

## **Heather Cantrell**

A Study in Portraiture: Act I  
June 20 – July 19, 2009

**Curated by Caryn Coleman  
@Kinkead Contemporary**

Kinkead Contemporary is pleased to present *A Study in Portraiture: Act I*, on view in Los Angeles from June 20 – July 19, 2009.

*A Study in Portraiture* deals with the subversion and altering of identity through portraiture and how those issues manifest themselves through Heather Cantrell's exploration of tribes and subcultures, specifically those of the art world. The project explores her usage of theatricality and references to historical artworks within her chosen medium of photography to document the performative. Involving much more than mere photography, Cantrell's artistic practice entails a conceptual strategy that incorporates performance, theater, painting, sculpture, and sociology. The resulting photographic image represents this in one captured moment with all its beautiful ambiguity and intrigue – it is a 'play-still.'

Kinkead Contemporary will be turned into an "in-house" photography studio for Heather Cantrell's *A Study in Portraiture: Act I* where members of the Los Angeles art community will be invited to participate in the performative act of having their portrait taken. Using hand-painted backdrops and a variety of costume and prop materials, Cantrell pushes her role as a director, embracing ideas of the theater, by making each exhibition of *A Study in Portraiture* an act in a play (hence the titling "Act I" and "Act II" etc.) where each individual has the ability to realize and portray a character. Referencing West African photographers Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibe as well as the 18th century society portraits of British painter Thomas Gainsborough, she addresses the subject's complicity in constructed identity and the role the artist also has in creating this. Like these artists, she does this while simultaneously documenting a generation - hers being an ethnographic exploration in the exclusivity of the contemporary art world.

Cantrell's portrait studio will remain in the main gallery throughout the exhibition functioning as the site for scheduled sessions throughout the show (these will occur both privately and publicly) and as an installation object when not in use.

Also on display will be selected framed portraits and a wall where small photographs will be added as each session occurs. The website [www.studyinportraiture.com](http://www.studyinportraiture.com) is a documentary component to the series featuring project history, images of the sessions, portrait photographs, news, and interviews.

**Heather Cantrell** (lives/works in Los Angeles) received her MFA from UCLA in 2001 and her BFA from the Maryland Institute, College of Art in 1995. Her work has been shown in the touring museum exhibition *Likeness: Portraits of Artists by Other Artists* curated by Matthew Higgs (Cantrell's *Singing Sirens* is featured on catalog cover) and the recent group exhibitions *LA: 2019 Cults, Collectives and Cocooning* curated by Ciara Ennis at 18th Street Art Center, *Celebration* at Circus Gallery, *Group Show* at Black Dragon Society, and *Flowing, Pulsing, Beating, Burning* curated by Roger Dickes. Solo gallery shows include *Century's End* at sixspace in Los Angeles and *Extended Family* at Newman Popiashvili Gallery in New York. Reviews of her work have been published in *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Frieze*, *Index*, and *Wired Magazine*. *A Study in Portraiture: Act II* opens at MOT International in London this November.

*A Study in Portraiture* is curated by **Caryn Coleman** who is presently pursuing her Master of Fine Arts degree in Curatorial Studies at Goldsmiths in London. She owned the art gallery sixspace in Los Angeles (2002-2006), Chicago (1998-2000), and has worked at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. In addition to founding the seminal art.blogging.la, Coleman has written for publications such as Art Review online, Beautiful Decay, and the LA Weekly. Upcoming curated projects include *A Study in Portraiture: Act II* at MOT International, London this fall and *The Beginning of the End of the Beginning* for Artist Pension Trust. Coleman is also currently doing research for Ralph Rugoff, Director of the Hayward Gallery in London.

Kinkead Contemporary is a contemporary art gallery dedicated to emerging artists. Founded by John Kinkead, the gallery's mission is to introduce new voices through an ambitious series of solo and group exhibitions.

For further information, please contact:

John Kinkead  
Kinkead Contemporary  
6029 Washington Blvd  
Culver City, CA 90232

Tel: (310) 838-7400  
E-mail: [john@kinkeadcontemporary.com](mailto:john@kinkeadcontemporary.com)

[kinkeadcontemporary.com](http://kinkeadcontemporary.com)  
[studyinportraiture.com](http://studyinportraiture.com)