

Ecstatic Raptures and Immaculate Corpses: Visions of Death Made Beautiful in Italy

An exhibition of photographs by Joanna Ebenstein of Morbid Anatomy with waxworks by Eleanor Crook & Sigrid Sarda Viktor Wynde Fine Art, 11 Mare Street, London, E8 4RP

Opening Reception: September 6, 6-8, Sponsored by Hendricks Gin

In her many projects, ranging from photography to curation to writing, New York based Joanna Ebenstein utilizes a combination of art and scholarship to tease out the ways in which the pre-rational roots of modernity are sublimated into ostensibly "purely rational" cultural activities such as science and medicine. Much of her work uses this approach to investigate historical moments or artifacts where art and science, death and beauty, spectacle and edification, faith and empiricism meet in ways that trouble contemporary categorical expectations.

In the exhibition "Ecstatic Raptures and Immaculate Corpses" Ebenstein turns this approach to an examination of the uncanny and powerfully resonant representations of the dead, martyred, and anatomized body in Italy, monuments to humankind's quest to eternally preserve the corporeal body and defeat death in arenas sacred and profane.

The artifacts she finds in both the churches, charnel houeses and anatomical museums of Italy complicate our ideas of the proper roles of-and divisions between-science and religion, death and beauty; art and science; eros and thanatos; sacred and profane; body and soul.

In this exhibition, you will be introduced to tantalizing visions of death made beautiful, uncanny monuments to the human dream of life eternal. You will meet "Blessed Ismelda Lambertini," an adolescent who fell into a fatal swoon of overwhelming joy at the moment of her first communion with Jesus Christ, now commemorated in a chillingly beautiful wax effigy in a Bolognese church; The Slashed Beauty, swooning with a grace at once spiritual and worldly as she makes a solemn offering of her immaculate viscera: Saint Vittoria, with slashed neck and golden ringlets, her waxen form religuary to her own powerful bones; and the magnificent and troubling Anatomical Venuses, rapturously ecstatic life-sized wax women reclining voluptuously on silk and velvet cushions, asleep in their crystal coffins, awaiting animation by inquisitive hands eager to dissect them into their dozens of demountable, exactingly anatomically correct, wax parts.

MORE AT MORBIDANATOMY.BLOGSPOT.COM