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FRIENDS

Frederick Einhorn, Keith Haring, Cady Noland and Not Vital

FRED EINHORN

char
cun ögls ferms & dutschs pel vaira
es cuntaint cun pac &
va a spass cun 1a forsk

gentle
with strong eyes & sweet to the bone
is happy with little &
walks with 1 pair of scissors

il teater es ses mond
er
scha quel nun vol adüna esser ses

the theatre is his world
even
if the theatre does not always wants to be his

pero el chatta la storta
& co
sbuorfla'l ovras chi han da far cun
sang
poppas
1 pe scunflà
2 pulmums cun chaves

but he finds his way
& how
sputtering works that have to do with
blood
dolls
1 swollen foot
2 lungs with hair

ferm es quist mond
chi'd es nat
be güsta
avant ch'el es i

strong is this world
that was born
just before
he left

char
da buna glüna
cun pac
in's ha laschè usche bler

gentle
happy
with little
& he left us so much

co füss quai ossa cun Fred
chantessa'l amo adüna
Joni Mitchell cun 62

how would it be now with Fred
would he still sing
Joni Mitchell at 62

Not Vital, lügl 2018

FRIENDS

FRIENDS draws together a group of artists that shared amicable time in New York City in the 1980s and early 1990s. The exhibition evolves around the fairly unknown work of Frederick Einhorn, whereby his oeuvre is contextualized with sculptural and painterly work by Keith Haring, Cady Noland, and Not Vital.

Frederick Einhorn was born in 1956 on the ocean-side in Long Island, and grew up to become a passionate singer and actor, and an avid collector of Barbie dolls. When Einhorn tested HIV+ in 1988, and the subsequent manifestations of his illness brought an end to his career in musical theatre, he turned his creative energies towards the visual arts.

The works that Einhorn made in his all too brief career as an artist, although triggered by his struggle with AIDS, are surprisingly unsentimental and humorous in nature.¹ *Barbie* (1992), one of the first works that Einhorn made, is cast in bronze – from her elegant little toenails, up to her perfect hairdo. The Barbie, one of the most popular and collectible toys of all times, has been a life-long obsession for Einhorn. Not Vital remembers how Einhorn used to live in a tiny flat on the Upper West Side which looked like a doll house. Each morning, the fold out bed had to be folded back into the wall, in order to make space for an endlessly growing collection of Barbie dolls. Einhorn even had the very early editions of Barbie, and was always in touch with other people who shared his passion. One day, when Billy Boy, the owner of the world's largest Barbie collection and the author of *Barbie: Her Life & Times*, called Einhorn, he could not believe what happened – “the real Billy Boy”, the godfather of Barbie, had called him, Frederick Einhorn. Life is joy.²

Hey! Hey! Hey! (1992), is composed of three identical cartoonish

bronze masks, laughing at us with exuberance. The masks, facing us in triple brotherhood, carry the countenance of an iconic black figure: Fat Albert. *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* was an American Saturday morning cartoon that Einhorn had watched during his adolescence.³ During each episode, Fat Albert and his friends, aka The Junkyard Gang, dealt with an issue commonly faced by children, ranging from stage fright, first loves, and medical operations, to more serious themes such as racism, sexually transmitted diseases, smoking, and death. Fat Albert was a hero: civic minded and wise beyond his years, he worked hard to maintain integrity in the gang and with others – putting friendship above all. As did Einhorn in his life and art, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* confronted complications and hardship with inventiveness, cleverness, and humour.

While *Barbie* and *Hey! Hey! Hey!* refer back to positively charged icons of popular culture which played a key role in the artist's formative teen years growing up in suburban Long Island, many of Einhorn's other works specifically reflect upon his struggle with AIDS.

