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There You Are: Sandro Kopp's Skype sessions reflect the hybrid nature of painting reality from a two-dimensional plane

By Karen Day

A series that evolved out of two friends chatting online while on opposite sides of the world, Sandro Kopp's Skype paintings are a natural progression for the young portrait artist. As a half Kiwi, half German, Kopp—who currently lives in the Scottish Highlands—is no stranger to the nomadic lifestyle that Skype enables, telling us he regularly uses it keep up with friends and family. One person Kopp frequently speaks to is his pal Waris Ahluwalia, who is the subject of numerous paintings and the catalyst for this tech-inspired concept, which will soon be on view at NYC's Lehmann Maupin gallery in a week-long solo exhibit called "There You Are."

With Ahluwalia as his sitter, Kopp began his "experiment" of painting from Skype video sessions. A few days after its completion, he explains, he kept noticing it out of the corner of his eye and started thinking more seriously about the concept. Kopp prefers the emotional connection and fodder for real observation a live model gives over working from a photograph. The personal engagement Skype provides, combined with the screen's two dimensional plane, is for him a new hybrid format.

The Skype sessions also reflect Kopp's personal philosophy that art should develop from doing. The industrious artist paints nearly everyday—he told us of one instance in which he did four paintings in one day—and this routine practice allows him to explore new ideas, saying "there a million ways to do a painting."

The series has evolved since its organically-formed inception, and the forthcoming exhibition will not only include new works, but will also feature video installations that depict various moments during the sitting. Like his self portrait series called "The New Me," Kopp continues to explore the subject of realism with a sequence of paintings that depict his friend Dave Le Fleming. Each painted on separate occasions, the portraits reflect both his ability as an artist to remain consistent through repetition as well as the inconsistencies in observation on any given day.

Kopp's cast of models include some of popular culture's most famous subjects, including Michael Stipe, Tilda Swinton, John C. Reilly, Ryan McGinley and more. Those wondering how he finds himself in such good company need to look no further than the artist himself. Beyond the opportunity to sit for the talented painter, they are undoubtedly taken by his incredibly thoughtful, humble and considerate nature. Kopp is very aware of the time they give him, and says his fast-paced style—one where he often completes the small portraits in just a few hours—is both an understanding of the situation and his personal technique. "I would like to slow down in the future though," he says.

The fourth solo show of his Skype portraits, Kopp's mind is already wheeling with his approach for the fifth show, which will see the series unfold and progress in another

creative direction. "There You Are" opens 25 January and runs through 4 February 2012 at [Lehmann Maupin Gallery](#).