Facial Expressionism
IMMANENCE ENVISAGED

Opening Reception: Tuesday, January 31st, 2012, 5-8PM

“The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen. The face digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye.”

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, p.168

“Affect is heuristically important because it faces both in and out, and therefore clinches the univocity of expression.”

Rei Terada, Feeling in Theory: Emotion After the Death of the Subject, p.118

“Affects are moments of intensity, a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter. We might even say that affects are immanent to matter. They are certainly immanent to experience.”


A century and a half ago, the French neurologist Duchenne de Boulogne attempted to decode the expressive mechanisms of human facial pathognomy by employing electrical charges to trigger involuntary muscular contractions in/on the bodies of his test subjects. With the newly invented representational medium of photography available to help document and disseminate his findings, Duchenne’s experiments quickly became widely celebrated throughout the burgeoning biological and psychological disciplines of his time. As the seminal study on the physiology of human emotion, depictions of his faradized victims even served as the central illustrations in Charles Darwin’s own study, The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals. In the intervening decades between then and now, however, categorical and dividuated interpretations of facial expressions have become both more ubiquitous and more nebulous in their application. Of course, the face was already a marker of identity and a locus for signification well before Duchenne codified muscular assemblages into neuro-physiological vocabularies. Increasingly, these days, however, those signified identities, and their related expressive attributes, are read more and more by the pre-programmed semi-agential machines that share our collective ecosystems. Humanity must now overtly confront that abstract system of faciality annunciated by Deleuze and Guattari, but against the backdrop of contemporary technological phenomena ranging from the terror-induced, and fear-inducing, use of facial recognition software in the late capitalist bio-political police state to the collapse of embodiment with augmented virtual spaces in the current batch of face-tracking gaming platforms, such as X-Box’s Kinect - not to mention how these very same technologies often fuse and assemble with social-media networks, such as Facebook, and communication environments, such as Apple’s Facetime.
At this moment, when the machine-assisted biometric reading of faces has never been more socially prevalent and more culturally standardized, the fifteen contemporary artists participating in **Facial Expressionism** at the Cerritos College Art Gallery produce innovative aesthetic deterritorializations of faces that purposefully over-spill the limits of any singular signifying system, thereby resisting a simple complicity between a face and the evolving metrics for ‘knowing’ it. Merging baroque vision with haptic thought, the works on display exist as embodied (de)formations that explore the ontogenesis of a particular face with its various expressive manifestations, the gestalt of insular figuration with the non-organic vitality of ground, the immanence of representation and materiality, and the entanglement of emotive gesture and pre-responsive affect.

As gestures migrate from body to body, and from one medium to another, confusing the etymologically linked concepts of passion and passage, it is difficult not to be reminded of the individualistic humanism of the early 20th-century art historical movement of Expressionism (Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter, etc.). But while there are certain stylistic similarities to this modernist namesake, the work on display in **Facial Expressionism** must also be repositioned against the unfolding backdrop of recent para-humanist and object-oriented concepts of expressionism in contemporary philosophy (for example, theorist Brian Massumi argues that a kick is as much an expression of the ball as the player).

**EXHIBITING ARTISTS:** Michael Alvarez, Jeremy Bailey, Maya Bloch, Justin Bower, Guy Denning, Kim Dorland, Paul Gillis, Annie Lapin, Gerardo Monterubbio, Buddy Nestor, Rachel Niffenegger, Kambui Olujimi, Dominic Quagliozzi, Phoebe Unwin, and Eric Yahnker

**STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:** Galileo Gonzalez

Founded in 1955, Cerritos College is a public comprehensive community college in southeastern Los Angeles County. The mission of the Cerritos College Art Gallery is to serve as an educational, social and cultural enhancement for the Cerritos academic population as well as the immediate surrounding communities.

The Cerritos College Art Gallery presents rotating exhibitions highlighting the work of emerging and mid-career artists. A special emphasis is placed on works that confront challenging and pressing issues in contemporary art and culture. In support of exhibitions, the Cerritos College Art Gallery also regularly hosts workshops, lectures, and performances.

Admission and events are free and open to the public.

Daily Parking is available for $2.00 in lot C-10 in the student white stalls only.

To receive event updates, please join our Facebook Group page: [http://www.facebook.com/groups/104766622082/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/104766622082/)