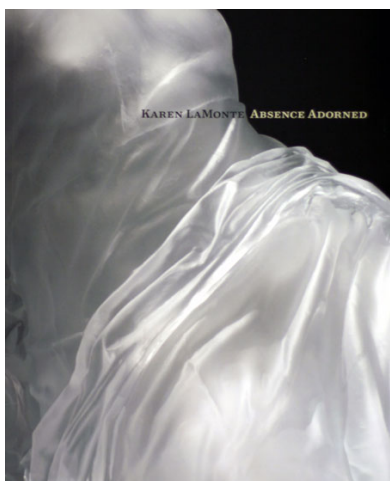


Karen LaMonte: Absence Adorned / Arthur C. Danto and Juli Cho Bailer.—Tacoma, WA: Museum of Glass: International Center for Contemporary Art; Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, May 2006.—87 p.: ill.—ISBN 0-9726649-1-2: \$24.95 (pa.).



Karen LaMonte has drawn international attention for her evocative life-size cast glass dresses. The dresses are cast in the Czech Republic through a process that captures both the female form beneath the dress and the shape of the dress on the female form. The completed piece metaphysically captures the constructions of women through both presence and absence, in a way that can only be illustrated through the translucence of glass.

Absence Adorned is the catalog of LaMonte's first solo museum show in the United States. The exhibit, curated by Juli Cho Bailer, featured three aspects of LaMonte's work: large scale sculptural glass dresses; sartoriotypes; and the *Sleeping Mirrors* and *Lark Mirrors*. These forms illustrate LaMonte's interest in constructions of feminine identity, fashion, and beauty. The high-quality photographs of the exhibition pieces capture the sumptuous, luminous, and sometimes voyeur-

istic qualities of her glass work.

The catalog contains two essays, "The Poetry of Meaning and Loss: The Glass Dresses of Karen Lamonte," by philosopher and art critic, Arthur C. Danto and "Karen LaMonte: Absence Adorned," by Juli Cho Bailer. Danto's work is an analytical examination of LaMonte's creative vision, speaking specifically to her glass dresses. He comes to the conclusion that "the poignancy of LaMonte's dresses is a product of two modes of change in which we participate as human beings, composed, as we are, of flesh and meaning." Bailer's essay speaks to LaMonte's interest in fashion and "the culture of vanity, where the dress defines the wearer and the mirror tells us who we are."

The catalog also includes a brief foreword by Josi Callan, then director of the Museum of Glass: International Center for Contemporary Art, an artist biography, list of exhibitions, and selected bibliography. Those interested in additional background information on LaMonte will find the bibliography useful. Readers might wish for more information on the artist's conceptual and technical construction of the objects represented.

The nature of Karen LaMonte's work is far-reaching and this catalog is sure to evoke discussion in a range of disciplines. This is a recommended purchase for academic and museum libraries that collect, or support programs, in contemporary art, glass art, printmaking, photography, gender studies, and cultural studies. The beauty and accessibility of the photographs also make it a good choice for large public libraries, particularly those with strong collections in the previously mentioned disciplines.

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