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TAI SHANI

Lavish Phantoms of the House of Dust

Opening: Thursday, October 3, 2024; 6pm-9pm

October 4 – December 20, 2024

From Tuesday to Saturday, 11am – 6pm

Gió Marconi, Via Tadino 15, Milan

Lavish Phantoms of the House of Dust is an immersive installation by Tai Shani. This new body of work spans sculpture, paintings, drawings, and animation that weave together gothic histories, fetish objects, and phantasmic forms. The result is a visual environment filled with spectral echoes and haunted traces that tunnel through the striations of time and its echoes.

A brilliant string of blown-glass breasts, each milky green and lit from within by a glowing bulb, is more than a mere chandelier. It also serves as a sample of the surfaces, symbols, and psychosocial resonances that make up “Lavish Phantoms from the House of Dust.” The breast—by nature soft, sensuous, and (in both senses) giving—floats free from any body. It’s also been multiplied (a bit startlingly) and had its flesh replaced and mimicked by the most brittle, fragile material, propelling the assembled contraption to a point of fantastical delicacy.

Which is to say that this chandelier gestures, coyly, in two directions at once: on the one hand at the bosom’s fleshly, sumptuous aspect, and on the other, at the abstract fantasy of the feminine as shatter-prone ornament, literally dangled in mid-air.

“Lavish phantoms” indeed. This exhibition lies flush with the boundary between overflow and atrophy, brimming and evanescence. That’s the mood, the tone, the affective texture of the gathered pieces. The carpets festooned with Victorian spirit photography imagery, the oddly lapidary repetition of skulls, peeking out and assembling themselves from the shredded psychedelic symmetries and shapes that constitute this exhibition’s visual dialect: like the aforementioned light fixture, the show proceeds by a series of transmogrifications and atmospheric effects that are at the same time taut visual riddles. Take the giant pair of suede gloves: what massive hands could make use of this luxe accessory?

House of Dust—not a mere dusty house, but a kind of lordly palace or aristocratic manse whose heraldic symbol and historical inheritance might be pulverized detritus, heaps of feathery, tenacious nothingness. That is, accumulation’s pesky underside, its mischievous, wistful twin. The video installed here shows the translucent flesh of a woman’s back, beneath we see her muscle, organs and skeleton —her face is reflected, in fact perfectly framed, in the hand mirror she’s holding—with her corset almost completely undone.

“The world to me was a secret,” a voice pronounces, “the world to you was open, a part of the secret and me all entropic, perishing disclosure.” The elegant cosmology that animates this exhibition might be said to follow from the operative tension in this sentence: between “entropy” and “disclosure,” between blur and blurt, at once crumbling and constructing, wavering and asserting. These are the powers—the age-old privileges—of ghosts. In an era reeling from hypercapitalist ruin and shattered (which is to say insurgent, recomposing) sociality, we all haunt the House of Dust.