

BLINK



BLINK CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY #6

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JOLA SKORA
LOLA GUERRERA
ALEX KISTLEVICH
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DOPPELGÄNGER, 8.23.07, C-PRINT 20X24IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 6.30.07, C-PRINT 20X24IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK

CORNELIA HEDIGER

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
 I grew up near Zürich, Switzerland and I moved to the United States in 1990. For the past ten years I have been living in New York City.

How long have you been a photographer?
 Personally I do not refer to myself as a photographer. I received a Masters degree in Fine Art and in fact I started out with the intension of becoming a painter. I graduated University in 2000. I went to a conceptual art school. Students were encouraged to take classes in every filed of the arts; art history, sculpture, painting, photography, performance art and video. It was a well-rounded program and we were exposed to many different disciplines.



DOPPELGÄNGER, 2.23.08 SET 2, C-PRINT, 20X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 2.23.08 SET 1, C-PRINT, 20X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 5.29.10 SET 1, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 5.29.10 SET 2, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK

How did you first get into photography?
 In my third year at University I signed up for a black and white photography class. I needed to add one more class to my schedule and this photography class fit right in. At the time I was already in my third year as a painting major and had no intention to take up photography. The photography class I signed up for, however, changed everything for me and I realized very soon that I was able to express myself better through the photographic medium than through painting. Unfortunately I was not a very good painter.

What's photography for you?
 Photography to me is a way to express myself visually, it is my 'voice', it is my way to communicate to an audience outside my circle of friends and family. But even more so, I use photography as a visual diary.

How would you describe your photos to someone whose never seen them?
 All the project I have been working on; the Exit series, the Future is Canceled series and the 'Doppelgänger' series are conceptual. I create moments and I create a certain mood. All images are carefully planned and staged. Since the day I picked up a camera, I have been working in self-portraiture. I also try to create photographs that cannot be linked to a particular time period so in a sense, these images are timeless. I avoid signs and landmarks that would give away the location, with the exception of a few images. Many of these photographs could have been taken either in Europe or in the US, in the 80s or today.

What image have you been happiest with?
 All the portfolios I have created over the past ten years are relevant to me. One body of work leads into the next project, it is a progression and I could not be doing 'Doppelgänger' if I had not worked my way through Exit and the Future is Canceled. The largest body of work is the 'Doppelgänger' portfolio and I have been spending the past six years working on it, thinking about it and exploring it.



DOPPELGÄNGER, 5.09.10, C-PRINT, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK

What artists have influenced you?

My biggest influence in terms of artist is the German surrealist Hans Bellmer. I saw his work for the first time when I was an undergraduate student. I was sitting in a lecture hall and was introduced to Bellmer's work for the first time. I remember sitting there and looking at the slide projections on the wall and I was getting very emotional. I was so moved by his work that I had a physical reaction – I started to cry. It is hard to say why Bellmer's work has hit me so deep and profoundly but it did. I knew then that Bellmer's work was most likely going to be the most influential and significant work I would ever come across.

How did the idea for the 'Doppelgänger' series come about?

The concept of the 'Doppelgänger' is one I grew up with. It is a concept that is significant in German literature and having been raised in Switzerland and speaking German, I became aware of it at an early age. I always felt that this idea of a 'Doppelgänger' was not only interesting but unsettling and a bit scary. Exploring this topic also allows me to examine the uncanny, the alter ego and the subconscious, all concepts that I am very interested in.

Do you believe in 'Doppelgänger'?

I love the idea of the 'Doppelgänger' but do I think that I will be faced by my 'Doppelgänger' any time soon, probably not. Not outside my work anyhow. On the other hand, I am being confronted by my alter ego and I have to deal with my subconscious all the time so in a way this goes along the same lines as having to deal with a 'Doppelgänger'.

You recently had a show at New York with new images from the series. What is difference between previous images and those new images?

The images in the first part of 'Doppelgänger' were created between 2004 and 2008. The first year and a half I was mostly occupied with figuring out a system and a method to make these images work. Most of the images, with the exception of a few, were created in already existing environments. I did create sketches and plan out the shoots but not to the extent I did in 'Doppelgänger II'.

'Doppelgänger II' is approached differently. I plan the sets often weeks in advance; come up with a story line and then make a drawing or sketch. Often I create a set by transforming a space by painting the walls or putting up wallpaper, moving around furniture and bringing in area rugs and lamps. Sometimes I install long extension cords and put up ceiling lights in locations where there are no fixtures and lights. There is a stronger element of set design in these images now.

