

## EXHIBITIONS Michelle Molinari *Nature Mort* 15th July 2014 - 2nd August 2014

Michelle Molinari is a painter, printmaker and taxidermy artist whose work focuses on notions of death, memorialisation and observation. Creating her own taxidermy installations, she amalgamates paintings or printed observational renderings, with that of the taxidermied animal they have derived from, blurring the divisions that typically exist between these artistic disciplines.

'At the tender age of 22, Michelle Molinari has a vision of the afterlife. It is an animal realm, where each wild soul is kept alive through the time-heavy processes of painting and taxidermy. Compelled to draw creatures even as a young child, Molinari came across traditional and revisited taxidermy practices while at art school: "I literally had one of those epiphany moments, where I was able to identify everything I had unconsciously investigated in my work all along."

Soon after, Molinari found David Luxford, a taxidermist living in Victoria's Gippsland region. Initially, she wanted to document his work as references for her painting practice: however, she would soon be apprenticed to his craft, learning the meticulous processes for herself. Unlike traditional incarnations, where animals are manipulated into lively poses for educational or natural history purposes, Molinari was more concerned with recreating their peaceful transition into death: "Sometimes in the museum scenario, birds have their beaks pried open as if they're chirping! I'm far more interested in a quiet, natural moment."

In keeping, Molinari's exhibition, *Nature Mort*, is a visual eulogy. The works include taxidermy creatures, and a series of paintings that reference them. Inspired by 19<sup>th</sup> century post-mortem photography—where families would pose their deceased loved ones on sofas, thrones, or in ludicrously invigorated positions before immortalising them in a snapshot—Molinari's works are also intimate recollections. Her paintings articulate each feather, eyelid and beak to match its tangible counterpart. This comes from spending long periods of time holding each animal between her fingertips, quite literally grooming its features to understand every detail.

In this way, Molinari's work is a form of mimesis, where art reflects life. However, this happens not once, but twice in her process. As taxidermy stands in for an animal that once lived, highly representational painting replicates this replica: "The cycle of representation has become really important to the work. It heightens the feeling of immortalisation." Each animal lives once as sculpture and twice through painting, and it is in the



Michelle Molinari!  
*Nature Mort* 2014  
oil on aluminium panel!  
96cm x 122cm



Michelle Molinari  
*In Memoriam* 2014  
oil on linen  
50cm x 40cm , 70 x 60 cm framed

latter that the 'essence' of the animal appears to reverberate. Here, lighting is dramatic, reminiscent of Dutch and Flemish still life of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; while a closer cropping and larger scale than Molinari's usual, pushes the subject further into the realm of portraiture. In affect, even the smallest soul expands.

Molinari has immortalised fox, deer, and many a flock of birds. However, in a few months time, she will be en route to New York for her most ambitious project to date: "I am going to taxidermy a horse! It will be a wonderful challenge." As with other contemporary artists like Julia Deville and Polly Morgan, it is Molinari's affection for the natural world that allows her to wander toward its darker side, beguiled not by the grotesque, but the view of a private departure.'

Essay by Laura Skerjil, 2014.

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Michelle Molinari  
*In Remembrance* 2014  
oil on linen  
50cm x 40cm , 70 x 60 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*Momento* 2014  
oil on linen  
50cm x 40cm , 70 x 60 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*Into Memory* 2014  
oil on linen  
50cm x 40cm , 70 x 60 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*Momento Mori* 2014  
charcoal on velour paper  
50cm x 34cm , 60 x 44 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*At Rest* 2014  
charcoal on velour paper  
50cm x 34cm , 64 x 47 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*Beneath The Dome* 2014  
oil on aluminium panel  
60cm x 76cm , 80 x 95 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*The Eternal Sleep* 2014  
oil on aluminium panel  
60cm x 76cm , 82 x 97 cm framed



Michelle Molinari  
*Eternal Sleep* 2014  
taxidermy fox, black glass mirror, acrylic dome!  
60cm x 60cm x 36 cm



Michelle Molinari  
*Together At The End* 2014  
taxidermy finches, black acrylic perspex, deep set convex glass!  
38cm x 31cm

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