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## SWAN SONGS

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (July 2007) - Photo Epicenter is proud to present Swan Songs, opening July 28th. Featuring local and international artists, this diverse collection of cross-disciplinary artwork offers a glimpse into various ends that forge new beginnings; some literal, others more poetic. At once visually arresting and conceptually accessible, Swan Songs offers a meditation on death and rebirth presented through installation, video, sound, photography, the written word, and mixed media artwork.

The gallery space at Photo Epicenter creates an intimate setting for this contemplative exhibition. With Swan Songs, curator Chris Fitzpatrick intended to present death in various conceptions as a beautiful transformative process, rather than a lamentable end point. Each project included in Swan Songs deals with transformation, adaptation, and re-composition in very different ways, using different media, informed by different ideas and subjects.

In Robert Gendler's astrophotographs, we see the remnants of stars in their final throes, creating fantastic spectacles of light, gas, and interstellar dust. Some of these forms have become nurseries, birthing new stars and planets, continuing a mysterious cycle that has been happening since the beginning of time.

In a video by Fideelia-Signe Roots, images and audio recordings of Hilda, the artist's senile Aunt, create a haunting reflection on the nature of death. The sound of the elderly woman's repetitive mantra frames the video with the strikingly casual acceptance of a person fully resigned to her fate.

Sham Saenz has captured the determination to create life even within the most abject conditions. His photograph documents two pigeon eggs within a nest built from discarded syringes, plastic spoons, and various inner-city detritus. His video, taken later, shows a hatched baby pigeon breathing its last breaths within this harsh habitat, struggling to overcome nearly impossible odds.

Aaron Sandnes literally erased his own birth certificate in a powerfully symbolic act of negation, refusal, and transcendence. He raises questions of identity and existence and re-contextualizes the document itself, which remains a birth certificate despite its having been rendered officially moot through erasure. Art historical references are also at play in Sandnes' nod to Rauschenberg's "Erased DeKooning".

Yvonne Mouser handcrafted a table and chair in white oak, veneer, and oil finish, and then charred them into blackness. With layers of wood and veneer split apart and warped, her narrative installation provides a metaphor for personal transformation and transcendence, while also recalling the role fire performs within nature as a destructive force whose affect ultimately results in renewal.

In Mark A. Horton's unique recollection of his 1992 Near Death Experience, the "afterlife" is described as a revelation and absorption, where geography and time break down and knowledge is unlimited. The account is made more profound by the fact that its author is now deceased.

Resulting in various visions of renewal, Swan Songs alleviates our preoccupying fear of death by refusing it as a singular event in time.

Swan Songs features the astrophotography of Robert Gendler (Connecticut), text by Mark A. Horton (Deceased), installation by Yvonne Mouser (San Francisco), video with sound by Fideelia-Signe Roots (Estonia), photography and video by Sham Saenz (San Francisco), and an erased birth certificate by Aaron Sandnes (Los Angeles).

The opening reception for Swan Songs will be held on July 28th from 5pm - 9pm, the exhibition will remain on display until August 24th, 2007. Photo Epicenter's gallery hours are Monday - Saturday from 10am - 10pm. For press inquiries, please contact Chris Fitzpatrick at [swansongs@chrisfitzpatrick.net](mailto:swansongs@chrisfitzpatrick.net) or contact Photo Epicenter at 415-550-0701 for general information.

Above image: Robert Gendler, "M42, The Great Nebula in Orion", Astrophotograph.