



CONTEMPORARY IMAGES IN PRINT SINCE 1915

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Totentanz: Debra Werblud

February 5 – April 10, 2004

Opening Reception: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Thursday, February 5, 2004

Artist Lecture Monday, March 29, 5:00 p.m. at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, B-3 Meyerson Hall, 34th & Walnut Streets. Sponsored by PennDesign, University of Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA: Debra Werblud, based in Venice, Italy, will transform the second floor front gallery into a dance between predator and prey represented respectively by vultures which feed on decay, and olive trees that nourish life. The installation references the pictorial tradition of the “Dance of Death” in which the representative of death leads, often in dance, the living to the world beyond the grave. Werblud takes the theme a step further and invites her viewers to walk into and through the installation to involve them in the dance. However, the viewers will be in a state of continual uncertainty. Depending on their position they either will be the prey or the predator. Werblud’s installation is based on her interest of the co-existence of an exalting experience and an oppressive loss.

Similarly, her choice of materials keeps the viewer in a state of uncertainty. Two hundred and thirty etched zinc plates (each 8”x8”) depicting olive trees will align the gallery walls. In contrast, thirty photographs of vultures printed on molded plexiglas will swoop from the ceiling onto the floor in the center of the gallery. The single light source will make the birds seem to be in flight and the olive trees grounded in the earth. Transparent materials will appear translucent while lightweight sheets of metal will assume the solidity of stone. The viewers’ movements intersecting the light will also alter the appearance of the materials.

Motion is an important factor in Werblud’s installation. In addition to the theme of dance and the seemingly movement of the olive trees, the birds were actually photographed in flight. The photographs originate from Eadweard Muybridge’s Animal Locomotion, published in 1887 by the University of Pennsylvania. Muybridge’s study remains one of the most exhaustive pictorial analysis of electro-photographic investigation of consecutive phases of animal movements. The historical significance of the birds undermines the fierceness of vultures. Once again we are made uncertain.

Debra Werblud is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Her work has been on view at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, the Studio d’arte contemporanea Pino Casagrande, Rome, Italy, and the New York Armory Show among other galleries and museums. Her work has been reviewed extensively. Since 1988 she has developed significant environmental designs and urban plans in the United States and in Europe.

The Print Center supports printmaking and photography as vital contemporary arts and encourages the appreciation of the printed image in all its forms. The Print Center presents a variety of programs for the public including 11 exhibitions annually; The Print Center Gallery Store, offering the largest and most diverse selection of contemporary prints in Philadelphia; the longest running annual international competition for prints and photographs in the country; an extensive series of continuing education programs; and special events.

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