

## **Nina Levy**

### ***William Beckman Portrait Head***

2005

Resin and oil paint

22.9 x 20.3 x 20.3cm (9 x 8 x 8", 8lb.)

Courtesy of Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY, and Feigen Contemporary, New York City

### ***Jason Salavon Portrait Head***

2005

Resin and oil paint

22.9 x 20.3 x 20.3cm (9 x 8 x 8", 8lb.)

Courtesy of Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY, and Feigen Contemporary, New York City

### ***Dawoud Bey Portrait Head***

2005

Resin and oil paint

22.9 x 20.3 x 20.3cm (9 x 8 x 8", 8lb.)

Courtesy of Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY, and Feigen Contemporary, New York City

### ***Andres Serrano Portrait Head***

2005

Resin and oil paint

22.9 x 20.3 x 20.3cm (9 x 8 x 8", 8lb.)

Courtesy of Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY, and Feigen Contemporary, New York City

### ***Spectator (Nina Levy)***

2005

Polyester resin with oil paint

182.9 x 43.2 x 38.1cm (72 x 17x 15", 90lb.)

Courtesy of Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, NY, and Feigen Contemporary, New York City

## **Nina Levy's Portrait Heads**

(2:29 min)

Right after I got out of college, I was doing a lot of portraits and I was really wrestling with the idea of how to present them and I did start putting them on bases so that they were at eye level because it seemed very important to me that you see the heads in the same way that you sort of saw the head on the person and when I removed the base and the neck, eventually it seemed even more important that they be at the level that the person is.

Having shown these heads several times, people are very sensitive about how tall they are as opposed to say people whose portraits are hanging and people who come to see them. I have a lot of responses that show that people will say "Well, he's not that tall," "Yeah, I'm actually..." People really know how tall they are, even if they can't tell you what their actual height dimension is. But they know, they sort of know what their eye level is in relation to somebody else's eye level, or at least they think they do. So, it seems, it's sort of one of those literal aspects of figurative imagery that I kind of like and that I kind of also don't like, but I'm definitely interested in working with. To have somebody's first response to a sculpture be "Well, he's not that tall," is in some ways kind of frustrating, but in other ways, kind of interesting.

It was a couple years after I moved to New York that I started sort of more specifically working on this series of portraits. I was spending a fair amount of time recruiting people to come in and sit for me because it generally took six or seven requests before I could actually get somebody to come in and sit for a couple of hours. I was asking people for a variety of reasons, but usually they were people I sort of bumped up against somehow socially or professionally and people who I thought had interesting heads as well which is a sort of a hard to define category of what makes an interesting head. But I did, I selected some people because they were unusual, some people because they were handsome, and perhaps some people because they were not handsome, but at least interesting in some way. The four heads I think really do make a nice group and they are an interesting group.

## **Nina Levy's *Spectator* (Nina Levy)**

(2:20 min)

*Spectator* is fairly in keeping with the rest of my work. Really, well, maybe less so now in that I'm not working exclusively with self-portraiture. I'm not so concerned with the issue of likeness when I'm using myself or my family members because I'm more interested in sort of using myself or my family members for material when I'm looking for a sense of specificity without necessarily sweating the details of the likeness. I've sculpted myself so many times now that it's not as, not as interesting as it is when I'm working with someone else. I know it's a flawed concept but I'm sort of positing myself as a, as an every-person or an every-man in a way that a white, upper-middle class female

artist could be an every-man, but I'm hoping to get something out of the specificity of my own situation.

I originally planned to make it for another show. The show was very much in keeping with most of my work at that point. I would say one of the central issues was about self-presentation and particularly sort of the issue of being the artist and being the subject matter at the same time and the whole history of representations of female bodies and in particular, nudes and sort of what it meant to be using my own body and being the sculptor as well as the subject. And I think on a more literal level, just sort of the content was about my life in the art world and what made me uncomfortable about it as sort of uncomfortable in my own skin literally and figuratively. So that piece was definitely part of that and it was sort of the third piece of three pieces where one piece was completely unclothed, one was clothed and sort of aggressive, and then that piece was sort of the mid-point. It's kind of wearing a revealing outfit; it's kind of dressed for an opening but not really dressed in quite the way I would present myself at an opening, anyway. And also wearing a, what might be, an oversized mask. I was interested in the issue of sort of the discomfort of how one presents oneself.