

Stop Motion
Keith Edmier and Allan McCollum
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535 W 22nd Street



Keith Edmier
Allan McCollum
Stop Motion
Installation view
Friedrich Petzel Gallery
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PRESS RELEASE

Memory, materiality, monsters, and motion; the layering and excavation of these form the crux of a show at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery that juxtaposes the work of artists Allan McCollum and Keith Edmier. The new and newly combined pieces embody both artists' desire to bring life to the inanimate, invisible, absent or imaginary. The concept of frozen time - or life stopped and examined at a single moment – forms the mirror side of this desire.

The larger bodies of work created during the careers of McCollum (b. 1944) and Edmier (b. 1967) may at first seem antipodal. McCollum is known for his work with casts and large quantities (e.g., 'Surrogate Paintings', 1978- and 'Plaster Surrogates', 1982-) paired with a long-standing fascination with the deep past, fossils, and objects created by nature (e.g., 'Petrified Lightning', 2000). Edmier is known for a highly biographical style of work that is intensely personal in the way that it reveals widely-held cultural mores (e.g. 'Keith Edmier and Farrah Fawcett', 2000). Both artists, however, have long-standing fascinations with the mysteries of molds and the casts they generate. For both artists, the memory attached to objects also forms an integral part of their corpus of work, whether it takes the form of dinosaur tracks for McCollum ('Natural Copies', 1994-5) or his mother in a Chanel suit for Edmier ('Beverly Edmier, 1967', 1998). Both artists, further, were heavily influenced in their careers by their deep-seated boyhood fascination with monsters. This is given homage in the title of the show, *Stop-Motion*, which had its genesis in the youthful inspiration both artists found in the work of special effects artists such as Ray Harryhausen and model making and stop-motion animation. The technique allowed mythical creatures and worlds to visually come to life; the resonant memory for the artists is not of material objects or subjects but of the manufactured images and imagination of them.

The role of memory is of course a ripe topic for artistic exploration. Freud ('Delusion and Dream', 1907) proposed that volcanic eruption and archaeological excavation formed the consummate material analogy for how memory is buried and revealed in the psyche. In *Stop-Motion*, McCollum taps directly into the culturally redolent site that inspired Freud - the Roman city of Pompeii buried in AD 79 - by including sixteen of the highly evocative and iconic casts from his work titled *The Dog from Pompei* (1991). The dog, chained to the house of Vesonius Primus by a bronze-studded collar, could not escape the eruption of Vesuvius and died in apparent agony two millennia ago. While the living dog and its body disappeared, the volcanic materials preserved the empty cavity of it which, after excavation, was filled with plaster in 1874 to create a cast from which McCollum was able to make his own mold and casts. The dogs are seemingly identical to one another except for the way that each cast is positioned. As each dog is rotated slightly in its relative position to its neighbor, in looking at the entire work a sense of animation or movement is created; in viewing a single dog, it is as though one is viewing a still frame from a film.

McCollum's work provides the counterpoint to a new work titled *Adonaïs* by Edmier. The first sculpture in a body of work collectively titled 'The Modern Man-Demon', the piece contains two human hearts – that of the artist and of a female archaeologist – which are cast in basalt using data from MRI scans. The use of basalt, or hardened volcanic magma, links thematically to Freud's fascination with Pompeii and the volcanic materials which both destroyed and preserved it. The lead box lined with silver that encases the hearts is reminiscent of the heart burials conducted in Medieval Europe and then incorporated into sentimental, aristocratic tradition through the nineteenth century. It is Freud's own personal fetish for artifact collection that is evoked by Edmier,

who extends the denotation of 'art' and 'object' capable of collecting to include human body parts. Unlike McCollum's dogs, which are identical to one another and long-dead, each heart cast in *Adonaïs* has specificity to a still living person. Like the metaphorical removal of stratigraphy invoked by Freud, the removal of deep layers of digital data from the three dimensional images was required to create the detailed replicas of each heart. Like the dogs, also, the hearts hint at arrested motion. While one heart wells with life blood, the other is captured in contraction; viewed together, the hearts seemingly provide material animation of a single frozen heartbeat.

Motion and the cessation of motion; animation and reanimation; the promiscuous boundaries between art and artifact, subject and object, science and art: what remains rigidly fixed around these permeable categories for living creatures is time. McCollum and Edmier - in Stop-Motion - stop time.

For more information please contact the gallery at 212.680.9467 or info@petzel.com.

Acknowledgments:

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Stop-Motion essay written by Dr. Karen Holmberg, archaeologist and volcano fetishist, who also contributed her heart to *Adonaïs*.

For further information, please contact the gallery at info@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.