

For Immediate Release:
info@deboergallery.com



THOMAS MCDONELL

ME

5 June - 10 July, 2021

(Los Angeles, CA) **de boer gallery** is pleased to announce a solo exhibition and limited edition publication of new work by **Thomas McDonnell**. Los Angeles-based McDonnell presents a suite of assemblage paintings and prints surrounding notions of the self. The title of the exhibition, *Me*, immediately presents the core of the work, a probe into the idea of private versus public, and the ownership of images and ideas.

The source material for the work is pulled from interaction with Heather Dollheart, an illustrator in Perm, Russia who created a digital painting of McDonnell. Dollheart found a picture of McDonnell on the internet that McDonnell had taken of himself in the studio. She 'painted' it in high resolution, making adjustments, additions, and subtractions. Dollheart described to McDonnell that she liked his face, and enjoyed the characters that he had played in movies and on TV. In the original image, McDonnell had a shaved head. Dollheart improvised, adding long flowing hair. The overall effect is not so dramatic that McDonnell is unrecognizable -- just different, uncanny, slightly off, and idealized.

From this starting point, McDonnell prints Dollhearts digital portrait on clear vinyl. McDonnell then paints on the reverse side of the vinyl. Gradients and colors begin to frame the painting and they meld into an indistinguishable mix in this collaborative process that reverses the normal order of painting, background first and foreground after. The finalized painting is contextualized by the presentation of each painting on highly finished custom-made hardwood shipping crates.

These simple, yet effective formal devices reference neo-geometric conceptualism of the late 80s, and the plastics and airbrush-forward sculpture and painting of California's 'cool school' before that. Manifested in real life, the extreme detail of the original digital painting -- the skin and hairs of the figure, layer upon layer rendered on a Wacom tablet, and cured here with ultraviolet light -- reference a long history of portraiture with roots in 15th-century High Renaissance Venetian painting like that of Giovanni Bellini.

Jarring text-based prints further contextualize McDonnell's conceptual process by erratically translating Dollhearts's own words; scrambled, redacted, and in both English and Cyrillic, the prints approximately read:

When you study a person's face, repeat all his lines, features, draw skin, moles, all these cilia, pores, hairs... You seem to touch a person's face, to him, to his soul. When I finish someone's portrait, I, to some extent, seem to take the person's appearance for myself, but at the same time, I seem to give the person part of myself. And with every stroke of the "brush" our souls, like paint from a palette, mix, as if they complement each other. I don't know if this is good or bad, but the face on the canvas no longer belongs to its owner, nor does it belong to me - now it is like a part of something larger, the result of the merging of our souls.

The broader context -- outside of McDonnell and Dollheart making these specific objects -- is, of course, vast. Digital narcissism, fake news, social media, mechanization, commercialism, framing, and literal objectification.

Thomas McDonnell, *Untitled (Me 1, blue on walnut)*, 2020, Acrylic and UV ink on vinyl with pine, walnut and hardware, 19 x 15 x 4.5 in. (48 x 38 x 11 cm)

For Immediate Release:

info@deboergallery.com

Thomas McDonell has exhibited his work internationally and has curated several exhibitions including a tunnel exhibit at the historic Southwest Museum site in Los Angeles, California, a video art show at a Best Buy in New York, and a monochrome painting exhibition at the ArcLight Hollywood movie theater complex. McDonell's practice often recontextualizes the visual language of contemporary film production. As a professional actor, as well as a visual artist, he often incorporates found objects from film sets into paintings, sculptures, and installations. McDonell's work has been exhibited at venues such as Roberts & Tilton Gallery, Los Angeles, Bellevue Arts Museum, Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts, New York, Edward Cella Gallery, Los Angeles, and Field Contemporary in Vancouver.