Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

For immediate release: February 27, 2004

KEITH COTTINGHAM

CONSTRUCTED PHOTOGRAPHS

March 20 – April 17

Keith Cottingham will exhibit large-scale photographs that depict imaginary architectural interiors and portraits. The photographs, constructed from drawings, wax structures, and a variety of computer techniques, are analogous to the creation of three-dimensional models or maquettes for film work. These models, however, have no material existence; they exist only as visualization. The photographs are not of the model; the model the artist makes is the photograph. Playing with ontological issues, Cottingham presents imagined spaces and characters that psychologically, culturally, and spiritually shape us.

In his latest series, the most complicated to date, Cottingham continues to challenge the viewer, who is unsure what the photograph reveals. The interiors are composites of religious, utopian, and secular places, combining turn of the century Modernism with cultural iconography such as African sculpture and Asian motifs. Studies in light and space, the images are familiar yet without specific location. The portraits are based on a melting in and out of different race/age/genders, yet gravitate to core identity types. Inhabitants in these spaces appear not as individuals but as representations, which calls into question private consciousness and perception of others.

We are uncertain if we are in the past, present, or future. Based on montage, the artworks are puzzle parts reconstituted as "real fictions."

Cottingham's previous work questions the scientific objectivity of the photographic image. His series from 1999 that simulates nineteenth century vintage ethnographic photographs was actually "painted" by using tiny bits of computerized information. *Fictitious Portraits*, 1993 depicts multiple portraits of prepubescent youths, all eerily the same and somewhat unnatural. These imaginary images question the conventions of portraiture and definitions of selfhood. Ron Platt, formerly assistant curator at the MIT List Visual Arts Center, referring to these portraits, has written: *It's this ambiguity – each image's uncanny tendency to both mimic and contradict photographic reality – that tells us no photo should be taken at face value.*

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Keith Cottingham is a San Francisco-based artist. This is his second exhibition at the Feldman Gallery. He studied at San Francisco State University, at the San Francisco Center for Computer Arts, and at the San Luis Obispo Polytechnic. His work is included in the traveling exhibition, *Paradise Now: Picturing the Genetic Revolution*, curated by Marvin Heiferman & Carole Kismaric, first presented at Exit Art. He has been included in major exhibitions exploring the digital revolution throughout Europe and the United States.

There will be an opening reception on Saturday, March 20, 6:00 to 8:00.
Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 to 6:00. Monday by appointment.
For more information, contact Laura Muggeo at (212) 226-3232 or laura@feldmangallery.com.