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Beyond the Dark Veil: Post Mortem and Mourning Photography from The Thanatos Archive is a compilation of more than 120 extraordinary and haunting photographs and related ephemera documenting the practice of death and mourning photography in the Victorian Era and early twentieth century. Supplemented with original newspaper articles, clippings, funeral notices, memorial ephemera and more, the collection will take us on a journey through a fascinating, moving, and melancholically beautiful part of our past. The images in Beyond the Dark Veil speak to us: they speak of love, loss, lives cut short, brave final hours, shattered families, and the depths of the human spirit. Contains 194 images of hand-colored photographs, albumen prints, ambrotypes, cabinet cards, carte de viste, daguerreotypes, gelatin silver prints, opatypes, real photo postcards, stereoviews, tintypes, and supplementary articles and related ephemera. Contributors include: Adam Arenson I, Jacqueline Ann Bunge Barger, Alex Jackson, Bess Lovejoy, Marion Peck, Joanna Roche, and Joe Smoke. ABOUT THE ARCHIVE: Located in Woodinville, Washington, The Thanatos Archive houses an extensive collection of early post-mortem, memorial, and mourning photographs dating as far back as the 1840s. The online version of the archive, hosted at Thanatos.net since 2002, offers a searchable database of over 2,300 scanned images, with scans of new acquisitions being added on a regular basis. In addition to the main online archive, hundreds of additional images and material can be found in the community discussion forum, including hi-resolution enlargements, genealogical information, and more.

Beyond the Dark Veil: Post Mortem & Mourning Photography from the Thanatos Archive Details

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From Reader Review Beyond the Dark Veil: Post Mortem & Mourning Photography from the Thanatos Archive for online ebook

Devi says

Ein unfassbar schönes Buch, welches ich heute erst aus dem Briefkasten zog.

Sab Cornelius says

I didn't make a blog update for this due to it being primarily photographs with little bits of historical text blurbs between chapters. If you're interested in post-mortem or mourning photography or general mourning practices and creations of the past, this book is perfect. It's well made, gold-lined, and just plain gorgeous. It is very somber, however. Make sure you know what you're getting into before viewing.

Tasha-Lynn says

Easily a 5/5 book. I've always loved post mortem photography and think it's a beautiful way to memorialize a loved one. The children section was very difficult for me to look thru and I felt immense sadness looking at each photo. There were so many amazing photos in the book but two specifically stood out to me. Page 93 took my breath away, a small stunning little girl, blonde ringlets, perfect face, bruised and bloody. And page 132 broke my heart. Jealous wife, unfaithful (??) husband and innocent baby all in one casket.

If you can ever get your hands on a copy of this I definitely recommend it.

Alice says

Una belleza de libro para pensar sobre lo efímero de nuestras vidas.

Amy says

Beautiful and thought-provoking. Fascinating how society's views of death have changed since the Victorian era.

Hanaa says

What an absolutely beautiful book Thanatos Archive put together. The pictures are almost other-worldly, as if I'm immersed in a dream. Indeed, I couldn't put the book down not only because of how wonderfully composed the book was but also of how and why the pictures were taken.

The book is organized as follows:

Deathbed/pre-mortem

Children & Family

Adults

Crime/Murder/Tragedy

Ephemera & Mourning

Pets

There were also a few essays that explored the history of post-mortem photography in different contexts, which I found incredibly helpful considering I haven't really explored the world of post-mortem photography before I followed Thanatos Archive on Facebook sometime last year.

Beyond the Dark Veil is a beautifully melancholy photography/art book that pulls you into this dream-like world, giving you a more intimate look into some of the lives lost in the late 1800s and early 1900s (at least it did for me). I highly recommend it =)

Noran Miss Pumkin says

I have been on a wait list for 1 year for this book, and it finally came.

yes, it is a strange topic, but well presented with care and respect. I got to attend a exhibit of original photographs, at greenfield Village, next to the Henry Ford Museum-a decade ago. I realize I had seen these pictures, as a child attending flea markets, just never thought they were dead, just odd looking. Everyone, on old photos looks so stoic.

I took 1 star off due the the color, size, and type of font used, under the photographs. You can hardly read them,even with a magnifying glass.

Now, taking pictures of loved one in coffins, is becoming common place these days. What was endearing and treasured back in the day, seems disrespectful, and morbid today.

Elaina says

Really good book, I learned a lot. Also made me thank my lucky stars that I live in a time and place where medicine is decent and medical care is typically available - at the very least, we have vaccines and our kids stand a true chance of surviving to adulthood.

Sandy says

It's a lovely little book, beautifully conceived and executed. Gorgeously bound, its high quality pages contain some stunning reproductions and an informative overview of death photography, perfect for those with general interests but easily appreciated by those invested in its collection and research.

With the publishing of *Beyond The Dark Veil*, I hoped that the potential of a new book's pages would marshal forth the long awaited expertise I found lacking in Thanatos' online content. After years of guarding their images like esoteric knowledge, a mystery only unshrouded by a paid membership to their website, it

seemed reasonable to expect them to finally draw back their own curtains to prove themselves the foremost authority on death photography. Unfortunately, I found very little more than a few biographical reconstructions of the photograph's subjects imparting more to the stigmatized and misunderstood niche in photography's timeline.

