

Talk to Me

Contemporary Figurative Sculpture by Beckie Kravetz

By: Sarah Baker

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Beckie Kravetz is a master of emotion and facial expression. Walking into her show, *Talk to Me*, is like walking into a party. The myriad figures, busts, heads and masks, mostly ceramic yet also bronze and mixed media, appear to be actively engaged in conversation. You can guess from the distance between the faces, or the tilt of a head or arch of an eyebrow what they might be chatting about. Something funny. Something sad. Maybe they're attracted to each other? Maybe they've had a fight? Maybe they don't want to be at the party at all.

Kravetz has spent her whole career thinking about faces. After years of training including at the Yale School of Drama and the Centro Maschere e Strutture Gestuali in Italy, she became the resident mask maker for the Los Angeles Opera, where she was also a principal makeup artist and assistant wig-master. She has helped transform the faces of countless stars, including Placido Domingo.



Beckie Kravetz, *Both sides, now*, 2019, paper clay and encaustic, 27 x 13 x 14". Photo: Beckie Kravetz.

While working in LA, Kravetz was offered a gallery show of her theater masks, leading to her creating her first visual art

masks—not designed to be worn. Today she lives in Massachusetts and focuses on her art practice, though works with Opera Roanoke, the Opera Fairbanks and the new Berkshire Opera Festival. She has won many awards, including a Fulbright to study sculpture, puppets and masks in Spain, and has exhibited internationally.

Kravetz’s sculptures usually evolve from several different sources—live models, photographs, books and internet research for specifics of facial features and expressions. Then she cuts and pastes to capture the perfect angle of an eye, or slant of a cheek. Finally, she sculpts, fires and layers on various kinds of paints (acrylic, casein, wax-based, clay paint). In *Talk to Me*, her works range from larger-than-life-size to a grouping of small heads in boxes, each stacked and adjacent. They are so close in proximity, yet siloed in their own square, maybe a metaphor for our times.

“The curtain rises and you’re in a scene, that’s the way I want people to feel in one of my exhibitions,” said Kravetz.

