

Jason Fox
Feature Inc.

By LILY FAUST

Eight paintings and a lone sculpture placed in the center of the gallery highlight Fox's idiosyncratic iconography: cartoon-based images of single men, in many cases shown from the shoulders up, bearing visual cues of obvious impenetrable human emotion; a smirk, a blank stare. Simultaneously frank, quirky and urgent, Fox's work bridges painting and cartooning, synthesizing the shorthand of linear caricature. Sinuous lines accentuate washes of paint, utilizing painting techniques that move from illustrational to painterly, often borrowing from the vocabulary of Pop and narrative art.

The paintings are notable for their play on collective imagery, utilizing clichés to establish an unexpected truthfulness in capturing



Jason Fox *Live at Golgotha*, 2004 (JFF0406).
Acrylic paint on canvas 76 x 42 inches.
Courtesy: Feature Inc., New York

human character. The four drawings located at the entrance of the gallery are remarkable in parodying comic "types," such as "the villain," "the drunkard," or "the knave". These near life-size drawings compel the viewer to have a one-on-one encounter with characters reminiscent of Dr. Seuss's "the Grinch". In *Untitled*, a gaunt face is visible through the four slats of an enclosure; something like closet, or perhaps a jail. Illuminated from the outside, the slats cast repetitive shadows, which appear as gray horizontal bars on the face, pushing the drama of the image toward an effective graphic tension of black and white. In another work, titled *Jeff*, the face is ominously blank; no eyes, no lines, except for a red, styrofoam clown nose collaged onto the middle of the face. Floating on a milky white surface, the face is outlined by gestural strokes in red paint, accentuated by scrawling lines to depict the shoulder-length hair. The mouth shows ambiguity, fixed in a curious, tentative smile. Considering the absence of features, and the reduction of portrait elements, the painting expresses more than what initially meets the eye. The deceptively blank, atonal face, in spite of having no eyes, returns the viewers gaze, striking dissonance in the observer.

Monument for Destruction, a cement and resin sculpture, has a humorous touch that belies the work's impressive artistry. Half figure, the piece is cast from the waist down with two cement legs on bulbous feet that support a red pelvis, made from resin, while topped by a phallic spike, whose constituent parts, like spinal vertebrae, gradually change in color from bright red, to pale pink, to white. Resistant to specific interpretation, yet obviously rich in metaphor, the sculpture brings to mind issues of consciousness, both spiritual and physical. The work here confirms Fox's answer to a question that appears on the Q&A sheet that the gallery provides. Responding to, "Are these portraits?" Fox states, "they're portraits of being stuck inside a big, powerful, stupid, funny, crazy, violent, ignorant, dangerous head looking into a mirror." The direct appeal of these words is matched by the zany energy of the artwork bordering on existential horror (and mirth), appreciated by all who have been there. Through 2/19. ♡