



a typically obtuse interview with the bruce high quality foundation
The anonymous art collective make a post-Brexit comment on British politics.

by Felix Petty
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The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Self Portrait (Tony)*, 2016.



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Self Portrait (Gordon)*, 2016.

Bruce High Quality is a fictional artist, who apparently died in 9/11; The Bruce High Quality Foundation are a group of real artists who remain anonymous, dedicated to the memory of the fictional Bruce, and who engage in a variety of stunts, projects, art works, and public interventions that often question the art world itself. Their work is often sharply funny, darkly humorous, and obliquely critical. They've run a free art school, tugged an island around New York, and have made a *Night of the Living Dead* art world parody. They defy easy categorisation.

Now the Bruce High Quality Foundation have made the trip across the pond, at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery tonight they're unveiling a new series of paintings of the last four British Prime Ministers; Theresa May, David Cameron, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. Rendered in colourful Warholian silkscreen, defaced with enamel paint, and daubed over with a blank white faces. The works maybe slip into a weird history of political portraiture, as kind

of alt-icons for the terrible world we live in, or part of a grand infantile tradition of defacement as a way of attack. Though of course, in typical BHQF fashion, they resist slithering into something so simplistic, as their typically BHQF answers to our questions prove.

As an American collective, what inspired you to make this intervention into UK politics? How would you rate the current state of affairs in both the US and the UK?

Did we intervene into UK politics? That is amazing news. We're so happy to hear Brexit has been cancelled. And for our next trick we're going to do a portrait of Trump and reverse the results of the US election. We have always believed that art has a truly awesome and mysterious power, but we never imagined the consequences to be so immediately rewarding.

How do the works relate to the history of political portraiture?



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Self Portrait (David)*, 2016.

Angry constituents and smart-ass children have been blotting out the faces of their leaders since the beginning of time. As a collective, and therefore our own body politic, we are enacting the will of the people.

Can you explain the process behind making the paintings?

First, inspiration, in this case, contempt. Then we paint a canvas. This part is a soothing reminder of the best of all possible worlds. Then the contemptible image is silkscreened onto our perfect abstract colour world. This makes us even angrier, and so we blot out the face with enamel paint in the hopes of bringing on a sense of catharsis. But it won't be had. We know the image is still there lurking. And we know the abstraction is even



The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Self Portrait (Theresa)*, 2016.

further down, yearning to be free. It's really a miserable state of affairs.

What are the faces you have painted over the portraits meant to symbolise?

That's Bruce. What he symbolises is another matter.

Are the paintings meant to be funny, depressing, thought provoking?

Yes.

Bruce High Quality Foundation's paintings will be on view at Pippy Houldsworth Gallery until 14 January 2017 as part of the exhibition 5 Years at Heddon Street.