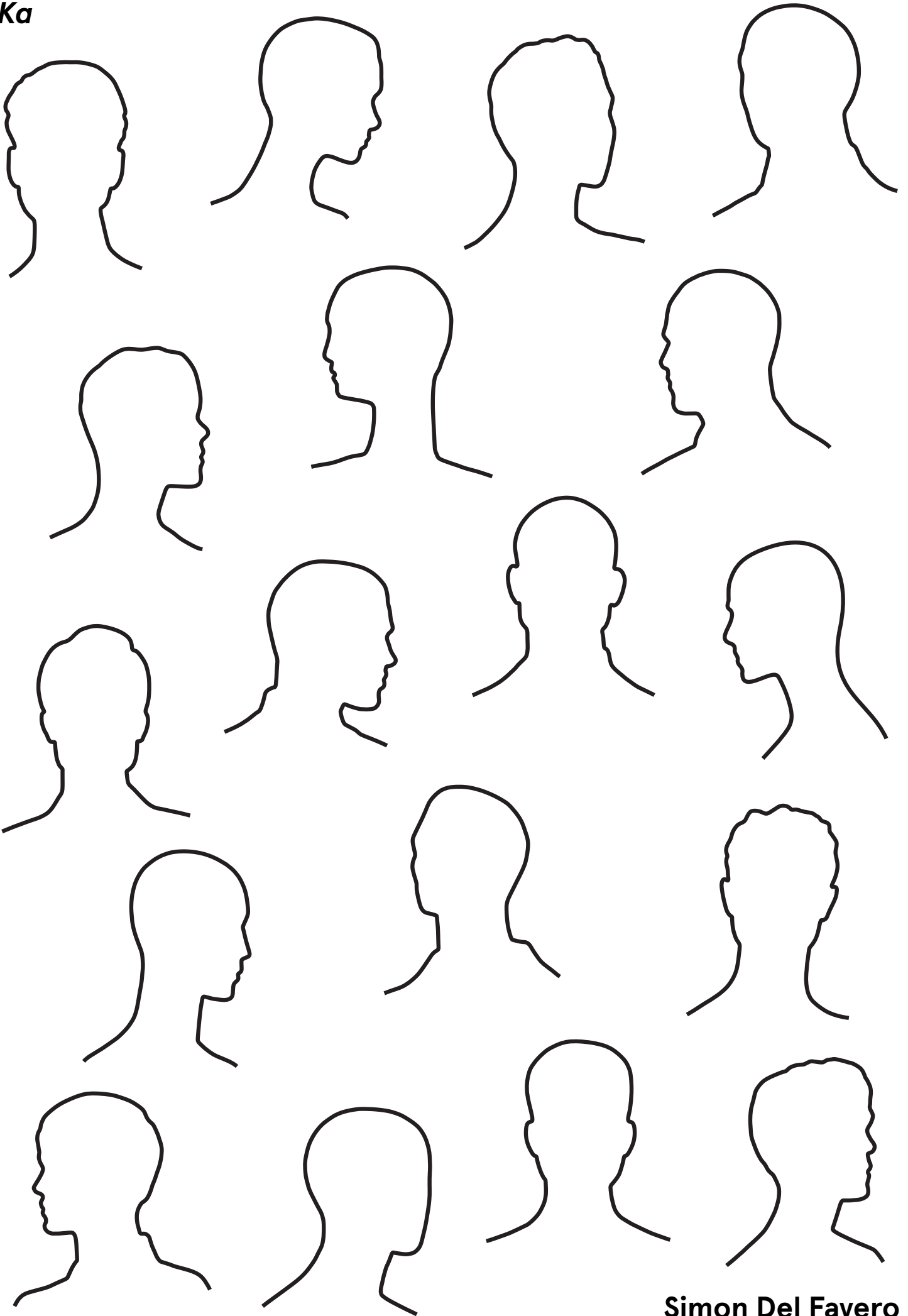**Ka**

Simon Del Favero

Ka explores the concept of the human double, as embodied in the now familiar shop front mannequin. However, while previous explorations of the mannequin, such as in the work of Erwin Blumenfeld, have treated it as a fashion prosthetic, or extension to the human world, *Ka* treats it as an uncanny embodiment of a post-human world. On the one hand, while the mannequins depicted have recognisable human traits, they are simultaneously unearthly apparitions of an entirely new domain.

The notion of the human double has its first documented origins in the Egyptian concept of the 'ka' or 'spirit double'. It was revived by Jean Paul in his novel *Siebenkäs* of 1796, in which he coins the famous term of the "doppelgänger". In the novel the central character is convinced by his double to fake his own death in order to start a new life with a new identity. This paradoxical relationship of the double as a bridge linking life and death, becomes a motif that is taken up by a range of authors, including Mary Shelley, whose humanoid monster composed of scavenged dead body parts brought to life by Dr Frankenstein is the imperfect embodiment of human creativity.

To explore this tension between human and machine, *Ka* presents a series of atonal mannequin portraits that emerge from a surrounding darkness. The intense and larger than life portraits amplify the original Egyptian and doppelgänger formulation, where the dead counter-part becomes the visual focus for the living.

In doing this they provide a framework for rethinking the identity of the human form in a world where the human figure is overshadowed by a machinic reference point. Rather than deathlike counterparts to the living human self, their hyper-realist form appears to evoke and allure to a perpetually elusive and unattainable world beyond life, a post-human world of engineered perfection. It is this post-human domain that *Ka* investigates, where the human is a poor imitation of what can be engineered, where the human double no longer acts as a counterpart to the human, but rather where the human is its imperfect shadow.