

COLLECTING MULTIPLES | BIDDING IN CUBAN | EVE SUSSMAN

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Hot Numbers

From Brillo boxes to paperweight breasts, multiples prove their mettle as playful—and collectible—works of art

By Carol Kino





(1) Marcel Duchamp, generally viewed as the father of multiples, made the first of his "Rotoreliefs" in 1935. The cardboard disks, printed with spiral patterns, were designed to be spun on a record player. Duchamp briefly tried to market them as toys; (2) Sylvie Fleury's 1993 "Slim-Fast" boxes add a feminist twist to her take on (3) Andy Warhol's 1969 "Brillo Boxes"



(4) Lawrence Weiner's brass stencils "Give & Get" and "Have & Take"; (5) "Couverture," 1994, by Anya Gallego, with chocolate and coconut oil in an aluminum can; (6) "Felt Suit," 1970, by Joseph Beuys, who famously said, "If you have all my multiples, then you have me entirely"; (7) the first of three busts by Kehinde Wiley, in cast-marble dust and resin; and (8) Katharina Fritsch's Gehirn (Brain), 1987-89



"So much art used industrial objects, the next step

was to manufacture the art itself"

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AS WITH SO MANY THINGS IN MODERN art, it all began with Marcel Duchamp. The father of the readymade is generally credited with introducing the notion that artworks can be mass-produced as multiples. Though the term can suggest anything produced in edition, including a photograph or print, it is used here to denote a sculptural object produced in quantity.

In 1935 Duchamp made the first of his "Rotoreliefs," a set of six optical disks with spiral patterns, designed to be spun on a record player. He briefly tried to market the works, produced in an edition of 500, as toys at an inventor's fair. Around the same time, he made the initial incarnation of his "Boite-en-Valise," 1935-41 (edition of 20), a small leather suitcase filled with miniature replicas of his own work, which served as a portable museum and promotional tool.

As with Duchamp's objects, today's multiples still tend to be mass-produced, are sometimes miniature

and often whimsical, giving off a whiff of commerce. And even though the fact that they are mass-produced may suggest to some that multiples are the poor man's collecting choice, it is precisely their accessibility that imbues them with conceptual nuance.

"Duchamp really opened up this entirely new way of looking at artwork," says Cary Leibowitz, a multimedia artist and senior specialist in prints and multiples at Christie's New York. "He's the one who emphasized the idea that the art did not have to express the artist's hand."

Multiples became a recognized category in the 1960s, when artists—especially those associated with Nouveau Realisme, Fluxus and Pop art—began focusing on making art for the masses. In the U.S., new manufacturing technologies emerged, along with several publishers of editions.

Many of them, such as Rosa Esman's Tanglewood Press and Marian Goodman's Multiples Inc., produced

objects as well as works on paper. As Esman puts it, "It just seemed that since so much art used industrial objects anyway, the next step was to manufacture the art itself."

Many multiples from the '60s play on consumerism, such as Claes Oldenburg's 1966 "Wedding Souvenir" (cake slices) and Andy Warhol's screenprinted "Brillo Boxes." Josef Beuys, whose first "Felt Suit" in 1970 was made in an edition of 100, famously said, "If you have all my multiples, then you have me entirely."

Many examples from this era also have a charged, fetishistic quality, like Christo's creepy "Wrapped Roses," 1968, a rope-tied cellophane packet of flowers (two versions, editions of 75 each) and Oldenburg's "London Knees," 1966-68 (edition of 120), a pair of female knees rendered in painted latex and packed in a valise.

The making of multiples dwindled in the late '70s and '80s. But today they are making a major come-

back as artists search for new ways to reach a broader audience. For younger artists, especially, "the ideas inherent in multiplicity are so much part of our culture. It's now a part of everything we do," says Wendy Weitman, co-curator of the upcoming exhibition "Eye on Europe: Prints, Books and Multiples, 1960 to Now," at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from October 15 through January 1, 2007.

