EDITING LIFE – AN INTERVIEW WITH ARTIST EWA DOROSZENKO

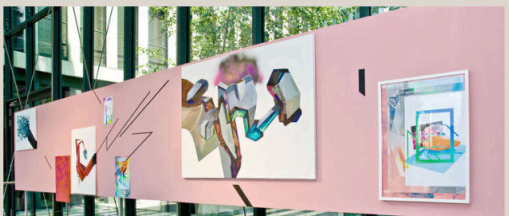
Visual artist Ewa Doroszenko crosses borders between mediums, in a type of investigative aesthetics – producing cerebral statements, arched over carefully constructed scenarios of beauty and its disruptions. Seeking to question the fragile state of a sustainable process of the production of self-image in contemporary contexts, Doroszenko's works employ the very mediums she asks us to be wary of: digital manipulation and collage. Her interest in glitches and defects of digital images parallels her curiosity for imperfection and the possibilities of error in a heavily curated visual realm. Inspired by the liquidity of the digital world, Doroszenko produces surreal works that refer to built-in flaws of technology and the inherent fallacies of notions of contemporary beauty.

We spoke with Ewa on her choices of mediums and conceptual scope, with a stop on her series *Body Editor*, where traditional and digital techniques clash to produce an original visual language.

Ewa Doroszenko

Elena Stanciu: Tell us a bit about yourself as an artist – what inspires you? When did you start making art?

Ewa Doroszenko: I am a visual artist based in Warsaw, Poland. I earned a Doctor of Fine Arts degree from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun. I have been drawing and photographing since my early childhood. I never doubted that I wanted to be an artist; my life was inevitably drawn in this direction. I studied painting, which soon became a very important medium in my projects. My main interests also focus on installation, and photography – in particular, the intersection area between these practices.



Future sex based on Parade amoureuse by Francis Picabia

ES: Your project *Body Editor* is very interesting and expressive of a sentiment a lot of us share today – distrust and criticism towards digital imagery. How did you navigate towards this problematic?

ED: The *Body Editor* series is my very private reflection on the notion of contemporary beauty, women's identity, virtual alter-ego, and self-improvement. The images are inspired by the failures and bugs in beauty apps, where unnatural bodies distort. Sophisticated editing tools, popular beauty apps, computer games change our perception of what true beauty is. The key to my work was the experimentation process, which shows our obsession with digital facades. I do not criticize the contemporary obsession with digital beauty, I simply try to describe this phenomenon using my own visual alphabet – very intense, grotesque and surreal.

From the series *Body Editor* by Ewa Doroszenko.

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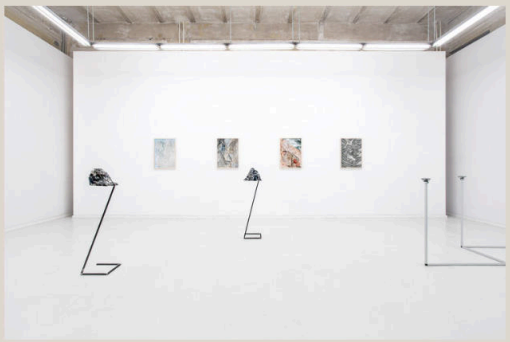
ES: Do you consider your art to be experimental? In what way?

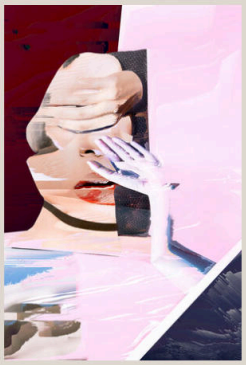
ED: Certainly, my art is often experimental. This experiment is visible in the clash of traditional and digital techniques, mixing them with each other and creating completely new, original techniques. My work is in constant evolution, without a specific shape, because it is a hybrid not only in the visual sphere but above all in the media. I like to challenge myself by experimenting with different techniques and technological innovations to achieve the best aesthetic and conceptual translation of my ideas.



Installation view: *Impossible Territory*, 2019.

ES: What can you tell us about the use of materials and color in *Body Editor*?

ED: I used photography as a starting point, alongside digital tools to create an expressive, vivid project full of saturated colors. I employed many methods of creating images: preparing three-dimensional collages constructed from stock images and my own portraits, photographing the scenes, printing in large sizes, physically manipulating prints, and digitally editing selected photos. In the final work, I tried to leave visible traces of digital processing, partly revealing my working methods in order to provoke discussion about contemporary photography.



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ES: What's the thing/idea/feeling you hope viewers take away from this series?

