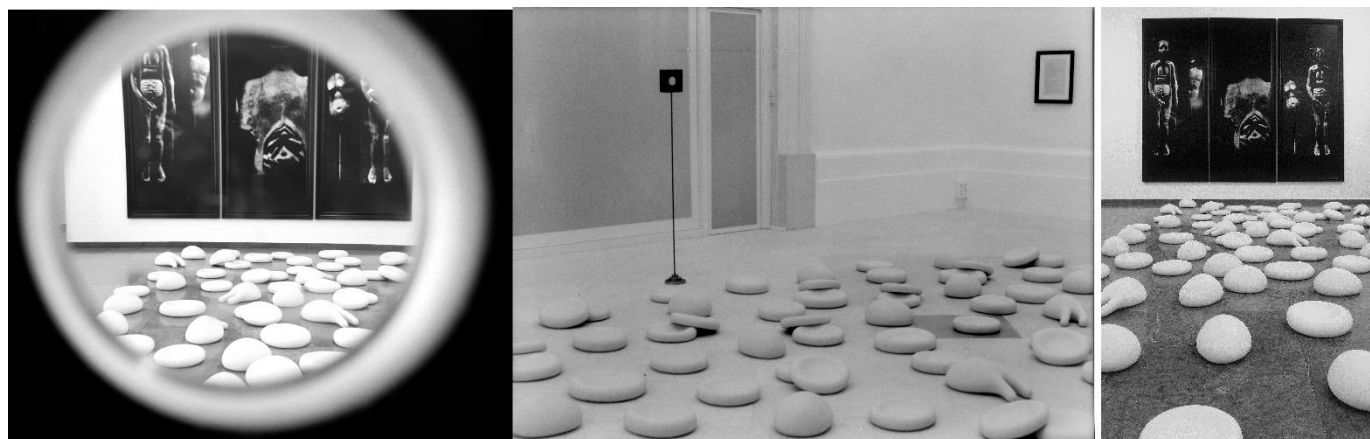


EINSPACH FINE ART & PHOTOGRAPHY



Orshi Drozdik: *Manufacturing the Self: The Pathological Body*, 1989/1995, installation, gelatin silver print, magnifying lens, porcelain and framed texts. Courtesy of the artist

FRIEZE MASTERS 2022

ORSHI DROZDIK:

ADVENTURE IN TECHNOS DYSTOPIUM

Working mainly with photography, performance, and her own body, Orshi Drozdik (1946) was one of the first Eastern European women artists in the 1970s to develop a multidisciplinary practice around social and sexual identities. As a student at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest, she elaborated a method of critically examining patriarchal visual representation, drawing on the traditions of historical Hungarian feminism and her linguistic-semiotic studies. In her early conceptual series such as *Individual Mythology* (1975–1977), *Nude Model* (1975–1977), and *Commonplace Symbols* (1976–1977), she used a variety of media and techniques – including photography, performance, photo appropriation, slide projection, and graphics – to question the normative artistic canon and the possibilities and limits of female role models.

Following her move to New York in 1981, she worked in close relation to feminist, critical and experimental literary practices associated with New York postmodernism. Her strong interest in the construction of gender identities continued, on one hand, with the *Adventure in Technos Dystopium* project (1984–1995) where she provided the feminist critique of patriarchal scientific representation, and, on the other hand, with her 1990s installation series *Manufacturing the Self*, where she examined the construction of the self in various cultural, historical, and geographical circumstances.

FRIEZE MASTERS 2022

In the Spotlight section of Frieze Masters, Einspach Fine Art & Photography presents a selection of artworks from Orshi Drozdik's magnum opus, *Adventure in Technos Dystopium* (1984–1995). This body of work offers a critical inquiry into a series of issues debated in the 1980s and 1990s around institutionalised knowledge, scientific production, collective memory, and gender identities.

In her multipart series *Adventure in Technos Dystopium*, Drozdik set out on a more than a decade-long endeavour to examine and deconstruct the way scientific discourse represented nature and the human body over the last three centuries. In 1984, she began to take photographs of exhibits stored in glass display cases in different science, medical, and technological museums in Europe. This series of black-and-white photographs entitled *Dystopia Infinite* features eighteenth- and nineteenth-century technological instruments and medical specimens that represented the world of truth and reality as constructed by patriarchal scientific discourse. In order to introduce a female perspective into the history of natural sciences, in 1986 Drozdik created the pseudo-persona of an eighteenth-century woman scientist, Edith Simpson, whose fictitious biography, scientific discoveries, and instruments she subsequently exhibited in the form of installations. The investigations carried out in natural history and medical history museums were brought further by Drozdik in the 1990s. Besides questioning science's attempt to model reality, in the installation series entitled *Manufacturing the Self* she examined the constructed nature of self-image and the female body. The floor installation *Manufacturing the Self: The Pathological Body; Erythrocytes* (1989/1990) and the two love letters entitled *The Normal and the Pathological Female Body* (1995) expose how science and language play a crucial role in the formation of the self and in our perception of the female body. The installation *Erythrocytes* consists of 68 red blood cells made of unglazed white porcelain. By placing a magnifying lens before the installation, Drozdik invites the viewer to replace the observing scientist.

In her investigation into the historical formation of knowledge and scientific representation in the 1980s and 1990s, Drozdik offered a critical analysis of the representation of truth and reality in patriarchal scientific discourse.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in 1946 in Abda, Hungary, Orsolya (Orshi) Drozdik studied at the Painting and Graphics Departments of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts from 1970 to 1974. After graduating, she pursued a master's degree between 1974 and 1977, and obtained her DLA degree in 2004. In 1976–1977, she was a member of the Budapest-based postconceptual artist group Rózsa Presszó. She was awarded the Munkácsy Mihály Prize in 2004. Since 2015, she has been a member of the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Arts and was a habilitated professor at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts between 2005 and 2015. From 1978, she lived in Amsterdam, then in Canada, and moved to New York in 1981.

As an outstanding exponent of international feminist art, Drozdik has been dealing with art from a woman's point of view since the 1970s. Her oeuvre is multifaceted in media and genre, unfolding in painting, graphics, sculpture, installation, photography, video, performance, poetry, literary and theoretical texts. As the first Hungarian artist to advance a specifically feminist agenda in the 1970s, her work is defined by the systematic analysis of issues concerning the representation of the female body, art education, and artistic and art historical discourses.

In 2001–2002, the Ludwig Museum, Budapest, organized a mid-career retrospective of the artist's work. Drozdik has also been included in several significant survey exhibitions, including *The Medea Insurrection: Radical Women Artists Behind the Iron Curtain* (Wende Museum, Culver City, CA, 2019–2020), *Re.act.feminism: Performance Art of the 1960s and 70s Today* (Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2013), and *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (MUMOK, Vienna, 2009–2010). Work by the artist is represented in international museum collections, including the Museum moderner Kunst (MUMOK), Vienna; Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest; Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest; Ars Aevi Museum of Contemporary Art, Sarajevo, and in private collections in the US and Europe.