

On Gary Deirmendjian's *Out of Existence*...



Sydney based artist, Gary Deirmendjian creates art that expresses what we ourselves cannot put into words.

Works such as *out of existence*, a trio of bisque fired ceramic sculptures of detached heads, present us with an individual and personal interpretation of an everyday moment or feeling experienced by society en masse. These three oversized severed human heads that form *out of existence*, which look as though they have been haphazardly flung across the floor like dice, allude to the contradictory binary nature of the human experience and the way in which it encapsulates both the 'oneness' of humanity along with the sometimes isolating nature of individuality.

Fragile and delicate works painstakingly crafted on a scale rarely achieved in the medium of ceramics, these works show an attention to detail that you cannot help but admire. Veins pop out and protrude from the foreheads, facial expressions display an astonishing verisimilitude, even the inside of the eardrum and the cavity within have not been neglected or forgotten. The finish, which is achieved through the application of Indian ink, lends each head an almost leathery quality which makes them appear so tactile you want to do the forbidden and touch the artworks, especially those torn tendons which trail from the base of the head.

The synchronicity with which each viewer experiences a deep seated and almost primordial response to these sculptures is contrasted with the way in which we individually feel this reaction to be deeply personal, unique and inexplicable. Tolstoy elucidates this in his 1896 treatise '*What is Art?*', in which he describes art as being an important means of communicating or expressing aspects of the human condition; in particular feelings and experiences, which cannot be expressed in words in a manner which is intelligible and easily understood by all.

This is a sentiment that is clearly expressed in Gary Deirmendjian's practice with the artist himself describing his own understanding of art as being 'a suggestive form of inarticulate communication'.

A myriad of words can be found to describe the physicality of works such as *out of existence*, with adjectives such as awe inspiring, intense and powerful immediately springing to mind, while the emotional response experienced upon viewing Deirmendjian's work remains difficult to articulate.

To try and describe in writing what a viewer should or might expect to feel or experience upon encountering these works would be redundant. Instead, the idea of the *Ekphrasis*, an artistic mode instigated by the ancient Greeks where they created a work in another art form, be it painting, literature, music or drama in response to an admired work thereby allowing them to share the emotional experience seems a much more relevant way in which to pay tribute to these works.

Sometimes though, it's not enough to just take someone else's word for it - you just have to go and see it for yourself...

Gary Deirmendjian's 'out of existence' can be seen at Arterreal Gallery, Sydney. Gary has upcoming work in this year's 'Sculpture by the Sea' and also at Sydney Olympic Park as part of their 10th Anniversary Olympic commemoration.

Image details: out of existence, (2006-2010), bisque fired clay and Indian ink, 80 x 80 x 80 cm each. Photograph © Gary Deirmendjian, 2010