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CRITICS' PICKS



Francesca Woodman, *On Being an Angel*, 1976, gelatin silver print, 10 x 8“.

Vienna

Francesca Woodman

Galerie Hubert Winter

Breite Gasse 17

February 22 - March 24

Nestled in nonchronological clusters, this precious collection of photographs captures how Francesca Woodman rearranged classical sculpture's erotic promise to suit the eerie tone of Victorian portrait photography. For the ancient Greeks, the body was the outer expression of inner virtue; in Woodman's rituals of exposure, it provides a richer, troubling vision of our interior lives. Both *Easter Lilies*, 1976, and *Girl with Weed*, 1980, contrast a proud, naked torso with plants, reminding us that sexuality is a cultural construct built by an impenetrable wall of repression. She meets this legacy confidently in *Untitled (Rome, Italy)*, 1977–78, where she gazes up at a Roman statue as if it were an equal, and *Untitled*, 1980, where a woman squeezes her bicep while her other hand rests on her shoulder, as if comparing her own material to that of antiquities.

A figure twists on a marble floor next to a bowl, mimicking the curves of an eel in the dish, for from *Eel Series*, 1978, and again in *Untitled*, 1972–75, where a woman, possibly the artist, is lying mud-caked in the fetal position by a misty shoreline, turning a landscape into a devastatingly intimate self-portrait. Revelation comes not in the boudoir scene *Untitled*, 1979–80, where the artist curls across a small divan wearing a garter belt, but in *On Being an Angel*, 1976, where we see Woodman's arched body from above, her mouth gasping in ecstasy. Even this barren room hosts a divine hymn.

— Max L. Feldman

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