A number of editions publishers have sprung up since the early '90s, including I.C. Editions, Editions Fawbush and, more recently, Carolina Nitsch and Christine Burgin in New York and the two-year-old Cerealart of Philadelphia. "It was a kind of reaction against rising prices," says Cerealart founder Larry Mangel, who has worked on projects with many young art stars. "We thought product was a really good way to reach out to people." In 2004 Cerealart published six action figures with Marcel Dzama (\$20; edition of 2,500 each) and a color-

ful soccer ball with Ryan McGinness (\$150; unlimited edition). This summer it is shipping the first of three baroque busts by Kehinde Wiley, based on a Bernini sculpture. The work renders one of the artist's contemporary African-American characters in cast-marble dust and resin (\$1,000; edition of 250).

The art journal *Parkett*, an important editions publisher since its inception in 1984, asks contributing artists to create either prints or objects that are offered separately to subscribers with each issue. According to publisher Dieter von Graffenried, multiples were few and far between during the '80s. But in the mid-'90s, he says, "I noticed an increase. In fact, every now and then, we have an issue where the majority of editions are objects." For the winter 2004 issue, for instance, three out of the four artists—including painter Alex Katz—decided to create multiples.

Many artists today use the

genre to riff on art history. Kiki Smith's "Little Mountain," 1993-96 (edition of 150), a cast-glass paperweight modeled on her own breast, seems an obvious nod to the pink foam breast on Duchamp's cover for the catalogue of the 1947 exhibition "La Surrealisme." Sylvie Fleury's "Slim-Fast," 1993, painted wooden boxes in vanilla and strawberry (editions of 250 each), spin off Warhol's "Brillo Boxes," adding a feminist twist.

Artists often riff on their own work, too, as in Cerealart's "The Wrong Gallery," 2005, by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick (\$1,200; edition of 2,500)—a perfect 1:6 scale replica of the original Wrong Gallery, a shallow space set behind a storefront door in Chelsea. Cerealart has also produced miniature versions of many works shown in the gallery, by such artists as Adam McEwen, Elizabeth Peyton and Lawrence Weiner (\$35 to \$300; most in editions of 500).



Red on Green
10,000 red roses, large bloomed and fragrant. The heads pulled from their stems then placed side by side forming a dense cover over a rectangular bed of the stalks.
The Nash Room, ICA, London, July 1992.

Red and Green
Two pastels, one red, one green made from the ground remains of one dozen of these roses.

Anya Gallaccio
Anya Gallaccio

(9) Pigmented concrete ingots from Allan McCollum's "Visible Markers" series, 1997; (10) boxed pastels made from ground rose petals, stems and leaves used in Anya Gallaccio's 1992 installation *Red on Green*; and (11) a detail from "Forgotten Baby," by Elmgreen & Dragset, after an artwork exhibited at the Wrong Gallery

Multiples can be whimsical, play with scale

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A lot of multiples have a deliberately tchotchke-like quality; they can also play with scale. Between 1981 and '89, Katharina Fritsch produced six unlimited-edition multiples: a white brain, a fluorescent yellow Madonna, a vase, a scarf, an abstracted black cat and a stack of coins in a plastic bag. Fritsch modeled the Madonna after souvenir figurines sold at a pilgrimage spot in Germany. In 1987 she remade it as a life-size sculpture, *Madonna Figure*. She has also used her small multiples to create larger installations, as in *Display Stand with Brains*, 1989-97, *Display Stand with Vases*, and *Display Stand with Madonnas*, both 1987-89—a nearly nine-foot-tall tower created with stacked Madonnas.

