

SPOTLIGHT: Chuck Close

Title of Piece: Cindy



El Presenter: Marlene Iversen

Date: January 22, 2013

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Year created: 2012

Artist: Chuck Close

Five points of interest about this artist

1. He overcame his disabilities of dyslexia, face blindness (prosopagnosia) and partial quadriplegia to become an innovative, world-renowned artist. His expertise is painting, photography, printmaking and Daguerre (Polaroid tapestry). He attended UW, Yale, and was a Fulbright Scholar in Vienna.
2. He is best known for his larger-than-life portraits. Working directly from photographs he creates a square grid on the canvas. Then he makes a mini abstract painting in each square. Because of his learning disabilities he is overwhelmed by the whole; by breaking down the image into small incremental units, he can make each decision into a bite-size decision The end products are precise and hyper-realistic.
3. He creates large works because he wants the viewer “to get lost in the painting and it takes people longer to walk by, and they have more time to look at it.” His work is labor intensive and time-consuming. He can finish about one row a day. Large painted canvases take about two months to complete. Some of his prints take 1-2 years.
4. His assistant mix paint and stretch canvases but he makes every single paint stroke himself strapping a brush in a wrist holder and using a mechanical system to turn the painting and move his chair up and down. He can make over 14,000 brush strokes for one piece. Using thousands of vibrating dots of color, he found a way the colors would mix optically in the viewer’s eye. Much like pixels on a color TV or computer screen.
5. He used to call his paintings big head shots. After his medical event (spinal artery collapse) in 1988 he started calling them giant portraits. He chooses friends and family for his models Since he isn’t able to recall 3D faces, he can memorize the face of a special person in a large 2D form. He has a photographic memory for colors and places.

Possible questions to use when discussing this piece with museum visitors:

1. What do you see when you first look at this picture?

2. Focus on one square in the grid. What shapes do you see? What colors?
3. Let's move back about 15 feet. What do you see first when you look at the painting from a distance?
4. Do you consider this portrait more realistic or abstract? Why?
5. What do you think Cindy thought when she saw her portrait? Would you like to have your portrait painted like this? Why or why not?

Tour Types: People and Places, Learning to Look