

Colnaghi presents Veronica Bailey's 'Hours of Devotion' & 'Shelf Life' in association with GBS Fine Art - Friday 8th May – Saturday 6th June, 2009

Submitted by: Cassleton Elliott

Tuesday, 24 February 2009

'Hours of Devotion' & 'Shelf Life' is an exhibition of two new series of photographic works by the British artist and Jerwood Photographic Prize-winner Veronica Bailey – a collaboration between Bernheimer Fine Art Photography (for Colnaghi) and GBS Fine Art.

13 large works from 'Hours of Devotion' and 20 from 'Shelf Life' will hang at Colnaghi, 15 Old Bond Street from 8th May until 6th June. The editions of the each of Bailey's works range from a series of 8 to 12, with prices ranging from £950 to £13,500 to suit all collectors. Colnaghi is the oldest Old Master dealer in London, which has a tradition of exhibiting photography beginning with Roger Fenton in the 1850's, when he showed images from The Crimean War.

'Hours of Devotion' is a body of work that resulted from an invitation from Coutts, one of the oldest and most prestigious banks in London, to explore their Old Staff Library; founded by Angela Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906) in the 1850's as a philanthropic resource for Coutts' staff. This collection consists of largely nineteenth century works, covering a plethora of subject matter, many in tooled leather bindings, with lusciously marbled and gilded page edges, as can be seen in the works, 'Russell's Modern Europe' and 'Curiosities of Literature - Disraeli'. Bailey presents the Coutts' books as opulent neo-gothic monuments on an appropriately impressive scale. Exhibiting 'Hours of Devotion' at Colnaghi, offers collectors the chance to view images inspired by the Coutts' Library whilst surrounded by The Colnaghi Library. One of the largest art libraries in private hands, The Colnaghi Library was responsible for the publication of the first photographically illustrated catalogue in 1858.

'Shelf Life' is an altogether different, self-contained visual essay stemming from Bailey's involvement with the Coutts' library. Ignoring the books' content, Bailey has shifted her focus to the bindings themselves – verso and recto - cropping uniformly to endow particular significance to their spines. The surfaces - marbled card, spun cloth or soft animal skin - are testament to the aging process of time, light and the reader. The titles have been digitally erased from the spines and this imparts a stronger visual impact, presenting us with simple fields of colour. This can be seen particularly with the works 'Canto 1829', 'Canto 1937' and 'Canto 1284'. The title of each image relates to its original library index number.

Visually Bailey seems to pay fealty to both Rothko, and Barnett Newman. These works may be photographs and the subject may be surfaces fashioned by Victorian book-binders, but 'Shelf Life's Cantos do reflect 'a form, mood, beat, and scale' not dissimilar to the lithographs that Newman created in his '18 Cantos' of 1963-4.

The series of 48 works of 'Shelf Life' offers Bailey's collectors the opportunity to design their own 'library' of works that can be altered to suit a different home or mood.

Bailey's previous work includes the Jerwood Photographic Prize-winning '2 Willow Road' (2003) on

the architect Ernö Goldfinger, and 'Postscript' (2005), which was a visual meditation on the passionate yet volatile wartime affair between Lee Miller and Roland Penrose. These series have been exhibited by galleries in the USA, Canada and South Korea, as well as Germany and the UK. Her work is seen in prestigious private collections both in Europe and worldwide; and in such collections as the V&A Museum, Coutts & Co. and Stephenson Harwood.

Veronica Bailey commenting on 'Hours of Devotion': "Once books have been handled, read and made part of a library, they assume an aura. I wanted these photographs to retain something of that aura, of the time, as well as of the people that read through the pages of these beautifully crafted books. These images were not to be cropped. They are objects without abstraction."

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Notes to Editors:

BERNHEIMER FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

In 2004 Bernheimer established a new department of Fine Art Photography in Munich. Blanca Bernheimer, Konrad Bernheimer's daughter, joined the company in 2005 and has since developed an extensive programme of exhibitions. These have ranged from solo exhibitions of contemporary artists to group exhibitions of twentieth century photography – all of outstanding quality. In the past three years, Bernheimer Fine Art Photography has earned a high reputation with a series of one man shows concentrating on the work of renowned photographers including Robert Mapplethorpe, Lucien Clergue, Michael Kenna and Toni Schneiders, as well as contemporary photographers including Veronica Bailey, Nick Brandt, Silke Lauffs and Guido Mocafico.

GBS FINE ART

Giles Baker-Smith was the founding director of the Blue Gallery. He has nurtured the careers of many artists, as well as dealing in both modern and contemporary art for some 25 years.

THE COLNAGHI LIBRARY

The Colnaghi Library is one of the largest art libraries still held in private hands and is constantly updated with the latest works on key artists or painting schools. The bulk of the collection dates from the early 20th century and includes stockbooks, catalogues and treatises on artists that have been represented by or sold through P & D Colnaghi & Co. Ltd.

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