



"Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium" opens December 5 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW

New York Artist To Display Edison Death Mask At FSW

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College will display Thomas Edison's full-head "Death Mask" in a new exhibition by New York artist Keith Edmier.

Exhibition dates for "Keith Edmier: Edison Impluvium" on the Thomas Edison (Lee) Campus are from December 5 to February 6, 2016, while an opening lecture/reception will be held December 5, from 6 to 9 p.m.

Before Edison's death in 1931, close friend Henry Ford commissioned James Earle Fraser, a distinguished American sculptor, to produce a bronze statue of his hero. Fraser took the original mold of Edison's head, but his project's completion was delayed until 1949 due to a bronze shortage and the Second World War.

Edison's very rare "Death Mask," a product of Fraser's mold, is on loan from a private collector in California and has never been previously exhibited.

Edmier's gallery exhibition will include a full scale re-creation of Edison's concrete swimming pool, currently located at the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. Along the walls of the pool will be Edison's "Death Mask" and 50 additional plaster masks created by Edmier as a historical record of family and friends.

Besides self-portraits of himself, Edmier memorialized his parents, Tom and Beverly, and a "who's who" of famous friends, including Farrah Fawcett, Michael J. Fox, Charlie Sheen, David Bowie, former studio-mate Matthew Barney and many others.

Edmier explained that Ancient Roman society inspired much of the exhibition.

"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," he said.

The event is open to the public, free of charge. The first-come, first-served seating for the 6 p.m. lecture is limited.

Gallery hours are Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The gallery is closed Sundays and holidays (including FSW's winter break from December 20 to January 3).



Thomas Edison's "Death Mask" will be on display for the first time

images courtesy of FSW

For more information, go to www.RauschenbergGallery.com or call 489-9313. Visit the gallery on Facebook.

Edmier was born in 1967 on Chicago's South Side and grew up in the suburb of Tinley Park. At age 17, he 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 *Captain EO* (which was 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. Edmier briefly attended The California Institute of the Arts/CalArts (studying under the influential artist Mike Kelley), then continued to work in the film business throughout the rest of the 1980s, supervising effects for films, including *Bride of Re-Animator*, *Barton Fink* for Joel and Ethan Coen and the television series *Freddy's Nightmares*.

In the beginning of 1991, Edmier moved to New York City to work as a fine artist. He had 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 (curated by Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Director Jade Dellinger), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Andy Warhol Museum, and 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, Tele Viv and The Tate Gallery in London.

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery was founded as The Gallery of Fine Art in 1979 on the Lee County campus of Florida SouthWestern State College/FSW (then Edison Community College). On June 4, 2004, the Gallery of Fine Art was renamed the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, to honor and commemorate a long-time association and friendship with the artist. Over more than three decades until his death, the gallery worked closely with Rauschenberg to present world premiere exhibitions including multiple installations of the *1/4 Mile or Two Furlong Piece*. The artist insisted on naming the space the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery (versus the "Robert Rauschenberg Gallery") as it was consistent with the intimate, informal relationship he maintained with both the local Southwest Florida community and FSW.✪