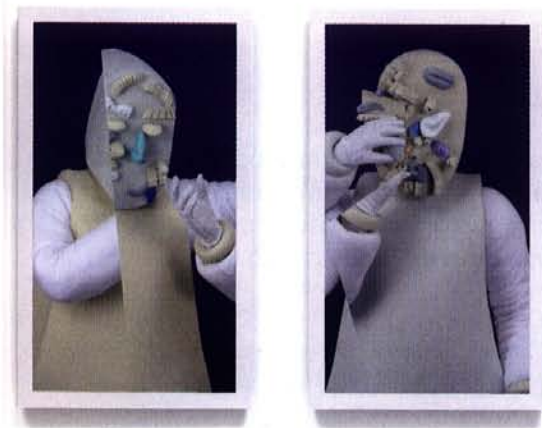


Art LTD January/February 2015



"ORGANIZING THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE (PURPLE)"
2014, **Brian Bress**
HIGH DEFINITION DUAL-CHANNEL VIDEO (COLOR),
HIGH DEFINITION MONITORS AND PLAYERS,
WALL MOUNT, FRAMED, 2-PART
37 $\frac{3}{4}$ " X 48" X 4", 20 MIN., 38 SEC., LOOP
PHOTO: COURTESY CHERRY AND MARTIN, LOS ANGELES

Brian Bress: "You Can't Sleep on a Door" at Cherry and Martin

In his early video works, Brian Bress and his friends dressed in handcrafted masks and costumes and performed for the camera in front of elaborate backdrops. What was unique about these works was that the performances were not shot and presented as narrative films, but as moving paintings set within framed flat-screen monitors. The actors often interacted with the screen as if it was an active surface. Many of the works in his current exhibition, "You Can't Sleep on a Door," depart from this signature style. Here, Bress explores new ways to fuse the language of video and abstraction.

These works feel like the first step in what will be an exciting transition, yet lack the humor and the intrigue of the more familiar pieces. The works with costumed actors are the most engaging. *Organizing The Physical Evidence (Purple)* (all works 2014) is a diptych wherein two Mr. Potato Head-like figures perform in front of a deep purple background reaching from screen to screen to rearrange abstracted facial features on each other's heads. In the two-panel piece *Doctor/Patient #1 (on tan and violet lines)*, masked actors representing a doctor and patient doodle with a black marker directly on the screens, then erase the cartoonish drawings they created. What is so captivating about this style of Bress' work is the use of the screen as a surface to be drawn upon, cut out, reached across, or seen through.

The creation of sculpture and paintings that have isolated video elements marks a new direction for Bress. What is significant about this transition is that the paintings are not flat-screen monitors but canvases with embedded screens. Far more than the previous works, these pieces are about directly engaging the language of abstraction and the formal qualities of painting. In *Clayhands* and *Clayhands X2*, Bress combines colorful geometric shapes painted in a minimalist style with video vignettes in which a disembodied hand creates small clay shards, placing them within a colored circle. Watching the placement of discreet clay objects is not as engaging as watching strangely costumed actors, however. As these figures become less prominent in the work it is harder to find a point of entry. It is encouraging to see Bress depart from known territories and into the unknown to investigate new possibilities for the fusing of video and painted or sculpted elements. These ideas should become more involving as they become more fully resolved.

—JODY ZELLEN