

Kunstmuseum Bern

Six Feet Under. Autopsy of our relation to the dead

November 2, 2006 to January 21, 2007 – Curators: Bernhard Fibicher / Susanne Friedli

Introduction

Violence and death are omnipresent in the media, yet our society avoids direct contact with dead people. The corpse has been definitively removed from our field of vision and replaced by a new system of rituals and symbols intended to help us deal with the finiteness of human existence. The skull, for example, has been transformed from a subcultural emblem to a chic mainstream fashion accessory. Other countries and civilisations often have more direct contact with the dead, which is mostly compensated by a greater degree of ritualisation. Repression, catharsis, de-symbolisation, metaphor, the invention of substitute rituals, neutralization, black humour and other such instruments have always been, and continue to be used, in ever new forms so as to redress our natural awkwardness in the face of the *idea* of death and the *body* of the dead person.

Death is a universal theme in art. Two extremes are evident in contemporary art: either art re-conquers the ritual, which was surrendered by religion to highly professional service providers or to the media, and restages or extends it using its own means; or else certain artists bring the undesirable corpse back into our field of vision in order to show us, in an often very direct way, that (physical) existence (also) continues after death.

Six Feet Under is an exhibition made up of works from the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts Berne and from other public and private collections as well as works specially created for the show, ranging from the 16th century to today, and originating from different continents and civilisations – Europe, America, Mexico, China, India, Thailand, Ghana.



Chapter 1: Corpses, Skulls and Skeletons

This chapter deals with the death of the flesh, namely that which will have disappeared within a few months (soft tissue) and that which can last for hundreds, even thousands, of years (bones). It illustrates what we do not like to see, that which for this reason only exerts a particular fascination: the dead and rotting human body reduced to its bones – our body, as we will never see it!

Joel-Peter Witkins arranges body parts – arms, feet, heads – in still lifes with food, flowers and other objects, taking the etymology of this artistic genre literally: “still” in the sense of “lifeless” (in the sense of “nature morte”). The titles of the pictures in **Andreas Serrano’s** series *The Morgue* refer to the manner of death of the depicted individuals. The pictures are all closeups, which on the one hand guarantees anonymity and on the other focusses the attention on specific body parts that indicate unmistakably the state of death: children’s stiff hands, a scorched face, congealed blood, a lifeless gaze. The

brilliant and absolutely precise aesthetics of these pictures result in one being unable to avoid them.

In *Strangled Body*, **Hans Danuser** highlights the traces of the cause of death – rigid folds of skin – in such an oversized and frame-filling way that they appear to be something separate from a human body: furrows in a nighttime landscape of skin. Nothing distracts from the body surface, there is nothing else for the gaze to rest on. The Mexican artist **Teresa Margolles** shows only traces of the dead: coloured woollen blankets with stains in which the victims of violent crimes were wrapped; body fluids and gases that escape from the body with the first incision of an autopsy or the acoustic recording of this “last sigh”. She counts on the evocative power of the relics and evokes death in our imagination.

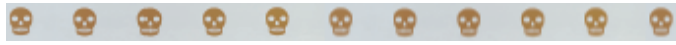
In his painted-over photographs of corpses, **Arnulf Rainer** concentrates on the face, and with this inking over (more rarely he uses oil or watercolour) effaces the individuality of the men and women of all ages. He works particularly on the body openings – eyes, nose and mouth – and emphasizes specific features as in a caricature. **Daniel Spoerri** uses criminalistic illustrative material for police in his series *Morduntersuchungen*, staging a theatrical fiction.

The haunting humanity of **Hans Holbein the Younger’s** *Christus im Grabe* (1521) makes the figure an archetype for every other depiction of recumbent or dead bodies, such as **Ferdinand Hodler’s** emaciated and colourless *Paysan mort* (1876) or **Karl Stauffer’s** *Liegender männlicher Akt* (1879) with the same upthrust beard. **Marlene Dumas** resurrects him in a portrait. **Félix Vallotton’s** painting *Le cadavre* (1894) shows the body of Christ, image reversed and true to detail, as a cadaver. Holbein opens the round-dance of “brutal” depictions of the dead, he is the real founder of “cadaver aesthetics”.

