

# ARTSCENE™

## Matthew Rolston

by Jody Zellen

On display in Matthew Rolston's exhibition, entitled "Talking Heads," are large-scale color photographs of ventriloquist's dummies. Rolston had access to the Vent Haven Museum in Kentucky's collection of over 700 dolls, dummies and masks. With dates ranging from 1820-1980 the array of characters becomes a compelling catalog of not only doll making but the ventriloquists' sense of self. Each doll or dummy was photographed against a white background and is printed to a larger than life-size square.



Installation view, courtesy Diane Rosenstein Fine Art. Photo by Craig Kirk.

The details of the painted forms resonate emotionally as we encounter the differences in the expressions and the materials used for eyes. A quintessential ventriloquist's dummy is

a cliché – they are always more than just a doll with exaggerated features. Rolston's images depict a range of figures with an attitude of compassion. Some are women, some are more animal-like, some have painted eyes while others are frighteningly human. The dolls' vacant states are uncanny, holding your gaze but offering nothing in return.