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keith edmier

crystalline wombs and pregnant hearts

september 18 - october 26, 2013

exhibition opening  
september 17, 6-10 pm

We are pleased to inform you of the gallery's third solo exhibition with Keith Edmier (\*1967), which opens on September 17 and will be on view in our space until October 26.

For *Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts*, Keith Edmier has realized an installation in which an intricate and detailed narration unfolds from mythical-sacred objects. With these new works, Edmier continues his ongoing exploration of such themes as birth, death and renewal that found their beginning in his central work *Beverly Edmier 1967* (1998): made from translucent urethane, the double portrait is as striking as it is bizarre, showing the artist himself as a visible embryo within his pregnant mother. While in his earlier work Edmier connected the intimate with the iconic through personal references, these new works develop an evocative context from the tradition of Christian art and iconography.

With the careful arrangement of a series of objects, Edmier has transformed the main room of the gallery into a spiritual site, calling to mind the floor plan of a medieval cloister. Twelve earthenware vases were produced using Majolica, a technique dating from early Renaissance that Edmier revived based on examples from 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century Annunciation scenes. The artist discovered these in paintings by, among others, Duccio, Filippo Lippi, Rogier van der Weyden und Jan van Eyck. From the vessels protrude deceptively real imitations of white lilies, cast from life in dental acrylic, which Edmier stylized in elaborate detail as symbols of purity. Hanging from the ceiling above and around the vases are twelve glass forms with silver mounts, modeled after ostrich-egg reliquaries found in churches and monasteries of the Medieval period that presumably contained relics of saints. Hanging ostrich eggs were also depicted in paintings of religious scenes as symbols of fertility in relation to the birth of Christ, as well as allegories for His death and resurrection. The most famous example is the Montefeltro altarpiece, painted by Piero della Francesca around 1475 for the Urbino family mausoleum. Edmier cast an ostrich egg from life, using it as a mold into which glass was blown. The resulting delicate glass vessels each contain a portion of the original egg's cremated remains.

Positioned in the center of the side room is a sculpture made of walnut wood, the production of which Edmier commissioned from one of the oldest carving workshops in Oberammergau, Bavaria. It presents a portrait of the 27-year-old nun Alicia Torres from Chicago, who has gained popularity through her activities on social networks. It is through this medium that Edmier became aware of her, while at the same time coming across two extraordinary sculptures of The Visitation from the early 14<sup>th</sup> century representing the pregnant Virgin Mary and St. Elizabeth. The idea to depict Torres based on the model of these unreal and highly suggestive holy figures thus began to take shape. Inset into the cavity of her upper body is an oval crystal that, following the model of both icons, represents the womb and the heart of the young nun.<sup>1</sup>

Keith Edmier's sculptures are idiosyncratic hybrids that link traditional techniques with modern materials. Furthermore, he manages to characterize his motifs, which stand in a long and complex line of tradition, with subtle disruptions and immediate presence. In charging both exhibition viewing rooms with auratic symbolics, Edmier succeeds in finding a reified and immaterial level of perception in which the works find a narrative synthesis.

Works by Keith Edmier have been shown internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions at, among others, LACMA - Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2002), CCS Bard and Hessel Museum, New York (2007) as well as recently this year at the Frans Hals Museum/De Hallen Haarlem and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. His large-scale installation *Bremen Towne* (2007) is on view at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas, through September 22, 2013.

For further information as well as press images, please contact Jan Salewski: Tel +49 30 288 772 77, mail@neugerriemschneider.com.

<sup>1</sup> The exceptional representation follows a vision of the mystic Gertrude von Helfta (1256-1301): „the immaculate womb of the glorious virgin, as transparent as the purest crystal, through which her internal organs, penetrated and filled with divinity, shone brightly, just as gold, wrapped in silk of various colors, shines through a crystal.“ (quoted in: Jacqueline E. Jung, *Crystalline Wombs and Pregnant Hearts: The Exuberant Bodies of the Katharinenthal Visitation Group*, in: History in the comic mode. Medieval communities and the matter of person, Columbia University Press 2007, p. 223-237)