

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS INC

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Socialites & Satellites

April 7 to May 12

"ARE YOU NOW, OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN, A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY?"

Although the Fifties conjure up memories of Howdy Doody, Hula Hoops and Bunny Hops, the rhetoric and tactics of cold war politics intrude upon these happy reveries. The exhibition "Socialites & Satellites" attacks this selective sentimentalism by examining the cultural beliefs and fears which fueled the tensions of the decade. It is inspired by and includes the Chrysler Museum exhibition "Mystique and Identity: Women's Fashions of the 1950's", which appeared at the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia from February 2 – March 18, 1984. Fifty important fashions representing the leading couturiers of the Fifties – were selected by Guest Curator Barbara Scheirer of the University of Massachusetts to celebrate the fashionable elegance of the decade.

"Socialites & Satellites" integrates fashion with the dominant images of the American scene. Curators Barbara Schreier, Sean Elwood, and Ronald Feldman have selected representative art work, photographs, furniture and television programs of the cold war period, even a real Vanguard satellite, to illustrate the tensions of the decade. These popular objects from the Fifties are interspersed with the elaborately dressed and bejeweled mannequins, and melodies of the era and the scent of Chanel No. 5 will float through the gallery to complete the backdrop for the high-fashion designs.

Fashions of the 1950's emphasized a woman's femininity and promoted her seductive charms. In a dramatic departure from the masculine Forties' silhouette, curves replaced angles, sculptured lines superseded hard edges and the hourglass shape reigned supreme. As women began to embrace the feminine mystique and accept their destiny as full-time wives and mothers, fashion supported their response by creating an idealized vision of passive femininity.

These examples of Fifties' feminine self-adornment exaggerated sexual differences and minimized individual distinctions. The themes of social, sexual and cultural determinism were reflected not only by women's clothing of the day but also in the design of images and everyday objects. As one views these "fashions" against the backdrop of photographs, videotapes and objects that illustrate what was happening in the "real world", one begins to realize that there was a giant chasm between what was actually occurring and how we were expected to look and behave, what we were to want and have.

"Socialites & Satellites" is essentially a show about the Fifties. But it is also an exhibition that examines the space between fantasy and reality, between fashion and the way we live out lives... between cold cream and cold war.

The gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 AM to 6 PM. (Monday by appointment only.) For further information regarding the exhibition, please contact Lynn Cassaniti. For photographs please contact Barbara Goldner at 212-226-3232.

"Socialites & Satellites"
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Partial List of Lenders to Exhibition

Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Chanel Corporation
New York, NY

Chrysler Museum of Art
Norfolk, VA

Eli Buk Antiques
New York, NY

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Washington, DC

50/Fifty
New York, NY

Goddard Space Flight Center
Greenbelt, MD

International Center for Photography
New York, NY

Diane Keaton and Marvin Heiferman
New York, NY

Knoll Furniture, Inc.
New York, NY

Legett Department Stores
Norfolk, VA

George Stavrinos
New York, NY