The **Death’s Head or Skull** is an abstraction, namely that which remains and therefore returns to us (in a purified form). It possesses a prototypical form and can be varied formally in manifold ways. **Katharina Fritsch** presents it with detached purity, **Andisheh Avini** as a perfectly crafted jewel, **Andrew Lord** as an ageless ceramic and **Gabriel Orozco** (in an edition) as the carrier of an abstract and ornamental composition. The grotesque characteristic of a skull, that of a mask, a grimace, has been emphasized by countless artists: **Miguel Barcelo** creates a Pinocchio skull with pointed nose, **George Condo** turns Hamlet’s Yorick into a shapeless bubble and **Robert Lazzarini** distorts the skull in many other ways.

The Skeleton is the reduction of the human being to its basic structure and in the hands of an artist can turn into a primeval sign, such as a totem (**Jean-Frédéric Schnyder**) or a wooden monolith: **Stefan Balkenhol** carves it from a tree trunk from the bark inwards, therefore laying open the human/wooden body to its core in one fundamental act. The French painter **Denis Laget**, on the other hand, uses the

skeleton as a basis around which he constructs a viscous peinture. The skeleton, however, is also the articulated pattern for a human being and can therefore be “animated”: **Jean-Frédéric Schnyder** creates a sort of jumping jack of wires and corks. The uniformity of the human skeleton stimulated the English sculptor **Mark Quinn** to realize individualization by presenting a deformed skeleton.



Chapter 2: Coffins, Graves and Tears

There are no civilizations where the dead remain with the living. First, the dead are sequestered and later, with the assistance of complex grieving rituals usually originating in religious traditions, disposed of, either in fire or earth burials or entrusted to the watery element. The new skin for the rotting body is the coffin, its new home is the grave, the new city is the cemetery – at least in western civilizations.

Children's deaths are usually presented in a romantic and sentimental way. **Charles Durheim** shows the small corpse in a daguerreotype as if it were asleep. In contrast, *L'enfant mort* by **Edouard Vallet** has a melancholy effect: death is perceived as a disaster. In his *Kinderbegräbnis* (1863), **Albert Anker** does not portray death directly but reflects it in an anecdotal way in the body language of the bereaved. The overriding motif is the hole that has been dug. The work *Entierro* by the Mexican artist **Teresa Margolles** gives the impression of being a negative of this: the body of a stillborn child is immersed in a small, flat block of concrete. The mother did not have enough money for a burial. Margolles has given the fetus a mobile grave, created a place and a decidedly geometric sign (an antimonumental monument).

Jan Vercruysse supplants the human body completely in his *Tombeaux*, made in the 1980s and 1990s. The tomb exhibited here is composed of seven glass wind instruments hanging on the wall like trophies. These fragile replicas are merely to facilitate contemplation. Decorporalized, and no longer petitioning any human agency that could make them sing, they represent a place that excludes us physically – absolutely in the sense of a tomb.

The composition *Blick in die Ewigkeit* (1885) by **Ferdinand Hodler** is indicative of a metaphysical concept: all the “woodenness” in the picture stands for this side of finiteness. The half-kneeling posture of the carpenter and the emphasis of his gaze betray a yearning for the beyond. In the art of today, a coffin no longer conveys higher or sublime feelings. Misappropriation is the prosaic order of the day. **Joe Scanlan** has converted a well-known IKEA shelf into a coffin and **Francis Uprichard** lovingly transforms ceramics found at the flea-market into urns for ashes.

In **Arnold Brügger's** *Begräbnis* (1922), a coffin is carried up to the snow-covered cemetery where the open grave is waiting between some scattered crosses. The pyramid shape and the cool blue of the composition can be interpreted symbolically. The coffin bearers in **Gerhard Richter's** *Sargträger* (1962), on the other hand, are merely carrying out a task. In the painting, based on a photograph and executed in strongly contrasting black and white, the dynamics are between black and white, concreteness and abstraction, mass/order (the numbers) and pictorial anarchy, life and death.

