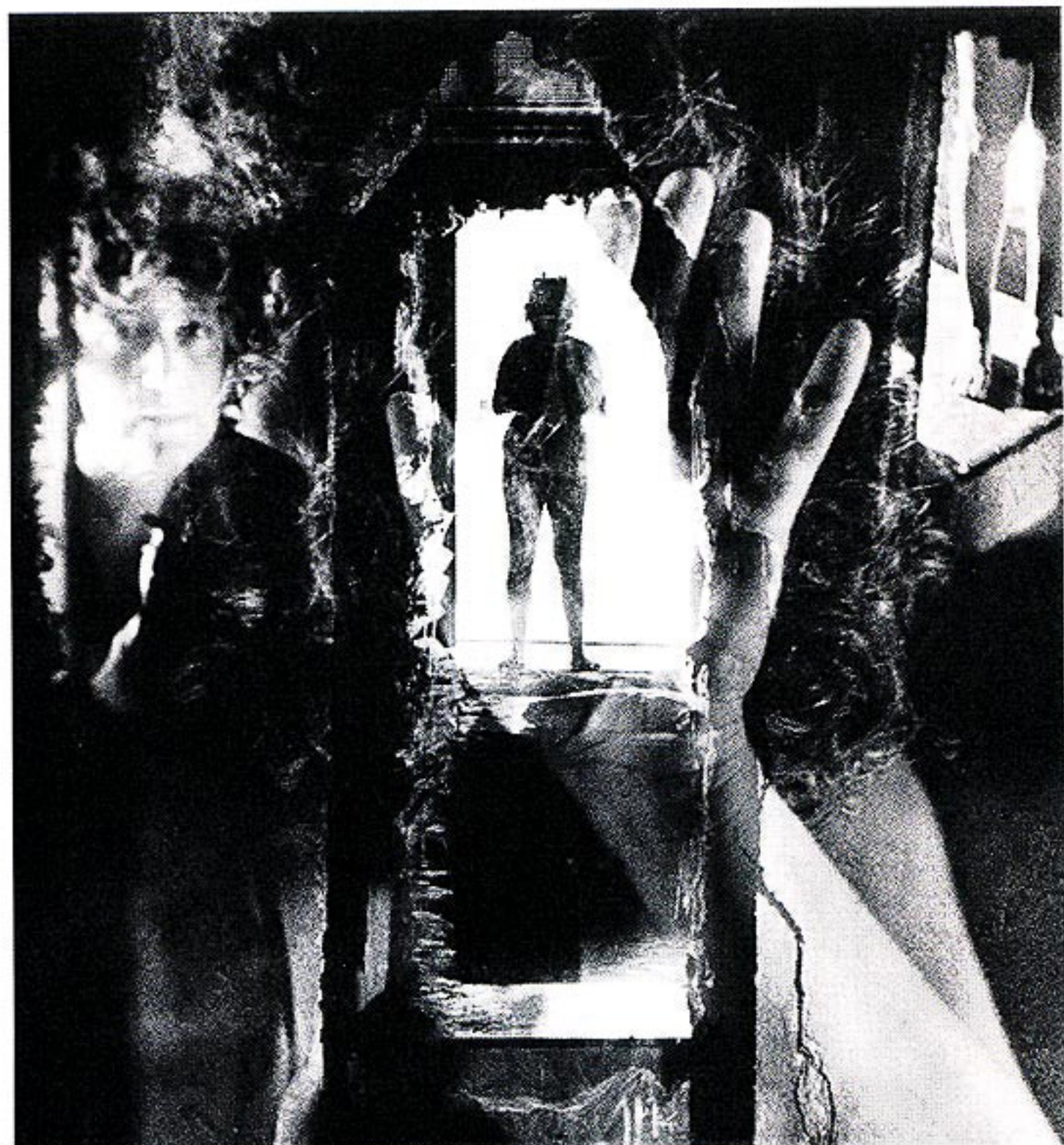


JANE FULTON

ALT



In *La Vita Nuova* (*The New Life*), Dante Alighieri's medieval poem dedicated to spiritual adoration, the Florentine writer places the persona of Love inside the protective shelter of the heart. Jane Fulton Alt achieves a similar metaphoric transcendence through her photographs, which illuminate the tender mysteries contained within the human vessel most closely associated with love.

Her series, *Matters of the Heart*, continues the Evanston, Illinois-based photographer's explorations of the life cycle as she infuses images of suffering with inner peace and renewal.

At the core of these works is a pig's heart, believed to be the same size as its human blood-

pumping counterpart. In *Sacred Heart No 1* (a self-portrait), Alt—clad in a white gown—cradles this raw but beautifully shaped mass of tissue against her chest. She has photographed her torso in order to draw attention to this disturbingly ethereal symbol of the life force being displayed outside the body. The second piece in the series offers a slight variation on this feminine "sacred heart" imagery as Alt extends one hand to display a palm streaked with blood from the heart she has been caressing. "The heart is a metaphor for life and love," says Alt. "These photographs are about all of our hearts. They reflect my interest in the mystery of the life force—the search for what is true and last-

ing. I'm trying to get to the essence of what it means to be human."

Subsequent photographs, all utilizing natural light to emphasize Alt's ties to nature, show a man and woman holding the heart as if they were embracing the world; a Christ-like figure with long hair contemplating the same small but powerful muscle; and two men, one sporting a heart tattoo on his chest, embracing the heart with a sense of quiet reverence.

Alt, a licensed clinical social worker, began exploring ideas of mortality, regeneration and spirituality nine years ago when she studied black and white photography with Dick Olderman. Through Olderman, she learned the importance of making a print "sing." After a one-on-one workshop with Debbie Fleming Caffery in Louisiana, Alt found her inspiration in the swamps and slaughter houses of the Bayou country, where life and death co-exist in a dynamic and inevitable way. She has also photographed home births, which resulted in her conceptual cocoon-like series, *Before the Butterflies*. Her extensive travels to Mexico and Southeast Asia put Alt in deeper touch with the life cycles, and she began to more actively assess death and dying.

"I recently turned 50," shares Alt, "and I decided I would devote myself to understanding the non-material world. I think life is a string of connections and separations, and is ultimately about letting go—a process that begins with the cutting of the umbilical cord. We're always letting go—of the day, of the seasons, of our children. I'm just

trying to get better at it."

Yet, within that realm of impermanence, Alt can preserve her ephemeral ideas in a photographic print. The latter part of her *Matters of the Heart* series foreshadows the next phase of her journey—the after-life expressed in angelic images of wings and feathers. —Lucia Mauro

■ EXHIBITION INFORMATION

In addition to solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally, Alt's work is featured in the following selected collections: Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Midwest Photographers Project; Centro Fotografico Alvarez Bravo, Oaxaca, Mexico; Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; Center for Photography, Woodstock, New York; and *Dancing Bear/W. M. Hunt*, New York City.

■ PRINT INFORMATION

All are selenium-toned gelatin silver, signed and editioned in pencil on verso. Image size is 10x10 and 15x15 inches, printed on 11x14 and 16x20-inch archival processed paper. Edition size is limited to 20. Prices start at \$500 and \$650, and increase as editions sell.

■ CONTACT INFORMATION

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