5.09.10 (image above) is a triptych, a series of three images that play out a dialog. In set one, the character on the right is reading a book on the Doppelgänger (the book was published in 1925 and is called, *Der Doppelgänger* – it is a psychoanalytical study on the subject, written in German). So the character that is reading the book is fully emerged in the topic of the Doppelgänger while being observed by her Doppelgänger. The Doppelgänger seems harmless, holding a box of cookies while peaking over the shoulder of her Self.

In set two, there is a level of guilt. The Doppelgänger puts guilt and blame on her Self (other character) for having made her drop the box of cookies (metaphor).

In set three, the Self gives in to the guilt and kneels on the floor to collect the cookies while the Doppelgänger is smoking a cigarette and drinking a glass of milk, while looking down on her Self. The images are all metaphors for internal struggles and irrational blame.



DOPPELGÄNGER, 1.22.09, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 10.03.08 SET 2, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK

1.22.09 (image above left) In most of the Doppelgänger images the Doppelgänger and her Self are watching each other, observing each other and they are very much aware of each other. Image 1.22.09 is different in this respect. The Doppelgänger is lost in thought and observing the green parakeet she is holding in her right hand where as her Self is taking off her skirt and is completely oblivious to what is happening in the room. This image shows the moment before the two characters encounter each other, it is a silent moment and we can only imagine what happens once they become aware of each other.

10.3.08 (image above right) The characters are meeting in a staircase, stairs that splits in two, half way up - there is a choice to be made. There is also a celebration. One character is kneeling on the floor while holding a cake with candles.

Where did you find the location?
 Many of the sets are created in my own apartment by painting the walls and moving in furniture and area rugs. Other images I create in a building in the East Village. It is an old school building that now is being used as artist spaces and it also has a performance space. I love the feel of this building, the building has a soul and it has quite some history.

Why did you choose yourself as model for the series?
 The 'Doppelgänger' work is a way to look at the alter ego, subconscious and my own internal struggle. I draw inspirations from my own life and I examine my own personal stories and issues. It would not feel honest to me if I used someone else to play out my own internal dialog.



DOPPELGÄNGER, 8.02.10, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK



DOPPELGÄNGER, 12.27.09 SET 2, C-PRINT, 30X30IN, EDITION OF 15 © CORNELIA HEDIGER, COURTESY KLOMPCHING GALLERY, NEW YORK

8.02.10 (image above left) Is an image I shot three times over the span of three years. The first time I created this image was in 2007. I liked the interaction of the characters but I wasn't happy with the image. Earlier in 2010 I took another shot at it and still, I was not happy with the outcome and on 8.02.2010 I took my last and final shot at this idea. I told myself that I was going to stay there, in this staircase, until I got it, regardless whether or not I would have to be there for the next three days, this was my final attempt. The setting is somewhat mysterious. The Doppelgänger and her Self are having an encounter in a staircase. It is a symbolic and metaphoric image for me. The birdcage has no bottom, it is open and even though it is a symbol for captivity there is a way to escape it. There is a mirror on the wall, a chalk drawing on the floor, one character is reaching out to her other Self. There is a trace of childhood and a feeling of loss in this image.

12.27.09 (image above right) is a set I created in a painters' studio. In this set I ended up moving the studio around, putting up wallpaper and curtains and I brought in an area rug and props. The outcome of a Doppelgänger interaction often is one that ends up in suicide, where the Self is trying to kill her/his double. In this set, the Doppelgänger and her Self are keenly aware of each other and they are facing each other. One of the characters is holding a pair of scissors/weapon and we are led to believe that suicide is the outcome.

Can you talk us through the process of this photo?

First I come up with an idea and an interaction between myself and my 'Doppelgänger'. I then make a drawing or sketch of the characters. If I cannot find an environment that projects the mood I am looking for I will create a set in my own space. Sometimes I choose the cloths first and then decide on the color of the wall and sometimes I do it vice versa. Often I do a pre-shoot, or a quick run through of a set in order to get a feel of the space and gain a sense of how I want to break up the body. I work by myself and all the images are taken on a tripod with a self-timer. I use studio lights to carefully light the set and recently I have experimented with strobes. For a six-panel image, I approximately take 100 images that I then edit usually the day after. The individual images are not manipulated, photo shopped or altered, they are used full frame and are arranged in a grid to make up a composition or photograph.

What future projects do you have coming up?

I have been working on a video collaboration for the past 15 months. The project is not simply a video but is in fact an installation. This project has two parts. One part is a video collaboration I am working on with Ignacio Valero, and the other part consists of black and white medium format images shot with a film camera. So in a way the story we created about this new character is being documented in both video and still images.

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