



Kim Bruce's cast beeswax "Dress Maker 2" with pins and gauze,

Kim Bruce spent 20 years as an interior designer making environments comfortable. In a way, it's a business of shaping identity through functionality, quality of life and aesthetics. With a designer's touch, spaces suddenly gain personality.

Although no longer working with spaces, the Calgary-based artist is still exploring notions of identity with her encaustic and beeswax sculptures. *Face the Figure*

combines two series, one of tiny torso figures and another of tiny heads, and delves into her concerns about body image.

“We all put on a face, so to speak, and we all have a style,” says Bruce. “From that, I’m able to look at what we personify ourselves as—who we are, what we do and how that comes out in what we wear.”

Manipulation is key in Bruce’s study of identity. Her material of choice, wax, is easily manipulated. Working from a single silicone mold she can explore one face or figure any number of times.

The wax also gives her a willingness to make mistakes. Unlike her commercial work in design, Bruce can now explore the impact of opposites. By inserting opposing materials or forces she further manipulates identity from piece to piece.

“I use a lot of pins. When you think of a pin it’s a very feminine object, but it’s hard, straight and sharp. Yet, it’s used with fabrics which are soft, flexible and warm.”

There’s something a bit unsettling about Bruce’s disembodied figures and sleeping heads.

“My purpose is to expose the private self behind the facade; not having appendages forces you to focus on that dress...Having the eyes closed conveys a silence but more poignantly suggests that perhaps we are not looking.”

To emphasize this, Bruce will install her heads to face the figures. But Bruce also wants the viewer to come face to face with her figures as well. The pieces are only between four and eight inches large. Bruce figures she’s compelled subliminally to make her work small.

“If you think about the intimacy of these things—you’re forced to look closer and you’re bent down to see the detail. It’s almost like you’re intruding on the privacy of the piece.”

Face the Figure will be on display from Thu November 26 - Wed December 23 at [ArtFirm Gallery](#) in Calgary.