

Dreaming eyes don't lie.

A note on Matthias Dornfeld's 'portraits'.

They look at us as if they *knew*: Our secret thoughts, our daemons – our true self. Matthias Dornfeld's 'characters' behold us with entrancing Cheshire Cat smiles. They may not be shifting from transparency to visibility (as Carroll's famous feline does), but they seem to have emanated from an equally phantasmagorical place – like those unexpected visitors our minds like to conjure up from the corners of dimly lit rooms at night.

Just like our mind's eye, Matthias Dornfeld's brush has a propensity for faces. His, however, may bear a dozen pairs of eyes; they may be adorned with mystic ornamentation, or halos of unruly energy. Dornfeld likes to call them 'comrades'. Outlandish, but welcome, they emerge on the artist's canvases as if by virtue of their own desire to make themselves known. Glowing – here, now – on the canvas: Bright, spectral colours, once and for all trapped in thick, claggy paint.

Sometimes reduced to their most basic features (dot – dot – smile), Dornfeld's faces seem to touch upon something eternally human. Today, there's facebook, there are selfies and smileys – and aren't we currently teaching our computers to excel at face recognition?

Human eyes are designed to detect and read faces, even if there's actually nothing more to see than a cluster of inkblots. As developmental psychology revealed, the innate human ability to perceive and recognize faces is an essential condition for our development of a sense of self. Newborns with an age of less than an hour have been found to prefer schematic face patterns to other stimuli. The mother's face, looking at her child, fosters the infant's awareness of the difference between inner and the outer realities. There needs to be a 'you', in order to understand what 'I' and 'world' mean.

In psychotherapeutic contexts, images provide a key to otherwise inaccessible realms of our self. Rorschach tests are known to unlock internal images – feeding back to us, what we've already been carrying within ourselves. The image, and the image of the face in particular, speak vividly to our unconscious minds. Thus, if we feel that Dornfeld's portraits *regard us*, it is because of this simple truth: They read our minds.