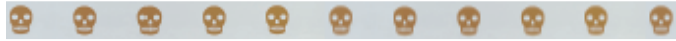
While **Berclaz de Sierre** creates a cemetery for the dead who are actually called “*Personne*” or “*Niemand*”

thereby indicating simultaneously the anonymity and particularity of death, **Jonathan Monk** prepares his own gravestone: he had his name and date of birth engraved on a marble slab; the work is wryly titled: *A Work in Progress* (to be completed when the time comes). **Jorge Macchi** has reworked a map of Lisbon and has eliminated everything except the cemeteries. With this simple gesture of emphasis, he establishes the realm of the dead as the foundation of the Portuguese capital as well as that of every city with an historic past. In contrast, **Kon Trubkovich** blurs the reality of cemeteries: in fine pencil drawings he depicts places of the dead that evoke anonymity, uniformity and bleakness. The cemetery as a place for the bereaved is presented by the English artist **Sue Fox**. She films herself going to visit the grave of her recently departed mother and giving herself unrestrainedly to grief. This intimacy of the video shared with the viewer is difficult to bear: Sue Fox's absolutely private and therefore unheroic and unvarnished mourning results in it being impossible to share this with a “group” of mourners.

An interesting sub-chapter is offered by the works of American artists of the 1960s and 1970s. It illustrates that the apparently intellectual **Conceptual Art** can also deal with existential questions and specifically with death. In 1967, **Claes Oldenburg** had a pit measuring 180cm by 90cm dug by gravediggers behind the Metropolitan Museum in Central Park and then had it filled in again. The underground event-sculpture was titled *Placid Civic Monument*. In the same year, as a response to the lack of emotion in Minimal Art, **Paul Thek** created the installation *Das Grab* (which was later destroyed) with a replica of the artist in wax. In 1963, Thek, together with the photographer **Peter Hujar**, had undertaken a journey to Palermo and had been overwhelmed by the mummies in Capuchin catacombs. These pictures weren't published by Hujar until 1976 in *Portraits of Life and Death*. Somewhere in Holland in 1968, **Sol LeWitt** buried a small metal cube and made it public by means of a photographic documentary (*Buried Cube* or *Box in the Hole*). **John Baldessari's** *Cadaver Piece* from 1970 plays with the trivializing of depictions of death by artistic ideals.

Coffins by Paa Joe and Ata Okoo from Ghana. As the Ga believe in reincarnation within the family, they do not regard death as the final end. As ancestors, the dead are much more powerful than the living and within the family can exert a significant influence for good or for evil. This is why families make great efforts to insure that a departed family member remains in a good mood. Social status is largely dependent on the size and success of the funeral ceremony as well as on an exclusive coffin. The figure-shaped coffins, only seen on the day of the burial, are often symbolic of the profession of the late departed and are supposed to help him or her to take up their earthly career again in the hereafter. This is why fishermen are often buried in a canoe or fish coffin, farmers in vegetable coffins and a businessman in a prestigious Mercedes Benz coffin. Some of the motifs reflected in the shapes of the coffins, for instance, the Ga stool or traditional chief's sandal, are royal or priestly insignias with a magical and religious function. Only those with corresponding status may be buried in such coffins. Various animals such as lions, cocks and crabs are clan totems. In this case too, only chiefs from the corresponding families may use coffins with these shapes. And finally, many coffins indicate a proverb, which is why the Ga call the figure-shaped coffins Proverbial

Coffins. **Ataa Oko**, born around 1919 is regarded as the inventor of the figure-shaped coffin, and **Paa Joe**, born in 1947 as the most important coffin designer in Ghana. For our exhibition, Paa Joe made seven coffins that have a symbolism anchored deeply in the art, the religion and the funeral ceremonies of the Ga. The coloured drawings by Ataa Oko done in recent years are based on memories of coffins that he made in earlier times.



Chapter 3: Homages – The Beloved and the Honoured Dead

All the artworks exhibited here show the corpses of people who were close to the artists or who meant a lot to them. That artists began to thematize their private relationship with death in portraits of dead people is a long-term consequence of the secular phase following the French Revolution that threw the artistic individual back on to his or her self in an existential questioning: the paradigms for the individual “Homages to the beloved dead” can be found in Pietà depictions.

Claude Monet's wife Camille died at the age of 32 on September 5, 1879, after long suffering, probably of cervical cancer. The portrait done after her death shows her, not in profile as in typical portraits of corpses readied for burial, but from above and to the side as if from the view of someone bending spontaneously over the bed with concern. Monet said later of this picture: “(...) when I found myself at the bedside of someone dead, someone who had been, and still is, precious to me, and realized that my eyes only focussed on the tragic temple, mechanically occupied with the succession and ordering of the shades of colour that death had given to the immobile countenance. Shades of blue, yellow, grey, what do I know? That's what I had sunk to”. When looking at the picture later, Monet believed he had reacted in an extreme situation in his private life purely as a practised painter, had allowed himself to be lured by the play of light, by the manifold refraction of the white and, in an attack of “automatism”, had treated his dead wife as a neutral object. In the expressive gestures, Monet's inner state, his feeling of desertion, hopelessness and desperation, is manifested in an abstract expressionism avant la lettre.

