

Cherry and Martin

Goldner, Liz. "OCMA: Brian Bress," **Artillery**, October 12, 2016.

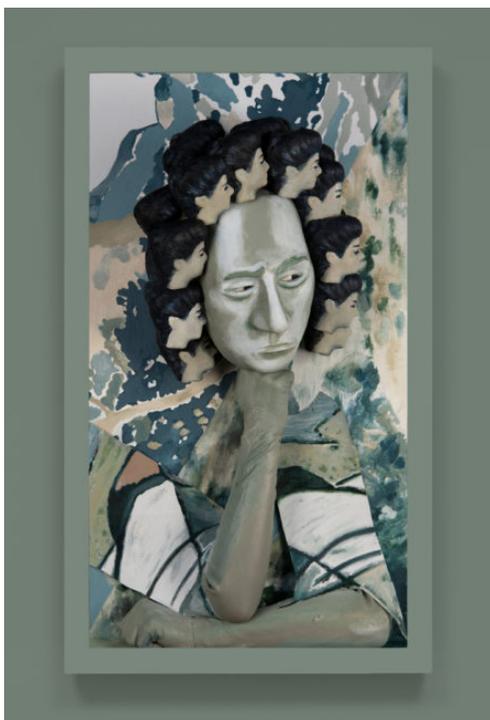
ARTILLERY

Brian Bress' amalgam of drawings, paintings, masks, sculpture and videos, brought together for "Make Your Own Friends," a survey of the last ten years of Bress' output, elicits a range of feelings, from poignancy and surprise, to disconcertion and compassion. The exhibition as a whole is like a new iteration of surrealism. The artist's *Beadman (costume)* (2012), for example, is a 76-inch sculpture, presumably based on a model of a person who is covered head to toe with a jumpsuit of multi-colored wooden beads. It is a creature that could easily come out of a fairy tale or one's imagination. Nearby is the video *Beadman (Parker)* (2012), but this time the figure within the beaded costume is animated. Apparently real, it is jumping up and down, like a child's fantasy come to life. The similar 75-inch *Whitewalker (costume)* (2012), made of hanging white bamboo beads on wire looks like a white, faceless Chewbacca from *Star Wars*. This stationary character is also illustrated by a video, with the beads blowing in the breeze.



Brian Bress
Whitewalker (2012)
Courtesy the artist and Cherry and Martin, Los Angeles
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Another video, *Three Faces* (2014), featuring three anthropomorphized potted plants combines real plants with animated flowers and abstract shapes. Here also is the video *Cowboy (Brian led by Peter Kirby)* (2012), an animated, puppet cowboy, seated behind a pane of glass, drawing onto the glass, so the viewer sees the drawing in reverse. Among the static sculptures are three mixed-media masks: *Ridley-Tree Sleeper #1 (Nick and Brian)*, *The Mushroom* and *Imposter* (all 2012). By including wigs, feathers, rabbit skin, and with *Ridley-Tree Sleeper*, 21 smaller heads attached by pins, the artist evokes scary human forms. In another video, *Imposter* comes to life.



Brian Bress
Ridley-Tree Sleeper #1 (Nick and Brian), 2012
Collection of Cyndee Howard
©Brian Bress

One of the oddest pieces in this exhibition is the dual-channel video, *Organizing the Physical Evidence (Purple)* (2014). It features two puppet-like characters, seemingly built out of foam, with bits of material, foam and perhaps clay stuck onto their faces, suggesting features, although askew ones. These two characters relate to each other in part by reaching from one video screen to the other. Bress' source material for the works in this exhibition is 1980s children's television, including the programs *The Muppets*, *Pee-wee Herman* and *Romper Room*, which the artist watched as a child. "Make Your Own Friends," alternately sweet and strange, delves into the uncanny and delivers palpable dissonance.



Brian Bress
Organizing the Physical Evidence (Purple), 2014

"Brian Bress: Make Your Own Friends," August 6 – December 4, 2016 at the Orange County Museum of Art, 850 San Clemente Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660. www.ocma.net