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Ventriloquist dummies convey amazing emotion – when they don't scare the heck out of you, by Becca MacLaren (July 7, 2014)



Cecil Wigglenose used to make his living wisecracking with a partner under hot stage lights. After years of service, this ventriloquist dummy retired and was sent to the Vent Haven Museum, a Fort Mitchell, Ky., institution dedicated to the art of ventriloquism.

But it wasn't curtains for Mr. Wigglenose. A renowned photographer rediscovered his perpetually smiling face several years ago and brought him to star in a new exhibition in Hollywood.

"Matthew Rolston: Talking Heads" at Diane Rosenstein Fine Arts, a gallery on Highland Avenue, features portraits — some as large as 5-feet square — of dummies like Wigglenose and Uncle Eddie, who has a bulbous nose and open-mouthed grin.

Rolston first became interested in these unconventional subjects after reading a newspaper article about the 700 ventriloquist dolls at the Kentucky museum. The results are arresting; the views are intimate. While these faces are wooden and inanimate, they still seem eerily human. "These are not documents of dolls," said gallery director Diane Rosenstein. "They are new and transformative portraits."

Diane Rosenstein Fine Art

