As the manufacturer promises, ROSCO-brand Chroma Key is specifically formulated for the sensitive contrast requirements of standard television systems. ROSCO TV paint is a versatile acrylic paint that can be applied to nearly any surface and comes ready to use right out of the bucket. Featuring one-coat coverage, this system dries to a matte, non-reflective finish and allows for easy touch-up. ROSCO-brand Chroma Key Blue TV paint is formulated to provide high-luminescence values and color saturation for keying effects.

Anyone familiar with televised weather reports has witnessed a meteorologist demonstrating this special effect. Other colors can be used to create chroma keying, but since blue is the complementary color of most flesh tones, it provides the best contrast. As Keith Edmier explains: “Chroma Key paint was used for so-called blue-screen effects. The blue painted surface works as a background in front of which an actor or scale model (as in Star Wars) would be photographed. This color would register as invisible on film or video. A completely separate background could then be composited with this to make it seem as though these two disparate images were occurring in the same place. Now, green-screen is used primarily for this effect, but in past decades it was blue-screen.”

When designing the original “The Ray Rayner Show” WGN-TV set, a decision was made to minimize any use of blue. As Rayner would later write: “Why not blue? Oh, I like blue all right, but television for years and years has gone too strongly to blue sets. One reason is that blue is the easiest color to shade and transmit for color TV.” Contrary to Edmier’s interpretation of his set, Ray Rayner seemed to have little interest in Chroma Key effects. For Edmier, the color blue and its potential for a chroma keying effect is conceptually central to the work: “I intend this color/paint/technique as a metaphor. With the & Episode 1 installation, I am attempting to composite disparate elements of time and space—both personal and collective.”
KEITH EDMIER
& EPISODE 1

Narration by Jade Dellinger

July 10 through September 21, 2008
University Art Museum, University at Albany
State University of New York
Introduction

Keith Edmier: & Episode 1 features autobiographical objects and ephemera that have influenced the early esthetic development of sculptor Keith Edmier. As such, his installation at the University Art Museum and this subsequent publication form an artist-curated project. & Episode 1 weaves together Edmier’s own personal recollections of growing up in the suburban Midwest during the 1970s with larger cultural phenomena, such as children’s television, horror films, special effects, and mass-market toys. With the goal of sorting through the many referential layers that connect Edmier’s autobiography to larger histories, these commingled hierarchies and collapsed time frames are at the core of Edmier’s devotional quest to give memory a tangible form.

We would like to sincerely thank those individuals whose support and assistance made this exhibition possible. Special thanks go to independent curator Jade Dellinger for writing the narration that illuminates the many networks and trajectories that remain central to Edmier’s practice; to Fritz Dietl and Dietl International for making the wondrous Mold-a-Rama possible; to Daniel Berger and The Museum of Broadcast Communication for the loan of so many gems from the golden age of Chicago children’s television; to Geoffrey Stein of the New York State Museum, Chris Hunter of the Schenectady Museum, and Patrick Ferlo of the Performing Arts Center, University at Albany for the important loans of period soundstage equipment; and to Friedrich Petzel Gallery for its encouragement and assistance in realizing this project. Matt Tiernan, artist and museum friend, deserves a special debt of gratitude for his passionate resolve to bring a great idea to life.

The complexities and many challenges of mounting Keith Edmier: & Episode 1 were met by the museum’s multi-talented and endlessly resourceful staff under the wise oversight of director Janet Riker. Special thanks go to student volunteers Tegan Barron-Shashok, Peggy Collins, Jennifer Hunold, Janae McHugh, and Joelle Nadeau; and to the University at Albany’s Office of the President and Office of the Provost.

Finally, our sincerest thanks go to Keith Edmier for shedding a beautifully twisted light on the stuff that shapes us all in indelible ways.