My Foot (1992) is a life-sized bronze cast of Einhorn's foot, which is filled with cigarettes. Visible through both the ankle and a cut-out on the upper side of the foot, the cigarettes function as a visualization of the burning pain that haunted Einhorn's body in the last years of his life. *X-Ray / Toupee* (1993), a wall-piece that the artist made with his own X-ray and a toupee, touchingly and humorously refers to both his lung-problems and his hair-loss. Whereas *My Foot* and *X-Ray / Toupee* pick up on the bodily manifestations of AIDS, *HIV Positive* (1993), an edition of 100 red baseball-caps with “HIV” embroidered on them in yellow letters, playfully engages with the stigma afflicted to the illness. With the

¹ Press release: David Zwirner. *FREDERICK EINHORN: Carnival of Souls*. June 18 – July 31, 1993.

² Billy Boy (1960) is an artist, author, socialite, and fashion designer who was a muse of Andy Warhol.

Einhorn's love for Barbie dolls is delineated here as told by Not Vital, in a conversation about his dear friend Frederick, in July 2018.

³ In the show's playfully warm theme song, Fat Albert announces himself singing “Hey! Hey! Hey! It's Fat Albert”.

baseball-cap, another reference to popular culture emerges: Einhorn loved everything that was American, and cherished all that was prominent, and endowed with strong symbolic character. In the vein of General Idea's AIDS paintings and their *IMAGEVIRUS* series, Einhorn utilized gay signal colours when designing *HIV Positive*. In doing so, he called attention to the plague, whilst contemporaneously celebrating visibility and life.

In 1993, shortly before passing away, Einhorn made four drawings: on a Barbie colouring book, and with his own blood. All of the sheets that Einhorn used for this series depict a timetable and a group of children playing underneath a banner stating "PLAY SAFE".

On one of the drawings, entitled *Me and Barbie*, Einhorn meticulously drew the portrait of Barbie in three-quarter profile onto the pre-existing scenery, also adding a + sign, and a small, nearly invisible self-portrait to the picture. Another sheet serves as a playground for different hairstyles. Entitled *8 Hairdos for Barbie + Midge* the careful drawing depicts Barbie's happy ponytails, and Midge's neatly coifed hair. The other two drawings – *Untitled (Lips)* and *100,000,000,000 Miracles* – both play with the elements of repetition and infinity. While Einhorn covered the first one with imprints of his kisses, he wrote on the latter, as if in a prayer "*100,000,000,000 Miracles*", over, and over again.

While the works that Einhorn made in the last two years of his life are reflective of a personal struggle with illness and identity, their formal clarity and their iconographic qualities serve as vehicles for hope and optimism.⁴

Before turning to the visual arts in the early 1990s, Frederick Einhorn was a theatre actor and a singer. Vital remembers vividly,

how Einhorn often used to wake up at five o'clock in the morning to go to a casting. His routine was as follows: he rushed to the specific address, drew a number, then came back to the apartment, got ready, and then left again when it was his turn to audition. As Vital tells, back in the time, in New York, it was not so much about portfolios and all of that: to actually do something and to actively build a career was less of a thing, than it is today. When Einhorn got a re-call, he was happy. He immediately called his family and friends, and talked to them for hours, gesticulating by the phone.

Sometimes Einhorn and Vital went to see exhibitions together, but for most of his life, Einhorn's world really was the theatre. He had only a few close *FRIENDS* that were artists: Keith Haring, Cady Noland, and Vital.

Keith Haring is represented in this exhibition with a suite of three drawings that the artist made in 1979. Those oil stick drawings are all portraits of Frederick Einhorn – entitled *Fred*, they depict genitals in the loud colours that are characteristic for Haring: red, yellow, green, and orange.

Like Einhorn, Haring was diagnosed HIV + in the late 1980s. Growing into an avid AIDS activist, Haring stated that art "should be something that liberates the soul, provokes the imagination and encourages people to go further."⁵ Just like Einhorn, in working through hardship, Haring celebrated humanity and life.

Apart from being an actor, a singer, an artist, and a collector, Einhorn was also a dedicated hair-dresser. His most important and most useful accessory were scissors: he carried them everywhere, in his pocket. Since the acting and singing barely provided

⁴ Press release: David Zwirner. *FREDERICK EINHORN: Carnival of Souls*. June 18 – July 31, 1993.

