

FFOTO

Fausta Facciponte: Sleepy Eyes

The series of doll portraits explore the human condition as a 'material thing'. Through the examination of objects - how they decay, how they are preserved, forgotten and passed along from one owner to the next - the work raises questions about our own physical bodies and the nature of their existence within the boundaries of material goods.

For this series, old vinyl dolls that have been discarded by girls and boys are salvaged. The face of the doll is photographed in the deadpan style of photography; the image is large scale, highly detailed, with a clean clinical approach. The viewer is meant to be drawn closer to the image and, as a result, experience an astonishing clarity of dust, dirt, and filaments of hair, revealed and magnified beyond what is normally and comfortably perceived.

The large scale of the work creates a shifting sensation between the object/image and the viewer. There is confusion between who is viewer and who is object, who is large and who is small, who is important and who struggles for meaning – forcing the viewer to reflect on their own existence as a central entity. The work narrates detail and scale and explores the paradoxical relationship between comfort and unease, beauty and decay, endurance and fragility.

The use of dolls is significant to this work. Believed to be the earliest known toy, dolls are objects that are usually associated with children and play, but these objects also represent the human form. Children often bestow a power into these objects - to be their keeper of secrets, confidant and protector and many times these objects are an extension of the owner: a portrait of the inner self. By reclaiming used and inexpensive dolls from thrift stores, garage sales and online auctions these discarded objects evoke a feeling of terminated love and abandonment.

This series of doll portraits focuses on 'sleepy eyes'; a term used to describe a doll with moveable eyes. The earliest sleepy eyes from the 19th century were operated by weights or wires and later on developed into simpler mechanisms. The open and shut eyes were developed to create more life-like dolls but the term also suggests the human need for sleep, weakness, and fragility.

This body of work also makes reference to Victorian post mortem photography, which often focused on children as their subject. The children in these photographs often appeared as though they were sleeping and at times resemble dolls in their stillness and in the way they were propped up for their memorial photograph.

Through the investigation into discarded objects, detail, scale and the dynamics between image and viewer, these works challenge and address our notions about our existence and condition as a material thing.