



## Channeling David Bowie

### How one artist is paying tribute to the late singer.

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During Rome's charioted age, the ruling class had built into their homes a small, sunken atrium—an *impluvium*, Latin apparently for a shallow, unfilled pool—where they hung lifelike likenesses of their ancestors. These stone masks were cast in life and later, after death, they were taken off the walls and worn ceremoniously by the descendants. By putting on these *imagines maiorum*, they were reanimating the dead.

There's no need for *imagines maiorum* with [David Bowie](#). He's left behind an immense visual legacy, retrieved from album covers, music videos, movies, fashion, evocative invented phrases like "space oddity" and "plastic soul," and of course the billion synaptic connections his fans have to when they heard "Heroes" at exactly the correct moment in their lives.

And yet there is a Bowie *imagine maiorum*, in the artist Keith Edmier's exhibition currently at the Bob Rauschenberg gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers, FL. *Edison Impluvium* consists of 48 cast masks of people who have had an impact on Edmier—one for every year of his life, give or take a few repeats. "This show is a way for me to connect with the people who have passed through my life," explains the artist. These include Farrah Fawcett (with whom Edmier has collaborated), Matthew Barney (for whom he once worked), and his parents.

Curiously, Bowie was one of the few memorialized whom the artist had not met in person; such was the Thin White Duke's impact on those who knew him only through his art. Edmier actually obtained the life cast through his mentor Dick Smith, the Hollywood special effects makeup artist who worked with Bowie on the set of Tony Scott's vampire romance *The Hunger*, released in 1983. That puts this likeness of Bowie at around age 37. As always, he looked to be lost in the future.

Keith Edmier, "Edison Impluvium," 2015. Installation at Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, Florida Southwestern State College. Courtesy of the artist, Bob Rauschenberg Gallery, and Petzel, New York.