

Sui Jianguo's Giant Touch

Blanke Gopnik

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THE DAILY PIC: These are the "Blind Portraits" of Chinese artist Sui Jianguo, which the Public Art Fund has mounted in its usual spot at the south-east corner of Central Park, in New York. Sui made the pieces by wearing a blindfold as he modeled a fistful of clay into tiny "portraits", which he then had enlarged into giant bronzes. The enlargement gives the pieces a whole batch of new references: They recall the standing "scholars rocks" than are so prized in China, but they also remind me of European expressionism and especially the tortured figures of Francis Bacon – here arrived at casually, in a finger-squeeze, and without any angst.

Sui's monuments are also about the "hand of the artist" that's such a big deal in the West: The little fingermarks of a Rodin here metastasize into a parody of the romantic genius's touch. That means there's some 21st-century irony in the pieces, since it would have taken digital technology to magnify their traces of the certifiably hand-made. (Courtesy Sui Joanguo and the Public Art Fund, NY; photo by Jason Wyche)

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