

ARTFORUM

Tony Oursler

LEHMANN MAUPIN | HONG KONG
 12 Pedder Street, 407 Pedder Building
 January 14–March 5

Tony Oursler's "PriV&te" draws on the artist's long-standing concern with the implications of data's encroachment on personal life, in particular Big Brother's and big business' yearning to map and identify the human face. This series of seven large and colorful head-shaped panels, four of which are inset with video screens that play animated composites of erratically moving facial features, borrows dots, grids, and numbers reminiscent of measurements used in facial recognition software to adorn each panel. The panels' surface textures affect a sleek, glittery mood of hyperbolic sci-fi technology.

The mouths featured on four of the LCD screens make largely illegible movements, and occasionally visitors can make out audible fragments of sober sentences. Due to their random timing and plurality, these recognizable phrases sometimes overlap with and interrupt one another, creating a clamor with a psychological gravity. Oursler's characters, who frequently sound tortured or who appear to be in the midst of inner turmoil, tend to exist in existential spaces, and this series is no exception, albeit with a technological leaning. The largest, most impactful work in the show is *EUC%*, 2015, a wooden panel held upright by black sandbags in a Brechtian nod toward its own theatricality. By riffing on facial mapping technologies, Oursler is gesturing toward our increasingly quantifiable personal identities. He seems to suggest that if anonymity is becoming null in the crowds of public life, interior privacy will surely be next. This is a message with particular resonance in Hong Kong, whose residents' recent struggles with the distant Chinese central government are marked by an increasing inability to maintain anonymity when voicing dissent.



Tony Oursler, *EUC%*, 2015, wood, ink-jet print, LCD screens, USB flash drives, sound, 113 x 71.5 x 30.5".

— Elliot Albrecht