⁵ Couderc, Sylvie and Marcand, Sylvie (1985): *The Ten Commandments: An Interview*. The Keith Haring Foundation (webpage).

any source of income, Einhorn earned the little money he needed to survive by joyfully coiffing and cutting other people's hair.⁶ Einhorn's hairdresser persona is reflected in his art: most evidently in *8 Hairdos for Barbie + Midge* (1993) and in *X-Ray / Toupee* (1993), but also in the details of *Barbie* (1992). In those works, the neatly coiffed hairdo, as well as the illness-inflicted hair-loss emerge as important motifs.

As a hairdresser, Einhorn had many customers, among them none other than Holly Solomon and Cady Noland. With Noland especially, Frederick also shared a friendship. Vital remembers how he and Frederick were sometimes allowed to sleep at Noland's place if they had no accommodation.⁷ Cady Noland herself remembers Einhorn as a soulful friend.⁸

Noland's contribution to *FRIENDS* consists in a fairly large work made out of cardboard and covered in argentic spray paint: *Not Yet Titled* (1996), Edition for Parkett Vol. 46. Equipped with nine holes which can be covered and uncovered, *Not Yet Titled* plays with the notions of negative and positive space and inserts itself into a larger group of cut-out and pop-up pieces by Noland. The cardboard of *Not Yet Titled* is palpably worn off, and the silvery spray paint is scuffed off in parts. This piece is meant to ominously and seemingly haphazardly lean against the wall. Like many of Noland's installations, it resembles a work in progress rather than a formal or finished piece. By adopting a visual logic of carelessness and neglect, Noland points to what she perceives as an abandoned plan: the American dream.⁹ In tackling the visceral Americana, mechanisms of institutional control and objectification, and the public spectacles of cruelty and fame emerged as key topics in Noland's work. Situated within her

broader oeuvre, *Not Yet Titled* can be interpreted as representing a pillory: depending on which holes are uncovered, the piece could function as an entrapment, symbolizing notions of disability and impaired (social) mobility.

In both, Einhorn's and Noland's work, symbols and icons of American popular culture play an important role. Yet, while Einhorn cherished the American dream, Noland examines its underbelly, and exposes the myth behind its promise.

A few years after Vital had moved from his native Engadin to America, he got to know Einhorn in the West Village. Right after the two first met in the early 1980s, they started to spend a lot of time together: Einhorn took the M13 bus to Vital's loft on Broadway, and Vital visited him in his tiny apartment on the Upper West Side. When Einhorn suddenly started to make art, they decided to go to Italy together, to work in Vital's foundry in Pietrasanta. There, in 1992, Einhorn had three sculptures cast in bronze: *Barbie, Hey! Hey! Hey!* and *My Foot*.

Between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s, Vital made two artworks for Einhorn: *Einhorn, Zweihorn, Dreihorn* (1986) and *per Fred* (1993). *Einhorn, Zweihorn, Dreihorn* is a tall sculpture made of hydrocal, wood, and antelope-antlers. Just as Noland's *Not Yet Titled*, this piece is meant to be exhibited leaning on the wall. As characteristic for Vital's sculptural work, *Einhorn, Zweihorn, Dreihorn* is conceived to be looked at with an upward-facing gaze: only when tilting his head back, the beholder sees the three antelope antlers that are placed on top of the longish form that composes the sculpture's body. Forming a contrast to the white corpus of the sculpture, the dark antlers swing to left, as if curled by a light breeze.

⁶ Delineated here as told by Not Vital, in a conversation about his dear friend Frederick, in July 2018.

⁷ Delineated here as told by Not Vital, in a conversation about his dear friend Frederick, in July 2018.

⁸ Told here as written by Cady Noland, in a letter of hers from June 2018.

⁹ Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York: *Collection online: Cady Noland* (webpage).

The German title of this piece is a pun: on the one hand, it refers to Frederick's last name: Einhorn (German for unicorn). On the other hand, it relates to the sculpture's tripartite hairdo: onehorn, twohorn, threehorn.