ED: I am open to different interpretations of the project, but most of all I would like to encourage the viewer to question the contemporary egocentric culture. In the age of social media, where selfhood is effaced by self-promotion, and the glorification of digital beauty undermines the truthfulness of real self-expression, women very often become dissatisfied with what they see in the mirror. Modern technology provides women with tools that allow them to quickly create dream digital image of themselves. Digitally edited images can serve as aspirational fantasies and occasionally they even can have a positive impact – when they are just effects of joyful entertainment. But this seemingly funny game with beauty apps can also be dangerous.

Installation view: *The same horizon repeated at every moment of the walk*, 2014.

ES: How do you normally balance digital work and analog creative methods in your work? Which one do you feel gives you more freedom?

ED: My explorations are not limited by any medium, and in fact, I experiment with various methods in the attempt to portray my thoughts. When I am thinking about creating new work, I try to create structures with many layers of meaning. The material choices are calculated and meant to bring on the idea. My work seems to progress in a very linear way, it is very process-oriented. I begin with traditional media, and then start to incorporate technology. I found in digital media the best tool to go forward, and I started to make works that could mix together everything that had previously been separated. I use many techniques and I am constantly seeking new ones to learn.

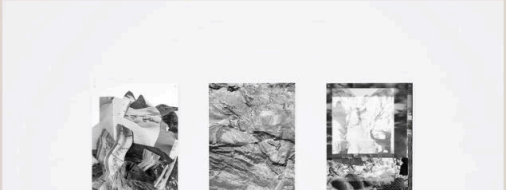
Installation view: series of oil and acrylic paintings, an on-going project.

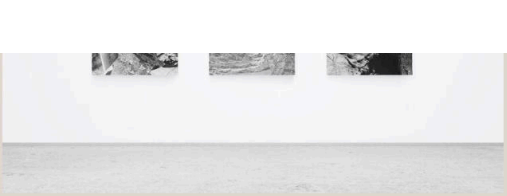
ES: You use collage in your artworks – what's the biggest plus of this method? What's the shortcoming?

ED: My works are digitally processed photographs of three-dimensional collages. In fact, they are very classic photographic works, which only had their beginning in the collage. But I agree that the collage technique is very interesting and still gives a lot of possibilities. The interdisciplinary approach to the image and using collage-like methods are very common in the constantly transforming culture. Just like the sampling in music. Contemporary art is generally experimenting with the past and the digital present, making use of old and new tools, responding to the mass-circulation and consumption of images. It seems to me that the college still has innovative potential by employing juxtaposition and disruption to create important and powerful artworks.

ES: Our contemporary experience of technology is a lot of taking "the good with the evil" – it opens possibilities while limiting and affecting our lives in very radical ways. What's your perspective (informed by your artistic practice so far) on curating our lives in harmony with/ against technology? Can we ever change it if we don't immerse ourselves in it?

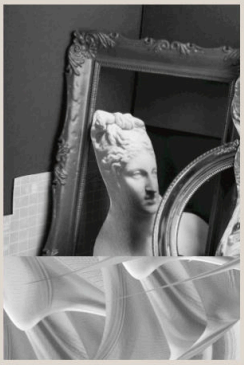
ED: I am very excited to follow modern technological discoveries, but at the same time, I am terrified at how they can be used. I'm not against technology, because its creations are only tools that can be used in thousands of ways. In my work, I use digital techniques to talk about contemporary culture, while at the same time searching for a new definition of beauty. My artistic research addresses questions of future technology in tune with digital aesthetics and the traditional fine arts. I am interested in the idea of imperfection and the allowance of error, which makes me think about the fact that modern technologies have built-in flaws. I try to examine ways of deconstructing the digital pieces, I like the aesthetic of glitches, textures, damaged photographs and defects in the virtual world.





Impossible Territory, 2019.

As many artists nowadays, I am inspired by the liquid culture of the Web. Consequently, as reality is increasingly questioned by the virtual world and technologies evolve so rapidly, art exhibitions around the world become more engaging and interactive, offering completely new experiences. These new approaches and tools will certainly create completely new opportunities in art.



The Promise of Sublime Words.

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ES: Any upcoming projects? Where can we follow you?

ED: I am still working on a photographic project *The Promise of Sublime Words* that I started during my Ph.D. studies. The series draws on my private fascination with ancient sculptures and is a reflection on the use of photographic material in the post-internet era. I intend to continue my work on the cycle.

You can find me on Instagram, too: https://instagram.com/ewadoroszenko

Words: Elens Stanciu