



Haim Chanin Fine Arts

Andrew Robinson, "Drawing With Darkness", Gay City 05/17/2007

Jean-Michel Fauquet's current exhibition at Haim Chanin Fine Arts consists of two large-scale portraits with peculiar implements inserted into the mouth of the subject.

Jean-Michel Fauquet
"Kairos"
Haim Chanin Fine Arts
121 W. 19th St., 10th fl.
Through Jun. 30
Tue.-Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
646-230-7200

According to Carl Jung, scientific experimental inquiry has often resulted in a psychologically biased view of the natural world, which discounts what cannot be empirically grasped. The effort to represent the perception of intangibles can result in a chaotic collection of curiosities, rather like those old natural history cabinets, where anatomical monsters are suspended in bottles; and just next to them are the horn of a unicorn, a dried carcass of a mermaid, and a stack of 19th century "spirit" photos - all presented as "evidence" of the inexplicable anomalies of the physical world.

A thinking person can conclude that these things represent a hoax, manufactured relics reflecting ephemeral events based on the fragmentary beliefs in a person's mind - a mind where dreams or fantasies are confused with reality.

Humankind's ongoing attempt to fathom the relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual is what seems to have led artist Jean-Michel Fauquet to explore his phantasmagoric imaginings through constructed realities - meticulously crafted, photographed, and manipulated into a series of made-up relics, unhinged events whose meaning has been lost to the frail memory of history.

While Fauquet's primary medium is photography, his work begins with the construction of settings, objects made of cardboard, dust, dirt, paper clips, glue, and, critically, the mysteries of the soul. The exhibition consists of two large-scale portraits with peculiar implements inserted into the mouth of the subject. There are also a multitude of close-ups of what Fauquet terms "unnamable objects."

The artist's initial preparation begins with making sketches of imaginary things, which are then constructed and photographed. The negatives are scratched and drawn upon, and the prints are seeped in oil paint highlights and a residue of wax. The result is more like a drawing than a photograph.

There are images of stairway labyrinths leading nowhere, and yet there is an uncanny paramnesia, or perhaps a déjà vu, which finds resonance in a mind grasping for recognition as well as the comfort of understanding the incomprehensible.

Settings where a heap of cloth serves as an understudy for a mountain range allow the artist and the viewers' mind's eye to believe that a faux-relic construction when photographed becomes an image of a monumental thing; a theatrical crescendo crafted out of darkness rather than light. These incredible relics have a mysterious setting deepened with the patina of a black border. The resulting work is an enigma; a created illusion, a mimic, which imitates the natural world and implies a divinity where there is none.