Vital made *Einhorn*, *Zweihorn*, *Dreihorn* when Einhorn started to lose his black curls. The artist bought three elegantly curled antelope antlers, formed a perfectly white geometrical form reminiscent of an obelisk, and combined the two parts to a sculptural portrait of his friend. The result is a complete form, from which nothing can be subtracted, and to which nothing has to be added. *Einhorn*, *Zweihorn*, *Dreihorn* is exemplary for Vital's multi-faceted oeuvre, which brings about the realization that minimalism and surrealism can be just as symbiotic as the ancient and the contemporary.

When Einhorn died on May 26th in 1993, Vital made a drawing entitled *per Fred* (for Fred). As typical for Vital's works on paper, *per Fred* is made of simple, everyday materials: pencil, tobacco, and tape. Underneath the tape, as if protected from all harm, Vital wrote in delicate letters in his native Rumantsch: "F left earlier than I thought, he left so early, yet so late".

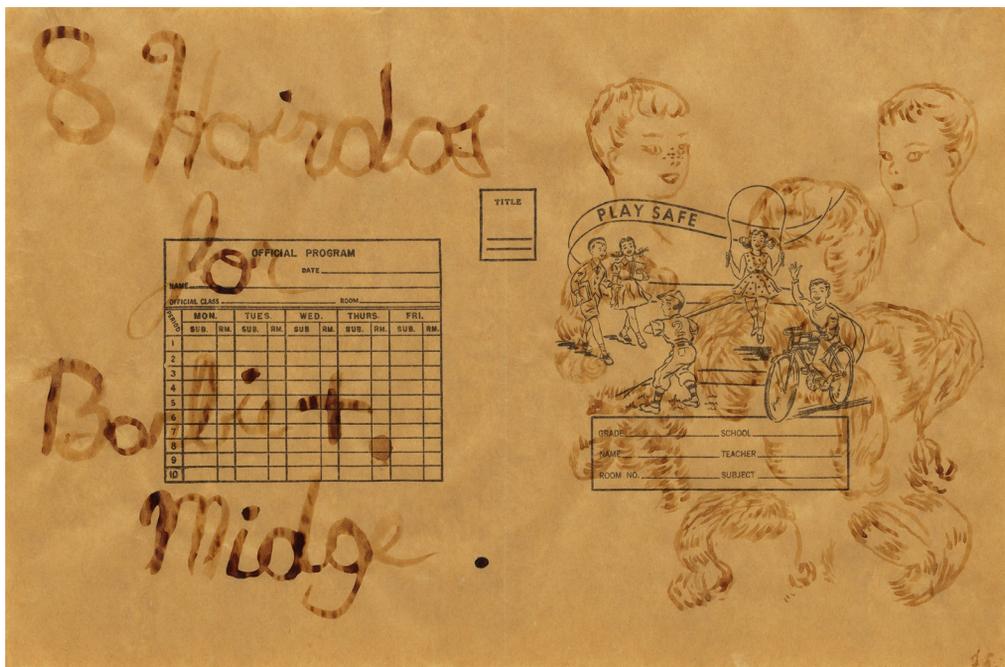
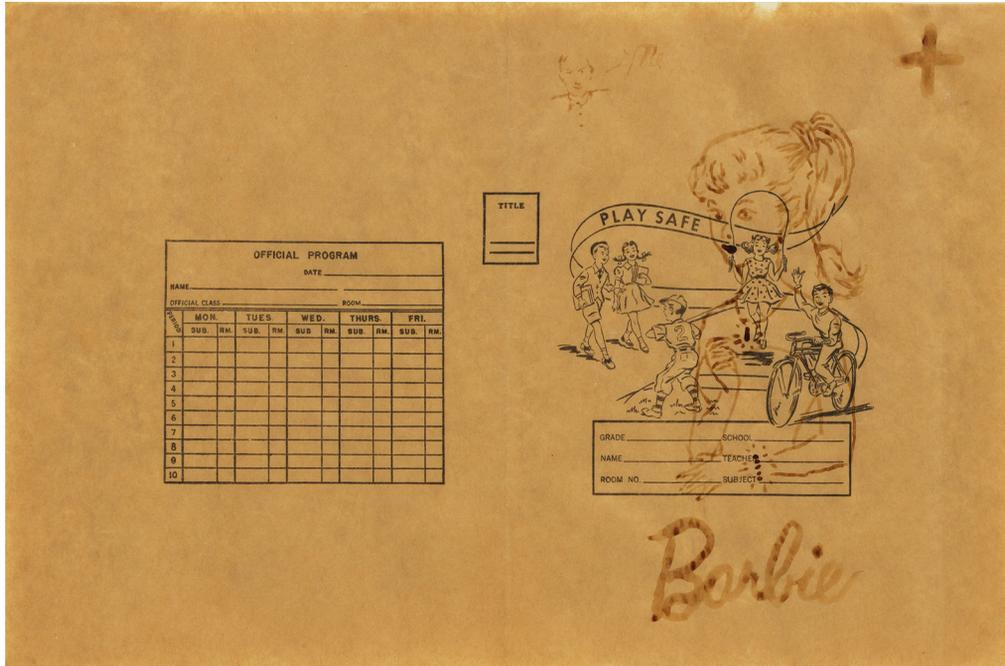
Einhorn died at the young age of 36. In defiance of his illness, he remained full of optimism, humor, and care until the end of his life – three notions that are reflected in both, his social, as well as his artistic legacy.