The experience of death and fear of death run through the whole artistic work of **Ferdinand Hodler**. In the portrait *Louis Duchosal sur son lit de mort* (1901), the “permanence of death” as accepted by the artist “that transforms thoughts of death into a powerful force” is manifested in the completely relaxed face of his poet friend which is enclosed in a constellation of Art Nouveau geometry. In the death room of his mistress Valentine Godé-Darel, on the other hand, Hodler remains fixated on the actuality of the body lying before him. This dead body has been horribly destroyed, furrowed, the bones emerge through the eroded skin. Hodler finds no positive and affirming answer to death in the presence of his dead beloved.

Cuno Amiet has painted his friend Ferdinand Hodler in a coffin. The expressionist picture, in which everything is contrasting and in movement – the coffin is aimed in a steep diagonal at the viewer and flickering black overflows the white of the coffin's interior and the colour of the flowers – can be regarded as a counterpart to Hodler's three paintings titled *Die*

tote Valentine Godé-Darel. It is as though Amiet wanted to unite the two figures by painting Hodler in a coffin the way Hodler had painted his dead mistress.

In drawings, etchings and paintings, **James Ensor** has portrayed dead relatives on their deathbeds. His dead aunt does not lie horizontally, her upper body is raised by enormous pillows and seems to convey a threat.

Benjamin Cottam has availed himself of an extreme miniaturization in his drawing. His series *Dead Artists* is composed of portraits of artists whose deaths have taken place since 1950. These drawings are the same size as coins and, on the white paper, appear as tiny as if they were at an unreachable distance. In contrast to this, **A A Bronson**, founder of the artist group *General Idea*, works with a large format. Due to the enlarging onto a vinyl surface of the portrait of the group member Felix Partz who died from AIDS, the picture represents a departure from the pattern of commercialized death pictures put out by the media. It takes on the characteristic of a film still that repeatedly appears in the media, thus becoming a symbol, an untouchable icon.

The installation *Death of Che* (2000) by the Englishman **Gavin Turk** is based on the famous photograph of the revolutionary by Alberto Korda. The wax figure shows Che on a stretcher, but bearing the features of the artist. The deviations prove to us that the actual content has been lost behind the collectively remembered picture. In **Aida Ruilova's** video work, the main emphasis is on mourning. The French film director Jean Rollin, the creator of bizarre and horrific porno films is stretched out on the bed and is being mourned by a young woman. As the ultimate homage, she is trying to unite with the corpse underneath her while grieving at the same time.



Chapter 4: The Death of the Artist

The death of the artist is actually one of the romantic themes of the 19th century. In the drawing by **Ferdinand von Rayski**, *Selbstmord des Künstlers im Atelier* (1840), a painter has hung himself from his easel in a corner of his sparsely furnished studio. A four-line commentary accompanies the picture: “The life of a real artist/Is not of great length/Carries death within itself/True artists love to die”. These words do not only legitimize the suicide of the artist, death almost becomes the seal of approval for a “true artist”. **Eduard Manet's** small painting *Selbstmord im Atelier* (1887) is probably the result of experienced reality. The picture was Manet's contribution to an auction for the benefit of the late composer Jean de Cabanes. Emile Zola wrote in the auction catalogue: “The truth is that he dies because of his art.”

The finality and the radicality of suicide is approached by the Estonian artist **Ene-Liis Semper** in an insistent as well as playful way. In spite of the repetitions and regressions of the picture material, the two staged suicides in *FF/REW* (1998) fall into line almost naturally. The theatrical staging avails itself of elements from the beginnings of silent films, keeps to black and white and is underscored by piano music. The events can be undone by using the rewind button and the future be written again.

What will one's own funeral be like, who will stand at the grave and be shaken by emotion? **Zuzanna Janin** chooses the cool atmosphere of a Polish cemetery, while

Gianni Motti, in his performance *Entierro No 1* (1989), consigns himself to the adventure of a southern procession that really took place before an unknowing audience. With the *The Disappearance of the Artist* (1969), the British artist **Keith Arnatt** rehearsed his own burial. The multi-part photographic series shows the artist sinking ever further into the ground in nine stages until nothing more can be seen of him.

