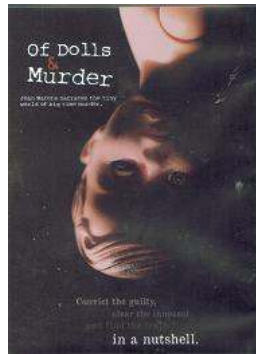


2 days ago

Of Dolls and Murder



[\[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071BY2R8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071BY2R8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0071BY2R8&linkCode=as2&tag=dvdreviewsand-20%22%3EOp%20Dolls%20And%20Murder%3C/a%3E%3Cimg%20src=%22http://www.assoc-amazon.com/e/ir?t=dvdreviewsand-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B0071BY2R8%22%20width=%221%22%20height=%221%22%20border=%220%22%20alt=%22%22%20style=%22border:none%20!important;%20margin:0px%20!important)

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These are the times of CSI, the crimes series that has been ruling TV for some time, with its flashy and colorful style of making science – crime investigation, in this case – look so easy. Still in my mind is the exciting “Quincy,” a favorite of mine, which was kind of a precursor to CSI during the seventies, but without the technology and fantastic photography. However, science is not as easy and fast as these shows portray. The exquisite “Of Dolls and Murder” provides a fascinating, highly educational and detailed look on how forensic and criminal science really works. This is the real deal.

The documentary centers on the so-called “Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death,” made by the late Frances Glessner Lee, the first female member of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. These “nutshells” are miniature doll-house-like scenarios of famous murders of the time. They are quite detailed and, if observed carefully, can give you clues about the murders and how to solve them. Each one is built by one inch to one foot in scale. In fact, part of the film takes place at the State of Maryland’s Forensic Medicine Center, where we meet Dave Fowler (Chief Medical Examiner) teaching detectives about forensic science. Also in hand was Jerry Dziecichowicz, who teaches about the nutshell models to detectives. Some of the models mentioned and detailed in the program are: the Three Room Dwelling (1937), Dark Bathroom (1896), Kitchen (1944), Blue Bedroom (1943), Parsonage Parlor (1946), Attic (1946), and more. In total, Glessner made 20 nutshell models, of which 18 are in Maryland, one is missing, and one was destroyed.

The rest of “Of Dolls and Murder” features interviews with an assortment of people, including Nareem Shankar, one of the ex-producers of CSI, who explains about the fact and fiction between his show and the real world. Of particular interest, was taking a walk on the famous “Body Farm,” in which many cadavers are kept exposed to open air at various steps of decomposition. They are used to mimic crime cases, and it is run by the University of Tennessee’s Forensic Anthropology Department, which also houses the Bill Bass skeleton collection. We are told that “forensics is not cool – is science,” referring to the students that go to forensic school thinking that is just like CSI, not realizing that real life is not like that.

Helmed by Susan Marks, “Of Dolls and Murder” is a remarkable documentary for any student of crime and related fields, as well as those hard-core fans of CSI and similar TV shows or movies. For that matter, it is a great movie for everybody. Very instructive, indeed. The DVD features interviews with film director John Waters, segments on the missing nutshells and Frances Glessner Lee, filmmakers’ commentaries, and more. (USA, 2012, color, 70 min plus additional materials). Reviewed on October 9, 2012. **MVD Visual**

To purchase DVD, click here or on image above. [\[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071BY2R8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0071BY2R8&linkCode=as2&tag=dvdreviewsand-20%22%3EOp%20Dolls%20And%20Murder%3C/a%3E%3Cimg%20src=%22http://www.assoc-amazon.com/e/ir?t=dvdreviewsand-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B0071BY2R8%22\]](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071BY2R8/ref=as_li_tf_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0071BY2R8&linkCode=as2&tag=dvdreviewsand-20%22%3EOp%20Dolls%20And%20Murder%3C/a%3E%3Cimg%20src=%22http://www.assoc-amazon.com/e/ir?t=dvdreviewsand-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B0071BY2R8%22)

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Labels: [Kitchen \(1944\)](#), [Attic \(1946\)](#), [Blue Bedroom \(1943\)](#), [Three Room Dwelling \(1937\)](#), [Dark Bathroom \(1896\)](#), [Parsonage Parlor \(1946\)](#)

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