



MSB Gallery

... and then everything was different

**PORTRAITS of
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY
SURVIVORS**

by
Eliette Markhbein
Solo exhibition

March 15 - April 15 2012

Opening Reception: March 15
6:00pm - 8:00pm

Sponsored by
Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation
Medicine

NYU Langone Medical Center
550 First Avenue, New York 10016
Medical Science Building, First Floor

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WHACK'ed ... and then everything was different honors traumatic brain injury (TBI) survivors who changed perceptions of TBI and disability in general and became role models for millions of others. The series of large scale portraits personifies the various causes of TBI as well as the diversity of people it affects. The portraits include those of rock and movie stars Keith Richards and George Clooney; Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords; ABC-TV news correspondent Bob Woodruff; ARMY SPEC (retired) Claudia Carreon, a veteran of the Iraq War; athletes Troy Aikman (NFL Hall of Famer) and Pat Lafontaine (NHL Hall of Famer); a very spirited 5-year-old, Alexis Verzal, who was shaken and thrown into a wall at age 2; Trisha Meili, the "Central Park Jogger"; and Timothy Pruce, New York Brain Injury Association Vice President.

The concept and formalism of my work are informed by my personal experience with TBI and evokes the need to reassemble fragments of a pre-existing identity in order to create a new self. Thus the drawing/cutting/collage technique used throughout the series, a reflection and a silent testimony to the three phases of TBI: Fractured/ Reassembled/ Whole.

First drawn in charcoal on paper based on photographs cropped to desired intimacy, the drawings are then imperfectly cut with scissors into squares and reassembled as portraits on painted canvas. I use paper to draw the portraits because like a human being, paper is organic, resilient, and fragile. It bends, absorbs, and rips; and bears witness to its endurance by exhibiting its scars in the process.

The uneven grid effect resulting from the drawing/cutting/collage technique illustrates how TBI disrupts sensory and perceptual processes, such as the seamless way in which one's mind functioned pre-injury - a phenomenon one is not conscious of until it is lost - substituting it with jagged awareness and fractured perceptions. The grid also acts as a metaphor for the support and structure TBI survivors require to live a productive and rewarding life. Each portrait is organized in a grid formation that reflects both an inward and an outward representation of TBI. Like the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, I believe the face is not only the outward sign of a personage, but the naked essence of humanity. As such, it reveals an extraordinary vulnerability and an astonishing resilience. By representing faces of TBI survivors on a large scale, I hope to elicit emotional intimacy and universality.

I want my work to bring awareness of TBI and its effects so the public at large better understands its symptoms, as well as help and support injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and their families, to transition and adapt to a new life. Based on my experience as an Artist in Residence at The Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Center in New York, and the success of using art as a modality for the rehabilitation of TBI patients, I have partnered with the Brain Injury Association of America and the Society for the Arts in Healthcare to educate the public about TBI through a touring exhibition of the portraits. The portraits will be auctioned to support a nationwide Artist-in-Residence program to serve people with TBI in hospitals and rehabilitation facilities.

More on the portraits at: www.biausa.org/tbi-portrait-project