

## ARTFORUM

### Critics' Pick: Eleanor Antin, by Travis Diehl (May 27, 2014)

Occluding the 1980s and '90s in favor of the '70s and the first decade of the 2000s, "Passengers" offers a disorienting yet thorough sample of several of Eleanor Antin's more acerbic bodies of work—not properly a retrospective, but a welcome dose of West Coast wit nonetheless. Selections from "Dance of Death," 1974-75, for example—a group of pastel drawings depicting a skeleton chasing and stomping on women and then smoking with soldiers—are a rare treat, but they might also serve to attenuate this unwieldy show into neat themes: sex and death, wealth and war.



Eleanor Antin, *Plaisir d'Amour (after Couture)*, from *Helen's Odyssey*, 2007 © Eleanor Antin, courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Art

But maybe it is that simple. Antin figures culture down to acts, to fictions, to myths—which are then redeployed against our more stifling cultural constructs. In the series "Helen's Odyssey," 2007, two pieces of which appear in "Passengers," beautiful, chiseled bodies decorate marble steps or battlefields, bleached flat as ads, superficially glorious, observed in one version (represented here in the production doc *Classical Frieze*, 2008) by two Orange County housewives: beauty faded before it began.

LA has always rhymed with Pompeii: If Antin's recent work pushes production values, she has always delved into the codes of decadence. Her five-plus decades of output, like history itself, move in giant, unhinged loops, still ringing with the same tragedies. Antin's best-known work gets pride of place here: a full set of *100 Boots*, 1971–73, digitally reprinted in 2005. With its weird metaphor of absent boys or dead soldiers taking figurative ground from Southern California to Manhattan—from hilltops to supermarkets—this classically pacifist photo work arcs from the wake of one disastrous war to the next.