Taking place at the foundation of Einhorn's friend Not Vital, and opening 25 years after Einhorn's first and only solo show, *FRIENDS* is conceived as an intimate exhibition that reflects upon friendship and solidarity. In tracing the legacy of Frederick

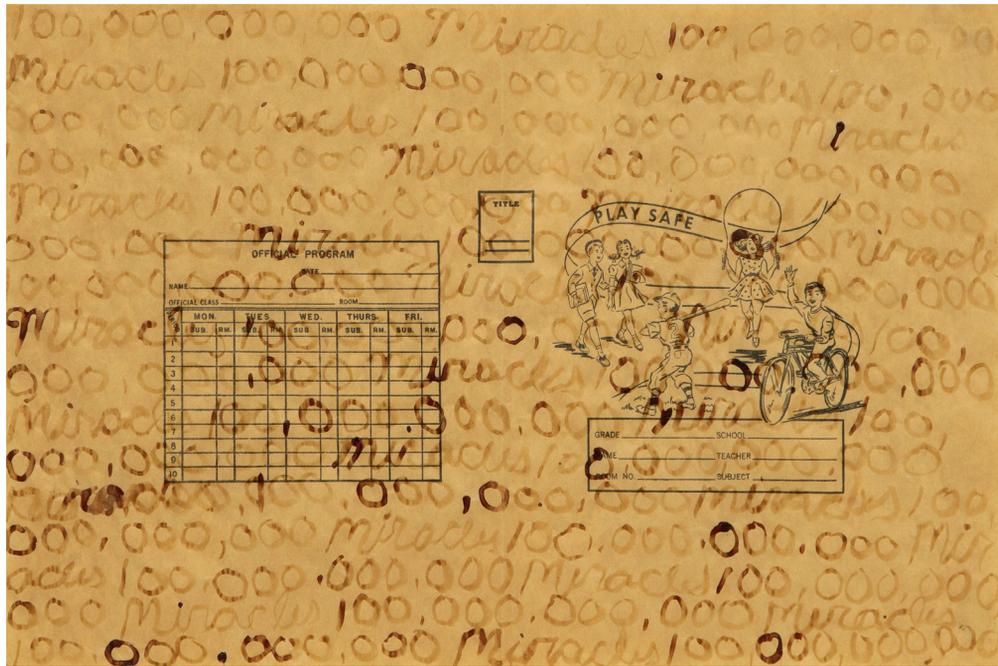
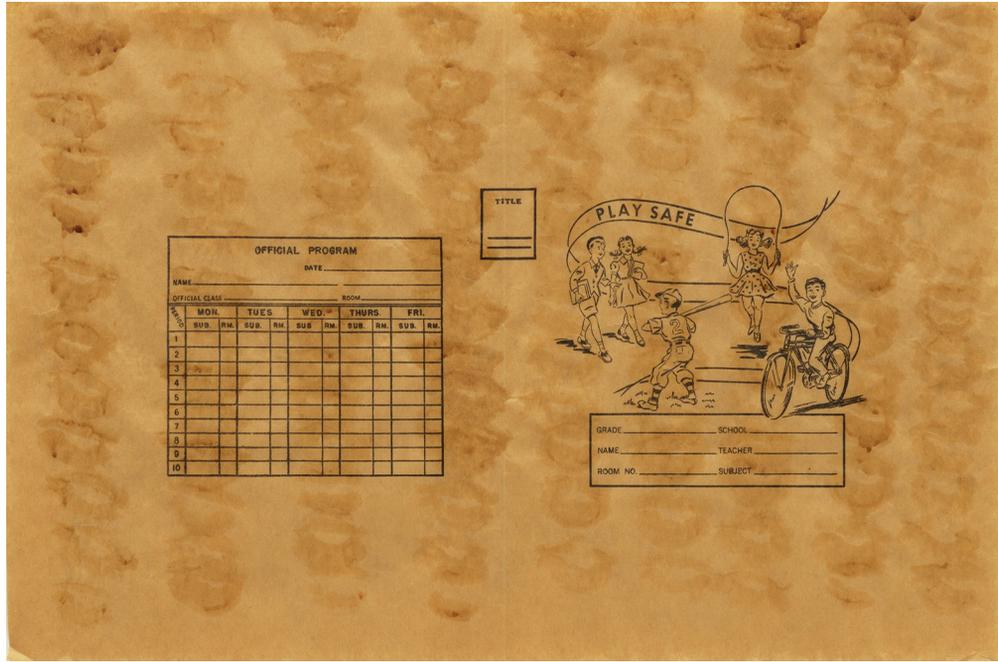
Einhorn, and in researching his friendships and influences, the documentation of his first show at David Zwirner in 1993, as well as the uncovering of oral histories played an important role.¹⁰ Therefore, I would like to thank both, Not Vital, and David Zwirner.

