

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts

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Keith Cottingham

Biology & Cosmology: Below the Visible

February 13 – March 26, 2016

Cottingham's subjects don't really exist. ...The closer the fictive figures are scrutinized, the more they begin to deconstruct, much as paintings break down into welters of colored brush strokes. 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.

Ron Platt, "Believing is Seeing." *Wired* 3, No. 10

For his fourth exhibition at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Keith Cottingham will exhibit fourteen large-scale photographic prints that touch on spatially complex imagery from the realms of biology and cosmology. Minimal compositions include spheres, crystals, and other seemingly recognizable shapes floating against black backgrounds, as well as intersecting forms which convey a prismatic sense of space. Hyper-realistic lighting activates the subjects, and bold colors, narrow depth of field, and time-lapse motion create emotional undertones. Suggestions of condensation and liquid represent form and spirit infusing out of emptiness. These futuristic renderings, operating outside human scale, ask the question: are we inside living cells or floating amongst the stars?

The exhibition charts a new direction for Cottingham, a seminal artist in the digital age, who previously challenged the authenticity of photography by simulating the material world to unsettling effect in three series: multiple images of a prepubescent boy in *Fictitious Portraits* (1992); a collection of nineteenth century ethnographic studies in *History Repurposed* (1999); architectural spaces in *Constructed Photographs* (2004); and animations of successive movement and interaction of diverse forms in *Growth* (2007). None of the subjects depicted exist.

With *Biology & Cosmology*, Cottingham finds freedom to create new symbolic worlds that go beyond real world limitations and operate outside human scale. The process, which he identifies as "constructive imaging," begins with 3D models rendered and then printed as archival pigment prints. Instead of light photons revealing an outside world through a lens, these pure renderings go beyond photography to objectify 3D representations not tethered to real world referents. The 3D scenes, materials and lights are sculpted and designed, but how their physical properties interact with each other to create an image is based on real world physics. This divergent approach creates artful "visualizations," blurring the distinction between imagination and reality.

As the lifeworld becomes more and more quantified, mystery is being further reduced and buried underneath the appearance of the rational. But there is more than meets the eye. What is circulating and permeating below the surface of the visible? What are the unseen creative forces breathing life into our unfolding existence? How will the new paradigm of matter and energy taking precedence over the 'soul' affect our understanding of ourselves? These colorful visualizations hope to re-enchant the viewer with the 'mysterious' by glimpsing the world that is just beyond our understanding. The deeper we look, the greater the new expanse becomes.

Cottingham's work has been reproduced and exhibited in major exhibitions, including the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Siemens AG, Munich, Germany; Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, Spain; Hayward Gallery, London, England; and Neue Galerie Graz, Austria.

A press kit with more information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1IPb5m9>

Reception on Saturday, February 13, 6-8. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10-6. Monday by appointment. For information, contact Casey Dorobek (212) 226-3232 or casey@feldmangallery.com