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## Crowds

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*Anonymous*  
Kim Foster Gallery, NYC  
December 2-24, 2010

When Lucifer fell from Grace, we are told, it was because, as God's once most favored creation, he had lost His countenance, and thus, his status. To remove, in other words, the sight of the face, whether God's, or the beloved who turns their back, is to ameliorate our existence. In *Anonymous* at Kim Foster Gallery, we see this theme woven into the works of artists working in a variety of mediums. Alejandra Villasmil paints, draws and collages over found images of people. Unlike a graffiti artist who attacks first the eyes (usually) then the mouth (adding words) of a subway ad, Villasmil obscures the faces, e.g. identity, while leaving the eyes, those "windows to the soul," intact.

In "Mirror/Mirror" (2010), for example, she plays with this concept in an almost cubist way, obliterating the head of her subject, while leaving the reflected mirror face intact. Judith Page performs a similar set of interventions with black and white photographs, pouring a pink, Silly Putty-like medium over the heads and shoulders of her subjects. We are reminded of playing with the Liquid That Is a Solid, lifting old comic strip character faces, then stretching and distorting them with the clay. References to Chryssa's and Rauschenberg's newsprint transfers from the sixties

combine with the child-like activity, giving us the sense that we are caught in the artist's process of morphing rather than obliterating her subjects. Christian Faur also employs that most elementary drawing device, the crayon, to portray long-lost people from found WPA photographs. Rather than use the crayon as a tool, though, Faur creates pristine, handcrafted versions, standing them on end to create a pixilated image, much like a Lite Brite picture. The waxy substance of the material resembles a Tussard version of our primordial human mud.

In criminology we use the victim's or witness descriptions to compile visual information in a suspect drawing. The now infamous Unabomber sketch might be the ultimate example of the anonymous person as individual. Sherry Karver's "The Simplicity of Being" blurs identity in favor of anonymity, gives us images of crowds, not of specific people. Similarly, Antonio Petracca and Dolce Pinzon address groups, immigrant laborers, and Italian movie stars and such, showing the loss of specificities which define us when we are defined by our race and country.

Richard Butler gives a different spin to the subject in "Smokingsinner #3" (2010) (*image above left*). We are placed in the priest's side of the confessional booth, a place where anonymity is the optimal condition. Butler's sinner is seen through the filigree that separates the confessor from absolution. A trail of smoke winds through the openings, like the words describing the sin. Whitfield Lovell's drawings from antique photographs of long-dead African Americans are similarly resurrected through the artist's hand, given new life and history, though not identity. In a sense, Lovell's works hit the mark, philosophically. Through the insertion of decorative elements, and the reification of the lost soul's image, we are given the approximation of a person, though without a specific name or story, we can't identify with who we see.

In the Gallery's Project Space, *Anonymous* curator D. Dominick Lombardi presents a set from his sculptural series of *Urchins*, whose title subject seems to have less to do with a Dicken's character than the sea creature. Comprised of a plastic refuse infrastructure, these figurative pieces are given visage and character with a covering of acrylic medium and sand. The surfaces resemble the organic trails left by snails by the sea, but also reference the Biblical creation of Man; God stuck his finger in the earth and created Life. Lombardi's creatures, with their oversize heads and features, exude a comic air, though one filled with pathos. Their synthetic covering reminds us of the Replicants from *Blade Runner*, our still-mortal equivalents in the film's future. "More Human than Human" was the Nexus company motto, and in "Urchin #6" (2009) Lombardi portrays a creature slumping with elbows on knees, lost in thought; though he sits atop a book, this being was created without eyes. A remarkably poignant piece; he resembles us, yet we cannot completely identify with him, or speculate on his world. Not blind, but eyeless -- is his world darker than our seeing one, or has he, like the Nexus Six Replicant Roy (Rutger Hauer) evolved further? That might be the point of Lombardi's work, as well as the exhibition. In a world comprised of millions of individual stories, when seen from another, farther, vantage point, they blur into oblivion. Or, as Roy says in the film, "All of these moments, will be lost in time. Like tears, in the rain." - *Bradley Rubenstein*

*Mr. Rubenstein is a painter, story teller, and smart culture aficionado.*



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