

Delen Misbruik rapporteren Volgende blog»

DLK COLLECTION

From one photography collector to another: a venue for thoughtful discussion of vintage and contemporary photography via reviews of recent museum exhibitions, gallery shows, photography auctions, photo books, art fairs and other items of sometime interest to photography collectors large and small.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2009

Book: Carla van de Puttelaar, The Beholder's Eye

JTF (just the facts): Published by the artist in 2008. Unpaginated, with 36 color images. Includes an essay by Bob Frommé and a detailed biography. (Cover shot at right, via Photo Eye.)

Comments/Context: Since part of our collection consists of female nudes, we are always interested to hear about contemporary photographers who are taking on this classic subject and making it their own. Carla van de Puttelaar's nudes are a direct repudiation of the airbrushed commercial perfection of the female form that pervades our culture; her models are ordinary young women, whose extraordinary beauty is found in minute details, small imperfections and subtle gestures.



The subjects are set against a uniform black background and photographed in natural light, washing out the skin tones to a soft alabaster; the paleness of the skin then highlights the simple wonders of a birthmark, a bruise, or goose bumps. With closed eyes and careful poses, the women become intimately sculptural, but in a way that celebrates their unadorned naturalness rather than idealizing them to perfect forms. The compositions force the viewer to pay attention to the details, to see the special individual nature of the curve of an arm or the fragile line of a collarbone. To me, these models look neither asleep or dead (there is no Sleeping Beauty fable here). They all seem acutely alive; some are resting serenely, while others are painfully aware of their exposed vulnerability.

Many of these images seem rooted in a Renaissance aesthetic, though pared down and stripped away to get at the true underlying beauty of the subjects; there is plenty for flowing hair and artful posing. In the context of photography's history, these works seem most akin at least in spirit to the nudes of Ruth Bernhard and Imogen Cunningham, as the "female gaze" is clearly at work here; van de Puttelaar's images bear no resemblance whatsoever to the work of the well known male photographers of the nude. What I think is unique about this work is that van de Puttelaar has found a way to both honor the individuality of the sitters and transform them into expressions of the universal; not the fashion magazine ideal, mind you, but gloriously imperfect human beings who represent the unique, uncommon, and rare beauty found in everyone.

Overall, this volume contains well crafted images, with a novel point of view, well worth inclusion in your library, especially for those interested in the evolution of the photographic nude.

Collector's POV: Carla van de Puttelaar is represented by Flatland Gallery in Utrecht ([here](#)), Galerie Esther Woerdehoff in Paris ([here](#)) and Box Galerie in Brussels ([here](#)). Her work is not yet available in the secondary markets, so gallery retail is really the only option for interested collectors at this point; it's time for someone to bring her work to New York. For our collection, the full body nudes in this book are much too large (approximately 80x30); we'd likely be interested in one of the works that is slightly more abstract and less overtly personal, printed on a more intimate scale.

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