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Barton Lidice Benes

Reliquaries

June 4 – July 30, 1999
Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

Barton Lidice Benes was born in New Jersey in 1942. His middle name memorializes a village in Czechoslovakia destroyed by the Nazis the year he was born. Benes is an avid collector of Egyptian and African art, as well as taxidermy animals. He has lived and worked in a small Westbeth studio since 1970, surrounded by his ever-growing collections. In the 1970's he made book and mail art, which soon began to incorporate objects. In the 1980's he requested and received several grants, the proceeds of which he tore up and used as materials for his constructions; he even got several million dollars of currency from the Federal Reserve – already shredded. Following the death of his partner from AIDS in 1989, Benes began a group of works he titled "Lethal Weapons", placing such objects as water pistols filled with his blood in boxes behind safety glass. He has worked on the museums and relics for the past decade, and has made a related site-specific commission for the North Dakota Museum of Art. He has been invited to submit a "time capsule" to the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibition "Millennium Messages."