

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Creative Boom

Witty ceramic masks by Jonathan Baldock that convey a world of emotion

Katy Cowan

20 September 2019

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Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske III, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Via Creative Boom submission.

Do you know those people who find the face of Jesus in a pack of Monster Munch? It's called pareidolia, a psychological phenomenon that causes people to see faces in inanimate objects. And it's a cognitive process that British artist Jonathan Baldock is exploring in his latest series of ceramic masks.

Called Personae, the collection teems with bright colours and outlandish expressions. Ripples of clay allude to folds of skin whilst incisions and abstract protuberances reveal physiognomic features such as eyes, ears and nostrils. Here, you can see Baldock is toying with the theme of pareidolia. Whilst some

masks mediate universal emotions such as happiness or sadness, others merely hint at figuration.

Baldock achieves the variations in mood and personality by experimenting with different ceramic techniques, using coloured clays, applying glazes, and firing the hanging tablets at varying temperatures. "Lustrous, painterly finishes emphasise the playfulness of certain expressions whilst earthen, pumice-like surfaces manifest feelings of melancholia," says the Gallery. "The artist employs seriality to emphasise these differences by hanging the works side-by-side and using an identical rectangular format."

You can see this new series at an upcoming exhibition at the Stephen Friedman Gallery in London, launching on 27 September and running until 9 November 2019.

Baldock trained as a painter but now works primarily in low-fi ceramics and textiles – hand-making vast 3-D objects, sculptural pieces and colourful immersive installations. His work is often crazily humorous but also has an uncanny, macabre quality. He has exhibited internationally and his work has explored everything from emojis to orifices. His studio is in East London but he exhibits internationally. Find out more at jonathan-baldock.com.

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Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske I, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 25 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske VI, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 25 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske XIII, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske XVII, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske IV, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske XI, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske IX, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Jonathan Baldock, Maske XXIII, 2019, ceramic, 31 x 35 cm. Copyright Jonathan Baldock. Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London