Giorgia von Albertini
July 2018

¹⁰ In 1993, Einhorn had his first and only solo show with David Zwirner, shortly after the gallery had opened on Greene Street. After this show, which the artist himself had entitled *Carnival of Souls* right before he passed away, Einhorn's work found a place in the private collections of David Zwirner, and of his long-time friend Not Vital.



Frederick Einhorn
Me and Barbie, 1993
 Blood on paper, 29.8 cm x 45.7 cm
8 Hairdos for Barbie + Midge, 1993
 Blood on paper, 29.8 cm x 45.7 cm
 Collection of David & Monica Zwirner, New York



Frederick Einhorn
Untitled (Lips), 1993
 Blood on paper, 29.8 cm x 45.7 cm
100,000,000,000 Miracles, 1993
 Blood on paper, 29.8 cm x 45.7 cm
 Collection of David & Monica Zwirner, New York



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Frederick Einhorn
Barbie, 1992
Bronze, 30.5 cm x 7.5 cm x 3.8 cm
Edition of three
Collection of Not Vital, Sent
-



-
Frederick Einhorn

My Foot, 1992

Bronze and cigarettes, 14 cm x 9.5 cm x 26.1 cm

Collection of Not Vital, Sent
-



Frederick Einhorn

X-Ray / Toupee, 1993

X-Ray, toupee, 43.2 cm x 35.5 cm

Collection of Not Vital, Sent



Frederick Einhorn

HIV Positive, 1993

Cotton base-ball caps with felt letters

Edition of 100

David Zwirner. *FREDERICK EINHORN: Carnival of Souls*. June 18 – July 31, 1993.