Originally offered for around \$300, Fritsch's multiples are more expensive now because they are no longer made. "I know someone who bought a Madonna for \$1,200 some time ago," says Jeffrey Peabody, director of Matthew Marks Gallery in

New York, which distributed the works. "The last time we had any brains, they were \$1,000, and that was several years ago." (Although officially the editions are unlimited, Fritsch decided to stop making them a few years ago. They were mass-produced, but many had to be hand-finished, so, ironically, "they were just too much work," says Peabody.)

Sometimes artists use multiples to expand on their other works. Anya Gallaccio's sculptural installations, for example, often employ natural objects, like flowers and fruits, that decay over the duration of a show. She frequently produces multiples along with her installations, which have the effect of fixing some of these evanescent projects in time. To commemorate her 1992 project *Red on Green* at the ICA in London, Gallaccio made three sets of boxed pastels incorporating the ground-up remains of the roses, two in editions of 10 and one in an edition of 20. For a current

project, *After the Gold Rush*, she is producing six distinct varieties of Zinfandel wines made from grapes grown in different vineyards in Sonoma County, California. About 200 boxed half-cases will be released sometime in 2007.

So how big does an edition have to be to qualify as a multiple? As with everything else related to this category, it depends on whom you ask. The typical definition is three or more, says Susan Inglett of I.C. Editions. But her husband, David Platzker, a New York dealer who runs Specific Object, an Internet site specializing in artists' books and editions, says: "Oldenburg's argument was that if they're done in editions of 26 or greater, they were multiples. If they were done in editions of 25 or less, they were sculptures in edition. But the whole notion is that if it's done in volume—any volume—it's a multiple. It's all about dissemination of artwork."

Like prints, multiples tend to go



(12) A 1:6 scale replica of the Wrong Gallery in Chelsea, with a store sign by Adam McEwen; (13) "The Wrong Gallery," by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni and Ali Subotnick, with a photograph by Shirana Shahbazi; (14) four miniature store signs by Adam McEwen, for Cerealart's "Wrong Gallery" series; and (15) Ryan McGinness's "Bucky Ball"



or fix evanescent projects in time

up in price as the edition is disseminated; many publishers raise prices after each third of the run is sold. But not always. "It all depends on the artist," says Thomas Jones, who co-founded Editions Fawbush in 1997. "A lot of times, artists don't want to raise the price."

One artist who has built affordability into the concept of his project is Allan McCollum, whose "Visible Markers" series has been published in four versions so far. Its initial incarnation, published by I.C. Editions in 1997, was priced at \$300 for a set of six different-color concrete ingots, each impressed with the word "Thanks." For the most recent version, in 2002, Cerealart published a resin edition of the bricks, priced at \$30 for a set of five.

"Allan was playing with the notion that the person who gives the most away in a certain society is the one who has the most status," says Inglett. Yet as more bricks were

produced and prices dropped, the cost of the original concrete bricks rose. Inglett has only about a dozen individual bricks left from the initial edition, priced at \$250 each. "Any object becomes more valuable as it is sold out and fewer can be acquired," she notes.

The resale value of contemporary multiples is hard to gauge because most have yet to establish auction records. "If you're buying strictly for value," Platzker advises, "you should think about where the artists' market is in general. The editions market isn't all that radically different."

Yet a market for the category itself clearly exists. In the past decade, several museums have begun publishing multiples to raise money, including the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago and the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut. In late 2003, Christie's New York renamed its biannual print



sales "Prints and Multiples."

"We were noticing more attention being paid to multiples—to objects that weren't necessarily flat," says Kelly Troester, head of Christie's print department. "Collecting has gotten so creative and gregarious these days, it kind of leads to these other objects too. It's a way to get an interesting object at a more affordable price for certain names."

Major art fairs, including Art Basel and the Armory Show, have added special sections dedicated to editions. And growing interest in multiples has led to changes for the eight-year-old Editions/Artists' Books fair in New York, which is moving to a larger space in Chelsea this year, November 2 through 5. "This is no longer a new medium," says Weitman of the Museum of Modern Art. "It's one that has much more widespread acceptance." ■

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