



Mark Karasick

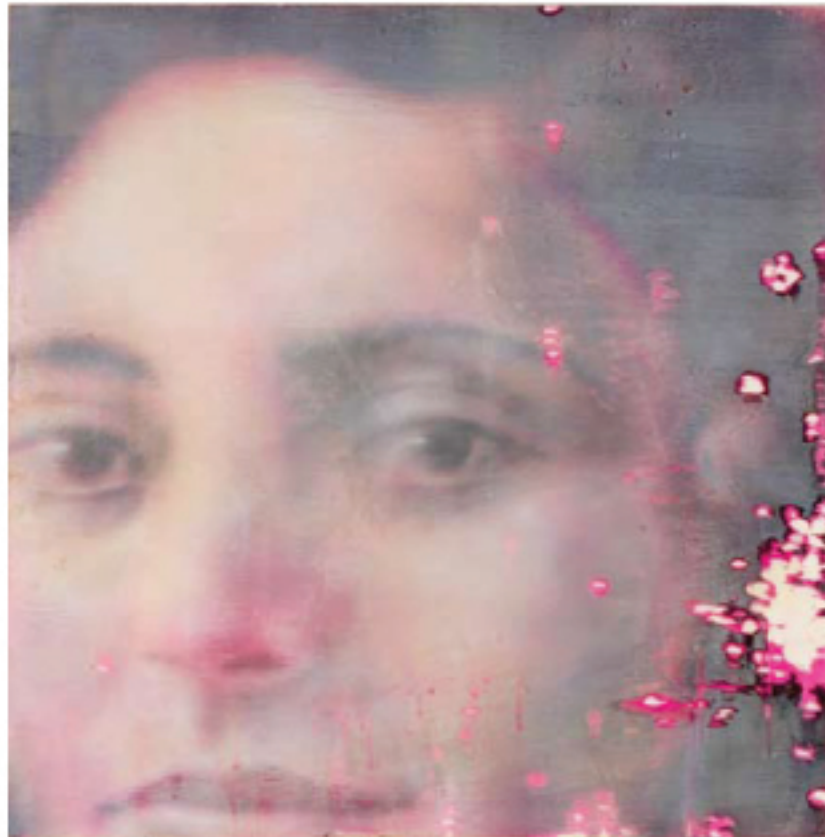
Memory, history and time are implicit elements in the art of Mark Karasick. Karasick appropriates images from various media sources as a starting point for his encaustic paintings and video works. The conflict of gain and loss in replication is central to his practice. In the series of encaustic paintings titled **Forgotten Women**, Karasick combines a personally significant portrait of his aunt with images of anonymous, forgotten women creating a statement about memory. The portraits are images taken from two distinct sources: four of the five faces were taken from turn-of-the-century *carte de visites* discovered by the artist in a second-hand shop in Budapest; the fifth comes from a photograph of his great aunt. Karasick has painted the portraits. They retain their photographic realism but the painted faces lie beneath layers of paint and wax; they are visible but mediated from their original format. We are left to ponder what memories have been lost or hidden under the artist's manipulation. None of the women are identified, including the aunt with a known history. By combining and reproducing the unknown faces, the artist substantiates their existence and conversely objectifies and distances the memory of his relative. The women have been placed on equal ground. Encaustic solidifies their presence as embedded images or embalmed beings under wax.

Above:
Forgotten Women
2005
Encaustic on canvas
Collection of the Artist

Situated next to the installation of **Forgotten Women** is a video titled **Michael**. **Michael** is a work of pure emotion. Through filming this boy, Karasick captured a range of emotions in a short span of time. Originally shot in colour, the video has been altered by the artist to resemble an old black and white homemade movie. Like Annika Larsson and Bill Viola, Karasick uses close-up and slow motion in the making of the work. By doing so, he is able to open up and accentuate the range and cycle of emotions expressed through the child's face. We witness an arch of emotion as it enters, manifests and leaves the body revealing a transition from happiness to sadness, joy to displeasure. Karasick maintains a direct relationship with the viewer through frontal viewing and peak moments of emotional states.

Such devices were used in early filmmaking to communicate paths to liberation from social boundaries. The critic Walter Benjamin discussed this effect as such: "By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action ... with the close-up, space expands, with slow motion, movement is extended ... An unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man ... the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses²¹."

Resembling silent film, **Michael** is freed from speech and fastens the spectator's attention on gestures on the face. Facial expression isolated from the surroundings is intensified and penetrates to a strange new dimension striking at the expressive heart of the moving image.



Forgotten Women
(detail)
2005
Encaustic on canvas
Collection of the Artist