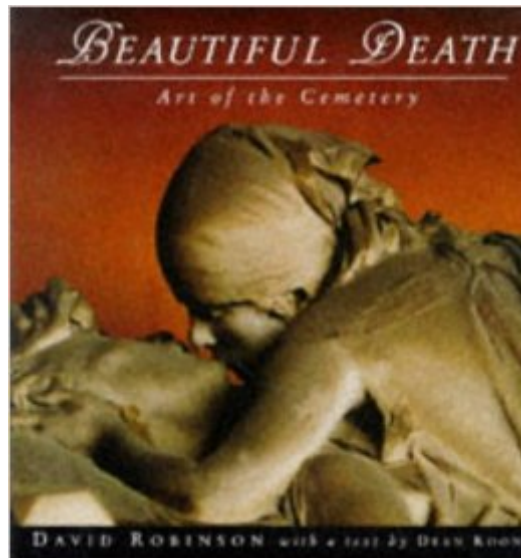


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Beautiful Death: The Art Of The Cemetery (Penguin Studio Books)



Synopsis

In the spirit of Halloween comes a compelling meditation on mortality by an evocative world-class photographer and by the bestselling master of the mystery thriller. From the history of the 19th century European municipal cemetery to the grave of an Italian couple whom "death shall not divide", Beautiful Death is a many-faceted tribute to an eternally fascinating subject. 130 color photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To appreciate this is book of art you have to be able to look past all preconceived ideas of cemeteries and dying and look further into a higher realm of spirituality. The monuments featured in this book speak of something other than death - they speak of the person that lives on and the people that are left behind to remember them. Looking through the pages I felt a connection to another world that was very much alive. When you look at each picture you can feel the emotion. The monuments whisper to you from beneath the vines and the algae that threaten to keep their secrets forever. Looking at all of this one must wonder why so many feel the need to express their grief in such a manner? When I look at the pictures, the beautiful aged monuments tell a story of their own and possess their own mortality, especially the ones that mimic our image. Seeing their bodies covered in snow or their faces that have aged like our mortal ones instill a sense of fragility among the living and the dead alike. There is no escaping the inevitable and if you could just look past the marble and granite you would see the souls that are trying to tell you their story. After I read

this book I longed to see Pere-Lachaise in Paris. I finally got the opportunity five months ago. Being there was the most surreal experience I have ever had. I found many of the monuments shown and I have to say David Robinson's photography speaks to us in a way that no spoken language can. Pere-Lachaise is over 105 acres of remarkable ethereal beauty. Cemeteries are usually thought of as the land of the dead but this book will show you how alive death can be. After you view this book you will not only see beauty, you will feel it. And if you are one of the lucky ones you will realize that cemeteries are alive and if you listen closely, you will feel what they have to say.

Cemeteries are like galleries of the dead, mausoleums and tombstones etched with the intricacy of a sculptor's chisel. *Art of the Cemetery* is a gorgeous visual journey into some of the most elegant and quaint gravesides around the world. Horror writer Dean Koontz reflects upon mortality while discussing his personal insights about death, and speaks about the sense of quiet charms that permeate cemeteries from New Orleans to tiny cemeteries hidden away in corners of the world. The pictures in the book represent lavish and sometimes forgotten memorials, and serve as ceremonials to the dead, whether the dearly departed are famous graves buried within Paris' Pere Lachaise cemetery or unmarked tombs decorated in simple yet loving care. Many of the tombs are studies in beauty, and photographer David Robinson's pictures paint an ethereal eye over many of the locations, giving testimony to cemeteries as artistic havens of extraordinary form and decadence. Koontz explores the perceptions of death and the afterlife by reflecting on the history of cemeteries, his eloquent words giving a sense of humanity to the imagery of death. The pictures show remarkably beautiful cemeteries, such as the Montmartre in Paris and the Jewish cemetery in Prague. The idea of transcendence is evoked through the pages, with images of exquisite emblems of wreaths and personal items left on graves to remember the dead. There seems to be a story behind many of the grave sites shown, which makes the book a fascinating exploration each time it's looked at. While the book does depict symbols and artwork of the silent world of the cemetery, it's not a somber portrayal that will sadden. The book's depictions of angelic statues and carved marble resting places serves to uplift the common misconception about death as a final end. To view the pictures and epitaphs from tombs of lovers and children is to visit an unknown soul's home, leaving your thoughts like flowers at their feet.

Dean Koontz did a beautiful job with this book of photographs of cemeteries, writing words that whisper softly into the ear and which match the photos perfectly. This is a lovely book.

I now know what I need to do for retirement. Photograph cemeteries. There just aren't enough picture books out there. Even as a hobby photographer, I can frame the subject and take some great pics w/o post-processing.

Capturing a work of art (in this case sculptures) using photography can be somewhat challenging. David Robinson does an excellent job of portraying the beauty of cemetery art, while making art of his own. Originally I found this book at my local library some years ago and fell in love with it. Eventually I bought it and many photos inspired me in a series of paintings I did that year.

The introduction by Dean Koontz had nothing whatever to do with this book's title or contents. Koontz deviated from a family mystery, which also had nothing to do with the book, to a 250,000 million-year-old cataclysm that wiped out the predecessors of the dinosaurs, and the later disaster that finished the dinosaurs. He then veered to the hopeful foolishness of poets who write for the ages, whose works will also be obliterated, and finally confessed to believing in an afterlife. Whew! The photos themselves are technically flawless and in some cases very beautiful, but in no way represent what I would expect to find in a book celebrating BEAUTIFUL cemetery art. One reviewer, to whom I should have paid more attention, said the book was short on sentimental symbolism. Turns out that the front and back covers are the sum total of that which I found beautiful. And they are sentimental! Living as I do near a huge and lovely Victorian cemetery filled with angels and magnificent crypts, I was disappointed in the number of photos of modest-to-odd-ball grave markers covered with loving tributes of plastic flowers and cheap objects d'art that appear to have been bought at Hobby Lobby. And this in Europe, where the populace thinks of Americans as crass, loud and childish. The actual stonework--sculpture--was masterful, but many of the pieces in Pere-Lachaise and Montmartre were so extremely bizarre and Art Deco, that they seemed out of place in a book with the word "beauty" in the title. Some of them verged on the hilarious, though, and perhaps that's a good outlook on death. ("we miss Jean-Paul, but what a card he was!") This is a book for the iconoclastic and modern thinkers--those who come to replace the classicists. And I salute them. After all, this book is really more about the love of the living for the dead, and we all express these feelings in our own ways. Celebrate individualism! (But do read Koontz's introduction on another day.)

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