

An Off-Kilter Giant

Evan Penny puts every hair in place – but keeps us out-of-body



Much more than trompe-l'oeil (Courtesy Sperone Westwater)

“Jim Revisited,” a sculpture by Evan Penny from his show at Sperone Westwater on the Bowery in New York. “Jim” is 10 feet tall, and realized with a level of illusionism that makes Duane Hanson seem like Picasso. Every hair, everywhere, is to scale and in place. But the astounding realism of Penny’s sculpture is less impressive than its signature distortions: The piece seems realized with the skewing of a figure seen from above, which means that when you see it from in front, your senses get deeply confused. In the most profound sense, you feel your body is in the wrong place – an effect that can be stomach churning. The piece has a tremendous lot to say about the relationships between 2-D and 3-D images, between perspective and perception and between our embodied selves and the independence of art objects from us.

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