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By Leah Garchick



Rena Bransten Gallery had a full house for the Saturday, July 7 opening of “The Portrait Show” at the Minnesota Street Project. It’s a group show that includes works by some well-known artists — **Robert Arneson, Dawoud Bey, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Rupert Garcia, Bovey Lee, Vik Muniz, Lava Thomas, John Waters** among them — riffing on the idea of self. Some works are autobiographical, some not.

Bransten, who has been a gallerist in San Francisco for 44 years, is well-known to art lovers. The image in the show that really made me smile was based on a photograph of her, cut out with its silhouette affixed to a board by **Hung Liu** probably 25 years ago, for some major birthday or other, said her daughter and co-gallerist Trish.

It’s a work made from a photograph of **Rena Bransten** as a little girl dressed as Snow White, looking at the camera with eyebrows knit in a fierce expression. I wasn’t the only gallery-goer who asked her to pose for a picture while standing in front of it. She couldn’t resist mimicking the facial expression in the work. “I don’t know why, but I always looked angry,” she said.

Let’s not call it anger; let’s call it a portrait of the early years of a woman who’s not willing to settle for anything less than wonderful.