

FREE
December 2015
Issue 129
gulfcoasttimes.net

gulf coast times

MAKING CHRISTMAS BRIGHT

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Casting History

Sculptor, Keith Edmier embeds life into plaster

New York artist, Keith Edmier is making art in new ways.

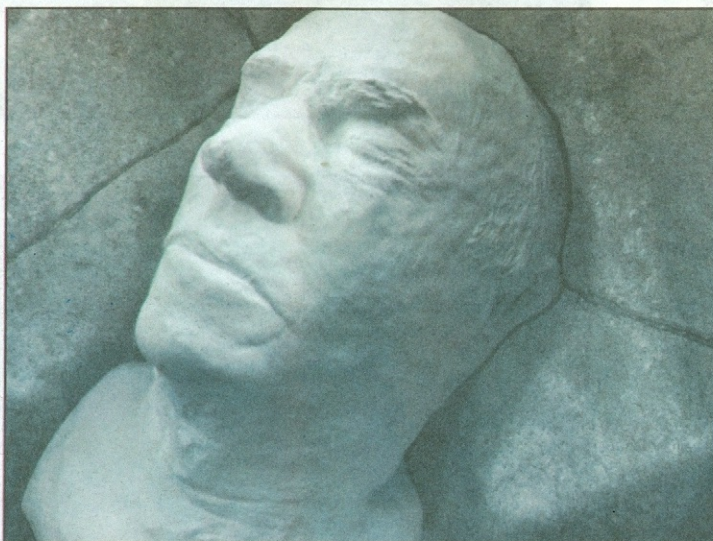
Interested in odd motifs, Edmier focuses on site-specific sculptural environment pieces filled with personification. Opening with a lecture and public reception on Saturday, December 5th, *Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium* is a site-specific, full-scale sculptural recreation of the historic c.1910 concrete swimming pool (located on the nearby property of the Edison-Ford Winter Estates) and will include the first-ever exhibition in Florida of the late, great inventor Thomas Edison's "full-head" plaster-cast death mask.

Immersing visitors in a haunting (even tomb-like) hall of monochrome faces, the cementitious interior walls of the "swimming pool" sculpture (sans water) are adorned with fifty original plaster life masks. Many created by Edmier personally – making molds directly from the faces and bodies of his subjects, these "casts" are a physical record of time and include "self-portraits" of the artist as a teenager; in his 20's and most recently as a middle-aged man in his late 40's. Keith Edmier's parents (Tom and Beverly) are memorialized alongside a chronological "who's who" of the artist's friends, actors, comedians, musicians and various subjects from his personal life and work history (including "life masks" of Farrah Fawcett, Michael J. Fox, Charlie Sheen, David Bowie, former studio-mate Matthew Barney and numerous others).

According to the artist, "Edison's Fort Myers pool is reimagined as an ancient ruin and references both the Roman Republic-era idea of life casts as ancestral masks and the water basins (known as impluviums) in the atriums of houses like those found in Pompeii."

Edmier was born in 1967 on Chicago's South Side and grew up in the suburb of

Tinley Park. At age 17, Edmier moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in the film industry creating special make-up effects. His first job was working for Rick Baker on Michael Jackson's *Caption EO*,



Sculptor, Keith Edmier's *Edison Impluvium*

directed by Francis Ford Coppola. He then worked for Chris Walas on David Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly*, which won an Academy Award for best make-up in 1986.

While living in California, Edmier briefly attended The California Institute of the Arts/CalArts (studying under the influential artist Mike Kelley), and then continued to work in the film business throughout the rest of the 1980's, supervising effects for films including *Bride of Re-Animator*, *Barton Fink* for Joel and Ethan Coen, and the television series *Freddy's Nightmares*.

Although his stint in art school was brief, it did serve to re-focus his career goals from film to art, and over the past 25 years, Edmier has focused on themes of mortality, eroticism and autobiography, with his sculptural oeuvre uniquely reanimating deeply personal memories and capturing moments frozen in time and space.

Amongst his better known pieces are *Beverly Edmier*, a life-size figure of his pregnant mother carrying him as a fetus curled up in her transparent womb, *Bremen Towne*, a full-scale reproduction of the interior of the artist's childhood home in the Chicago suburb of Tinley Park, and *Farrah Fawcett*, depicting the actress as a coy, tousled-hair nymph laying with an ear to the ground vacantly staring at an unseen object off in the distance. Each of these works is rife with autobiographical content. Each is subtly erotic on multiple planes. And each embraces our inevitable mortality with the cold exactitude of a mortician.

He enjoyed his first solo show in 1993 at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery. He has exhibited extensively since, including solo exhibitions at the USF Contemporary Art Museum/Tampa, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Andy Warhol Museum, with major mid-career surveys at the CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, New York and De Hallen Haarlem/the Frans Hals Museum, the Netherlands. His work is in numerous private and public collections including the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Hessel Museum of Art/CCS-Bard College, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Denver Art Museum; The Israel Museum, TeleViv; and The Tate Gallery in London.

- From December 5 – February 6, Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium will be on display at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, located at Florida SouthWestern State College 8099 College Parkway in Fort Myers, FL. For more information, visit www.bobrauschenberggallery.com.