

CLIFTON BENEVENTO

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ARTFORUM

Martin Soto Climent

CLIFTON BENEVENTO 515 Broadway October 24–November 27



View of “Following the Whisper of My Shadow,” 2010.

Using only found objects, Martin Soto Climent creates artistic interventions with feminine accessories, whose playful transformation he initiates and then suspends in tableaux that fill his first solo exhibition at Clifton Benevento. Inspired by the myths of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar and the Dance of the Seven Veils, the logic of the striptease governs the installation *Luminous Flux* (all works 2010). Seven arrangements of items on a long wooden table each allude to a different article of clothing removed, including a hat cradling an egg and a pair of high heels wrapped in pantyhose. The piece culminates in a wall-projected black-and-white video showing a dancer’s suggestive shadows. With a palette of nude, pinks, and blacks, and with a fair amount of leather, Soto Climent pulls panties taut over an oversize goblet and entwines a white boot in a black heel. Part cosmology and part camp, these erotically charged objects stand in for an absent female body, or for the artist himself.

Soto Climent whimsically places *Dorotea*, ballet shoes also adorned with feathers, on a window ledge, and *Delicious Poison*, a wine bottle spewing a leather glove, at the foot of a column. In *(The sweeping caress of) The Milky Way*, a broom handle topped with a mop, wiglike, is propped up in a corner opposite a bucket brimming with milk—both seemingly primed for a Surrealist encounter. Teetering between the sensual and the maternal, these objects encompass the multiple roles attributed to Ishtar as a goddess of fertility, love, sex, and war.

Intimate Ballet, a grid of nine photographs taken from a book about dancers in the 1920s, relates the female body to the materiality of the page. By taking new photographs while turning the book’s pages, the artist has elongated and warped the figures so that their bodies merge into the folds of the book. Like the projection’s perpetual but unrealized striptease, these women’s bodies remain poised on the verge of a transformation that is forever postponed.

— Lori Cole, November 2010