

Life-size cast of pregnant mother Keith Edmier's most recognizable work

By TOM HALL
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Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium opens at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on Saturday, December 5. The exhibition is a site-specific sculptural environment that features the never-before exhibited death mask of inventor Thomas Edison, as well as three-dimensional self-portraits and masks that the artist has cast of family and a host of celebrity friends. The cast of his mother is particularly noteworthy. His 1998 life-size sculpture of Beverly Edmier is perhaps the artist's most famous and recognizable work.



Beverly Edmier, 1967 is startling. With it, Edmier turns the century-old tradition of Madonna and Child on its proverbial ear. The sculpture is a cast of his 22-year-old mother carrying him as a fetus curled up her transparent womb. Caressing him with her right hand, she gazes down at her swollen belly in an intimate, early exchange between mother and child.

“Beverly’s seated pose echoes that of Abraham Lincoln, another Illinois resident, in the Lincoln Memorial,” wrote art critic Holland Carter for *The New York Times Art & Design* on January 11, 2008. “And she is dressed in a facsimile of the pink Chanel suit that Jacqueline Kennedy was wearing the day her husband was assassinated. (Note the presidential seals embossed on the suit’s buttons; Mr. Edmier is a fanatic for such subliminal touches.) A dozen red roses like the ones Mrs. Kennedy carried in Dallas that day, but molded from dental acrylic, lie on a pedestal nearby like an offering at a shrine.”

In this way, Edmier poignantly evokes imagery from our historical past while juxtaposing life with death. It is this type of symbolism and metaphor that we can expect in *Keith EDMIER: Edison Impluvium*. The show will run through February 6, 2016 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery on the Lee campus of Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW). ■