Corinna Ripps Schaming
Associate Director/Curator

LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION
Buzz Sports & Entertainment, Chicago
Mike Capps, Technic Dental Lab, Orland Park, IL
Beverly and Tom Edmier
William Forsche
Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York
Bill Jackson
Jack Kellog
Don Kellogg
The Museum of Broadcast Communication, Chicago
New York State Museum, Albany, NY
Craig Reardon
Schenectady Museum, Schenectady, NY
Mold-a-Rama

Mr. J.H. “Tyke” Miller of Quincy, Illinois designed the Mold-a-Rama, a cutting-edge injection molding system that could cast waxy plastic toys in a matter of minutes under a glass dome so that the entire manufacturing process could take place right before the customer’s eyes. The toys were a novelty at the 1964–65 New York World’s Fair; a Sinclair Oil-sponsored exhibition featured machines that produced Sinclair Dinoland Brontosaurs and Sinclair Dinoland Triceratops in a variety of colors. Like all souvenirs, the Mold-a-Rama statues were intended not only as toys, but also as tools to remind visitors of their visit—physical, sensory, and experiential reminders of a particular time and place.

Given their instant popularity, after the World’s Fair the machines were sent on a tour of Sinclair gas stations across the country. The text “New York World’s Fair 1965” on the base was removed from the aluminum molds, while “Sinclair Dinoland” remained on the verso. One of these Mold-a-Rama machines, with its original dinosaur molds, eventually found a home in Illinois at the Brookfield Zoo. The early snapshot, which much later became Untitled (Brookfield Zoo) (1976/1993), was taken by the eight-year-old Edmier at the zoo’s ostrich enclosure. Perhaps just as significantly, this zoo was also where the child artist first collected one of these injection-molded plastic toys.

To this day, the exact material composition of the earliest Mold-a-Rama figures is a matter of debate, but the distinctive smell of liquefied plastic and the pliable, waxy surface of the still-warm-to-the-touch, freshly minted toys have remained so vivid in Edmier’s memory that the form has become a common vernacular in his visual and material language. Edmier’s Flicka (Blue, Green and Yellow) (1993), and Ethiopian Baby, Young Woman (1984–85/1994) are prime examples of the Mold-a-Rama’s lasting impact. As on the Mold-a-Rama toys, the mold lines and seams are shamelessly revealed, and Edmier adds pigment to a combination of polyvinyl and wax to create a solid, monochromatic, semi-translucent color. While from a distance it might be mistaken for a Japanese model kit (fully assembled but left unpainted), the artist’s Young Woman (Maquette) (1994) edition is, on detailed inspection, as close an approximation of a Mold-a-Rama product as one is likely to find.

ABOVE: Keith Edmier, Mold-a-Rama Dolphin
RIGHT: Mold-a-Rama machine, installation view
Clowns

Keith Edmier notes that “the clown is an ambiguous figure who is neither child nor adult. Essentially without gender, the clown becomes a vessel onto which anything can be projected.” Edmier’s father, Tom, commissioned a family friend to paint a clown portrait in celebration of his son’s birth in 1967. The canvas, by H.J. Bialik, hung in Edmier’s bedroom and was thematically linked to an officially licensed Bozo doll that accompanied the baby nightly in his crib.

“Bozo’s Circus” first aired on Monday, September 11, 1961. The original cast included Ringmaster Ned (Ned Locke), Bob Trendler and his thirteen-piece Big Top Band, Sandy the Tramp (Don Sandburg), Oliver O. Oliver (Ray Rayner), and Bob Bell as Bozo the Clown. There may have been hundreds of Bozos who later played the role on regional television stations nationwide (many trained by the late Bozo, Larry Harmon), but in Chicagoland Bob Bell was the one and only Bozo. The later additions of Cooky (played by Roy Brown) and characters like Wizzo the Wizard with his Stone of Zanzibar (created by magician Marshall Brodien) were entirely unique to WGN-TV.

Bob Bell retired from the program in 1984, and died at the age of seventy-five on December 8, 1997.
Marshall Brodien

Marshall Brodien spent twenty-seven years entertaining children on WGN-TV's "Bozo's Circus" as Wizzo the Wizard. Donning an Arabian Nights costume and turban, Wizzo first appeared on "Bozo's Circus" on July 31, 1968. In the 1940s, the young Brodien took a job demonstrating tricks at a magic shop in the Chicago Loop, but soon was performing as a sideshow Barker at Riverside Park, Illinois. He was entertaining mobsters with card tricks and fire-eating at the Magic Lounge in Cicero, Illinois by the age of nineteen, and spent a few subsequent years on the stage of Chicago's Cairo Supper Club performing as a hypnotist.

