

## **Art in Review: Evan Penny: No One - In Particular**

By Ken Johnson

Evan Penny, a Toronto-based artist whose other job is making props for movies, creates technically amazing and stunningly realistic sculptural portraits. That his busts are larger than life and, in some cases, distorted as though viewed in a funhouse mirror or a tricky photograph only enhances the hallucinatory verisimilitude. Some are in the round, but most are flattened into wall-mounted reliefs. Some portray real people and others imaginary characters - hence the show's title *No One - In Particular* - but it is impossible to tell the difference.

Mr. Penny sculpts his subjects in clay and then makes molds into which he applies thin layers of colored silicone rubber, using different tools and hues to create blemishes, veins and other epidermal variations. Finally he adds glassy eyes and hair - human or equine - one strand at a time.

The sculptures most immediately call to mind works by the British sculptor Ron Mueck, but Mr. Penny's involve less play with narrative. The most impressive are the least distorted: the back of a shirtless, heavysset, middle-aged man with close-cropped hair; the jowly, grizzled, white-haired fellow with a pensive expression; and the young, freckled, wide-eyed woman with modish, dyed-red hair. Such works seem more than just feats of technique; they have about them a wonderfully attentive sympathy for the corporeally human.

*Ken Johnson, 2005*