

# VENUS

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## MANHATTAN

### *GANG BUST*

April 11 – June 22, 2013

Venus Over Manhattan

980 Madison Avenue

New York City

New York, NY... New York-born painter, writer, gallerist, collector, publisher and art entrepreneur William N. Copley (1919-1996) began his career in the arts as a dealer of Surrealist and Dada titans Rene Magritte, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Joseph Cornell and Yves Tanguy. Such was the impact of their work upon the imagination of this American eccentric – who dubbed himself CPLY – that he began to paint on his own in the 1950s after shuttering his Los Angeles gallery. Mixing eroticism, symbolism, whimsy and darkness, CPLY earned the enthusiastic encouragement of the very artists whose works his business had represented. By the early 1970s, he developed a signature style in which everyday objects or (more often and now legendarily) sexually explicit couplings were presented against lushly patterned backgrounds. In these paintings, Copley emerges as a mediator between European postwar art and American Pop Art, and a bemused if troubled guide through the charged sexual, psychological and emotional terra incognita he once referred to as “the tragedy of man and woman.”

In tribute to this 20th century original, Venus Over Manhattan gallery will devote its Spring 2013 program to William Copley with two presentations – **GANG BUST**, an exhibition in New York City, and **Confiserie CPLY**, a site-specific art and candy project at the historic Confiserie Schiesser chocolate shop in Basel, Switzerland.

### In New York

Beginning April 11th, the gallery's New York City space at 980 Madison Avenue will present **GANG BUST**. Curated by artist Bjarne Melgaard's Big Fat Black Cock Inc. (BFBC), this exhibition centers upon a selection of important CPLY paintings spanning the artist's career from the 1950s through the 1980s. Among these are key examples from two of CPLY's most celebrated series – the satirical, Pop-influenced “Nouns” paintings of singular everyday objects set against boldly patterned backgrounds, and the infamous “X-Rated” series from the 1970s depicting sexually explicit couplings.

CPLY's paintings will be exhibited alongside a variety of new works, including paintings and furniture, created by BFBC in response to William Copley's art, politics and life. Whereas CPLY's own paintings depict Caucasian figures almost exclusively, BFBC

has repainted his predecessor's sexual partners in CPLP's signature naïve style but as African-Americans. Connecting CPLY's work to the larger context of his era, BFBC also will present furniture inspired by the work of Allen Jones, the British Pop sculptor (b. 1937) whose emergence coincided with Copley's own. For **GANG BUST**, BFBC has made objects that borrow from a series of erotic sculptures Jones made in the late 1960s and early 70s, known for their focus on bondage, fetishism and the transformation of women into human furniture.

By curating CPLY's work and offering new interpretations of it, BFBC also invites fresh associations that reach beyond the accepted narratives of CPLY's career and suggest a kinship of practice across time. Melgaard and CPLY are linked by their emphasis upon collaborations with other artists and their rejection of the status quo as it regards politics, sexuality, morality, good taste, good citizenship and the accepted values of the art world.