

For Immediate Release  
Contact: jonathon\_keats@yahoo.com

## **ARTIST CREATES NEW UNIVERSE FROM URANIUM AND CHEWING GUM**

*Novel Technique Puts Quantum Theory to Practical Use. . . Automated Universe Factories Planned for Government and Industry. . . San Francisco Gallery to Begin Selling \$20 D.I.Y. Universe Kits on November 20th. . . Universes Provide Alternatives to Recession*

October 31, 2008 - Following decades of effort by engineers to build quantum supercomputers and to master quantum cryptography, today quantum physics has spawned a far more powerful technology. Applying theory developed by deceased Princeton physicist Hugh Everett III, and using little more than a piece of chewing gum, a plastic drinking straw, and a bit of uranium, San Francisco conceptual artist Jonathon Keats has constructed the first machine for fabricating all-inclusive universes.

"It was a product of my anxiety," admits Mr. Keats. "I'd recently had a couple museum shows, yet I was feeling that no matter what I made, it was hardly comparable to the creation of the cosmos. And though no one talks about it, the same issue faced Picasso, Monet, even Michelangelo. The Big Bang has artists beat."

Taking on the cosmos as a creative challenge, Mr. Keats began researching an aspect of quantum mechanics proposed by Dr. Everett in the 1950s and later refined by scientists including David Deutsch at Oxford and Wojciech Zurek at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Dr. Everett's theory addressed the question of how a subatomic particle can exist in a quantum superposition - for example being in two places at once - until someone observes it, at which point the observer finds it to be in only one place at a time. The explanation Dr. Everett gave, now widely accepted, is that the particle remains in both places when it's observed, but the observer's entire universe splits as the measurement is made, so that from that moment forward there are two separate observers living in separate universes, both identical except for the observed location of that single subatomic particle.

"When I studied Everett's theory, I immediately saw how it could be put into practice," says Mr. Keats. Liberated from his state of despair, the artist could deliberately cleave the universe whenever he desired, effectively creating new universes by subdividing our cosmos. "In creative terms, that seemed a lot more significant than going into a studio and making another oil painting," he observes. "Not that I know how to paint."

Mr. Keats decided that, rather than producing only one universe, he might as well fabricate them in quantity by building a quantum universe generator. His machine needed a steady supply of subatomic particles and a means of methodically observing them. "I figured the easiest approach would be to measure radioactive decay," he says. "So I assembled a prototype out of uranium-doped glass and a sliver of scintillating crystal."

The components cost him a couple dollars on eBay. The drinking straw and chewing gum, which he found in his kitchen cupboard, held the pieces together.

After building several more efficient prototypes, and making untold trillions of universes, Mr. Keats started to feel guilty. "Creating all those universes seemed a little selfish," he confides. "And the last thing I wanted was a god complex." He decided that other people ought to have the opportunity to generate new worlds. "What could be a more fulfilling hobby," he asks, "especially in this bleak economy?"

Accordingly, Mr. Keats designed a \$20 do-it-yourself universe kit, with simple instructions as well as manila envelopes containing the uranium glass and scintillating crystal. "A six-year-old could assemble it in under ten minutes," he promises, noting that purchasers need to supply their own chewing gum and drinking straw, as well as a mid-size mason jar. Manufactured by Mr. Keats' new company, Universes Unlimited, the kits will be packaged in small metal tins, and sold exclusively through Modernism Gallery in San Francisco. A grand opening has been scheduled for Thursday, November 20th from 5:30 to 8:00 PM.

At the opening, Mr. Keats will also unveil the next phase of Universes Unlimited, revealing plans to fabricate universes at an industrial scale. His first automated universe factory has been designed for the U.S. government's proposed Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository in the Nevada desert. "The radioactivity of the dump makes it ideal for making new worlds," Mr. Keats says. His plans, which call for sinking two-mile-long scintillating crystal stacks into Yucca Mountain, has yet to be officially reviewed by the Department of Energy. However, the artist/entrepreneur is hopeful: "Now that we've pretty well destroyed this world, generating a googolplex of alternate universes with a googolplex of possible outcomes may be our only chance at redemption."

#### *IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST*

\* \* \*

*"Universes Unlimited" opens at Modernism Gallery on Thursday, November 20, 2008, with a public reception from 5:30 to 8:00 PM. The gallery is located at 685 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. The phone number is 415/541-0461. Gallery hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 10:00 to 5:30. For more information, see [www.modernisminc.com](http://www.modernisminc.com).*

\* \* \*

*Jonathon Keats is a conceptual artist, fabulist, and critic residing in San Francisco. Recently he opened a temple for the worship of science with a grant from the University of California, and choreographed a ballet for honeybees as part of the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts biennial. He has also exhibited extraterrestrial abstract artwork at the Judah L. Magnes Museum, unveiled a prototype ouija voting booth for the 2008 election at the Berkeley Art Museum, attempted to genetically engineer God in a petri dish in collaboration with scientists at UC and the Smithsonian, opened the world's first porn theater for house plants in the town of Chico, and petitioned Berkeley to pass a fundamental law of logic, a work commissioned by the city's annual Arts Festival. His projects have been documented by PBS and the BBC World Service, garnering favorable attention in periodicals ranging from *The San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Washington**

*Post, to Nature and New Scientist, to Flash Art and ArtUS, as well as Ripley's Believe It Or Not. Additionally, Keats serves as the art critic for San Francisco Magazine, as a correspondent for Art & Antiques, and as a columnist for both Artweek and Wired Magazine. He is the author of two novels, a dictionary, and a collection of fables forthcoming from Random House, as well as numerous museum catalogue essays, monographs, and artist's books. Since graduating summa cum laude from Amherst College in 1994, he has been a visiting artist at California State University, Chico, and a guest lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, as well as the recipient of Yaddo and MacDowell fellowships. He is represented by Modernism Gallery in San Francisco. He can be contacted at [jonathon\\_keats@yahoo.com](mailto:jonathon_keats@yahoo.com)*