

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION "SURROGATI. UN AMORE IDEALE"
FROM 21 FEBRUARY 2019 AT OSSERVATORIO IN MILAN

Milan, 11 January 2019 – Fondazione Prada presents "Surrogati. Un amore ideale" (Surrogate. A Love Ideal), an exhibition curated by Melissa Harris, from 21 February to 22 July 2019 at the Osservatorio venue in Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, Milan. The press preview will take place on 20 February from 10 am to 1 pm.

Comprising a selection of 42 photographic works by Jamie Diamond (Brooklyn, USA, 1983) and Elena Dorfman (Boston, USA, 1965), the project explores the notions of familiar, romantic and sexual love. Both artists focus on a specific and unconventional aspect of this universal theme: the emotional link between a man or a woman and a synthetic representation of a human. As explained by Melissa Harris, "together, Diamond's and Dorfman's work presented in 'Surrogati' vividly and nonjudgmentally documents the interactions of humans with their lifelike, inanimate companions."

In her series *Forever Mothers* (2012-2018) and *Nine Months of Reborning* (2014), Jamie Diamond portrayed the life of an outsider art making community called the Reborners, a group of self-taught female artists who hand-make, collect and interact with hyper-realistic dolls that fulfill a desire for motherhood. As stated by Diamond, "working with the community allowed me to explore the grey area between reality and artifice where relationships are constructed with inanimate objects, between human and doll, artist and artwork, uncanny and real." In her other exhibited project titled *I promise to be a good mother* (2007-2012), Diamond played the role of a perfect mother, dressing up in her own mother's clothes and interacting with Annabelle, a reborn doll. The project was inspired by and named after a diary she kept as a girl. Starting as a restaging of specific memories from her childhood in a variety of locations, the project evolved into an exploration of the complexity of social stereotypes and cultural conventions that surround and shape the relationship between mother and child and contribute to create its idealized or artistic representation.

Still Lovers (2001-04), a series of photographs that brought Elena Dorfman international acclaim, focuses on the domestic lives of men and women who devote themselves to lifesize, anatomically realistic sex dolls. Her photographs explore the emotional ties between humans and perfectly formed synthetic women, forcing us to evaluate our own notions of love and the value of an object that has the power to replace a human being. The artist's interest was not to exploit the deviancy of these sexual surrogates, but rather to reveal the fascinating world of intimacy between flesh and silicone. As underlined by the artist, "this body of work is my witness to an unsettling yet moving way of life. My ambition is never to judge, but to allow the inhabitants of this secret world to share their daily lives with me. In the familiar surroundings of their homes, I watch the scenes of domestic life unfold."

Both photographers portrayed these lifelike surrogates as desired, fetishized, and idealized beings, “living” as such with their flesh and blood mothers and partners, and sometimes with their immediate families as well. As stated by Melissa Harris, “by showing these vignettes of traditional domesticity, love, and/or eroticism, Dorfman’s and Diamond’s representations take on an unexpected poignancy.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by an illustrated publication in the Quaderni series, published by Fondazione Prada, consisting of an essay by Melissa Harris and a conversation between the curator, the artists and some of the subjects of their photographs.

Press contacts

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Biographical notes

Jamie Diamond is a photo-based artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. Diamond is a recipient of the Artist in Residence program at Mass Moca & Skidmore College (2016), the NYFA Fellowship Award in Photography (2014), Artist in Residence at The Bronx Museum (2014), Artist in Residence at the Mana Residencies program at Mana Contemporary (2014), LMCC Swing Space residency (2013), LMCC Work Space residency (2008-2009) and the Toby Devan Lewis Fellowship Award (2008). Diamond's work has been featured in publications such as The New York Times, The New Yorker, The Last Magazine, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Vanity Fair, Hyperallergic, The Huffington Post, Lenscratch, Dummy Magazine, Barron's Magazine, Phaidon and PBS Online Series among others. Her work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally, some of which include Galerie Frank Pages (Geneva), AJL Art (Berlin), Mass MoCA (North Adams), The Bronx Museum (New York) and Catherine Edelman (Chicago). Diamond received her MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 2008 and BA from the University of Wisconsin in 2005. Since 2009, Diamond has been lecturing in photography at the University of Pennsylvania and is currently the Undergraduate Photography Coordinator of UPenn’s Fine Art Department.

Elena Dorfman is a Los Angeles-based visual artist working in photography, video, and Jacquard tapestry. She is known for her intensive portrait series that combine beauty with atypical subject matter. Identity—sexual, social, cultural and environmental—is a root element of her work. Dorfman’s photographs and video installations have been exhibited in

both the U.S. and worldwide at venues, including the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, the Triennale di Milano, Milan, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Denver Art Museum. Her work is held in numerous collections including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Cincinnati Art Museum, Palm Springs Art Museum, Newcomb Art Museum of Tulane University, the Denver Art Museum, and Bass Art Museum. Her work is the subject of three monographs, *Empire Falling* (Damiani, 2013) *Fandomania: Characters & Cosplay* (Aperture, 2007), *Still Lovers* (Channel, 2005).

Melissa Harris is editor-at-large of Aperture Foundation, where she has worked for more than twenty-five years, including as editor-in-chief of *Aperture* magazine from 2002 to 2012; under her leadership, the magazine received many honors, including ASME's National Magazine Award for General Excellence. Harris has also edited more than forty books for Aperture. As a curator, Harris has curated photography exhibitions for Aperture, the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Lumière Brothers Center for Photography, Moscow; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Villa Pignatelli, Naples; and Visa pour l'Image, Perpignan, among other venues. Harris teaches at New York University in the Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Photography & Imaging / Emerging Media, and occasionally at Yale University. She served on New York City's Community Board 5 for several years, and is a trustee of the John Cage Trust. *A Wild Life*, her biography on the photographer Michael Nichols, was published by Aperture in Summer 2017. She is currently working on a biography of Josef Koudelka, to be published by Aperture in 2020.