Committed less to the ideas of Minimal Art than to a cultic act, is **Ana Mendieta's** performance *Untitled (Burial Pyramid)* (1974). At various historic burial sites, the Cuban artist allowed herself to be buried under stones until only her face showed. As if triggered by a ghostly hand, the body starts to move. The falling stones then gradually reveal the naked body.

With *Death of a Replicant* (1998), **Christiana Glidden** has created an image of her body. The associations to Snow White's figure lying in a glass coffin from the Grimm's fairytale of the same name are obvious. Narrative moments are also to be found in **Adrian Paci's** video work *Vajtojca* (2002). The artist enters a house and gives himself into the hands of a professional mourner. He even dresses himself in the shroud and lies down on the freshly made deathbed at which point the dirge of the mourning woman commences. Finally, Paci gets up again and takes his leave. Grief and pain give way within only a few minutes to a cheerful mood in order for the ritual to begin again within a short time.



Chapter 5: Death and Lifestyle

In the New Romanticism of the 1980s, which saw itself as the counter movement to punk, the misty-eyed yearning for death, stemming partly from Symbolism and Romanticism, arose once again. Since then, a brisk trade in devotional objects over the internet has arisen – people are interested in mythical God cults, are occupied with death and transience and seek asylum in what is romantic and idyllic. This neo-romantic spirit can be found in the objects and installations by **David Altmejd**. His works cultivate what is abysmal and horrific as well as the yearning for what is beautiful and paradisaical. Altmejd develops, arranges and decorates mysterious objects, half human and half animal. For this he uses the most diverse materials: from crystals and mirrors to synthetic hair or copies of bones made of plastic as well as geometric mirror and glass architecture. This combination with “clean” materials and human fragments stemming from Minimal Art was already a characteristic of Paul Thek's Meat Pieces. Altmejd visualized phantasies and visions that imitate aesthetics from the horror and fantasy genre.

Feminine, sensual and pure, the beautiful “corpses” of the Japanese photographer **Izima Kaoru** wear exquisite labels such as *Comme des Garçons*, *Dolce & Gabbana*, *Louis Vuitton* or *Yves Saint-Laurent*. Since 1993, in various photographic series, Kaoru has been depicting acts of violence against women, although their lifeless bodies sacrifice little of their beauty and sex appeal. Kaoru's discussion with death refers to the tradition of the beautiful dead in Japanese art and literature. To have one's own death constantly in one's mind is seen as the greatest challenge and allows one to hope for an exitus in perfect beauty. The stagings follow the instructions of the relevant model. The women seek the place as well as the mode of their death. Kaoru's experienced eye then translates the idea. On the one hand the female figures are victims, on

the other – the titles such as *Koide Eiko wears Gianni Versace* makes this clear – they wear designer clothes. This role would hardly differ from their other commissions if it were not for the little fresh blood stain on their breast or on their head. In addition to ideal beauty, youth and success, they convey also a perfect image of their death, and one which is completely open to the voyeuristic gaze of the viewers. The image of death conveyed by the photographs is neither scary nor repellent but becomes – as does fashion also – an expression of a lifestyle.

For **Martin Kippenberger**, pictures from the media as well as everyday objects and consumer goods were important sources of inspiration. He uses slogans and sayings that refer less to the ethics of the viewer and much more to the attitude of the artist. It does not matter if the case is a hackneyed joke or a moral saying. Kippenberger, for instance, worked with a group of works with “I ♥” stickers that were popular cult articles in the 1980s. Before the background of two skeleton figures in the painting *Hilfeschreiender aus der Gaza-Gegend* (1985), one can read slogans such as “I ♥ Schnapps (Licor)” or “I ♥ Nicaragua”. Political, moral and emotional statements are combined and trivialized.

John Armleder is also interested in the mingling and combination of art and the everyday. Instead of abstract or floral geometries Armleder makes use of an abstract skull, and by using a stencil turns it into a wall-sized ornament. The image of the death's head is familiar on many levels of meaning: In our daily life as a symbol of great danger near electronic equipment or poisonous substances, as the symbol of adventure and piracy or even as the insignia of youth movements and music genres which want to demonstrate their unbowed freedom but also their closeness to the otherworld. Armleder uses the skull as a kind of ready-made which can not, however, be classified unequivocally and swings between kitsch décor and a symbolic metaphor.



