

# LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

---

514 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265  
info@lennonweinberg.com www.lennonweinberg.com

## Barton Lidice Benes

### Curiosa

October 17 – November 23, 2002  
Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

Barton Lidice Benes (b. 1942) collects bits and pieces of items, which function as historical relics. Some relics are contemporary and intrinsically insignificant, even absurd, while others are quite old or unusual. He assembles them thematically into display cabinets, which he calls “museums.” The cabinet’s twenty or thirty compartments are each occupied by a single item, attached to and identified on a stiff paper card. The exhibition will include new “museums” dealing with the subjects of fire, music, flowers, things that are white, and bodily excretions.

In a piece entitled *Foul Play*, one compartment holds a matchbook cover on which art dealer Andrew Crispo, convicted of tax evasion and a suspect in a grisly sex murder, scribbled his phone number. Another compartment contains a few strands of Charles Manson’s hair, and another a piece of wood from O.J. Simpson’s house, Texas. Another recent work, *Pandora’s Box*, concerns itself with troubling items and behaviours; included are a Nazi-era swastika-emblazoned poker chip, minutes of a Ku Klux Klan meeting, a vial of a bogus AIDS cure from Africa and a plastic strap certifying that a car has been inspected for bombs before entering the Senate parking garage.

*Foul Play* and *Pandora’s Box* were included last year in the provocative exhibition “Art at the Edge of the Law” at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Also included in that exhibition was a selection of Benes’ *Lethal Weapons*, a series of works from the early 1990’s in which Benes filled things like fountain pens, squirt guns and perfume atomizers with his own HIV-positive blood.

In addition to seven new museums, our exhibition will include a few *Lethal Weapons* and other earlier works such as several from his *Aunt Evelyn’s Letters* series. For many years the artist received from an elderly aunt long, stream-of-consciousness letters and used her words in his work. We will exhibit several sculptures including an oversized hourglass in which the cremated remains of two lovers have been joined for eternity.

Benes has also revisited another subject and material with which he has often worked – money. In an encompassing new piece, he has used the currencies of nearly a hundred nations and fashioned from the banknotes little objects depicting foods associated with each country. Polish sausage, Dutch cheese, an English tea bag and Swiss chocolates represent some of the developed countries of the world; peanuts from Indonesia suggest the more rudimentary staples of the third world. One of the most beautiful is a little fish crafted from Jamaica’s extraordinarily beautiful dollar bill with pictures of tropical foliage and islands in a sparkling sea.

The work of Barton Lidice Benes is the subject of a new book published by Harry N. Abrams. *Curiosa: Celebrity Relics, Historical Fossils & Other Metamorphic Rubbish*. There is an introductory text by novelist John Berendt and a longer piece by Benes in which he recounts anecdotes about his relics and how they came into his possession. Berendt himself was the source, for example, of a vial of nasal douche containing wisps of Roy Rogers’ mucus. That particular item is included in *Excreta*, Benes’ newest museum.