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For immediate release:

Exhibition Announcement: Modern & Contemporary Ceramics
Selected Works by Devin Dougherty, Steve Keister,
Elisabeth Kley and George Schneeman
On view: December 4th – January 10th, 2010
Opening Reception: **Friday December 4^h -6-8pm**
Gallery Hours: Weekdays by appointment • Fri-Sun 1-6 pm
The gallery will be closed Dec. 25th-27th

A.M. Richard Fine Art is pleased to announce Modern & Contemporary Ceramics, a group exhibition with selected works by Devin Dougherty, Steve Keister, Elisabeth Kley and George Schneeman.

Devin Dougherty, a painter who recently chose clay as a medium of expression, is presenting a collection of Raku ceramics. Deceptively naïve in presentation, Ms. Dougherty's ceramics are a testament to her refined understanding of this sophisticated craft.

Ms. Dougherty's vases, bottles and ewers are distinctive in that they present an amalgamation of eclectic sources. In her choice of forms the artist takes inspiration from metal and ceramic art conceived in ancient civilizations. Ms. Dougherty has assimilated a vocabulary of Etruscan, Islamic and Asian decorative and architectural sources that are subtly exhibited in her sculpted wares. Through the usage of a jewel-like enamel palette, the artist exhibits an acute consciousness of light motifs familiar to early 20th century still-life paintings (Henri Fantin-Latour, George Braque, Giorgio Morandi). In bringing pictorial signs, surface treatment and outlines of disparate histories together Ms. Dougherty has designed a leitmotiv to call her own.

Xibalba, the title of Steve Keister's installation, is a reference to the fearsome underworld associated with Mayan culture. The Keister tableau, an alternating low and high relief sculptural assemblage composed of castings made from discarded industrial packaging, is set against the length of two walls of a small gallery space. From the ground up, Xibalba, measures approximately 3 feet in height. Viewed from a distance, up close and within the center of the piece the spectator is offered several perspectives of spatial and material interpretations. In this the artist questions preconceived ideas of perceptions (what am I looking at and how do I read this?) and breaks from traditional conventions of classified representation. The panorama presented is a polished, edited and restored rendition of an archaeological site, a scaled-down theatre set as well as a fragmented architectural skin. Inner and outer, over and under, hard and soft, liquid and air are metaphorically conversing. Symbolic fear is presented in the stylized death masks projecting from and punctuating the length of the walls. Skulls, free standing warrior skeletons and utilitarian wares landscape the immediate surrounds, On a note of regeneration, a bright pink cacti flower closes the reading of the work.

Ceramic, concrete, glaze, acrylic paint, paper and wood coexist in the composition of Mr. Keister's narrative. At its most primal level Xibalba, is a reflection pool for a plethora of contemporary human fears and cultural anxieties. Within this complex microcosm, Mr. Keister succeeds in exposing the dualities and similarities of ancient civilization and present society.

Contrasting Mr. Keister's sculptural work, Elisabeth Kley's ceramics are anchored in the iconography of traditional domestic ceramic forms. The vases are hand-built using coils and slabs. The ceramics are low-fired with under-glaze, scraffito and wax resist and finally re-fired with the artist's homemade glazes. The artist is prolific and has produced an important body of drawings relating to her ceramic output. Ms. Kley's imagination is fueled by a wide range of seemingly disparate subjects and themes. Renaissance ornament, Islamic tile work, flamboyant artists (Dali, Chanel, Jack Smith, performers in drag) and birds which embody theatricality (peacocks, fancy pigeons) are but a few of her known muses. Expressive eyes are a constant motif and adorn her pots in mysterious ways. Eyes peer and probe often within leafy, wing like totemic masks. In Ms. Kley's hands, vases are not static objects. Wearing dramatic and colorful maquillages in the guise of color and glazes, the ceramic pots have been infused with life. The Kley vases have been morphed into stage players- they look at us and beg to be looked at.

George Schneeman (1934-2009), was a prolific and complete artist. As numerous collaborative work attest to, Mr. Schneeman was a painter navigating among a dedicated group of poets. More than an aesthete he was an accomplished illustrator, printer, cabinet-maker, harpsichord player and ceramicist. Mr. Schneeman's early stay in the Tuscan hills of Italy (1958-66) combined with his subsequent living in New York City informed his work in ceramics. The four pre-fabricated terra-cotta planters displayed in the exhibition were initially purchased from an East Village vendor. The pots were then "reworked" i.e. decorated, painted, glazed and re-fired. The first pair of terra cotta vases -utilitarian, modest and codified in form, are inspired by Etruscan red figure wares. Interestingly the pots are theoretically very musical- one is akin to a *scherzo*. It is painted with a dynamic and lively group of humorous cavorters. In contrast, the companion pot conveys *softo voce*. It is quietly and sparsely painted with series of interspersed columns. Both planters are decorated around the lip with nude bodies engaged in sensuous activities. The second pair of planters, perhaps more intimist pieces, feature wide friezes around the circumference of their tapering cylindrical bodies. Each frieze is painted blue and white with a composition of an Italianate landscape. One landscape is specific to where the artist lived with his family during his Tuscan stay. The hills and roads have signs indicating neighboring towns. The companion pot, possibly intended as a pendant to the other, features a starry night. An inscription within the sky reads: ***Omnia quae sunt, lumina sunt*** (1) (all beings created are light and everything, even the humblest, is but a light that shines) a line borrowed from the early medieval poem *La Chanson de Roland*. This quote may well sum up Mr. Schneeman's passion for the literary form and denotes his innate sense of joy and optimism.

Nota Bene: (1) Ron Padgett informs us that Mr. Schneeman was reading Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948) when he fell upon the *Omnia Quae* quote, which in turn was lifted by Pound from texts by the medieval monk-scholar Eriugena Scotus.