

Exhibition: The Secret Museum

OBSERVATORY • 543 UNION STREET (AT NEVINS) BROOKLYN, NY 11215 • 718-702-5937 • OBSERVATORYROOM.ORG

Opening party: Saturday April 10th, 7–10 PM

On view from April 10th–May 16th

3–6 Thursday and Friday : 12–6 Saturday and Sunday

An exhibition exploring the poetics of hidden, untouched and curious collections from around the world in photographs and artifacts, by Joanna Ebenstein, founder of Observatory and Morbid Anatomy.

Photographer and blogger Joanna Ebenstein has traveled the world seeking and documenting untouched, hidden, and curious collections, from museum store-rooms to private collections, cabinets of curiosity to dusty natural history museums, obscure medical museums to hidden archives. The exhibition “The Secret Museum” will showcase a collection of photographs from Ebenstein’s explorations—including sites in The Netherlands, Italy, France, Austria, England and the United States—which document these spaces while at the same time investigating the psychology of collecting, the visual language of taxonomies, notions of “The Specimen” and the ordered archive, and the secret life of objects and collections, with an eye towards capturing the poetry, mystery and wonder of these liminal spaces. In tandem with this exhibition, Ebenstein has organized a two week “Collectors Cabinet” at the The Coney Island Museum, which will showcase astounding objects held in private collections, including artifacts featured in her *Private Cabinet* photo series of 2009.



“Femme à Barbe, Musée Orfila. Courtesy of Paris Descartes University. Giclée Print.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joanna Ebenstein is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, blogger, and graphic designer based in Brooklyn, New York. She runs a blog called [Morbid Anatomy](#) and the related [Morbid Anatomy Library](#), and is the founding member of an art/event space called [Observatory](#). She photographs and collects artifacts, images, and texts relating to curious collections, early museums and cabinets of curiosity, collectors and collecting, medical museums, and museums of natural history. Her work has been shown internationally and has appeared in a variety of publications. Her recent solo exhibition “[Anatomical Theatre](#)” explores the art and culture of medical museums around the world through photographs of their artifacts. She also acted a curatorial advisor and designer for the London based Wellcome Collection’s recent “[Exquisite Bodies: or the Curious and Grotesque History of the Anatomical Models](#)” exhibition. You can find out more at [www.astropop.com](#).

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Observatory is an art and events space in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. Run by a group of seven artists and bloggers, the space seeks to present programming inspired by the 18th century notion of “rational amusement” and is especially interested in topics residing at the interstices of art and science, history and curiosity, magic and nature. The space hosts screenings, lectures, classes, and exhibitions, and is part of the Proteus Gowanus art complex. It is located at 543 Union Street (at Nevins), and is accessed through Proteus Gowanus Gallery’s entrance. Observatory’s gallery hours are 3–6pm on Thursdays and Fridays; and 12–6pm on Saturdays and Sundays. You can find out more at [observatoryroom.org](#).

ASSOCIATED LECTURES AND EVENTS (See [observatoryroom.org/2010/03/28/secretmuseum](#) for details)

Congress for Curious People at the Coney Island Museum: a 2-day symposium exploring the idea of collecting curiosities in the 21st century as well as the politics, history, and changing methodology of collecting and collections

The Saddest Object in the World: An Illustrated Meditation by Evan Michelson, Obscura Antiques and Oddities

A Rogue’s Approach to Stuffing It: Taxidermy in Contemporary Pop, Art

and Sub-Cultures An illustrated lecture by Robert Marbury, Rogue Taxidermist

A Brief History of Automata: An Illustrated Lecture and Demonstration by Mike Zohn, Obscura Antiques and Oddities

A History of Taxidermy: Art, Science and Bad Taste: An Illustrated Presentation by Dr. Pat Morris, University of London

Charles Wilson Peale and the Birth of the American Museum: An Illustrated

Presentation by Samuel Strong Dunlap, PhD, Descendant of Charles Wilson Peale

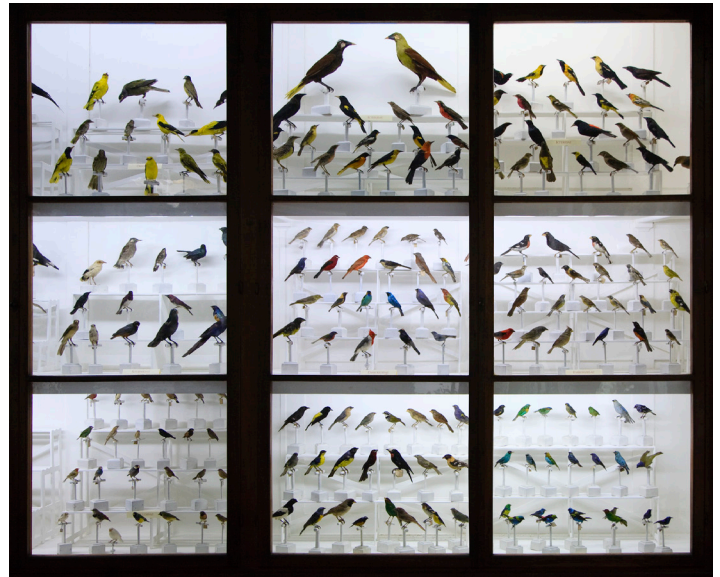
Museums, Monsters and the Moral Imagination: An Illustrated lecture with Professor Stephen Asma, author of *Stuffed Animals and Pickled Heads*

Experimenting with Death: An Introduction to Terror Management Theory: An Illustrated Lecture by Michael Johns, Former Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Wyoming

Exhibition: The Secret Museum

OBSERVATORY • 543 UNION STREET (AT NEVINS) BROOKLYN, NY 11215 • 718-702-5937 • OBSERVATORYROOM.ORG

SELECTION OF WORKS



TOP TO BOTTOM: Column 1: Museum backroom, Netherlands; Tim Knox and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Collection, London.; Museum backroom, Museum of Rouen, France; Column 2: Floor Display; "La Specola" (Museo di Storia Naturale); Teylers Museum, Haarlem, Netherlands; Parlor, Tim Knox and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan Collection, London. All images Giclée Prints.