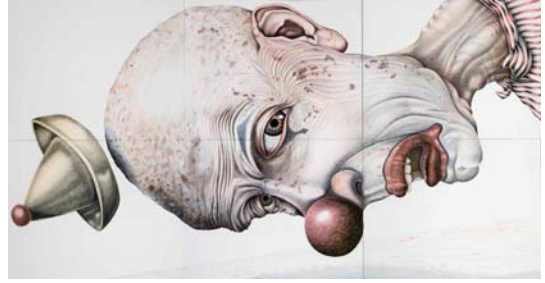


OTIS

Otis College of Art and Design
9045 Lincoln Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90045
Telephone 310 665 6800 Website www.otis.edu



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Media contact: Kathy MacPherson, gallerinfo@otis.edu, 310.665.6909

The Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design is pleased to present:

Keith Puccinelli: *The Wondercommon*

April 19 – July 3, 2008

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 19, 2-5pm

The Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design is pleased to premiere a new body of work and installation by Southern California based artist Keith Puccinelli opening Saturday, April 19, 2-5pm with a public reception and on view through July 3, 2008.

Keith Puccinelli is creating a new body of drawings, sculptures, and an interactive installation called “The Morgue” for his first solo exhibition in Los Angeles at the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis.

The title of the exhibition, *The Wondercommon*, combines two seemingly opposite ideas into one and refers in part to the artist’s use of common materials and tinkering techniques to evoke a sense of wonder or the wonderful. Simple pen and ink drawings on paper and sculptures are made out of everyday materials like twigs, leaves, shoes, pipe, glue, house paint, varnish, mud, and bone. The strong juxtaposition of materials often brings a sense of humor to glaze or emphasize the serious or tragic presented in the work. The title of the show is also a direct reference to the *wunderkammer* or a “cabinet of curiosities,” which is the genesis of museums as we know them today.

Working in the vein of Jeffrey Vallance, Michael C. McMillen, Jim Shaw, and Robbie Conal, Puccinelli is using an irreverent quick wit, modest materials, and tableaux to broach the conflict between the preciousness of life and man’s disregard for life during times of war to create a kind of carnival of sorrow. He is assembling a body of work filled with moments of laughter ranging from the fitful and joyous to uncomfortable and embarrassed. The title of the interactive installation is indicative of Puccinelli’s passion for wordplay. He is using the word “morgue” more like an illustrator or journalist’s archive of ideas and stories versus a coroner’s lab. It is an area of the gallery that he is filling with hundreds of interesting objects that can be handled, examined, and arranged by the viewer. Many of the altered objects are items he found on his working farm in Ventura.

Keith Puccinelli was born on Cinco de Mayo in 1950 in San José, California, in the heart of the once fertile Santa Clara Valley—now Silicon Valley. On the brink of adopting after eight years of trying, Irene and Julius were blessed with an eight and one-half lb. screaming yellow-jaundiced bundle of joy.

(more)

Keith relished and thrived in his position as an only child for three years until the birth of his only sibling, Jessica, after which he began an unjustifiable life-long sulk. While becoming somewhat withdrawn, Keith passed a good deal of time exploring his media of choice: crayon and pencil, drawing a variety of subject matter ranging from the pornographic to war scenes to hot rods. He was not particularly well thought of in his elementary school art sessions. As a budding member of the *culturati*, he rose to a level of mediocrity in his competence as a horn player. Despite a growing love for music (especially rock, soul, blues and jazz), Keith's significant act of rebellion (after getting deservedly cold-cocked by the lead trumpeter), rejected band and orchestra and took to art class at Willow Glen Sr. High School. Influenced by an older cousin, David Bottini, who became a sculptor of some renown, Keith entered and graduated with Great Distinction with a Baccalaureus Artium degree in Art/Sculpture from San José State University in 1973. He worked part-time in the kitchen and as bartender in a local music club. Declining the offer to join his father's electrical contracting business, Keith accompanied his girlfriend to Santa Barbara where she was attending university. Keith became employed in a t-shirt screen-printing factory where he would learn rudimentary skills in illustration and graphic art from the "floral and chrome beer can" school. After a few years he quit and bicycled the Hawaiian Islands for a few months. Fumbling around for his identity in the world, Keith revisited the restaurant business, ending up in management and advertising over a five year period. Still searching, he pounded Santa Barbara pavement for work as a graphic designer. Unable to find employment, he opened Puccinelli Design in 1983. That same year, he also had the good fortune to meet his wife, Fran. His highly successful design firm would be awarded national and international recognition for design, illustration and advertising over the next 20 years. Still searching, Keith gradually curtailed all design work and adopted his current pursuit as full-time artist. He would also successfully battle tongue cancer. Over the past 30 years, Keith has exhibited works on paper and multiple-media installations in the Southern California area, and his work is included in many private collections.

The exhibition is curated by Meg Linton, Director of the Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design. The forthcoming catalogue features an essay by Nancy Doll, Director of the Weatherspoon Art Museum at University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and highlights work from the 1990s to present. It is being released in June 2008.



L-R: *Babeboyman*, 2007; *War Heads*, 2007; *Boarboy*, 2006
Top: *Face Plant*, 2007