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KAREL FUNK
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Karel Funk creates astonishingly detailed and hauntingly quiet paintings that at once rely on and challenge

conventional notions of portraiture. Historically, portraits were painted with an agenda. Preeminent figures with the means to commission such work were portrayed to emphasize real or desired attributes, seeking to command admiration and respect from the viewer. Most often the subject faced forward, with eyes clearly meeting the gaze of the onlooker, allowing for the often-cited "window" into the nature of the sitter. Visual evidence from clothing, environment, and posture conveyed pertinent information about the life of the individual. In contrast, Funk paints portraits of his friends and acquaintances, unknown to most who will view these works. In this way, the depiction of the subject is more democratic, the everyman portrait of sorts. The background of each painting is an austere white, devoid of any environmental clues that place the individual in any particular context or location. Funk purchases the largely nondescript, often neutral color clothing for the models to wear, most often hooded outdoor jackets. This further acts as a separator between sitter and personal identifiers, reducing in many instances the work to deliberately formal concerns. The subject's expression is ambiguous, and Funk does not volunteer a narrative or insights at the inner life of the individual, but instead invites consideration of concepts of representation and reality, presence and absence, the identified and the anonymous, the specific and the ambiguous, and the viewer and the viewed.

Previous exhibitions have been presented at the Musee d'Art Contemporain de Montreal; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; the Prague Biennale, Prague, Czech Republic; and the Marella Arte Contemporanea in Milan, Italy. His work is included in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art, among others. Funk resides in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

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