

CHEIM & READ

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Adam Fuss

Cheim & Read
547 West 25th Street, Chelsea
Through Nov. 15

With a fix on childhood and death, this British-born photographer, who had an attention-getting retrospective last year at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has come up with one of this season's more bizarre shows. To wit: each of a group of daguerreotypes (images formed on silver-coated copper plates with mirrorlike surfaces) presents a memento mori in the form of an eerily cheerful skull. Look at it, and your own face becomes part of the image.

Then there is a series of 105 enameled "gravestone cameos," each bearing a photograph of Mr. Fuss, that take him from infancy through age 11. (Cute little devil he was, too.) Each picture is fashioned into the ovoid shape affixed to cemetery headstones. But the pièce de résistance is a life-size sculpture of him as a toddler, circa 1965, clad from neck to toe in a fluffy white cryogenic snow suit that is actually made of ice. (The mannequin is wired to a refrigerant device.)

Three blown-up color photographs of butterfly pupae have a scarab quality to them, suggestive of Egyptian tomb ornaments. But all is not recherché here. A photograph of a naked youth with an erection — black silhouette on white — appears among the skulls, as does another of a child's outspread hands in stark white reaching up into a black void. Mr. Fuss's technical tricks and turns are impressive. Substance, however, is apparently not a large issue for him.

GRACE GLUECK