


Profile: Daryl Austin

December 16, 2013 by [Jane Llewellyn](#) 



Daryl Austin is messing with our minds in his current exhibition at Greenaway Gallery. He's taking the fundamentals of portraiture and turning it on its head. The images have a vintage feel and titles like *Dublin 1911* leaving the viewer wondering, is it a portrait of a real person from *Dublin in 1911* or something else? On closer inspection you realise there is something skew-whiff – the subjects have different coloured eyes, they are all distorted. “I have constructed them so they all kind of have a vintage photo look. Except once you start looking closer you realise it's all constructed, it's all made up basically.” Titled *Fictions* the exhibition focuses on the idea that everyone believes photos and photo portraits. “These portraits are constructed and smashed together and they become new people, they have never existed,” he explains. “I have given titles to them of what they might be and times, I have no idea if that's the case.” Austin wants to show people that just because it's a portrait, and it looks like someone, that doesn't necessarily make it a good portrait. “One of the works, *Minnesota 1927* has an albino eye and a pale blue eye. It's about having that point of difference where people can look at them and at some point think, ‘They all can't have different coloured eyes, so what's that about?’” He is questioning portraits and photos, what's real and what's not and our acceptance of an image because of preconceived notions. Austin

hasn't always focused on portraits, having previously looked more at the subject of painting itself. "I guess since about 2006 my work has been getting more naturalistic. I have been learning the skills of painting more naturalistically." Austin felt the best way to do this was through portraiture which would make him even more engaged with the act of painting. Austin is particularly interested in painting people and the audiences' reaction to these paintings. "The trouble is most people's perception is, 'Why would I want a picture of someone I don't know on the wall? It's not a member of my family.' As soon as it becomes something not real, or something else is going on, people's perceptions change." The whole basis of this body of work is to turn the focus around from the portrait itself, to it being seen for its value as a painting. "That is one of the difficulties with portraiture, that the primary aim seems to be about a likeness of someone and never about it being a painting. I'm trying to swing it around so it's an interesting painting and sure it's someone but it's not a real someone. Or it could potentially be a real someone." **Daryl Austin *Fictions* Greenaway Art Gallery Continues until Friday, December 20 darylaustin.com**