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Gallery Exhibition Schedule

ELENA DORFMAN: *Still Lovers and Transmutations*

April 11–May 10, 2019

Modernism is pleased to present its fifth one-person exhibition of works by California visual artist Elena Dorfman. The current show will focus on her latest body of work, “Transmutations,” (2017-2018) as well as revisit her seminal “Still Lovers” (2000-2004) series, viewing it from a present-day perspective, almost two decades after its inception.

In “Transmutations,” meticulous, process-oriented, large-scale photography and the time-honored act of tapestry weaving inherently share a sense of history and materiality while creating a unique arena for contemplation.

Each photographic work within “Transmutations” reveals a range of nuanced mark-making; both subtly and uniquely embedded within the digital process or placed atop specific surfaces **by hand**. Dorfman explains, “ I incorporate native elements and minerals such as gold, silver, copper, nickel, pigments and salt into my works. A vein of nickel coursing through a mountain ravine in my two-dimensional picture becomes a place for reflection, symbolic for intellectual rendering and generative thought.



Transmutation 7 (Gold Dome), 2017

Further linking the past with the present, Dorfman combines her distinctive layered approach toward photography with the complicated process of tapestry weaving. Densely woven with metallic threads, the language of the Jacquard loom, invented in 1804, is now capable of digital translation. Dorfman offers, “As I continue to investigate the role of materiality on my practice, the centerpiece of “Transmutations” is a set of Jacquard tapestries, three-dimensional objects that shift to the play of shadow and light. The decision to work in tapestry is a natural progression from earlier series, where hundreds of images were digitally stitched together to create the illusion of depth within a unified vista.

Through a highly personal exploration of place, Elena Dorfman illuminates the landscape while alluding to the human desire to find connection within Nature. Allowing for an expanded exploration between the natural and the artificial; real and fabricated, Dorfman’s distinct series of photographic and textile works within “Transmutations” convey a commitment to reflect beauty found and to acknowledge, as well, the presence of conflicting perspectives of an ever-changing world.

As “Transmutations” explores the human need to find connection with nature, “Still Lovers,”—currently featured at the Fondazione Prada in Milan in the exhibition *SURROGATI. UN AMORE IDEALE*—seeks to examine the enduring subject of sexual desire, romantic love, and the human yearning to find the ideal partner—one made from flesh and blood or a silicone facsimile.

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CJ 3, 2002

“Still Lovers” takes us into the world of sex dolls, where men (and some women) project their sexual and romantic lust and longing—and true love, perhaps—onto customized, life-size, anatomically correct female dolls. These lifelike surrogates inhabit the images as desired, fetishized, and idealized beings, “living” as such with their flesh and blood partners, and sometimes with their immediate families as well. The “still lovers” in Dorfman’s project are, at times, part of a larger family unit that involves both husband and “organic” wife, as well as children. By showing these vignettes of traditional domesticity, love, and/or eroticism, Dorfman’s representations take on an unexpected poignancy. Dorfman has gained the trust of the men who cohabit with “Rebecca,” “Sidore,” “Azra,” “Lily,” “Ginger”...—dolls with remarkable anatomical virtues that are surely a principal reason for their existence.

And yet, somewhat disconcertingly, the dolls are also shown seated for a board game or at the breakfast table, or in front

of a television, keeping a human companion company on the lawn as he works, and in a church pew, head bowed. It seems that the very presence of these “still lovers” are, in their fashion, remarkably affirming.

Dorfman’s photographs from “Still Lovers” present a relatable and emotional tableau from which to view this uncommon lifestyle. The issues depicted were prescient when this series debuted and in myriad ways today, a few of which include advances in Artificial Intelligence and digital and medical technologies that allow for the nearly complete alteration of the body. People and robots regularly interact in the workplace and on film and TV. Shifting societal and cultural norms continue to disrupt established sexual boundaries, an example of which was the recent New York Times reported nuptials between an man and his hologram. The photographs from “Still Lovers” continue to pose questions rather than try to provide the answers.

Entering the “uncanny valley” of her work, we question the essential and elemental nature not only of what we are seeing—“can we believe our eyes?”—but also of love, intimacy, and life itself.

Elena Dorfman’s previous series include: *Sublime: the L.A. River* (2016), *Empire Falling* (Damiani, 2013), *The Pleasure Park* (2009), *Fandomania: Characters & Cosplay* (Aperture, 2007), *Still Lovers* (Channel, 2005). Her work, which has been exhibited internationally, is in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Denver Art Museum, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, The Cincinnati Art Museum, The Palm Springs Art Museum, and the Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University.

Modernism is pleased to invite the public to attend an opening reception on **Thursday, April 11th**, from 5:30-8PM.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL: 415/541-0461 / FAX: 415/541-0425 / INFO@MODERNISMINC.COM

HI-RES IMAGES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.