

PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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CANADIAN ARTIST SPRING HURLBUT UNVEILS NEW PHOTOGRAPHIC SUITE *DEUIL* – FROM ASHES EMERGE CONSTELLATIONS

(Toronto) – **Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art** presents *Deuil*, curated by **Scott McLeod**. The exhibition runs from **May 3 to June 9, 2007**.

Deuil, a solo exhibition by accomplished Toronto artist **Spring Hurlbut**, with accompanying essay by **Maia-Mari Sutnik**, comprises a series of photographs of the ashes of Hurlbut's father, James, and of Scarlett Wright, an infant who died a few hours after birth. It also includes photographs of the ashes of Mary Pocock, a Toronto photographic artist whose unwavering spirit endured a protracted struggle with her own mortality, and of Galen Kuellmer, an emerging photographer and former assistant to Hurlbut. *Deuil*, her first photographic work, was shaped in the wake of her most recent installation based works – both concerned with loss, and its preservation – composed of the artifacts and specimens from the encyclopedic collections of the Manchester Museum of Natural History (*Beloved and Forsaken*, 2004), and the research collection at the Royal Ontario Museum (*The Final Sleep*, 2000-2001). *Deuil* (to mourn) is a logical progression in the evolution of her artistic thinking and practice.

A reception for *Deuil* will be held on May 3 from 7 to 10 PM, in conjunction with the release of *Prefix Photo 15*, at **Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto**. The exhibition continues until June 9, 2007.

"In her first photographic work *Deuil*, Spring Hurlbut gives us a thoughtful meditation on death. By documenting cremated remains, and thereby revealing the fragile materiality of what remains of existence, Hurlbut connects us to an experience both individual and universal. One might imagine that such a project would require a rigorous detachment, but Hurlbut, deeply affected by the trust bestowed upon her by the families of the deceased, experienced empathetic grief and loss in the making of this work. *Deuil* explores the inevitable mourning and sorrow occasioned by death, but goes further, to reveal the timeless incandescence of the luminous spirit. Hurlbut's intimate handling of the ashes and fragments has produced work of great tenderness and emotional depth.

Generally regarded as an uncomfortable, if not a grim subject, death is often avoided or is referred to euphemistically in social discourse. Hurlbut wanted to rescue death from its status as either hidden or sensationalized. She wanted to restore to death its naturalness and to do so directly in a public context."

– Maia-Mari Sutnik, Curator, Photography, Art Gallery of Ontario

"Normally the devastation of death and the reflections on loss remain a deeply private subject... a closed door. It has been a privilege to be entrusted by the families to witness their loss – I was, and continue to be, deeply honoured to have this door opened up. *Deuil* has also allowed me to explore new depths and enter uncharted territories within the tradition of post-mortem photography." – Spring Hurlbut

Born in Toronto in 1952, Hurlbut's practice began in the early 1980s. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Group shows include: Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart, Germany; S.E.S.C. Fabrica da Pompeia, São Paulo; Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston; Insite 97, and San Diego/Tijuana Border Projects, amongst others. Solo exhibitions include: National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa; Oakville Galleries; Musée du Québec; Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal; The Power Plant; and the Manchester Museum in England. The artist wishes to thank the Canada Council for the Arts, Chalmers Art Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council.

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For more information, interview scheduling and print-ready images, please contact Yvonne Bambrick, T: 416-826-2964 E: yvonne@prefix.ca

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