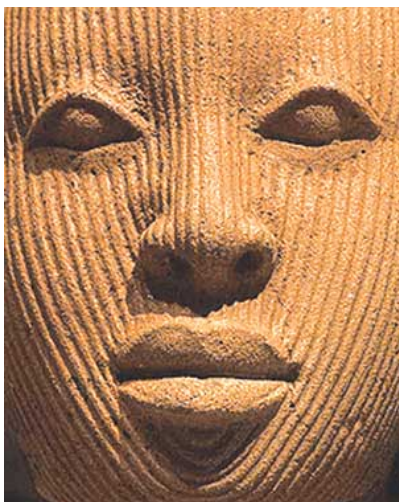


PIERRE SERNET

By Steven Psylos

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Pierre Sernet

Born in Paris, lives in Manhattan. Uses a controlled formula to celebrate details. In his latest series, "Face," Sernet photographs different sculptural depictions of man, from ancient time to present day, only capturing the image of the face: two eyes, the nose and a mouth. In using this precise format, Sernet enables the viewer to clearly see the similarities and differences and truly appreciate their beauty.

How did the concept of "Face" arise? Similar to all of my work, it is about the contrast of cultures and environments. The first series was the "T-Cube," which is about a virtual space in this cube in which I perform an actual Japanese tea ceremony. I'll set up the cube in an environment like Times Square, a *favella* in Rio, on a gay beach in Mykonos etc., and I will invite whoever is there to share a bowl of tea. My values are based on the tea ceremony: respect, harmony, purity and tranquility. Although the guests' values may be completely different, they enter that virtual space and our values become compatible.

When I was creating "Face," I was looking at other people's faces and asked, how can one tell, just by looking, where they are from? You can do this when you see them on a beach in Rio, or in a desert somewhere. Yet I wanted to do it without that extra information. I decided that throughout time, the ultimate representation of man by man is sculpture. In prehistoric time, you will find sculptures of man. You can see a Buddha, or a bust of George Washington. Some of these sculptures are three feet tall and some three inches, yet when you walk into the room, all the faces I present are alike. "Face" is not about the origin of a sculpture, the timing or the materials used. It is about the similarities in that virtual space, or in this case, the face. So I decided to take all the iconography away, all the embellishments, and focus in on the two eyes, the nose and a mouth.

Was this concept born in response to something? I think when people look at a new environment, by defense, man thinks that it's threatening. This comes from ignorance. What I am trying to express is that the similarities between the cultures, and between mankind, is the key.

As the world shifts and cultures merge, how does this world change? In the tea ceremony, it is very formal. You hold things in a certain way, you pour in a certain way; it is very precise. This enables both the host and guest to know what each other will do and therefore to transcend that. To forget about what they're doing, and to communicate on a much higher level.

"Face" is exhibited through Sat., Jan. 8 at the Paul Rodgers/9WGallery, 529 W. 20th St. (betw. 10th & 11th Aves.), 212-414-9810; 11-6, free.