

small world

PHOTOGRAPHER LINDSAY PAGE PUTS
PRIVATE EMOTIONS ON PUBLIC DISPLAY.
BY KIM EDWARDS



Untitled, from the series *Collections*, 2003

LINDSAY PAGE LIVES IN HER OWN LITTLE WORLD AND BELIEVES EVERYONE ELSE DOES AS WELL.

"We all experience our lives privately, we're all engaged in this private spectacle, experiencing our own events, people and places," she says. "So we exist in our heads, that's only ours, nobody else can enter into that."

Take, for example, one of her untitled photos featuring a close-up of a man's head with little paper buildings sticking out of it. "I had the idea of having multiple worlds inside and how you navigate through that," the artist says. "How you define that depends on what you think about. Where you're taking yourself. So you build these things in your head." Page says the subject of her cur-

rent series, *Collections*, is simply the human condition. "I see them as sort of scenes or vignettes about the nature of human existence, or what it means to be human."

The 29-year-old Toronto native creates constructions out of paper and photographs, sets them up in scenes, then takes photos. The scenes can take weeks or months of painstaking labour with paper and glue to put together. The actual photography is secondary to her creations, which, although time-intensive endeavours, are intended to look crude. "I keep it pretty simple," she says. "I want the images to look a little bit raw and homemade. I think there's something personal about that."

Memories of teenage social pressures provided Page with her creative inspiration. "I wanted to talk about people who picked on me in high school," she explains. "I had this idea that I wanted to make collections of people, and talk about the ways we classify relationships. [Bullying] raised all these questions, how we project ourselves in terms of others, and what that says about who we are when we do these things to other people. That got me thinking how we connect and how we communicate. That led to the larger [series]. It was sort of a progression. The questions just seemed to get bigger and bigger. Something clicked, and I was able to make them funny and sad and dynamic all at once."

Page studied photography at Ryerson University in Toronto after studying English and cultural studies, followed by a stint of travelling and teaching in Japan. After finding that work was hard to come by with an English degree, she made the daunting decision to earn a second one in art. The union of her love of photography and art was a happy one. And fortunately that English degree didn't go to waste. Her passion for literature continues to influence her art.

Some of the works in Page's *Collections* were inspired by author Paul Auster's treatment of the subject of grief in his novel, *The Invention of Solitude*. "He [wrote] about his relationship with his father and to what degree can we actually know anyone but ourselves. What it means to attempt to know someone else, and how much you can actually reveal of yourself. I found that a really interesting idea."



Untitled, from the series *Collections*, 2003



Untitled, from the series *Collections*: *people who picked on me in high school*, 2002



Untitled, from the series *Collections*, 2003



Untitled, from the series *Collections*, 2003

Oddly enough, Page's most melancholy photos often evoke the strongest reactions. One of her most popular pieces is a series of paper dolls with photographed faces placed on generic bodies, (see above, middle). The faces are actual images taken from the Internet of people experiencing traumatic events. The photos serve as masks – a key concept in her

work and in her creative rationale. "I wanted to speak about masks – what sort of social or personal ones we wear and when we wear them. For that, I wanted to talk about the nature of grief, which is a highly personal mask, but also a communal one. We all wear it and it immediately evokes a response. If you see someone upset or crying, you can imme-

diately empathize. I used the faces I found online of grief or crying to speak about the collective nature of grief."

Page's exhibit, *Collections*, can be seen at the Photo Passage at Harbourfront Centre in Toronto from Nov. 8 to Dec. 31. An exhibition at Luft Gallery also in Toronto is planned for June 2004. ☺