

Jim Torok: There is Nothing Wrong with You

Opening reception:
Saturday, September 8, 6-8 pm
Talk and performance with artist at 7 pm

We are pleased to announce the fifth solo exhibition by Brooklyn-based artist Jim Torok at Lora Reynolds Gallery.

Jim Torok's work typically falls into two categories: hyper-realistic oil portraits on panel and drawings on paper of cartoon-like imagery. *There is Nothing Wrong with You* will include more than 40 new cartoon drawings and a self-portrait in oil.

The cartoons are spontaneous ink drawings on paper. The protagonist is Torok, represented by an over-developed stick figure with an oblong head and a big, round nose. Text provides a wandering, monologic storyline or sometimes just a simple catchphrase. Extreme but friable optimism abounds. These drawings chronicle the artist's quotidian struggles in a humorous light, combating melancholia with joy and exuberance.

I Drempt I Could Fly, for example, bears its title boldly across the top of the composition. It depicts a figure (whose nose is almost as big as his head) against a sky of watered-down blue and red ink, hovering just above a sliver of green. Small print at the bottom of the piece reads, "(But only a foot off the ground)" followed by an arrow pointing at the grass. A thought bubble containing, "Wow," emerges from the figure's head. Torok embraces spelling errors, poor penmanship, and a seemingly innocent style of drawing to emphasize the farcical nature of his cartoons.

Torok's small, intimate portraits, on the other hand, are so well rendered they are easily mistaken for photographs. All subjects are represented from the front, head and shoulders, holding a neutral expression. Torok paints from multiple photos taken during a single sitting to imbue a two-dimensional likeness with the subtleties a photograph cannot capture: the specific way a person blinks or breathes, the way her hair ripples and bounces. Torok has painted himself many times throughout his career, building a multivalent narrative around personal growth, mortality, and coming to know himself.

Torok's portraits and cartoons are the fruits of a rigorous exploration of the depths of the mind and the elusive details of physical appearance that compose a human identity. Torok is in pursuit of personhood and all of its polarities—sometimes unflattering, sometimes transcendent.

The release of Torok's first major artist's book, *Portraits*, will coincide with this exhibition. The book includes 83 of Torok's portraits made between 1996 and 2012 and essays by artist Michael Smith and curator Anne Goodyear, Ph.D.

Jim Torok was born in Indiana in 1954 and lives and works in New York. He has had solo exhibitions across the US regularly for the past 15 years. His work has been acquired by museums including the Museum of Modern Art (New York), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), and is in many important private collections around the world.

We are also pleased to announce a selection of new work by Cordy Ryman to open in our project room in conjunction with *Jim Torok: There is Nothing Wrong with You*. Ryman makes abstract, slapdash, colorful objects that straddle the line between painting and sculpture. Typical materials include velcro, staples, Gorilla Glue, chopped-up 2x4s, and enamel paint. Ryman's work—deeply rooted in the history of modern abstraction—plays formal games that call attention to the subtleties of surface, space, and light while championing unabashed visual pleasure.