

BORYANA ROSSA

Born 1972

About the Artist:

Boryana Rossa PhD (b. Sofia, Bulgaria, 1972) is an interdisciplinary artist and curator who works in the fields of electronic arts, film, video, performance, and photography. She is an assistant professor in Film and Media Arts at the School of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University, NY.

Most of Rossa's works have been shown internationally at venues such as Elizabeth A Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Brooklyn Museum, NY and Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art (MUMOK) Vienna; Kunstwerke and Akademie der Kunst, Berlin; Stedelijk Museum Bouwkeet, Amsterdam; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona and Centro Cultural Montehermoso Kulturunea, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain; Zurich University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland; Zacheta Gallery, Warsaw; 1 and 5th Thessaloniki Biennial, Greece; Museet for Samtidskunst Roskilde, Denmark; Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary; 1st and 5th Moscow Biennial for Contemporary Art; GARAGE Museum of Contemporary art, Moscow; Sofia Arsenal – Museum of Contemporary Art (SAMCA), Sofia; Coreana Museum, Seoul; National Gallery of Fine Arts, Sofia; Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn, Estonia; Institute of Contemporary Art, Sofia.

In 2004 together with artist and filmmaker Oleg Mavromatti, Rossa established UTRAFUTURO—an international group of artists engaged with issues of technology, science, and their social implications. Works by UTRAFUTURO have been included in the Biennial for Electronic Art, Perth (BEAP) and shown at Foundation for Art and Creative Technologies (FACT), Liverpool; Waag Society, Amsterdam; Society for Art and Technology (SAT), Montreal, Laznia Center for Contemporary Art and Instytut Sztuki Wyspa, Gdansk, Poland; Hangar, Barcelona, Spain etc. Rossa and Mavromatti performed also as UTRAFUTURO in Trickster Theatre, Exit Art, NY between 2006-09.

Rossa's works are in numerous public and private collections among which are Kontakt. The Art Collection of Erste Bank-Group, Sofia City Art Gallery, SAMCA Brooklyn Museum, Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, and others. Her performances and videos have been included in international art archives such as the performing art archive re.act.feminism and Transitland Video Art from Central and Eastern Europe 1989-2009.

Rossa's work has been published in numerous books and exhibition catalogs about performance and gender such as Global Feminisms, Brooklyn Museum, NY; Gender Check, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien; Sexing the Border, Cambridge Scholar Publishers and in periodicals such as Frieze Magazine, Brooklyn Rail, New York Times, New Yorker, Animal, NY, Kunstforum International, n.paradoxa etc.

In 2009 she curated the international bio-art show “Corpus Extremus (Life+), featuring work by artists who are using bio- and media- technologies to investigate questions of life and death and how these two notions change with the development of biotechnology. This show has been a culmination of her curatorial work as one of the initiators of the Bioart Initiative (2007-2009) a collaborative research project between Rensselaer’s Arts Department and the Center for Biotechnology and Interdisciplinary Studies (CBIS). Her recent bio-art work “The Mirror or Faith” is a critical review of genetic determinism, related to spirituality and gender identity has been presented at GARAGE Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, and was realized in collaboration with the biologist Dr. Michael Edel, (University of Barcelona) as part of the Grid Spinoza program, funded by the European Commission and Dr. Heidi Hehnly, Syracuse University, NY. Together with Dr. Hehnly, Rossa has been curating The Bio-Art Mixer, an international across-universities semi-semester event at Syracuse University, where artists and scientists meet to share their research and initiate collaborations since 2017. In 2022 Rossa and Hehnly established the Bio-Art Research Coalition of Syracuse (BARCS). BARCS hosts the Bio-Art Mixer, and has initiated bio-art exhibitions on campus, started to integrate bio-art in an interdisciplinary curriculum across the VPA and the College of Arts and Scientists, and is currently hosting three artists-residents at Hehnly’s lab.

