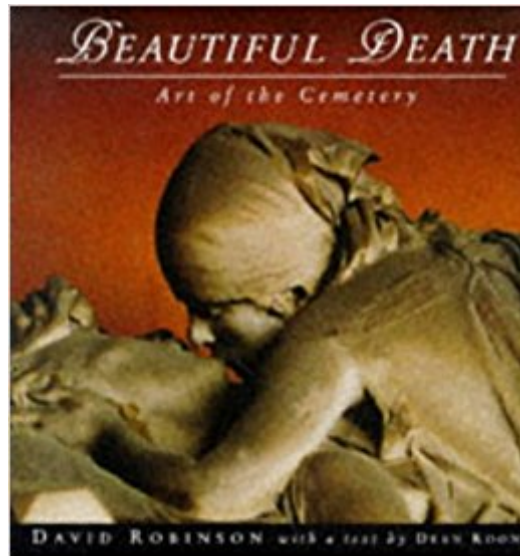




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Beautiful Death: The Art Of The Cemetery (Penguin Studio Books)



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

Hardcover: 176 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

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Customer Reviews

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.)

There was nothing morbid about this book. It does not seek cheap, necromantic thrills for immature minds by exploiting the dead. Instead, it seeks to bring comfort to the bereaved by grappling with death itself. It wrestles with issues that our often shallow and mindless society would rather ignore than engage. The photographs are absolutely beautiful and the essays are thoughtful and well written. The photographer mentions the great American photographer Clarence John Laughlin as an influence on him. Laughlin influence another favorite photographer of mine, the late, great, Sir Simon Marsden, as well. Yes, this book is about death. It is unflinching as it looks at the darkness and silence behind death. Death might mean an eternal end to everything. But most men and women have always hoped for light and hope beyond the grave. This book is about that hope. It is about the struggle of the artist to create beauty and hope in the face of death itself.

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.

Beautiful book, filled with dramatic photos of cemetery monuments. If you are fascinated with the carved beauty people have made to grace their eternal life, this book satisfies. I have always enjoyed a walk in a cemetery and so will anyone who reads this book.

beautiful photography

An enticing book that became a gift for another, who was well pleased with it.

I find the art in cemeteries amazing. They are so full of emotion. The sculptures have lovely lines. The generally black and white contrast is so pure. This is a great art.

very pleased

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