Chapter 6: Afterlife

Death may be seen as the absolute end of the physical existence of a human being, but it could also be a transitory condition to another life form that could be called: resurrection, immortality, transmigration of souls, extended digital life etc. Then there are all kinds of alternatives, individual concepts of paradise, the postulated world of the undead and those who return from the dead, as well as concepts that integrate life and death in cycles (for instance, the further life of the dead in genetic make-up) thereby lending death a legitimacy. In an unspectacular and short video, **Rudolf Steiner** makes a point of light dance on the black surface of a monitor, growing bigger and bigger to finally fill the whole screen – the film was made from a moving train approaching a tunnel exit. With such a simple imitation of one of the best-known experiences with closeness to death, Steiner opens the spatiality of death.

In the right wing of the so-called *Berner Allerseelenaltars* (1506, Museum of Fine Arts Bern), a mass is read by the dead in order to intercede on behalf of the living. In the foreground a grisly scene is taking place: the leg of the verger in the red coat is being grasped by a skeletal hand reaching out from beneath a gravestone. Close by, skeletons

with skin stretched thinly across their bones are climbing out of a grave and entering the church. Only now does the verger notice the “illegal” machinations of the poor souls. He is also being prayed for, more or less behind his back. **Olaf Breuning** allows the “beyond” to enter by populating a music studio with dozens of marionette-like standing and sitting skeletons all “looking” straight at the viewer. Are we dealing with the resurrected, as in the *Allerseelenaltar*? In contrast to those figures, these are all completely inactive: they are merely posing for the photographer. With its forcefulness, this group picture brings stereotyping into question: can death be counteracted with products of culture (music, photography)? Can culture only be achieved by calling upon ghosts?

As with the Mexican artist Teresa Margolles, the Thai **Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook** has dedicated her entire artistic work to death. Her video works are based on performances that took place in morgues, with the exclusion of the public. In a series of recent works, she arranges seminars or talks with the dead. These performances are geared towards the camera filming the event, that is, the artist is actually speaking to us. Her “didactic” video works are following the goal, as in the late Middle Ages the *artes moriendi* did, of bringing their own mortality closer to the people, thereby removing the frightening terror of death.

There are various ways of defining oneself as consciously living by occupying oneself with death, or practising an intense life (experience) as a counterplan to death. **Ergy Landau** inscribes a skeleton onto the back of a standing female nude and “tattoos” the body, stamping life with the insignia of death by drawing directly onto the photograph with black ink. In a photographed performance, **Ana Mendieta** lies down naked on a skeleton and kisses its sculpted masculine head on the mouth. She couples with death in order to overcome it, thereby assuming the active role. The woman dominates masculine death in the midst of a green meadow, an indication of how natural an act this is.

The Dance of Death. The fundamental reason for a dance of death is the representation of the inescapability of death for men and women of every status and every age. In Bern, the *Totentanz* by **Niklaus Manuel** (approx. 1484-1530) has become particularly famous. It was painted and written on the cemetery wall of the monastery on what is today the Zeughausgasse and was most probably done in the years 1516/1517 to 1519/1520, a decade before the Reformation in Bern in 1528. We have the painter **Albrecht Kauw** (1616-1681) from Strasbourg to thank for the fact that the *Totentanz* by Manuel has been preserved in spite of the demolition. **Wilhelm Stettler** (1643-1708) copied Kauw’s copy.

The “wake” that is usually carried out during or after a burial is to be understood as a definitive collective recognition of life. In **Max Buri’s** tavern scene there is nothing – apart from, perhaps, the black top hats – to indicate that they are drinking to someone who has departed this life. In a sort of secular communion, **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** imbued his friend Ross who died of AIDS with new life by offering the visitors to the exhibition a pile of colourfully wrapped sweets. The small, colourful and gleaming pyramid corresponded to Ross’s body weight (175 pounds or 79.4 kilos). For Bern, the Indian artist **Shrinivasa Prasad** created an installation of dry leaves that he projects onto video scenes of rituals for the dead in which food plays an important part.

