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AMERICAN
art
COLLECTOR



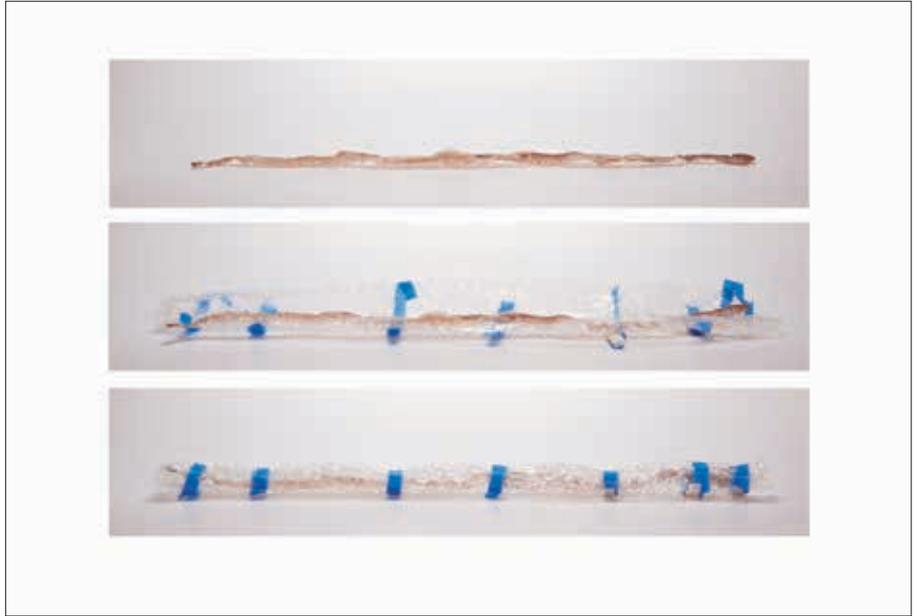
*Also Showcasing
Glass, Ceramics & Wood*

SUSAN JØRGENSEN

Beauty in mortality



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Last year, Susan Jørgensen received an unexpected package in the mail. When she opened the 4 foot-long tube, she was baffled at the bubble wrap in front of her, but after closer examination, it became the perfect subject for her studio photography. She photographed her rattlesnake shed gift unopened, revealed and singularly for triptych *The Gift*, a brand-new version of a metamorphosis.

Jørgensen, a photographer for more than 30 years, often features dead and found items in her beautifully peaceful photographs, 60 of which are on display at John Pence Gallery in a solo exhibition. For collectors such as Karen Sinsheimer, curator of photography at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, the photographer's ability to revere nature and merge life and death in a state of grace is impactful.

"Jørgensen's images reflect quiet moments and intimate explorations," says Sinsheimer. "Looking for larger meanings in small things, she seeks to dissect and reveal the almost fierce connection she feels to nature and to the people she cherishes. Although her photographs are extremely personal, they speak to every human being's search for connection: to the natural world, to other creatures, to family or friends, and to a spiritual essence."

Included in Jørgensen's exhibition of works from about the past 10 years, including prints on aluminum, are images of deceased birds and skulls. *The Find: Skull #1* features a shorebird skull Jørgensen found, while the item in *The Find: Skull #3* was also found, but Jørgensen is unsure of the animal. All the skull images in the exhibition are the same scale prints, reflecting a size similar to a human skull, whether it's a mouse, coyote or deer.

"I find looking at these skulls, it's death, but it's so beautiful," Jørgensen says. "You see the tiny lines. There's such a wonderment to them—they're like drawings or etchings. There's an opportunity to see not a silly little mouse who runs on the floor, but an equal being. There's an invitation to look at something in a safe place and really see the beauty in something that's not typically beautiful."

Jørgensen, who lives on a 20-acre ranch with a chicken coop in the north hills of Santa Ynez, California, often brings finds from around her home back to her studio, ranging from feathers to mummified mice. She says instead of being wary of death, she views it as the opportunity to examine things closely.

"In our Western culture, a lot of us are afraid of death, but life is this visceral journey," Jørgensen says.

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The Find: Skull #1, 2011/2014, digital print on Ultrasmooth Fine Art, ed. 1/10, 18 x 12"/22 x 17"

2

The Gift, 2014, digital print on Ultrasmooth Fine Art, ed. 1/4, 36 x 44"

3

Alice's Black Doll Collection: Luvlee, 2010/2012, digital print on Ultrasmooth Fine Art, ed. 1/15, 10³/₅ x 16"/13 x 19"

4

Susan Jørgensen in her studio.



3



"I'm not under any illusion I'll live forever. My hope is I'll be a little lizard at some point and experience all these different views of the world. I see death as that last great adventure. It's the door we go through and don't really know what's on the other side."

Life is seen in the exhibition in photographs from *The Encounter* series, such as *The Voyeur* and *Two by Two*, featuring toads. *Alice's Black Doll Collection* adds a fun, charming aspect to the show, as the series of cloth doll portraits, including *Voodoo* and *Luvlee*, features some of the more than 100 dolls amassed by Jørgensen's wife since she started collecting 20 years ago.

The exhibition is a rare photography exhibition for John Pence Gallery. Pence says Jørgensen's sensitivity and unique perspective made her a standout when he first discovered one of her works in a client's home several years ago.

"It's so obvious she's so dedicated about what she's doing," says Pence. "People I introduce her to are captivated by her eye."

Jørgensen says she hopes her images inspire people to be more aware of the environment, as everything is connected.

"I hope we embrace diversity and take care of this planet, which means thinking about water differently and really understanding the crazy stuff going on with fracking," Jørgensen says. "I hope my work makes people live more sensibly with other things, whether they be plants or animals." ●

4