

# Meat



Left: *Still Life with a Tongue on Pink Background*. Right: *Still Life with Cow's Head #5*.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MONIKA MALEWSKA © 2003

I TOOK THESE PHOTOGRAPHS with a medium-format camera and printed them on 24" x 20" glossy paper. They are an attempt to reinvent the seventeenth-century Dutch theme of *vanitas* in still-life paintings. The inherent aesthetic qualities of these photographed culinary arrangements are enhanced by flowers, attractive draperies, decorative or functional objects, and various amenities such as a silver serving tray, ornamented candleholders, and an ordinary toaster.

My primary focus of representation, however, is meat. I feel that despite the grandiose history of painting meat, an image of a carcass displayed elegantly in its "raw nudity" is still surprising, and actually beautiful. The rich tonalities and textures of the meat that I photograph are manifest in a diverse collection of animals and animal parts—from octopuses, chickens, and rabbits to fragmented boar's heads,

cow's heads, and tongues. All of these anthropomorphic characters are orchestrated in macabre yet seductively beautiful compositions which, when removed from their ordinary context, are transformed into almost theatrical stage arrangements akin to Peter Greenaway's movie sets or Peter-Joel Witkin's disturbingly beautiful photographs.

The use of natural light and an objective camera lens makes my images appear unquestionably sharp in their carnal lusciousness. I am fascinated by the ironic and playful contrast between the typically repulsive subject of raw meat and traditionally beautiful elements such as flowers and colorful fruits. In combining the familiar and the shocking, I hope to bridge humor and horror and to create a realm of imaginary, fantastic, mystifying objects that blur reality and dream. ☉