

# The Museum of Modern Art

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HELEN CHADWICK: *BAD BLOOMS*

April 13 - July 11, 1995

The first exhibition in the United States of the most recent photographic series by British artist Helen Chadwick (b. 1953) opens at The Museum of Modern Art on April 13, 1995. Organized by Peter Galassi, Chief Curator, Department of Photography, **HELEN CHADWICK: *BAD BLOOMS*** presents thirteen large, round-format color photographs of flowers, made from 1992 to 1994. The exhibition, which remains on view through July 11, is made possible in part by grants from Peter and Eileen Norton/Peter Norton Family Foundation and The British Council.

Encircled by steel frames enameled in a range of colors, Chadwick's lush photographs describe carefully arranged, symmetrical designs of flowers in viscous liquids -- for example, dandelions in hair gel, narcissi in bath bubbles, bluebells in oil and milk, orchids in window cleaner, and tulips and a plum in engine oil. As in all of Chadwick's work, the ***BAD BLOOMS*** series fuses opposites: natural and artificial, vulgar and beautiful, seductive and repulsive.

Over the past two decades many artists have concocted their photographic subjects in the studio rather than searching for them in the world at large. Chadwick is an innovator among those who have pursued this strategy, and both her choice of subjects and the ways she has deployed them are distinctive.

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Raw meat, rotting vegetables, urine, animal furs, and chocolate are among the materials that have figured in her photography and sculpture.

"Helen Chadwick is a sensualist who is drawn to things that make us queasy," remarks Mr. Galassi. "A good deal of contemporary art aims to poke at taboos, or to challenge entrenched habits of thought and feeling, or to explore the ways we understand and remake the natural world. The remarkable achievement of Chadwick's new body of work is the inventiveness with which she has embodied her concerns in compelling pictures."

Born in London, Helen Chadwick studied at Brighton Polytechnic and the Chelsea School of Art. Her work came to prominence with *Of Mutability* (1986-87), a large installation involving sculpture and photography, which is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Although Chadwick's photography and sculpture have been widely exhibited in Europe, her work is less well known in this country. "Effluvia," an exhibition of Chadwick's work from 1988 through 1994, toured Essen, Barcelona, and London last year, and she was one of three British artists featured in the 1994 Bienal de São Paulo. The artist, who lives and works in London, lectures at the Royal College of Art and the Chelsea School of Art.

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