

ArtReview

Becky Beasley. Malamud
Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp
14 December - 31 January
 December 2008 - January 2009
 By Chris Sharp



Figure (Part III), 2008

selenium toned silver gelatin print, brown acrylic glass, double sheet version, dimensions variable, edition of 2.

Photo: Koen de Waal.

Courtesy the artist and Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp

This association is coupled with a more corporeal one of laid-out, disjointed cadavers; thus Hans Bellmer and his reconfigurable dolls insinuate themselves, adding an unexpected dose of macabre perversity to the mix. But if the spectre of Bellmer helps animate the fetishistic character of the planks, the plank sculptures themselves leaning up against the gallery walls bring into play the operative reference of John McCracken. Contrary to McCracken's lustrous and rectilinear sculptures, Beasley's matte planks, constructed with black American walnut veneer, curve away from the wall like partial parentheses or anthropomorphic spines. The planks, entitled Plank 5, Plank 6, etc, were created after the photos, save for a small, curved unit, which originally featured in Beasley's silver gelatin prints, and which is placed on the ground like a diminutive headstone.

The artist refers to these sculptures in the show's press release as 'fictions'. It is indeed not hard to see them as narrative structures in which the narrative has been sublimated by the mute, inscrutable eloquence of death. Despite their heavy reliance on art history, and therefore potentially anecdotal glibness illustrating the death drive of minimalism), Beasley's sculptures and photos are too weird to be explained away by citation. Like the one series of wall sculptures in the show that explicitly references language, Figure + Letter A-E, consisting of a horizon line of black walnut hinged shelves, whose hinged parts hang down into evocations of some Semitic language, the work remains hauntingly inassimilable.