

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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ELEANOR ANTIN

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

FEBRUARY 16 – MARCH 16

The image of Pompeii on the brink of annihilation has always suggested uncomfortable parallels with the contemporary world, where the sunlit life turns out to have dark shadows in which cruelty, pain, and death lurk at the edge of consciousness. I am excavating a Pompeii of my own invention where beautiful, affluent people live the good life innocent of the disasters waiting just around the corner.

Eleanor Antin, San Diego, August 2001

Eleanor Antin, a pioneering conceptual and multidisciplinary artist, will exhibit a series of fourteen new large-scale color photographs titled *The Last Days of Pompeii*. For over thirty years, Antin has been engaging in a dialogue with history, and her new photographs evoke narratives of sensual, decadent Rome seen through the screen of English and French salon painting (Alma-Tadema, Lord Leighton, Puvis de Chavannes...) in which the two great colonial powers tantalized themselves with their dream of the opulence, sensuality, and wickedness of the ancient power that preceded them.

The photographs are beautiful, elaborately staged recreations of an imagined Pompeii – two gladiators fight to the death at a sumptuous banquet; a young girl languorously bathes in a garden pool spied on by gray haired senators hiding in the bushes; the writer Petronius celebrates his suicide with an orgy of friends and lovers...as a Pre-Raphaelite beauty in a wheelchair intently watches the sunlit world of glamorous artifice that suddenly darkens on the morning of the last day, leaving a handful of survivors covered with chalk and dust and ashes.

Eleanor Antin's recent exhibitions include a retrospective of her work at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which traveled throughout England. She will be exhibiting photographs, drawings, and a video installation in the 2002 Biennale of Sydney, May 15 – July 2, as well as a film accompanied by a live performance at the Sydney Opera House. She will exhibit a number of the Pompeii photographs in the exhibition *Tableaux Vivants* at the Kunsthalle in Vienna, May 24 – August 25, 2002. And she is scheduled to speak about her video work as part of The Museum of Modern Art's program, *Video Viewpoints*, on March 18. A book of her pioneering mail artwork *100 Boots (1971-73)* was published by Running Press in 1999, and *Eleanor Antin* by Howard Fox was published by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Fellows of Contemporary Art in 1999. Her work is in several museum collections including The Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

There will be an opening reception on February 16 from 6:00 – 8:00. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 to 6:00, Monday by appointment. For more information contact Amy Bannon at (212) 226-3232 or amy@feldmangallery.com.

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