

SELFIE WITH DOG

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Short description of concept for practical work and abstract of doctoral dissertation

In 2014, in a series of photos titled *Selfie*, I photographed naturalistic sculptures I had made presenting fragments of the human body. Face, hands, breasts, stomach, were prepared from animal remains, specifically pigskin, which looks deceptively similar to human skin. The photos showed the objects at the moment of their final finishing - during cosmetic procedures, such as applying lipstick or rouge. The body fragments were placed on colourful leather backgrounds, properly lit, and then photographed from a specific perspective. The procedure of showing photographs of sculptures instead of their physical forms was dictated by my desire to take control over their representation. The photos allowed the objects to be preserved in a state just before decomposition, capturing the disturbing status of the dead still looking alive. The control of the image in the work alluded to one of the key aspects of modernity as mediated by the media - representation - hence the title *Selfie*, interpreting this work in terms of a contemporary self-portrait.

After completion of the work, some of the objects underwent natural decay, but two of them, depicting faces, dried and hardened, making it possible to store them over the next few years. In 2022 I returned to the topic, recycling them as it were, and took a series of photographs entitled *Domestic Animals*, showing dogs posing in these objects, which after drying resembled masks.

In *Domestic Animals*, the image of the artist, mediated by the sculptures made for the *Selfie* series, is transferred to dogs. In a series of 30 photographs playing out at the junction of nature and home, we observe their interrelationship - tenderness, cooperation, care, obedience. The masks worn by the dogs turn them into strange hybrids, suspended between human and animal, real and artificial, as if personifying their identity. The unusual work with dogs in *Domestic Animals* consisted mainly of trying to photograph their natural relations and behaviour, during which a detail related to the origin and scent of the masks described above caught my attention. I noticed that during the execution, the dogs started biting and licking the objects they were posing in. I was worried at first that they might run into the bushes and eat the masks, which would put an end to my work. But after a while I realized the meaning of their desire and its huge interpretive potential.

In 2023 I made copies of the objects from 2014 and fed them to the dogs, thus capturing the process of consumption, in a series of photographs entitled *Selfie with Dog*.

In my doctoral dissertation I conduct an interpretation of this work in the context of the analysis undertaken in my work of the variability and multiplicity of identity mediated by the body.

In successive chapters, I outline the area of my pursuits and its relevance to the discourse initiated and elaborated by other artists.

In the chapter *Control*, I compare my works to the works of Alina Szapocznikow, paying particular attention to the aspect of the methodology of execution based on physiology, which connects them. In the *Love* chapter, I raise the subject of deceased female artists, whose symbolic remains in the form of the works and images they left behind became the starting point for my pursuits. In the chapter *Animals*, I discuss the concept and implementation of my work, as proposed and performed by dogs, interpreting this in the context of anthropocentrism and the authorship of the doctoral work itself. Then, in the chapter *Objects*, I turn to the objectification of the body and the meaning of the surrogate object. I draw attention to the particular type of objectification present in my works, enabling the use of symbolic objects in a literal way, in accordance with their practical function. The next chapter, *Unconsciousness* is devoted to the issue of human, subjective consciousness, which in my opinion is an exhausting but aspiring limitation. I also attempt an analysis of my works as a metaphor pointing to the existence of an external perspective. The final chapter, *Multiplicity*, is an analysis of personality and identity as multiplicative structures, composed of versions constituted in time but slipping away as time passes, while remaining in relation to each other until the moment of death.