



THE HARRIET AND CHARLES LUCKMAN FINE ARTS COMPLEX

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LUCKMAN GALLERY

Cal State L.A.

announces

Very Early Pictures

on view

May 26, 2005 – July 23, 2005

***An exhibition of drawings (and works in other media) made by
contemporary artists when they were children***

The Luckman Gallery at California State University, Los Angeles announces ***Very Early Pictures***, an exhibition of drawings (and works in other media) made by nearly 50 contemporary artists when they were children. Each of the 130 works on view were completed between the early 1940s and early 1980s by children between the ages of two and sixteen, all of whom developed into practicing adult artists. Traveling to Arcadia University Art Gallery (Glenside, Pennsylvania) in the fall, the exhibition builds upon the audience's familiarity with the current work of many of its participants, which include a mixture of Los Angeles- and Philadelphia-based talent along with emerging and established artists from around the world. Exhibition dates are **May 26, 2005 - July 23, 2005**. Admission is free of charge.

Emphasizing the relativity of the words "very" and "early," the exhibition places the graphic production of children and teens in a generative context intended to propose speculative connections between the individual works on view, the mature works that followed, and the broader developments of 20th century art. The exhibition also strives to sanction an activity that, until recently, has generally been excluded from contemporary discourse despite the contribution of children's art to our concept of modernism and its source as one of modernism's most enduring critiques—the notion that "any child could do that." As described by exhibition curator Richard Torchia, ***Very Early Pictures*** "provides an unusual opportunity to study the full spectrum of drawings by children, including authentic products of adolescent sensibility—a condition long exploited by popular culture and now being mined by contemporary artists."

Installed according to the age of the artist at the time each work was made, the individual examples establish a timeline that progresses year by year from the primitive face painted from a 3-1/2-year old **Marnie Weber** (on a mimeograph sheet from one of her father's art history quizzes) to a 16-year old **Dorothy Cross's** determined rendering of the three witches of Macbeth.

Very Early Pictures responds, in part, to an increasing number of recent exhibitions by contemporary artists that incorporate or refer explicitly to their own childhood production. **Martin Honert**, **Wim Delvoye**, and **Glenn Ligon** have in the past several years developed strategies of revisiting drawings from their early youth to restore otherwise lost personal biography to make new works with the capacity to elicit collective memory. Some of the earliest examples in the exhibition—drawings by **Julian Hoeber**, **Dani Tull**, and **Randall Sellers**, (aged 3-7)—reflect the formal invention and performative spontaneity that inspired classic modernists such as Miro, Picasso, and Klee who most famously collected and studied his own childhood drawings. On the other hand, the searching, self-conscious images by teenagers **Chris Finley**, **Jude Tallichet**, and **Fred Wilson** seem to mirror the hybrid conditions of postmodernism.

In many cases the link between the childhood work in the exhibition and adult artistic practice seems arbitrary or nonexistent. Looking at drawings offered by **Thomas Demand**, **David Reed** and **Kay Rosen**, for example, it is almost impossible to project any causal or thematic associations to their mature work, underscoring the identity of all the works in the exhibition as souvenirs of the otherness of childhood. Several examples, however, stand out as evidence of surprising artistic prescience. These include excerpts from two-dozen notebooks that 5-year old **Carolee Schneeman** filled in the sequential manner of a flipbook that clearly suggest future themes explored by the artist. **Kim Jones'** early "war drawings" initiated in 1958 when he was eight years old, and aerial views of imagined cities begun by **Adam Ross** when he was in his early teens can also be considered as core examples of bodies of work still thriving today. Similarly, viewers familiar with the mature work of **Charles Burns**, **Patricia Cronin**, **Marlene Dumas**, and **Jim Shaw** will have little trouble recognizing the nascent state of each of these artists' cultivated approaches.

Very Early Pictures also offers a fascinating glimpse at the way current events and popular culture have increasingly captivated children as subject matter. In a caption written in her mother's hand at the bottom of a work by 4-year old Philadelphia-based **Judith Schaechter**, we are told that what appears to be a scribble actually pictures "Mr. Churchill in the coffin," one of numerous drawings Schaechter made in response to the 3-day television broadcast of the former prime minister's funeral she remembers experiencing in Cambridge, England where she was living in 1965. **Jeffrey Vallance** is represented in the exhibition with his cardboard model of the haunted house from the *The Addams Family*, the television show based on the cartoons of Charles Addams. Vallance sent photos of his model to Fred Gwynne, the actor who portrayed Hermann Munster on the show, as well as Charles Addams himself. Together, Vallance's model, the photograph he took, a drawing and the correspondence with Addams and Gwynne demonstrate an inspired engagement with television that contradicts warnings that such entertainment results in passive behavior.

Like Vallance's project, most of the works in the exhibition are evidence of projects taken up by children for their own pleasure and curiosity, not only about the world but worlds they might create for themselves. Regardless of any possible affinities these early drawings may possess with mature works by the same individual, each piece hints at an idealized relationship to art-making that remains a goal for artists of any age.

Participating artists: Polly Apfelbaum, Kjetil Berge, Elizabeth Bryant, Charles Burns, Mason Cooley, Patricia Cronin, Dorothy Cross, Russell Crotty, Tony de los Reyes, Tacita Dean, Wim Delvoye, Thomas Demand, Daniel Douke, Marlene Dumas, Tim Ebner, Joy Feasley, Chris Finley, Mathew Hale, Steve Hanson, Mona Hatoum, Jim Hinz, Julian Hoeber, Martin Honert, Tehching Hsieh, Yvonne Jacquette, Kim Jones, Deborah Kass, Christopher Knowles, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Virgil Marti, Sarah McEneaney, David Reed, Marco Rios, Kay Rosen, Adam Ross, Ed Ruscha, Hinrich Sachs, Judith Schaechter, Carolee Schneemann, Randall Sellers, Jim Shaw, Paul Swenbeck, Jude Tallichet, Dani Tull, Jeffrey Vallance, Marnie Weber, Olav Westphalen, and Fred Wilson.

Very Early Pictures is curated by **Richard Torchia**, who is the director of Arcadia University Art Gallery, Glenside, Pennsylvania, where the exhibition will travel in fall 2005.

The exhibition is organized in conjunction with **D-magazine**, which will publish a selection of these childhood works and accompanying statements in its fall 2005 issue. Edited by artist Yane Calovski, the pilot issue of this new journal addressing issues in contemporary drawing was published in June 2004 in collaboration with the Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, and Revolver, Frankfurt (for more information visit <http://www.d-magazine.net/>).

Related news: A similarly themed exhibition, entitled **The Early Show**, presenting works completed by contemporary artists before they entered art school, opens at **White Columns** in New York, in October, 2005.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Thursday, May 26, 2005

6:30 p.m. Lecture - Dr. Jonathan Fineberg

The renowned art historian and writer discusses his ongoing study of childhood works by significant artists from 1700 to the late 20th century. Dr. Fineberg is author of the book, *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist*, and editor of *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism, and Modernism*.

Co-sponsored by the **College of Arts & Letters, Cal State L.A.**

Saturday, May 28, 2005

6-8:00 p.m. Opening Reception

Gallery Hours: Monday through Thursday and Saturday, 12:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Directions: Go to www.luckmanfineartscomplex.org or www.calstatela.edu (Maps)

Information: For further information, please call the **Luckman Gallery (323) 343-6604**