In 2012 Rossa finished her Ph.D. entitled “Post-Cold War Gender Performances. Cross-cultural examination of gender representations viewed through Soviet, Russian and Bulgarian film re-enactments,” in the Department of Arts, at Rensselaer, Troy, NY, and is currently working on a related book. Her dissertation was supported by a research grant from the School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences at Rensselaer (HASS).

She is also a director of Sofia Queer Forum (together with philosopher and activist Stanimir Panayotov), which is an annual art-theory event in Sofia, Bulgaria that looks at gender and sexuality intersectionally, as systems through which we value ourselves and the others around us.

Rossa also holds the prestigious award Essential Reading for Art Writers of the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA, Sofia) for 2008. In 2014 she was awarded the Ruf Award for contemporary art. She is also a recipient of the 2018 College of Visual and Performing Arts Faculty Excellence in Research award. She has been granted 2014 NYFA Fellowship Award for Digital/Electronic Arts together with artist-filmmaker Oleg Mavromatti.

The film “No Place for Fools”, 2015 (dir. Oleg Mavromatti) that she had produced, premiered at the Rotterdam Film Festival and was awarded “The Best Documentary” at the prestigious DVIZENIE National Film Festival in Omsk, Russia. The film also has been mentioned as the best film for 2015 by three leading Russian film critics in the most important film, journal *Iskusstvo Kino*, Moscow and has since then been touring festivals such as New Horizons, Wroclaw, Poland; Munich International Film Festival; Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, Jihlava, Czech Republic; AV Festival, Newcastle; UK; Go East International film festival, Wiesbaden. “Monkey Ostrich and

Grave” 2017 is another film directed by Mavromatti that Rossa produced, which is highly rated by critics and got the Jury Award for Best Documentary at the prestigious ArtDocFest, Moscow, 2018.

Boryana Roassa is currently working on a film project dedicated to the creative and personal relationship between philosopher Walter Benjamin and theater director Asja Lacin, which is expected to premiere at the end of 2024.

BORYANA ROSSA

1. *SZ ZS Performance*, 2015

video documentation of a performance, photographs

Edition: edition 2/3

Ownership history: The Artist



BORYANA ROSSA, *SZ ZS Performance*, 2015



About the Artwork :

“My partner stitches my body into my mirror image with a surgical thread. The audience is located behind the mirror and can see only my arm and leg that are stuck through the mirror. The action can also be watched on a monitor placed nearby. The video feed comes from a camera mounted on my partner’s head. In the end, the audience is invited to come over to my side of the mirror and see me.

As we were working on the piece, we thought about illustrating the relationship between reality and the virtual world. Both worlds affect each other, they build and construct each other, but sometimes we don’t want the virtual world to expose some of our qualities or personal biography. The virtual therefore is not us, so often this connection and constant exchange is not necessarily a unity, but rather often a painful dependence.

SZ-ZS Performance can also be looked at as a visual embodiment of Lacan’s “imaginary, symbolic and real.” The piece is an attempt to expose these three concepts simultaneously. If “the imaginary” is our body, and “the symbolic” is our mirror image, then “the real” will be the inconceivable, physically non-existing border between the mirror reflection and the flesh of the artist. The attempt to reify this non-physical connection is painful and infeasible.”

This performance is made by Boryana Rossa and ULTRAFUTURO (Oleg Mavromatti, Katia Damianova, Anton Terziev, Miroslav Dimitrov).

BORYANA ROSSA, *SZ ZS Performance*, 2015

“...in the SZ-ZS performance (2005, Sofia Art Gallery) – in the SZ-ZS performance (2005, Sofia Art Gallery) – we incorporated the process of documentation into the performance. We also incorporated the conversations and spoke to the audience directly. In this piece, Oleg is stitching me up to a mirror. After this piece, we began to invite audiences to document our work. into the performance. We also incorporated the conversations and spoke to the audience directly. In this piece, Oleg is stitching me up to a mirror. After this piece, we began to invite audiences to document our work.”

Sandra D'Urso. "On Abjection. Pain, blood and humor as a feminist aesthetic strategy in the Work of Boryana Rossa", *Performance Research* 23·4, July 18. 2017.