

MOTHMEISTER

WEIRD AND WONDERFUL POST-MORTEM FAIRY TALES





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 | LANNOO

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Preface

After a breeding period of more than 25 years, Mothmeister — a two-headed shape-shifting creature — crawled out of its fragile cocoon, stretched its delicate antennas and spread its wings. Uninhibited and curious, it set out into the big world, driven by an insatiable Wanderlust.

Closely related to the moth, Mothmeister also mainly lives off dead organic material: taxidermy in all its glory of smells and colors. The *Weird and Wonderful Post-Mortem Fairy Tales* is a tribute to these deceased, stuffed animals.

The portraits in this book were mostly inspired by childhood dreams and nightmares. In addition, this book tells the story of Mothmeister's adventures on the road, the cross-pollinations with other artists, the passion for taxidermy, and the fascination with masks, and it tells you about the world Mothmeister lives in.

A look behind the mask of two impulsive minds that blindly follow their gut feeling. The result is a book in which everything is mixed together, one thing flowing into the other, with pure intuition as the connecting thread.



Assassins with excess hair and carcasses picked bare

Not only a pitch-black two-headed raven, a wolf's head trophy, and a horde of deer antlers hang above our heads in our *Salon de Curiosités*; the Sword of Damocles hangs there, too. The list of problems that can ruin our indoor zoo is a constant threat.

From squirrels that mutate to rare albinos due to a sunlight overdose, penetrating moisture that allows the famous Black Fungus to grow like crazy, and so-called fat burn. Fat that has not been scraped away properly by the taxidermist seeps through the skin and oxidizes, causing the skin to burst, which results in the shedding of fur and feathers. An all-you-can-eat buffet from which a multitude of voracious vermin nibble to their heart's desire.

But the phobia of phobias remains the all-destructive insect raid.

Old-fashioned taxidermists would stuff their animals with hay, wood shreds, jute, and newspapers. The biotope par excellence for the most cunning intruders in the insect kingdom. Moths, dust mites, and carpet beetles lay their eggs in folds or tears of the skin. Once the larva — or *woolly bears* — emerge, these terrifying body snatchers drill holes in the skin, dig tunnels in the animals, and eat away at them until there is nothing left, leaving them bare and empty.

Utter exploitation.











Candice Angelini | headpiece designer

For as long as I can remember, I have been drawn to morbid aesthetics. I found this type of beauty in the uninhibited way in which people in the 19th century dealt with death. For instance, they commissioned post-mortem portraits, or kept a lock of hair as a memento of a deceased loved one. I feel sentimentally connected with this century and try to express that nostalgia in my work.

The death masks are like an imprint of life; like wanting to maintain a substrate of an existence. I use real, old, human hair and old materials to make the masks look realistic.

Various themes reoccur in my work. The sculptured head coverings refer to my relationship with nature and my animistic beliefs. The masks and the dolls refer to my youth and more specifically express the passage between two stages: life here and now on earth and the afterlife. I believe in reincarnation and like to think of our body as a costume that we change in each life.



STARDUST

MOTEL



On the hunt for mystery guests in the Wild West

Everything is bigger in Texas.

Just as there is no end to the excessive portion of calories in the stacked burgers, the distances between cities are also pretty humongous. In this Lone Star State, you either consume gasoline until you want to puke or gorge on a 2 kg Texan Ranch Steak. The scenic view is limited to booted cowboys on the prairie, cattle, barren desert, and numerous laboring nodding donkeys that pump oil non-stop from the ground.

We, however, go down south in search of the elusive Marfa Lights and the infamous goat sucker, also known as the Chupacabra.



The Marfa Lights, a shady affair

The Big Bend County US highway 90 from San Antonio to West Texas is in the middle of nowhere, just outside the Marfa ranching community in the Chihuahuan Desert. For more than 100 years, a mystery has captivated everyone. Local believers and skeptical researchers have never been able to completely explain it. The mysterious Marfa Lights. They remain intangible and thus inexplicable.

The Marfa Lights were officially first spotted in 1883, but Native Americans saw them flying even before that time. According to eyewitnesses, the glowing orbs appear suddenly and randomly. They dancingly float above the horizon, change colors, then zoom away at breakneck speed, disappearing for good. There are even rumors of the Marfa Lights splitting in two, stalking people, and firing ultrasonic sounds.

Fanatic supporters of paranormal phenomena claim that the lights are wandering spirits of Indians, lost souls, or aliens. Skeptics claim they are reflections of car lights, but the Marfa Lights were spotted even before the car was invented.

Or is it purely an optical illusion? A fata morgana effect, caused by sharp temperature fluctuations in the air? Broken starlight? Marsh gas? Geologically generated electricity? Or simply a rarity that Mother Nature insists on keeping a secret?

Whatever it is, there has been no scientific explanation so far. Maybe we should inquire with the neighbors of the Army Airfield, a closed site. Who knows, maybe they have something to do with it... In any case, the unexplainable ghost lights are officially recognized as a tourist attraction with a Marfa Lights Viewing Area, and its own toilet facility for anyone who gets the shits from the endless waiting.



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© Lannoo Publishers, 2018
D/2018/45/15 – NUR 652/655
ISBN: 978 94 014 4905 2
www.lannoo.com

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