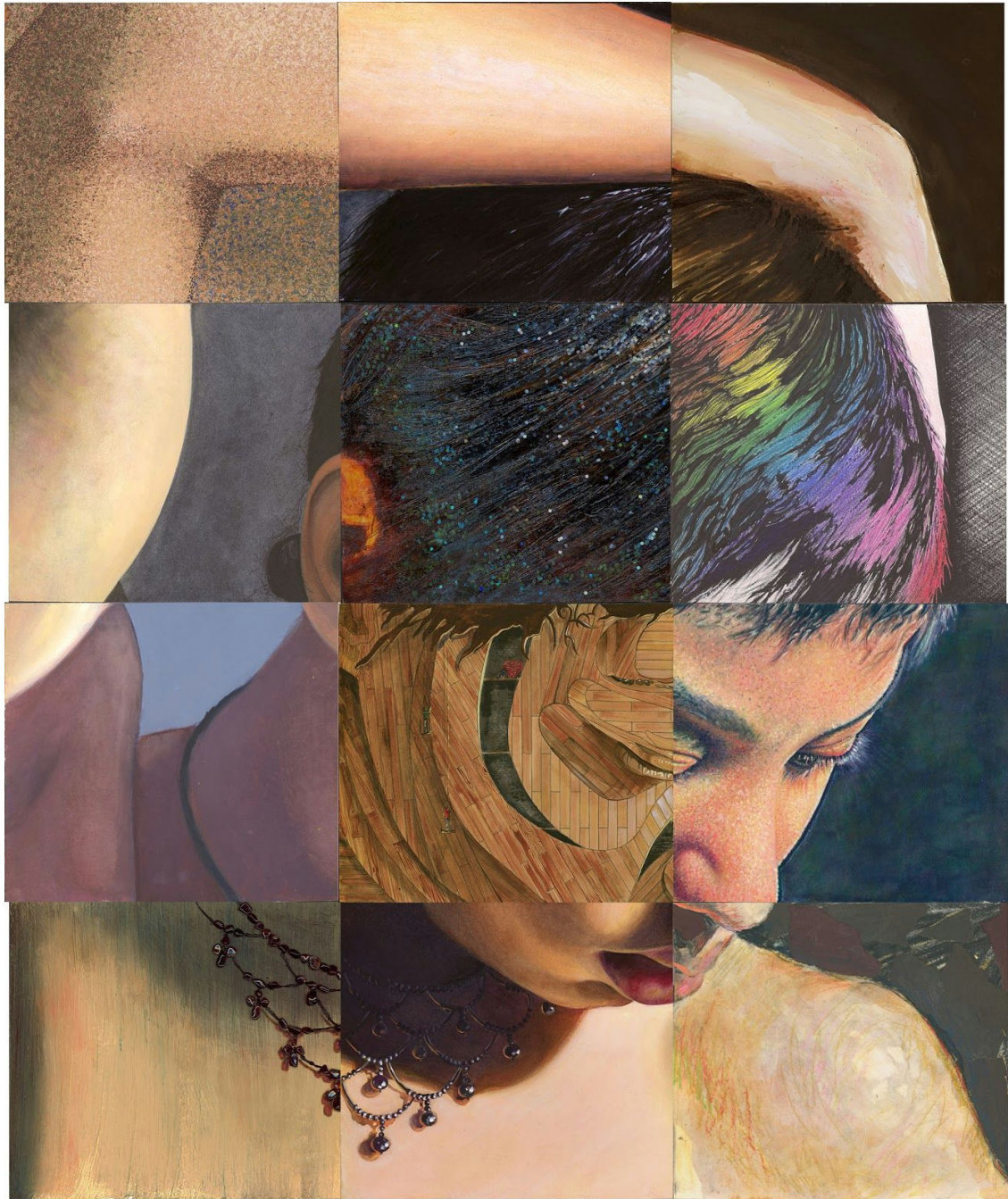
China Marks



"Big Head 1" (2012), aqua resin, 26" x 24" x 28"

Kosyo Minchev





Thea (2015), acrylic, oil paint, encaustic, pastel, colored pencil, marker and graphite on paper, 36" x 27"