According to Edmier: "I see parallels between Marshall Brodien and other larger-than-life personalities from this period, like motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel. Evel revolutionized the marketing of character toys. His wind-up stunt cycle and doll sold in record numbers, but Marshall Brodien also became nationally known as the creator of TV Magic Cards and TV Magic Show Kits for kids. Like Knievel, Brodien's persona is part real, part made up, and can be seen as a composite of all the things that interest me on the masculine spectrum of my work. He is a guy from an era gone by—self-taught, driven from an early age, ambitious, a showman, comedian, illusionist, manipulator of his own image and the media, performance artist for the masses who predates Andy Kaufman, a bizarre role model for children, etc. etc..."

Marshall Brodien is the undisputed leader in the mass marketing of magic.
As the creator of "Cartoon Town," "BJ and Dirty Dragon," and "The Gigglesnort Hotel," Bill Jackson was a children's television innovator. His shows featured live-action puppets made of latex (like monster movie masks) and a particularly memorable, malleable character known simply as Blob. Blob was a large mass of wet clay, an unformed mound at the beginning of each segment that Jackson would transform by the end. Blob never spoke, but some voices were pre-recorded, and Jackson provided intelligible grunting to animate the character as he shaped the clay into a wide variety of recognizable forms. Eyes, teeth, and an occasional hat or sign were added to complete the character.

As Jackson later recalled in the book "The Golden Age of Chicago Children's Television" by Ted Okuda and Jack Mulqueen: "I would try to script out things as fully as possible, but I would just write the beginning and the end of the Blob segments, and then we just went from there...When we'd do the Blob, I would let the audio man throw in any response he deemed appropriate...or inappropriate, as the case often was. They delighted in throwing me curves. If I was going to build Blob into a mountain with a stream or something like that, they had a lot of ways to be disruptive. I had a tough time getting Blob through these moments, because if he was supposed to be happy, they would delight in throwing in a sad response and I would have to ad-lib around that."
The late great Ray Rayner was a staple of Chicago children’s television for more than two decades. In the 1960s, he hosted “The Dick Tracy Show” as Sergeant Pettibone, and led the Grand March as Oliver O. Oliver on “Bozo’s Circus.” From 1972 to 1981, he hosted “Ray Rayner & His Friends” with Chelveston the duck and a hand puppet called Cuddly Dudley (voice by Roy Brown).

On “The Ray Rayner Show” Rayner was known for his popular (while often messy) do-it-yourself arts and crafts projects and for his regular Pretend Broadcasting System (P.B.S.) newscasts. On the P.B.S. segments, an off-camera couple named Mr. & Mrs. David joined Rayner (as he played the role of news reporter Walter Winkley) in responding to jokes and viewer-submitted artwork with sound effects. As a child, Keith Edmier sent a drawing to “The Ray Rayner Show.” When Rayner (as Winkley) held up the young artist’s work, his off-camera sidekicks rang their bells wildly. Rayner’s make-believe Mr. & Mrs. David would as often blow an “ah-ooga” or a bicycle horn. The bicycle horn (accompanied by a ridiculous laugh-track recording) was blown if they liked a joke, and those jokes or drawings they didn’t like received the “ah-ooga.” Of course, the drawings kids sent in almost always evoked an enthusiastic and laudatory bell-ringing.

In his book *The Story of Television*, Ray Rayner provides instruction aimed at TV career-minded teens and a thorough description of designing the set for his program: “The important person in making the set was the scenic designer at the television station—an artist who specializes in designing or drawing the plans and sketches for a set….I am also the producer of my show, so it was up to me to work out my ideas with the designer….I told the designer I wanted a fun set for a children-family show. I said I wanted lots of different colors, and not too much emphasis on blue….I did not want the set to have the feeling of being a specific place, like a living room or a street….It was to be ‘anywhere’ and ‘nowhere’….Since I knew I would be doing a little bit of everything, I wanted my set to be adaptable to anything. Therefore, it was to be ‘nowhere’! (No joke intended). This kind of set not only lends itself to a wide range of things you can do ‘within’ the set, but it also allows you to move ‘out’ of it into another area or another set without breaking the feel or the illusion of your main set.”