The book ultimately succeeds in its physical treatment of the images as objects of beauty, and perhaps this was their sole means of mitigating the fearfulness which describes contemporary attitudes about death. But for those of us in the field who are looking to our contemporaries to light the way for scholarship, it is, like life, a beauty fleeting.

Astrid Yrigollen says

I found this book I both interesting and sad. To see dead loved ones preserved for photos shows the human condition in its entirety, vulnerable.

Most pictures do not even look like corpses but look like they are sleeping.

The text is also interesting explaining things that were common practice during the Victorian era concerning death rites.

A must read / see for any mortuary industry worker , victorian era enthusiasts etc.

Carole Tyrrell says

This book was a tie-in with a 2013 exhibition of Victorian post-mortem photography. To our eyes the Victorian obsession with death can seem very morbid when compared to today's more relaxed attitudes. The cult of mourning in the 19th century was instituted by Queen Victoria after the death of her beloved Albert and continued until her death. It finally ceased with the mass carnage of the First World War when often there wasn't a body to bring home to bury as they often lay in a foreign land . Also the mass wearing of black was deemed unpatriotic.

But we don't live with death as closely as the Victorians did. One of the more disturbing facts that I learned from this book was that a child would often not be named until it was a year old due to the high infant mortality rate. For the first year of its life it was known as 'baby'. Women were often likely to die in childbirth as a walk through a Victorian cemetery and a look at the tombstones dedicated to women will confirm. In the 19th century death was also more likely to happen at home with the deceased laid out in a coffin with the lid removed in a front room for people to come in and pay their respects. Nowadays the death process has been taken over by medicine with people almost certainly dying in a hospital or hospice, with the body then taken care of by a undertaker instead of the family and then either cremated or buried. The process of death can now seem very impersonal.

I have to admit that when my cat died suddenly I did take his body out and take a photograph of him under his favourite bush as a memento. The urge to have a final image of him was too great and the Victorian middle class obviously felt the same as the book features post mortem images of much missed pets, some with their owners. Another sobering fact from Beyond the Dark Veil was that a deathbed or post mortem photograph was often the only image that the person would have in their lifetime. The book features portraits of children on their deathbeds which some readers may find upsetting. This is then followed by children, young people, husbands and wives and sometimes entire families. The first recorded set of quintuplets who

all died after a few hours makes a heart breaking photo.

Photography was a new phenomenon to the Victorians. Here was an invention that could almost give people everlasting life. The dead and the dying lived on not only in their loved one memories but also in a physical form. It was an age in which many exciting discoveries were made such as electricity and the telegraph and photography was one of the major ones. The Victorians were also intrigued with the afterlife which is when Spiritualism and contacting the dead via seances became popular and this culminated in dubious spirit photographs. In rural US communities there were travelling photographers who went from community to community and often the deceased would have already have begun to decompose which the photographer would then have to conceal. One haunting image is of the deceased in their coffin surrounded by their family with a bored looked wagon driver watching the scene from behind. In the background is a single farmhouse. The scene's backdrop is the large and empty prairie and as the caption said it demonstrated their isolation. There are also photos of murdered families with accompanying newspaper clippings. Sometimes the photos were printed up as postcards – one image of a Mexican family holding up their dead father to the camera's gaze may have intended theirs for relatives who were unable to attend the funeral.

Most of the images in the book are anonymous although sometimes the photographer is credited. Some of them are carefully choreographed and the subject looks as if they are asleep. Several of the photographs depict a parent holding their dead child in their arms or sitting on their lap – I can't imagine how that must have felt.

There are also short essays accompanying the photos although my only quibble with the book would be the choice of font colour because it rendered the printing faint and difficult to read in the low light conditions in which I was reading.

Loren says

I kickstarted this book because I am excited by the work of the Thanatos Archive. The photos here are carefully chosen to make the people in the past seem so real, like someone you know and would mourn as intensely as these must have been. It's a truly lovely, thought-provoking collection.

I knocked one star off for the design of the book, however. While the glossy black pages do emphasize the photographs, the teeny italicized font that captions them is practically unreadable except in very strong light - - which sort of undercuts the mood of the images, if you see what I mean. Even the text of the few, short essays is miniscule. This is the first time I've read a book with a magnifying glass in hand.

The essays span from useful (Adam Arenson's summation of Death in the 19th Century and Bess Lovejoy's Mourning as Memory were terrific) to not long enough (Marion Peck's Remembering Death left too much unsaid) to not worth the effort (Joe Smoke's The Soul & Its Substitutes was too theoretical for me).

The photos, though, are the purpose of the book and very much worth its price. They range from deathbed portraits to post-mortem photos, records of the aftermath of crimes or wasting diseases, explorations of the changes the body undergoes after death and the ways technology adapted to hold them at bay. Most unfamiliar to me were the images of mourners, both staged and captured in their wild-eyed moments of grief. The dead are objects of curiosity and pity, but the living are truly heartbreaking.