Outside-the-Line Collective





DQ (2008), oil on canvas, 56" x 35"

Ivan Pazlamatchev



Untitled (1995), ink on paper, 36" x 24"

Bradley Rubenstein

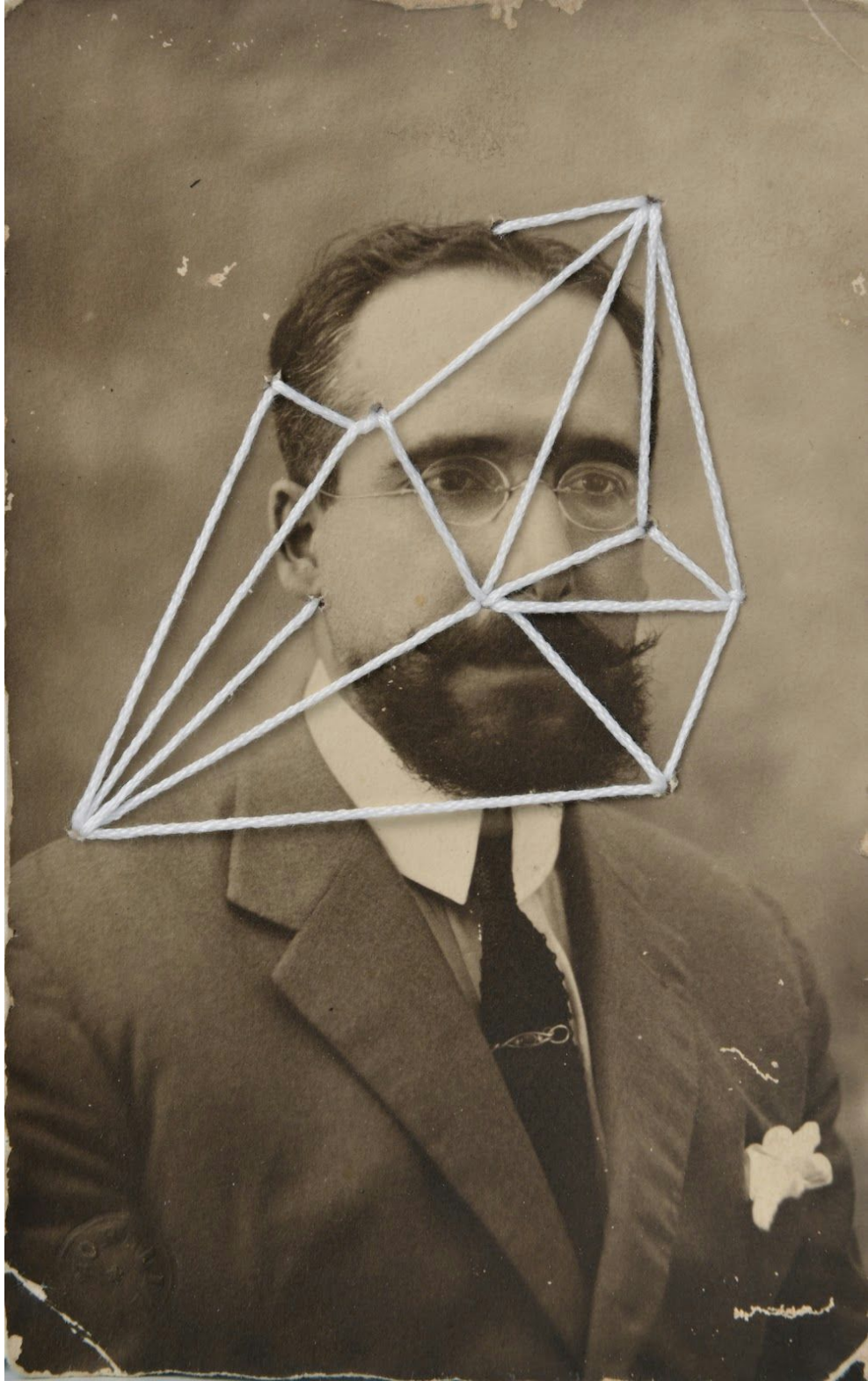




Walking on the down slope (2002), etching on paper, 11.5" x 7.5"