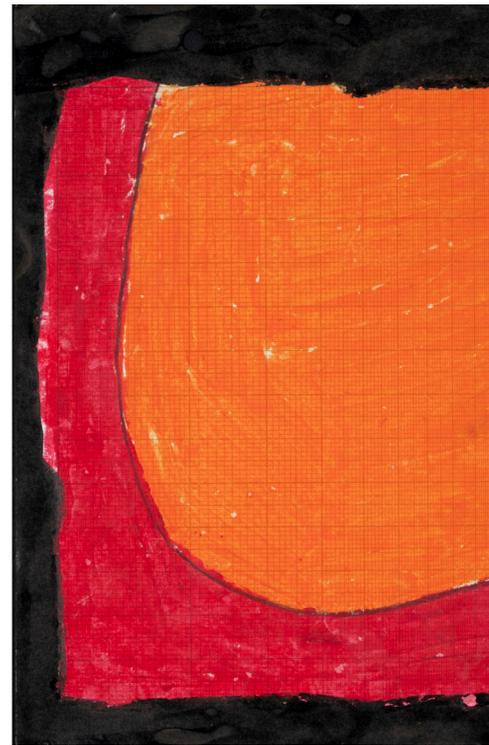
Collection of Not Vital, Sent



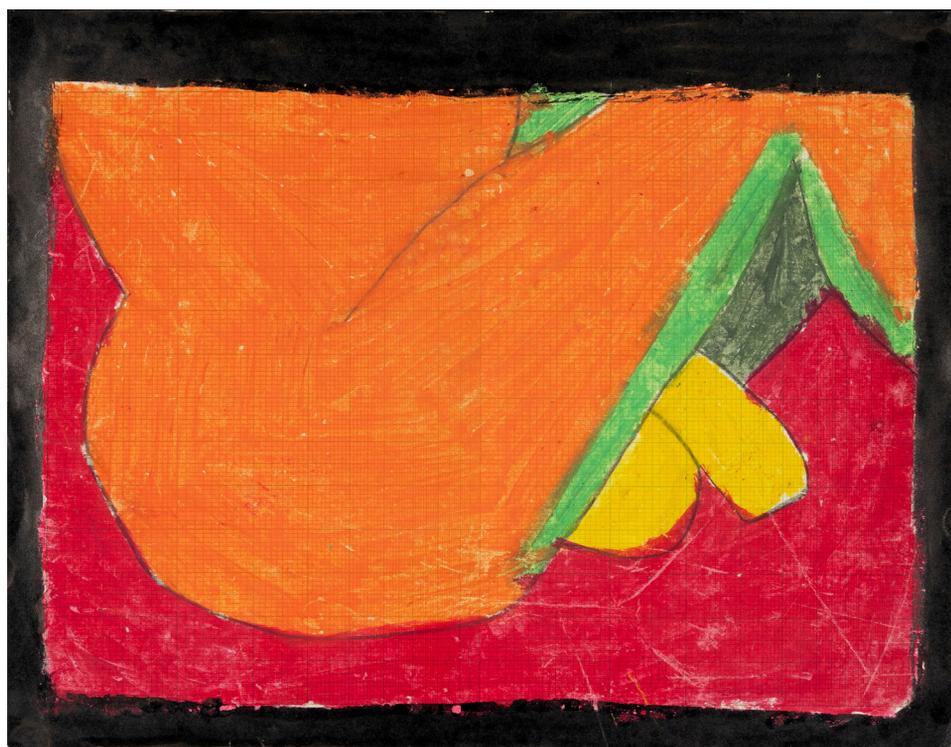
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Frederick Einhorn
Hey! Hey! Hey!, 1992
Bronze, 47 cm x 140 cm x 11.4 cm
Collection of Not Vital, Sent
-



-
Frederick Einhorn
Popeye get's Fucked, 1992
Silver, 8.5 cm x 12 cm x 3.5 cm
Collection of Not Vital, Sent
-



-
Keith Haring
Fred, 1979
Oil stick on paper, each 20.1 cm x 29.7 cm
Suite of 3
Collection of Not Vital, Sent
-



FRED WAS A DEAR SOUL AND HE LEFT US TOO SOON.

Cady Noland



Cady Noland

Not Yet Titled, 1996

Edition for Parkett Vol. 46

Cardboard, lacquer-based sanding, sealer and aluminum enamel spray paint, 142 cm x 137 cm

Ed. 3/60

Collection of Not Vital, Sent



Not Vital

Einhorn, Zweihorn, Dreihorn, 1986

Hydrocal, wood and antlers, 300 cm x 61.2 cm

Private collection, Switzerland



fundaziun
Not Vital
Chastè da Tarasp
7553 Tarasp