

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HANS BELLMER

Vintage Contact Prints

Hand-colored photographs, 1935-1938

April 30th – June 19th, 2004

Opening reception Friday, April 30, 5:30-8PM



Alan Koppel Gallery, in collaboration with **Ubu Gallery**, New York, will present an exhibition of 19 hand-colored vintage photographs by Surrealist artist **Hans Bellmer** (1902-1975). The exhibition, which opens April 30th and will run through June 19th, consists entirely of works from Bellmer's well-known *La Poupée* series in which he photographed two life-sized adolescent female dolls in various poses and vignettes between 1934 and 1938.

The first doll in 1933 consisted of segmented elements and was often photographed as a deconstructed and disassembled figure during various stages of its making. In 1935, the second doll was constructed around a central ball-joint and posed by Bellmer in various vignettes under a selection of seductive guises-- an innocent, a temptress and a victim. This second doll was rearranged into natural and unnatural configurations (sometimes with two sets of legs and no upper body, other times with a full figure) to create narrative explorations of Bellmer's own preoccupations with sexual anxieties and social discomfort. The photographs provided an agency by which Bellmer could act out a crucial conflation. His rejection of the strict modes of masculine behavior enforced by the Nazi regime and his own obsessions and confusions about gender identity seemed irreconcilable.

Bellmer also had a vivid fascination with the concept of the double, or twin, which he utilized as a symbolic transferal of the "self" onto an "other" in order to act out and explore his anxieties. His use of the tableau vivant format provided an intimate, narrative structure to the individual photographs while the different guises assumed by the dolls were metaphors for an assortment of types of sexual and social repression. Although the psychoanalytic meaning of this work runs deep and touches on Freudian Oedipal themes, sadomasochism, fetishism, auto-erotica and hermaphroditic symbolism, its importance to our current stage of art and the art of its time remains clear. Its themes of sexual desire and identity crisis coupled with its use of a fictive narrative setting provide the code for how artists today explore these same issues. From the photographs of Sam Taylor Wood, Katy Grannan and Gregory Crewdson to the films of Matthew Barney and recent sculpture by Louise Bourgeois, Bellmer's language of desire remains as topical today as it did at its inception.

The opening reception is free and open to the public. For further information or press images please contact Rebecca Epstein or Laura Ellsworth at 312.640.0730 or at alankoppel@earthlink.net.