Tomiyuki Sakuta





Portrait 3 (2014) , synthetic thread on vintage photos, 5.3" x 3.3"

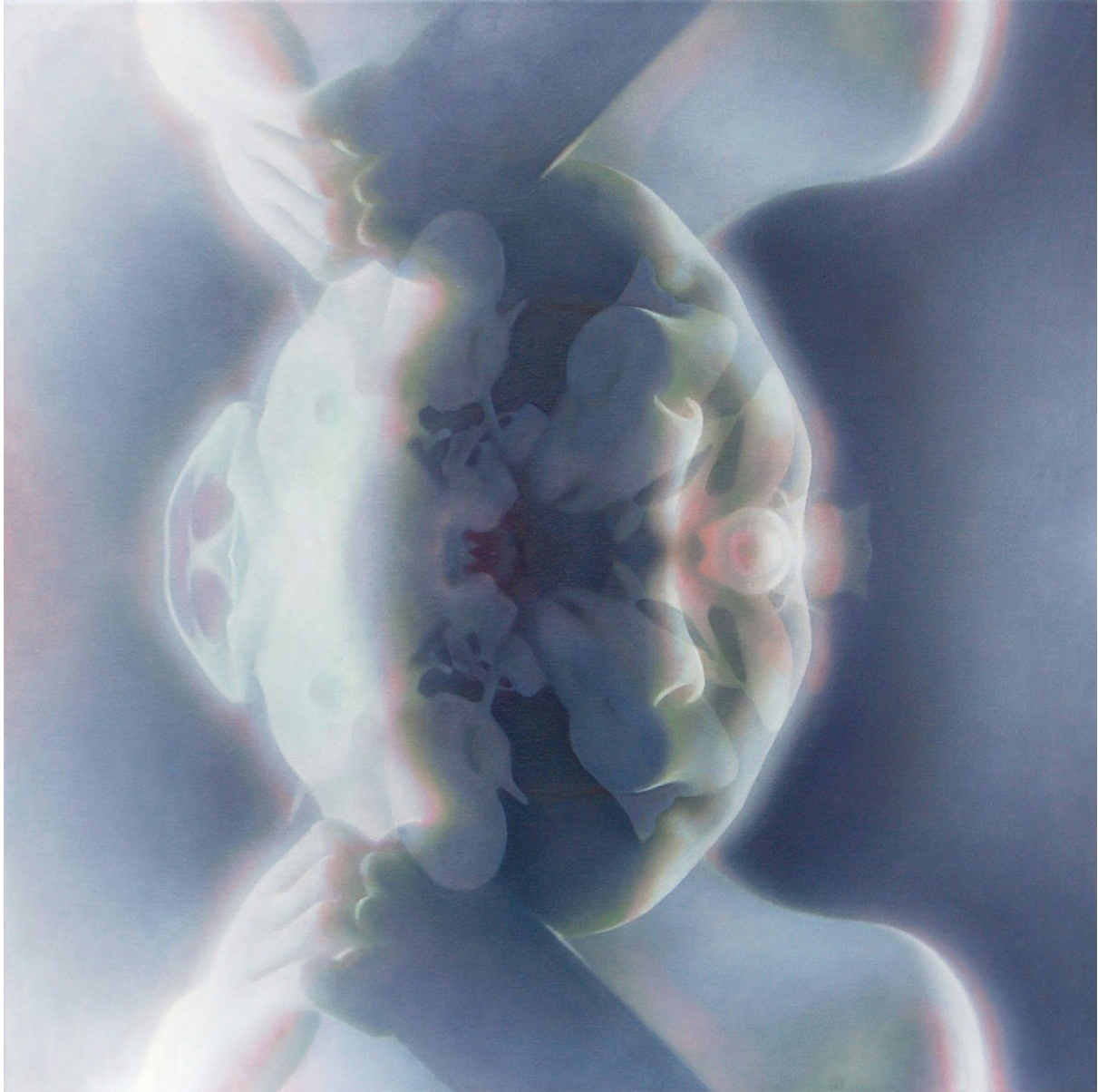
Rossana Taormina



Five Windows (1990-2015), (seen here: Nina, Dave, Neree, Mike, Jan, Nadja, Dan, Kim, Abriss),  
DVD, 25 minutes

