

**FOR
IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



NICOLA COSTANTINO
HUMAN FURRIER
SEPT. 7 - OCT. 7, 2000

SoHo window shoppers strolling by 76 Grand Street will pass a high fashion boutique featuring stylishly elegant dresses and accessories. A quick glance would reveal nothing out of the ordinary in a neighborhood filled with similar stores. Those who step inside to examine the merchandise, however, will receive an unexpected surprise. All products in the boutique of Nicola Costantino, *Human Furrier*, are skillfully made from synthetic human skin.

An intricate frieze embedded into the wall draws the viewer into the main gallery in the rear. At first glance, the frieze is reminiscent of a battle scene from the pediment of a Greek temple, with horses tumbling on top of each other. As is the case with the *Human Furrier* boutique, however, one senses a more disturbing aspect to the work. The intertwined animal bodies in the frieze are, in fact, casts of the fetuses of colts and calves.

The friezes surround the room in conduit-like forms. They are like trenches filled with bodies uncovered in an archaeological excavation. There is a reference to the excavations in Pompeii, but more sharply to the political climate in the artist's native Argentina during the period of repression in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The uncovering of mass graves and the opening of a pipe stuffed with dead bodies remain fresh in the artist's memory.

On the floor of the main gallery are cast metal balls made from the bodies of pigs and cows pushed into a spherical shape. The artist is interested in the contrast between the imperfect shapes of animal bodies and the round perfection of the sphere. The artist plays with the abstraction of packaged meat in the supermarket in contrast to the vitality of a live body. The work abstracts the animal form to artistic consumption, paralleling the way that portion controlled packages of meat abstract the slaughtered animal.

Meat is the national symbol of Argentina. It is appropriate, though still somewhat startling, that the bodies of pigs, cows and horses, in addition to humans, become the subject for the artist. With the casts of grown animals, animal fetuses, and human orifices, Costantino creates a powerful commentary on the relationship between human and animal life, and the relationship between the physical body and the structure of society.

The artist makes nearly every aspect of the work herself, from the casting of intimate body parts to the sewing of the dresses. The "merchandise" in the boutique is labored over by hand with traditional techniques used by skilled furriers. The works with animals begin on the farm where the artist works with veterinarians to obtain the fetuses that will be cast. No animals are slaughtered for the work. The casts are made from animals that have already died.

Nicola Costantino was born and raised in Rosario, Argentina and lived there until recently, when she moved to Buenos Aires. In Rosario, isolated from mainstream contemporary art, the artist developed her own vocabulary, working with materials and issues from the daily life of Argentina. Costantino began to achieve international recognition with her contributions to the recent Sao Paulo and Liverpool Biennials. This is her first exhibition in New York.

GALLERY HOURS 12 – 6, TUESDAY – SATURDAY

OFFICE HOURS 10 – 6, MONDAY - SATURDAY

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT AMALIA DAYAN AT 343-7300