



German Jamaican

Date
2006

Primary Maker
Alex Brown

Medium
Oil on canvas

Description
Alex Brown, who lives and works in Des Moines, Iowa, makes abstracted, close-up images of people’s faces, which he considers “paintings” more than “portraits.” The artist begins with lowresolution photographs that he finds on the internet or in the popular press, then enlarges them to bring about their pixelated distortion; his interest lies in color and pattern rather than in a specific individual: “Black, white, yellow, brown, geometric, organic, male, female. Those choices are much more part of my

decision making process than anything else.” He thinks of each image in terms of how it works within a group of his paintings and how it complements other works. In his canvases, Brown incorporates secondary images—which may at first be hard to discern—that he reduces to simple shapes within a larger, fractured composition. His work harks back to the Op art movement of the 1960s, which explored effects of visual perception through the use of geometric shapes, though often in stark black and white rather than color. Brown’s method also references the longer art-historical tradition of anamorphosis—the inclusion in compositions of images of objects that have been distorted past the point of recognition, except from certain vantage points—which was most prevalent during the Renaissance. Like many artists, Brown experiences a tension between abstraction and figuration—a tension within which he deliberately stages his paintings. “I have always been confused by abstraction,” he says, “confused because of a lack of orientation. Taking something realized and turning it into something unrecognizable makes sense to me. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017)

Dimensions
Overall: 78 x 77 1/4 in., 1.6 cm (198.1 x 196.2 cm, 5/8 in.)