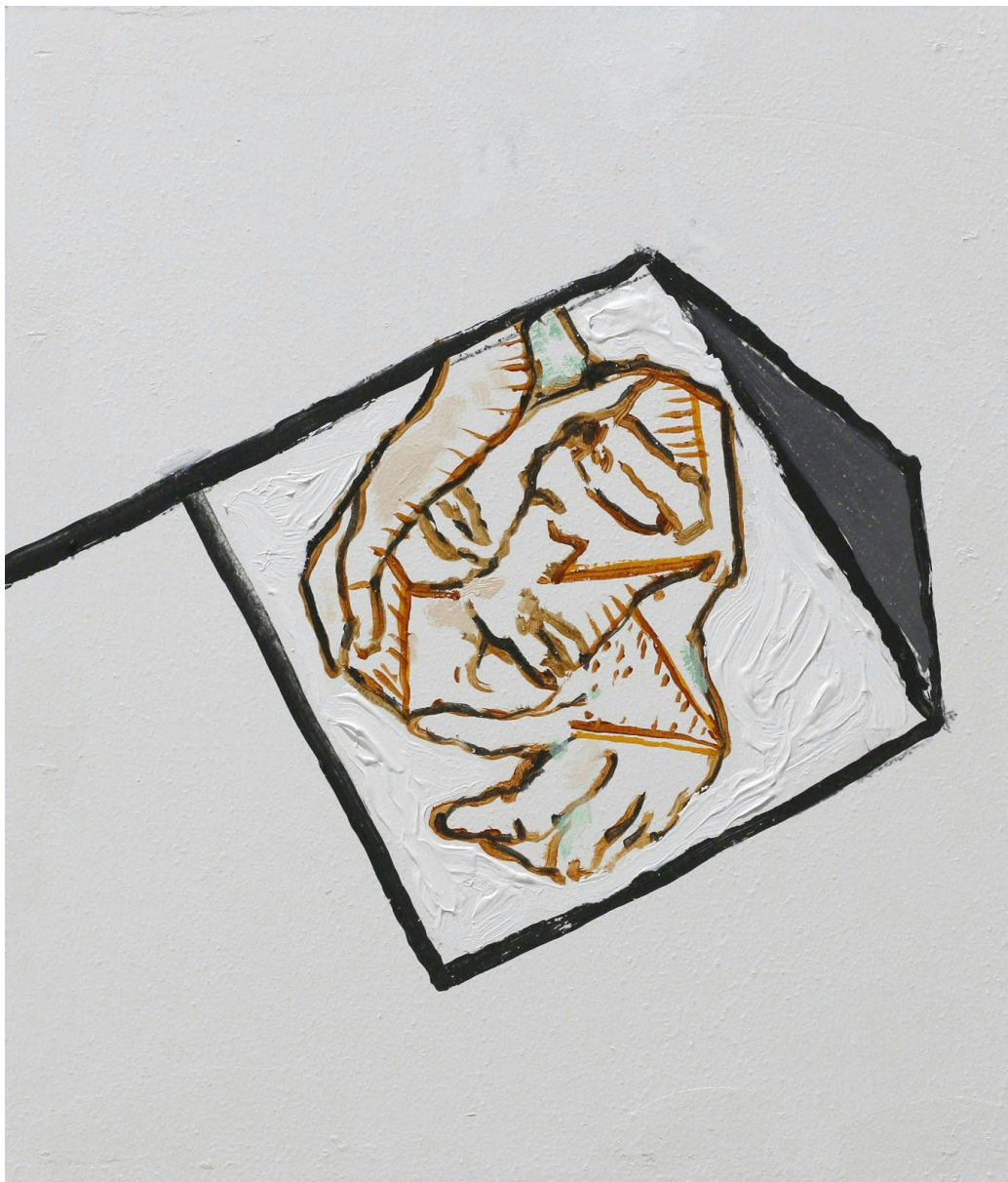
Roman Turovsky





Child of the Space (Gray) (2014), oil on canvas, 26" x 26"

Yoshikazu Yanagi



Untitled (2015), oil and acrylic on wooden panel, 12" x 14"

Michael Zansky