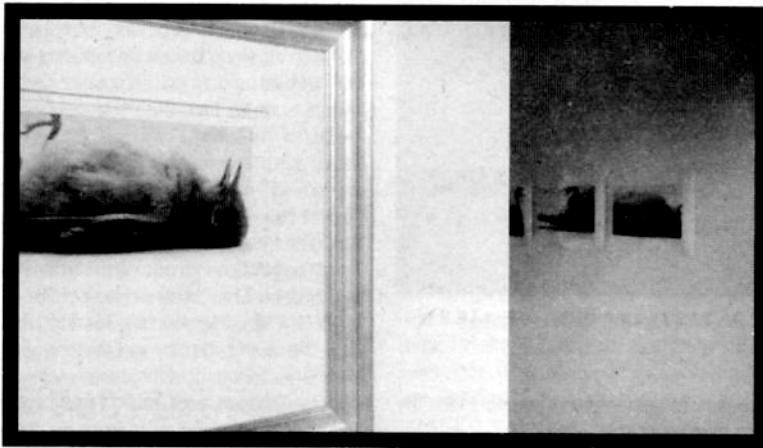


# ARTS ( )

## MAGNIFICENT CORPSES

CONNECTING A DEAD BIRD WITH THE SEARCH  
FOR SAINTS' BODY PARTS

**visual arts** BY DALE SMITH



DEAD BIRD, BY VERA GREENWOOD

photo Christina Riley

It takes a unique eye to examine the simultaneous veneration and fear of the dead, but Vera Greenwood

seems to take this in stride with her latest exhibit, titled *Magnificent Corpses*.

In 2004, a yellow-bellied flycatcher flew into Greenwood's living room window, killing itself. Greenwood immediately photographed the bird's corpse, producing over 114 images, 49 of which are included in *Magnificent Corpses*.

Later, after coming across an interesting quote from Anneli Rufus' *Magnificent Corpses: Searching Through Europe for St. Peter's Head, St. Chiara's Heart, St. Stephen's Hand, and Other Saints' Relics*, Greenwood took the book out from the Ottawa Public Library. She found that a previous borrower had marked up the book with notes, and as Greenwood grew fascinated with the marginalia, she took photos of each of the marked-up pages and arranged them.

"The pencilled-in running commentary generates a portrait of a woman, who while demonstrating an intense religious devotion simultaneously reveals rather an ironic abhorrence for the author," Greenwood says in her artist statement.

Pairing the marginalia about the quest for the body parts of dead saints along with the photographs of the dead bird creates an interesting juxtaposition of image and text, and provides a fascinating way of looking at the themes of dominant and counter-narratives.

*Magnificent Corpses* runs until December 20 at the Patrick Mikhail Gallery (2401 Bank Street). Vera Greenwood will be holding an artist's talk at the gallery on Sunday, December 3, at 3 p.m.

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