

Lora Reynolds is pleased to announce *Kids*, an exhibition of portraits by Jim Torok—the artist’s eighth presentation at the gallery.

For more than 25 years, Jim Torok has made strikingly small oil paintings of his friends—artists, mostly, and sometimes their children. The gallery’s third show after its 2005 inauguration was of Torok’s work; we have shown many of his miniatures over the years, but never, until now, has an entire exhibition focused on images of youths under the age of 15.

Torok’s hyperrealistic portraits are usually five inches by four (on panels an inch-and-a-half thick) although they can be a little bigger or a little smaller. He puts his model in front of a blank wall, near a window (as to be lit with soft, natural light), and snaps dozens of nearly identical pictures of the same pose, one after another—head and shoulders, looking straight into the camera, neutral expression.

He then spends the next *year* slowly building a painting, working from a slightly different source image every day to subvert the frozen instantaneity of a single photograph. Painting from many pictures like this allows Torok to take his time with a brush and simulate painting from life—his photographs capture his models breathing, blinking, the shifting of their hair, the rise and fall of inadvertent micro-expressions. (Anyone who has tried to hold perfectly still for any amount of time soon realizes it is an impossible task.) While Torok’s models are concentrating on relaxing and emptying their faces, they unintentionally reveal themselves to him. As curator Anne Goodyear put it, “In the very neutrality of his subjects, Torok can discern the full range of human expression, typically hidden behind a toothy smile.”

Torok says he paints artists because most of the people he knows are artists. But when considering the body of work he has produced over almost 30 years—tiny/viscous/super-realistic portraits and loose/expressive/fast/silly cartoon drawings that chart the flittings of his mind (in all their ridiculous and mundane glory)—a map of Torok’s value systems becomes clear. Despite the occasional flash of insecurity, Torok is a dreamer, an idealist, and a perennial optimist. The people he chooses to paint both inform and help reinforce his worldview. And what are children if not embodiments of hope? (“Kids ARE the future,” Torok says. “And I believe in the future!”) Little ones exist in a perpetual state of *becoming*—they are sensitive and exuberant, filled with dreams about the many unknowns of their futures. Quiet and yet saturated with an inexplicable magnetic charge, Jim Torok’s portraits—especially those of children—are powerful antidotes to the too-grown-up condition of world-weariness.

Jim Torok, born in 1954 in Indiana, lives and works in Brooklyn and upstate New York. Torok has had solo exhibitions at the National Portrait Gallery (Washington D.C.), Denver Art Museum, Ulrich Museum of Art (Kansas), Taubman Museum of Art (Virginia), and OMI International Arts Center (New York). He has participated in shows at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, FLAG Art Foundation (New York), Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati), and Blanton Museum of Art (Austin). His work is in the collections of the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art (Los Angeles), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), and Museum of Modern Art (New York).