Rayner continues: “One of my favorite artists is Mondrian, who became famous with that technique (of using geometric forms and primary colors). The geometric straight lines and colors I wanted on the flats are all there, but [unlike Mondrian] the colors are nicely muted with gold speckles.”
Jack Kellogg

A resident of Tinley Park, Illinois and neighbor of the Edmier family, Jack Kellogg would later found a company with his brother called Grey Matter Response. They created synthesizers and E! software for the Yamaha DX-7. Essential for both Pop bands on MTV and New York performance artists like Laurie Anderson, the portable E!-equipped DX-7 synthesizer-keyboard was an omnipresent stage tool during the period and helped transform electronic music in the 1980s. However, Kellogg’s influence on Keith Edmier pre-dated Grey Matter Response. As the artist recalls, “Jack was a friend from high school and child prodigy painter of circus clowns. He was the first exhibiting artist I ever met—featured in People Magazine at the age of 13. He introduced me to performance art in general—and to the work of Chris Burden in particular.” As People noted at the time in “Lookout: A Guide to the Up and Coming,” “A straight-A student steeped in the history of his field (Hieronymus Bosch speaks to him more than Henri Matisse), Jack Kellogg locks himself in his basement to turn out landscapes, still lifes and record album covers. But his great obsession is still those clowns…” The article noted that the then-teenaged Jack Kellogg’s colorful clown portraits would soon be featured in an exhibition at the 1979 National Clown Convention in Chicago. In addition to his work as an artist (which would later expand into performance, sound art, and film), Kellogg helped innovate digital media technologies for the production of sound in film. He currently lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina.
Mike Capps and Technic Dental Lab

As Keith Edmier recalls: “I first visited Mike Capps’s lab in 1981 at age fourteen. He had a dental lab in Tinley, Illinois at 6825 West 171st Street. It was in the basement of my mother’s dentist, Dr. Graff. She told Dr. Graff that I was trying to make vampire fangs out of acrylic and was having difficulty. Dr. Graff suggested I meet Mike Capps downstairs. He let me hang out in the lab for a day and helped me make the fangs. I worked for him for two years, from age fourteen to sixteen, after school, Saturdays, and full-time during the summers.”

Like his ongoing exchanges with the legendary make-up effects artist Dick Smith, Keith Edmier’s early apprenticeship with Mike Capps at the Technic Dental Lab was a formative experience; it taught the teenager much about materials and casting methods. Dental polymer, or self-curing acrylic resin, as it is also known, is a powdery white substance that is mixed with a liquid monomer to repair chipped teeth and make dentures. The dental acrylic is stable and relatively safe, but the monomer (also known as methyl methacrylate monomer) evaporates quickly, smells terrible, and is quite volatile. It requires careful handling in a well-ventilated work space. Aside from their uses in cosmetic dentistry, medical applications, or high-end movie effects, dental polymer and methyl methacrylate monomer are not your typical art supplies, nor are they intended for the novice. The monomer dissolves plastic and therefore must be stored in an airtight glass container. It must be special-ordered, and, as Edmier learned, in certain states these materials can be purchased only with a license.
Long before Dick Smith had formalized his certificate program for budding effects artists, a teenager in Tinley Park, Illinois was in frequent contact and maintaining regular correspondence with the movie make-up and special effects maestro. The young Keith Edmier mailed Smith photographs of works in progress (like his special effects “appliance” for a Victor J. Andrew High School stage production of Jesus Christ Superstar, a “human back” that realistically gushed fake blood when whipped), and Smith reciprocated with audiotaped instructions about methods and materials and no-nonsense advice about improving technique. “If you are going to be a make-up artist you will need a place where you can practice... A small area with a worktable, chair, adequate lighting, and a sink, as nearby as possible, is minimum.” As Smith warned the aspiring effects artist, “A basement, empty room, or garage is fine, but you may have to use your bedroom.” Keith Edmier had the good fortune of having supportive parents. Tom and Beverly Edmier converted the family room into a studio to provide their ambitious son with ample space for practicing his craft at home. His workshop was well appointed with industrial shelving, ceiling-mounted fluorescent lighting, a large table, stool, and necessary gadgetry like mixers and scales for measuring materials. A photograph hung on the black-and-white wood paneling above his work surface to provide inspiration—a haunting image of William Hurt’s transformation make-up from the film Altered States, inscribed simply, “Best to Keith—Dick Smith.”

