

MIRROR, MIRROR A GALLERY SHOW OF SELF-PORTRAITS RENDERS SNAPSHOTS OF IDENTITY.

BY EMILY KRUMM



MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL: Exactly who is looking back at me? And how do we respond when someone demands: *Tell me about yourself?* This month, 26 local artists will explore these puzzlers at Hennes Art Company's "Inside Out: The Self-Portrait Show."

Walking into HAC's Hennepin Ave. space, the eye takes in all manner of works; paintings line the walls, three-dimensional pieces are set up along the floor, and even the coffee table in the lounge does double duty as a piece of aesthetic intrigue. Greg Hennes, who opened the place last June, is turning a section of his gallery into a wildly varied exhibition. The space has hosted three previous shows, but Hennes says that "Inside Out" will be its biggest and most important to date.

Curator John Schuerman's inspiration was to bring together a community of accomplished local artists and create a venue for them to share their sense of themselves. And while all art is to some degree self-portrait, Schuerman wanted the theme of this show to be explicit. "All day we are making choices about what we choose to reveal about ourselves," he says. "An artist might choose to present an idealized version of himself—or expose some insecurities."

The artists contributed a wide array of pieces ranging from realistic to abstract, from sculpture to performance work. Michael Sommers, director of Open Eye Figure Theatre, spent last summer in Indonesia studying traditional shadow forms. He became fascinated by the hierarchy in the world within the shows he viewed—gods, demigods, flying monkeys—and when asked

by Schuerman to devise a self-portrait, he decided to create a personal mythology of himself.

"The hierarchy of Michael," Sommers calls it. His leather shadow puppets are based on Indonesian tradition, with every scar and gesture expressing his yin/yang of darkness and light.

But how permanent is a self-portrait, however, since all of us are constantly changing and growing? "The self is a very fluid thing; as an artist you're always becoming," Schuerman says. Tina Blondell's "Midwinter Blues Again," which was born out of a bout of depression during a long and dark Minnesota winter, is a snapshot of herself at a specific time. She also contributed a second self-portrait created

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