There is hardly a civilization that does not understand death as a part of life. Death and life are never defined merely by themselves. Even when there is no concept of beyond, the counterparts life and death coalesce to a synthesis or to a cycle of life and death, of birth and death, from becoming and departing. **Raoul Marek** has created a printed carrierbag for various hospitals and clinics, the two sides of which complement each other in that they are dedicated to a natural cycle: a waxing moon and the colour yellow for a birth, midnight blue and a waning moon for a death. On the occasion of the millennium in Peking, in the performance *Link of the Body*, the Chinese artist couple **Sun Yuan and Peng Yu** created a material connection to the corpses of two stillborn children. By means of rubber tubes, they attempted to pump blood taken directly from their own bodies into the mouths of the babies – an absurd attempt at resuscitation - or a failed act of conception. **Franz Dodel** has set himself the task of noting the names of living and dead persons of his acquaintance and publishing these lists on the internet. This medium, therefore, becomes a virtual memorial site.



Special Events

Öffentliche Führungen in Deutsch

Jeweils Dienstag, 19h und Sonntag, 11h

Visite Guidée en français

Mardi, 19 décembre 2006, 19h30

Public Guided Tour in English

Tuesday, November 28, 2006, 19h30

Tuesday, January 16, 2007, 19h30

Literarische Führungen mit Michaela Wendt

Dienstag, 14. November 2006 | 18h

Sonntag, 26. November 2006 | 13h

Sonntag, 10. Dezember 2006 | 13h

Dienstag, 19. Dezember 2006 | 18h

Sonntag, 7. Januar 2007 | 13h

Dienstag, 16. Januar 2007 | 18h

Podiumsgespräch: Unser Umgang mit den Toten

Dienstag, 21. November 2006 | 20h

Mit: **Bernhard Fibicher** (Kurator, Moderation), **Maja Zimmermann** (Pfarrerin am Münster Bern), **Thomas Plattner** (Oberarzt am Institut für Rechtsmedizin der Universität Bern), **Margarete Bader-Tschan** (Geschäftsführerin des Bestattungsunternehmens Charona)

Podiumsgespräch: Die Toten in Kunst und Kultur

Dienstag, 5. Dezember 2006 | 20h

Mit: **Bernhard Fibicher** (Kurator, Moderation), **Elisabeth Bronfen** (Autorin und Professorin am englischen Seminar der Universität Zürich), **Hans Danuser** (Künstler), **Hans Geser** (Ordinarius für Soziologie an der Universität Zürich)

Literarische Veranstaltung zur Finissage: Der tote Mensch in der Literatur

Sonntag, 21. Januar 2007 | 11h

Mit: **Bernhard Fibicher** (Kurator, Moderation), **Guy Krneta** (Schriftsteller), **Pedro Lenz** (Schriftsteller), **Markus Michel** (Schriftsteller), **Michaela Wendt** (SchauspielerIn)



Films in the Kino Kunstmuseum:

Imitation of Life

Saturday, November 4, 2006 | 18h

Monday, November 6, 2006 | 20h30

The Funeral

Saturday, November 4, 2006 | 20h30

Monday, November 6, 2006 | 18h

Tuesday, November 7, 2006 | 20h30

The Trouble with Harry

Saturday, November 18, 2006 | 20h30

Monday, November 20, 2006 | 20h30

Tuesday, November 21, 2006 | 18h30

Songs from the Second Floor

Sunday, November 19, 2006 | 17h

Monday, November 27, 2006 | 18h

Tuesday, November 28, 2006 | 20h30

Corpse Bride

Saturday, December 2, 2006 | 21h

Monday, December 4, 2006 | 21h

Tuesday, December 5, 2006 | 21h

Ultima Thule – Eine Reise an den Rand der Welt

Saturday, December 9, 2006 | 18h30

Monday, December 11, 2006 | 18h30

Tuesday, December 12, 2006 | 18h30

The series of films will continue in January 2007. More information on www.kinokunstmuseum.ch

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Exhibition Catalogue in German and English:

Six Feet Under. Autopsie unseres Umgangs mit Toten / Autopsy of our Relation to the Dead

Kerber Verlag, Leipzig/Bielefeld

Herausgegeben vom Kunstmuseum Bern,
mit Texten von Elisabeth Bronfen, Bernhard Fibicher,
Matthias Frehner, Susanne Friedli, Thomas Macho,
Helga Lutz, Regula Tschumi, Hans Christoph von Tavel.
Deutsch und Englisch.

224 Seiten, vierfarbig, 27,2 x 21 cm.

CHF 58.-

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