

**TOM OTTERNESS:
BATTLE OF THE SEXES**

APRIL 10–JULY 11, 2025



Tom Otterness (b. 1952)
Baby and Globe on Cylinder, 1982 (cast in 2025)
Plaster coated in polymer emulsion
26 1/2 x 20 3/4 x 19 3/8 inches

NEW YORK – Craig Starr Gallery is pleased to announce *Tom Otterness: Battle of the Sexes*, on view from April 10 through July 11, 2025.

Tom Otterness's *Battle of the Sexes*, also known as *The Frieze*, is a sculptural narrative. It is composed of seventeen plaster reliefs—thirteen horizontal and four vertical—and a freestanding sculpture, *Baby and Globe on Cylinder*. The cycle was first shown in 1983 at the Brooke Alexander Gallery in New York.

Tom Otterness: Battle of the Sexes is the first focused exhibition of *The Frieze* since its original presentation. The show brings together twelve of the seventeen reliefs, *Baby and Globe on Cylinder*, and two other related works: *Battle Cartoon*, a plaster panel that Otterness made in Wichita, just before he began working on *The Frieze*, and *Killing of the King*, a large high relief originally intended as an element of *The Frieze* but unrealized at the time. All pieces in the exhibition, except for *Killing of the King*, are unique plaster casts made from the original 1982-83 clay molds. *Killing of the King* is a unique cast made for the first time for this exhibition according to Otterness's original proposal drawings and specifications.



Tom Otterness (b. 1952)
Children's Paradise, 1982-83 (cast in 2025)
Plaster coated in polymer emulsion
11 3/8 x 44 5/8 x 6 3/4 inches

The Frieze tells the story of a fierce combat between men and women for power and domination. From the innocent world of *Children's Paradise* and *Baby and Globe on Cylinder*, a revolution unfolds, where the king is overthrown, the queen glorified, and workers destroy each other in monstrous acts of warfare. There are images of leisure and work, youth and age, wealth and poverty, order and chaos, obscenity and playfulness, tyranny and revolt, creation and destruction. In previous installations, *The Frieze* was designed to fit an architectural structure: the horizontal reliefs met the ceiling as cornice moldings and were suspended high on walls, while the vertical reliefs were placed in the corners as columns. While providing greater unity, this architectural installation lessened *The Frieze's* impact as a pictorial story.

The current exhibition breaks apart *The Frieze's* narrative and displays the reliefs individually, at eye level, showcasing Otterness's gifts as an image maker. As Michael Brenson writes in the catalogue that accompanies the show: "Breaking their expected sequential development, [this exhibition] has the effect of turning ideas of ascent and fall into everyday activities rather than biblical events... Seeing the sections up close eliminates the straining that comes with having to look up. Face to face, the scenes are vivid, the figures tactile... Each section emerges as a scene encouraging its own imagining."

There are three nearly complete versions of *The Frieze*: one at the former Lannan Museum—an Art Deco theater in Lake Worth, Florida, now part of Palm Beach State College; another at the Los Angeles Federal Plaza in California, which Otterness cast at triple-size and retitled *The New World*; and a third installed in the central atrium of the Weatherspoon Art Gallery, North Carolina. In addition, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum each have in their collection *The Frieze*'s original door installation, made of two vertical ladders and the horizontal relief, *Battle of the Sexes*, as a lintel.

A fully illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition and includes a new essay by Michael Brenson, an art historian and critic. He received a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University and was a critic for *The New York Times* (1982–91). He is a Getty Scholar, a Guggenheim Fellow, a Clark Fellow, and a recipient of the Whiting Creative Nonfiction Grant. He currently serves as the Artistic Director of the Jonathan and Barbara Silver Foundation.

About Craig Starr Gallery

Craig Starr Gallery is located at 5 East 73rd Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues. Gallery hours are Monday through Saturday, 11am–5:30 pm, and by appointment. For general information, please visit the gallery's website at www.craigstarr.com.