

Advance Exhibition Information

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Akio Takamori: Alice / Venus

September 17, 2009 October 17, 2009

Opening Reception: September 17 from 5:30 – 8:00 pm

New York - Barry Friedman Ltd is pleased to present *Alice / Venus*, an exhibition of new figurative sculptures by Akio Takamori in his first solo exhibition since joining the gallery in 2007. The exhibition will open with a reception for the artist on Thursday, Sept. 17 and will be on view through Oct. 17, 2009.

Considered one of the most inventive and expressive artists to emerge in contemporary ceramics, Akio Takamori focuses on human relationships and an ongoing search for personal and cultural identity in an era of increasing global influences and contradictions. Born in Nobeoka, Japan in 1950, the artist has spent more than half of his life living in the United States. Informed by a dual citizenship, Takamori's sculptures are liberated from their social context and grouped to suggest the artist's belief in a collective memory representing the shifting historical, cultural, and racial perspectives that create individual and group identity.

With *Alice/Venus*, Takamori explores the fundamental difference in adolescent girls before and after puberty. His figures may represent the same young woman, but at different times in her life. "Alice," with her ruffled collar and dress directly appropriated from a Velasquez painting represents the younger child, while the post-pubescent girl is depicted as "Venus" whose nude body resembles a Roman marble interpretation complete with missing arms. The theme of assimilation runs through both series of work with the decidedly Japanese features of the heads contrasted with their Western torsos.

Takamori's childhood in Japan was both idyllic and unconventional. His father, a dermatologist and urologist, specialized in treating venereal diseases and victims of the nuclear bombing. His small medical clinic was attached to the family house creating a bustling environment where nurses and members of Takamori's extended family lived. Takamori's artwork has been influenced by the many stories he heard from the nurses and the wide range of patients his father treated. The young Takamori also took great interest in browsing through his father's vast library which contained not only graphic medical texts, but also an extensive array of books on Western and Japanese art.

Takamori's sculptures are inspired by memories of his childhood and the people who surrounded him: nurses, students, fishmongers, and gossiping women. These are not specific individuals, but types of people that are contrasted with figures borrowed from paintings by Old Masters, Greek Mythology, history and photography highlighting differences of class, culture, and politics. As both an insider and an outsider in Japanese and American cultures, the artist warps time and history to create a global village.

In 2005, his critically praised mid-career survey, *Between Clouds of Memory*, traveled to 5 museums throughout the US. His work can be found in numerous private and public collections including Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Arts and Design, New York; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Numerous honors include three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, two European Ceramic Workcentre Fellowships, the Virginia A. Groot Foundation First Prize, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, and the Artist Trust Fellowship.

Akio Takamori resides in Seattle, WA where he is Professor of Art at the University of Washington.