

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Joseph Zito

et plus bellum

March 31 – April 30, 2005

Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

Joseph Zito's sculptures are memorials to lives lived or not yet lost, to particular individuals or anonymous unknowable strangers. There is something of a "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier" quality to the exhibition. The works are also about fathers and sons and the extent to which the artist inhabits both identities.

Plaid fabric embodies a child's reliance on the security and strength of his father and is offered folded thirteen times into a tight triangle like the coffin flag presented to the family after a death in the line of duty. An archer's bow rests against the wall anchored by a bronze-cast utility glove and suggests a mythological narrative, like Icarus fallen to earth. Another bronze cast, a cutaway anatomy model of a human heart, is lashed with a Zippo lighter, faithful companion of WWII era servicemen, burning until its fuel runs out. Fabric again, dyed progressively darker red, appears as off-the-shelf body bags, child-sized and unbearable.

Zito casts 50 mm machine gun bullets in brightly colored rubber and makes them useless as weapons, desirable as playthings, paying homage to sculptor H. C. Westermann in the title "Cliff's Crayons." Grenades seem fragile as eggs gathered into a slatted wood box, smooth, soft, and white. Or again in copper polished to a mirror shine, reverently placed on a silk pillow atop a slender red tower. The most overtly commemorative of all is the slab of black granite in the shape of a dog tag, quarried, shaped and polished by a monument-maker.

In many ways this group of work indicates Zito's continuing interest in process, material and transformation, and his references to admired predecessors such as Eva Hesse or Donald Judd. Drawings, made by igniting gunpowder on paper, include images of targets, stripes, and stars - patriotic as well as art historical icons. Zito takes materials and ideas fraught with negative connotations and renders them precious, poetic, palatable. This is a very personal body of work, enriched by deep feelings about life and loss.

Joseph Zito was born in 1957 and lives and works in Brooklyn. He had exhibitions at Rosa Esman Gallery in 1988, 1989 and 1991, and has exhibited since that time at Lennon, Weinberg, most recently in 1997.