

TIF SIGFRIDS

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Artist Creates Entire Exhibit Inside A Human Ear. Yes, You Read That Right.

The Huffington Post | By Priscilla Frank
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Have you ever dreamed of looking inside an artist or curator's head to better understand their vision of an exhibition?

This sci-fi scenario might merely have remained a fantasy in the minds of art nerds, if it wasn't for a visionary named Joe Sola. His upcoming exhibition, entitled "Portraits: An Exhibition Inside Tif Sigfrids' Ear," allows viewers to peek into the dealer's head like never before. Yes, the show is *exactly* what it sounds like.



The Los Angeles based artist has teamed up with Hollywood gallerist Tif Sigfrids to execute one of the most imaginative exhibitions with the smallest dimensions in recent history. Sola created six portraits, each measuring in at $\frac{4}{64}$ inches by $\frac{5}{64}$ inches, all using a stereo microscope, a .12-millimeter acupuncture needle, and tiny granules of paint. Each of the miniature paintings were then installed on a tiny white-walled gallery, which they proceeded to insert inside Ms. Sigfrids' audio canal.

The very precise act of painting of the works themselves was only the final stage of an unusual artmaking process, which involved steps like making a cast of the dealer's ear to make sure the miniature gallery would fit inside. A series of fittings was necessary before the gallery could even be constructed. Viewers who attend the show will be greeted by Sigfrid sitting at a table surrounded by white walls, because, you know... the gallery is in her ear. If you're brave enough, you can explore the aesthetics of portraiture and ear cartilage simultaneously. Of course we're very excited.

We reached out to Mr. Sola to learn more about the inspiration and process behind his unconventional exhibition.

Let's start with the obvious question. Why did you decide to install an art exhibition inside a human ear?

The idea came through a discussion I had with Tif Sigfrids about a year and a half ago. We were at the opening reception for the LA Biennial and we were talking together and I thought of the idea of creating a gallery space inside her ear. I couldn't stop thinking

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about the work and I continued a conversation with her where we decided that, yeah, we had to make it happen.

What was it specifically about the ear that caught your attention? Was it an aesthetic thing? Symbolic?

You know, I can't really answer that. I'm not really sure.

How long did the painting process take?

The set up for the work took several months of experimentation with materials and tools and different types of glasses and magnifying glasses. I found working under a stereo microscope was the best way to work at this size. Planning this out took several months before I even started painting. And then I found I could make two paintings a day on average and it took me approximately four hours to make each one. They're very, very, *very* small so my movements had to be very small as well. That made me have to work very slowly.

How does the exhibition viewing function on a physical level? Is there a magnifying glass or anything?

There is no magnifying glass, no. We will have a checklist available for visitors in the gallery which I made from a series of macro photographs I made of the paintings. So guests can see the paintings installed in Tif's ear and then get more information from the macro photos and catalogue.

And the paintings just stay in Tif's ear throughout the entire run of the show?

The gallery is open for business during regular hours. The paintings will be in her ear [then]. There are six portraits. The oil paintings are made from styrene which is a material often used in model making for miniature train sets. Each individual painting is glued to a miniature gallery wall using rubber cement. The installation of the whole exhibition took several days to do, as I had to build a miniature gallery, wall by wall, with the paintings installed on it, very carefully one by one.

Are the paintings for sale? Will they then live in a collector's ear?

All of the six paintings are for sale, installed in the miniature gallery, all as a single piece. The collector who purchases this will own the works so that is a decision they will make but my idea is it will function as an object independently of the ear.

Art in ears... Is there a metaphor here?

I really like this idea of people coming into a gallery and having the work inside the gallerist's ear, as if almost it's really inside a gallerist's head. I think there is something really interesting there.

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**Is this going to be the beginning of more unconventional installation sites?
What's next?**

I've been thinking about and building this project for about a year and a half. I am not sure what will happen afterwards. I am very excited to see what my larger paintings will look like when I get back to that.



"Joe Sola Portraits: An Exhibition in Tif Sigfrids' Ear" runs from October 12 until November 9 at Tif Sigfrids Gallery in Los Angeles.