

TIF SIGFRIDS

Joe Sola

Portraits: An Exhibition in Tif Sigfrids' Ear

October 12 – November 9, 2013

Have you ever really looked into Tif's ear? I know. You're busy. Who has the time to look in other people's ears? Sometimes it feels like having your own ears is too much. I get it. But this is different. Go ahead. Look.

[Do it.]

You looked. What did you see? Did you see the antechamber to her tympanum? Did you see the incus, the malleus and the cochlea? The Eustachian tube? Nope. You did not. You saw a white cube containing six micro-portraits by Joe Sola. Six portraits painted in oil with a finely shaved acupuncture needle in an individually molded ear gallery.

You could definitely leave things there. You could say to yourself, 'well, that's one more small and really befuddling thing. Like the fucking Higgs boson. But I've got stuff to do.' This is one way to go. But if you don't take it, then it's thinking time. Let's do it together. What was that in Tif's ear?

Let's exclude some stuff. Exclusion is fun. Humanly and historically speaking, having a very small portrait gallery by Joe Sola in the ear is rare. But having something in, around or through the ear is not. People put a staggering array of stuff in there. Humanly and historically speaking, we can't get enough of it. Gold hoops. Emerald, jade, amethyst, silver studs, rivets, boar tusks, hello kitty. In ancient Egypt women would wear scarabs as living broaches, a collar of the finest gold linking the insect to their ear lobes so that it not run, slowly, away. So one question is whether this is adornment, whether this is jewelry, whether it is next-level bling in Tif's ear? Will women soon be flying in from Dubai to buy Joe Sola microgalleries for their ears? Will Jay-Z buy Beyonce one? Does he love her that much?

Now let's pause to gaze up at the starry skies of abstraction. Look around you. Look at all these reflective people. What if Tif has a message for them in her ear? A frequently read book by gallerists and curators is called *Inside the White Cube*. And it is full of things to put in Tif's ear. It says that "we have now reached a point where we see not the art but the space first." It says that "In a peculiar reversal, the object introduced into the gallery 'frames' the gallery and its laws." If Brian

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O'Doherty were to write a follow-up to that book, he might of course call it *More Inside the White Cube* or *Cubetastic*. Or he might call it *Inside Tif's Ear*. Because what, after all, if the object which frames the gallery is itself a gallery? A small one in Tif's ear? What then? Are we ready for the answer? Because what we'd really be asking is whether Tif's ear holds a critique of the gallery system. As Robert Filiou once said, "art is what makes life better than art." So we need it. But galleries? Sure, inside the white cube there's beer and you like a lot of these people and who deep down is against art? But it is a very specific way of presenting a very unspecific array of things. It asks for aesthetic distance, for disinterested speculation, for refined reflection. And there's reason to wonder whether this isn't too dispassionate and orderly a way of experiencing something so passionate and disordering as art. Plus, there's the money-laundering angle.

Let's go in one more direction and then set this thing down. Because there's an elephant in this room. Joe Sola. What do you know about Joe Sola? [Pause for reflection.] Exactly! Is this safe? You've wondered, you know you have, what it would be like to have a little Joe Sola in your ear, a tiny Shakey whispering away in there, telling you to light things on fire, to jump out the window, to get a high school football team to tackle you, to confuse gay porn stars. Tif Sigfrids, like Joe Sola, is merry. But will there be a change in her merriment, living so closely to the work, hearing the world through it? Will she dive out a window? Will she be tackled by high school football players? Will she feel the spirit of Shakey move her? Let's watch carefully. Because this could get weird.

- Leland de la Durantaye