With a child inspired by the do-it-yourself approach of late-night Chicago horror hosts like Rich Koz (in his role as Son of Svengoolie), Edmier’s mother and father helped him order clay, plaster, liquid latex, and silicone rubber, and also made special trips to track down specialty items. Riley’s Trick Shop at 6442 West 111th Street in Worth, Illinois, a twenty-minute drive from the Edmier family home, sold magic kits, Halloween costumes, masks, and a wide variety of gags and novelties. Jim Riley, Jr. and his wife Judy had taken over the business that his father had begun in Chicago in 1937, but moved it to the Worth location in 1973. Riley’s Trick Shop became a frequent destination for the Edmier clan and an important source for the artist in acquiring spirit gum, synthetic hair, mortician’s wax, and more. Upon leaving home for the first time to live in California in 1985, the seventeen-year-old Edmier found employment through Dick Smith’s contact with fellow effects specialist Rick Baker. Edmier had first encountered Baker’s work in Dino DeLaurentis’s 1976 remake of King Kong. This was the film that sparked Edmier’s interest in the magic of motion picture special effects. At nine, Edmier had been inspired to attempt a photographic animation with his Kodak Instamatic camera and an Aurora-model-kit Kong. His fascination with the great ape continued through high school, as the aspiring effects artist created several life-sized animatronic gorilla masks.

During this period, Edmier corresponded with “King of Splatter” Tom Savini, and even made a “Zombie corpse” with the hope of being recruited to work on George Romero’s Day of the Dead, but he failed to land the gig. Still, owing much to his fang-making days with Mike Capps, Edmier was well equipped, as opportunities soon arose to assist Greg Cannom (on director Joel Schumacher’s vampire horror/comedy The Lost Boys in 1987) and make-up effects artist Craig Reardon.

Notably, Edmier provided prosthetics and effects for two TV series “Freddy’s Nightmares” and the film A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors (where he met Joji Tani, Osaka, Japan’s notorious Screaming Mad George)—and, a few years later, worked as the effects supervisor with Tani on the cult horror classic The Bride of Re-Animator. Before moving permanently to New York City in 1990 to concentrate strictly on visual art, Keith Edmier racked up a rather extensive list of film effects credits that included Big Top Pee Wee, Fat Man and Little Boy, and Joel and Ethan Coen’s critically acclaimed Barton Fink.

In a reconstructed photograph, Untitled (Dick Smith’s House) (1983/1995), the now-infamous head prop of actress Linda Blair from The Exorcist rests casually upon a shelf with other assorted knickknacks. This snapshot, from a personal visit (while Edmier was still in high school) to Dick Smith’s home in Larchmont, New York, ironically cries out—like Jeff Goldblum’s character Seth Brundle in director David Cronenberg’s classic remake of The Fly—for viewers to “Be afraid. Be very afraid.” As incredible as it may seem in retrospect, Keith Edmier’s first paying job in the film industry was to assist Chris Walas in creating the creature effects for Goldblum’s horrific “Brundlefly” mutation. However, the early influence that Dick Smith had on Edmier can hardly be overstated; through this photograph, the mature artist took the opportunity to pay homage to his mentor.
LEFT TO RIGHT: Dick Smith, life cast of actress Linda Blair from *The Exorcist*; Keith Edmier, photographs from visit to Dick Smith’s basement, Larchmont, NY; Dick Smith, life cast of Linda Blair (with facial prosthetics) from *The Exorcist*
LEFT TO RIGHT: Keith Edmier, life cast at age fourteen; Keith Edmier, photograph of make-up test for The Fly; Chris Walas, life cast of actor Jeff Goldblum with facial prosthetics from The Fly; Keith Edmier, Comedy & Tragedy (Victor J. Andrews High School Edition).

LEFT TO RIGHT: Craig Reardon, horror head and process photographs from Poltergeist; Dick Smith, replacement animation busts of actor Jeff Bridges from Starman.

LEFT TO RIGHT: Keith Edmier, proposal for zombie head for Day of the Dead; Tom Savini, “Bub” zombie from Day of the Dead.
Installation view of Special Make-up Effects section

Cover: Keith Edmier, KE/Bozo
Inside covers: Keith Edmier, The Ray Rayner Show Set (detail of installation, daily reports of Chicago's sports and weather on chalkboard)

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