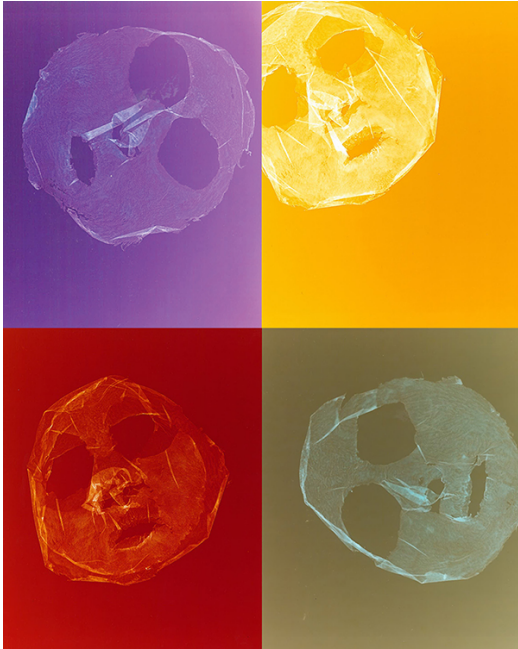


# CORKIN GALLERY

Barbara Astman

*I as artifact*, 2008-2014



opening Wednesday, September 2, 2015

In *I as artifact* Barbara Astman presents a collection of arresting, face-like constructions isolated by a dense void of deepest black. Bearing no specific markers revealing gender, race, or age, the features are intimated by the negative space encased by patterned skin textures. Dominating them are the eyes or, more precisely, eye sockets, their angular holes not unsighted but instead protective veils against complete self-disclosure. Noses, suggested by intensified folds flattened here or narrowed there, provide dimension to the otherwise compressed surface. It is the mouths, however, open in diverse labial positions, that complete the animation of these images. Pausing momentarily in speaking, singing, exclaiming, there is an almost overwhelming cacophony of resounding silence. And it is in this moment that their individuality appears.

They look out of the dark and take command of the entire picture space to create a universal micro- world. The dynamic tension is made especially palpable by the indeterminate vantage point. Are we witnesses to these translucent forms or are we in fact inhabiting them? In encountering other beings, we would normally use learned, socially acceptable inquiry to detect the underlying nature of the character. If the mask is ours, then like all masks, it becomes an extension of the face, a protective barrier against others reading the multitude of innate consistencies and contradictions. Implicit in this anonymity is the potential catalyst into a secret cosmos of psychological fantasy.

-excerpt from Catherine Elliot Shaw, Curator, McIntosh Gallery