

## Sculptor Keith Edmier has enjoyed a long preoccupation with masks and sculptural environments

By TOM HALL  
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The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery is bringing sculptor Keith Edmier to Fort Myers. While in town, Edmier plans to create a site-specific sculptural environment that embeds a death mask of inventor Thomas Edison in a replica of his circa 1910 concrete swimming pool along with masks of himself, his parents and a slew of his celebrity friends and acquaintances.

Death masks might seem like an odd choice of motif, but Edmier has enjoyed a preoccupation with masks and prosthetic devices since his early teens. While the other kids were hanging out or playing ball after school, Keith spent his free time in a dental lab learning to mold vampire fangs from acrylic resin. He quickly became adept at crafting clay models, molds and masks, skills he showed off while still in high school to Dick Smith, the special effects make-up artist responsible for Linda Blair's spinning head in *The Exorcist*.

At 17, Edmier moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in film creating special make-up effects. Smith put him in touch with Rick Baker, who was working at the time with director Francis Ford Coppola on Michael Jackson's *Captain EO*. When that project ended, Edmier went to work for Chris Walas on David Cronenberg's remake of *The Fly*, which won an Academy Award in 1986 for best make-up. He attended The California Institute of the Arts/CalArts for a year, but continued to work in film throughout the 1980s, supervising effects for films like *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. Among 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.



And so an exhibit that embeds sculptural self-portraits and life casts of family and friends in an architectural setting that harkens back in time to Fort Myers' most famous winter resident seems especially *a' propos*. Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium opens at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on the Lee campus of Florida SouthWestern State College on December 5. ■