

Face Value: New work by Lori Sikorski

Current sociopolitical conditions beg the questions: who are we, where do we stand and what is our connection to each other? With the advent of the *Global Village* we are forced to now ask ourselves: how can we make it work? It is increasingly clear that if globalization is to work for the good of all humankind, the out-dated approach of, “us verses them” must be replaced by attitudes of tolerance and accessibility. We must begin to see our interconnectedness as a means of achieving altruism.

The portraits included in this exhibit are intimate looks at individuals from my community, the few blocks in Brooklyn that I travel each day between work, home, and my studio. They are people who I interact with on a regular basis, reflecting the increasingly diverse communities in which we all live.

In my studio we spent several hours together, interacting and creating the work. These portraits explore issues of identity, self, and otherness. They are about observation, reflection, and introspection.

The work is a dialog between myself, as the artist, the sitter, and the viewer. The drawing is a result of my reaction to the sitter, and provokes the viewer’s response to the sitter through my drawing. This circular relationship mimics life itself – we see ourselves reflected back to us through the people we encounter in our lives. This observation of other becomes a basis of our interconnectedness. As we question the identity of the other we reflect back to our own identity.

Social and cultural indicators of economic status, education, religious affiliation, and ethnicity, along with identifiers such as clothing, jewelry, and body decoration that are generally used to judge and categorize people are removed from the portraits. Pictorial space is left undefined so that the environment in which the sitter exists cannot be determined. Rendering becomes the great equalizer, bringing it down to the essential elements, in black and white. It is those elements that separate and distinguish the individuals in the portraits, the facial features and traits that form the individual nature of a person.

The portraits are a culmination of these issues and brings us to the same place where we can begin to address questions, such as: what is the importance of these differences and what do they imply? What makes us beautiful yet different? What and how much can we know about each other through outward appearance? How and when do we judge others and how do we use that information? Are we really willing to take each other at “face value”? Can profiling ever be justified?