

Medulla

I EXPLORE... THE HUMAN... THE NAKED BODY
SEEMS SO FRAGILE YET THIS ALMOST
SCULPTURAL FIGURE CONVEYS MUCH POWER...

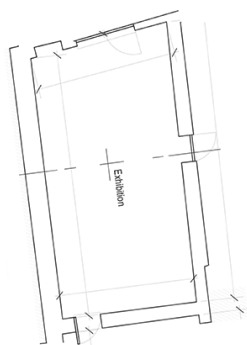
I ASK MYSELF WHETHER I AM ABLE TO EXPLORE MY OWN BODY AND SEXUALITY THROUGH THE BODIES OF OTHERS.

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DESIGNER ECHO

[illegible]

INTERESTING VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS
AT FIRST, BUT RAPIDLY BECOMING MORE ABSTRACT.
THE BRAIN, DEVOID OF ANY KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SOUNDS FROM SPACE,
CAN ONLY SEEK TO INTERPRET THESE USING PAST KNOWLEDGE AND IT IS
ONLY WITH REPETITION THAT NEW IMAGERY IS CREATED ALONG
REPEATING - OR TRANSFORMING - THEMSELVES INTO THE IMAGINARY.



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SWITCHING FROM BEHIND TO THE FRONT OF THE CAMERA. DISCOVERING THE WORLD AND MYSELF. IS LIBERATING AND TERRIFYING. THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE DEDICATED TO THE BEAUTY OF COINCIDENCE

Phases
Shocks
Power

Subconscious feelings and emotions are reflections of painful, unmet needs.

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MEDULLA

EXPLORING SENSES, TOUCH, AND THE BEAUTY OF THE BODY

Exploring the human body and transforming it into art is something fascinating and intriguing at the same time. There is a lot that can be said and done whenever touching this subject, as the human body and all its imperfections is a vessel where emotions, experiences, energies, and thoughts can move around this multidimensional realm called life. A trio of young artists - and friends - have got together to create an organic, fluid, and experimental exhibition where their diverse body of work comes together to study and explore the human body and all its glory. London-based multifaceted artists [Antonia Luxem](#), [Marika Kochiashvili](#), and [Simon Schmidt](#) presented their ongoing projects at Medulla. The first - of what we hope to be many - exhibitions showcased images, paintings, and short films produced by the trio both individually and as a group. We sat down with the creative trio to understand a bit more about their creative journey and what they sought to achieve through Medulla.

F WORD: COULD YOU COMMENT ON HOW YOU THREE CAME TOGETHER TO CREATE MEDULLA? WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO PUT THE EXHIBITION TOGETHER?

All three of us have a strong relationship which enables us to collaborate a lot together. Simon and Antonia work together on videos for OWOI as a performer-filmmaker duo, while Marika and Antonia on an urban photography and video project called ANTIKO and then all three as supporters of

each other's work. This year was very fruitful in terms of creating – it was on the basis of this that we decided it was time to set-up an exhibition - a way of celebrating all the work we had created. We decided this at the beginning of autumn and from there it all happened very quickly: the work had already been created, so the only other ingredients we needed were passion, motivation, and enthusiasm – which we had, and were the driving forces to Medulla.

F WORD: WHY MEDULLA?

Medulla is the short-form for Medulla Oblongata, a part of the brain which connects higher levels of the brain to the spinal chord, being responsible for automatic functions of the body. It helps to transfer vital messages between brain and body. We visualized this as a kind-of junction, the connecting point between the mental and physical world, which keeps us alive. Our art put together is exactly that. Simon and Marika are interested in the body, more specifically, the photographer's interaction and perception of the body. Antonia's work seeks to visually understand the brain's perception of the exterior world (Cosmos Echo) as well as the body (Abstract Body).

F WORD: WHERE ARE YOU FROM, ANTONIA?

I'm not from anywhere specifically...I moved around a lot since I was born, so I have never really known what to answer when people ask me that question. I come from wherever I live at the time. So right now, I guess I'm from London.

F WORD: AND HOW DID YOU GET INTO PAINTING AND FILMMAKING?

ANTONIA: I never studied art or film, I just started doing it. My background is actually in human rights and environmental law which has influenced my interest in making socially-oriented documentaries, but more recently my video work has expanded into the abstract and experimental. Painting is a form of self-expression - I had an urge to start and it became a way of releasing tension.

F WORD: HOW ABOUT YOU MARIKA?

MARIKA: I'm from Georgia. I started as a photojournalist at a news magazine in Georgia. I've always been interested in visual media as a way of storytelling. It's only recently, since I made my first short fictional film in the beginning of this year, that I realized I also wanted to approach photography differently. So I went on exploring the artistic part of it, shooting on film only, 35mm as well as 120mm medium format. I shoot film as I truly enjoy the delayed gratification part of it - having no idea what's gonna show up, anticipating.

F WORD: AND YOU SIMON? WE KNOW THAT YOU ARE FROM GERMANY, RIGHT?

SIMON: I grew up in Bavaria which is a very conservative and Catholic part of Germany. Being surrounded by a very set system, I slowly but surely found pleasure in the "new" and unconventional - to break out and to break the rules. I remember always having a camera around me growing up, mainly using it as a tool to express myself and capturing things I like or don't like. With the help of the internet, I taught myself the basics of photography, Photoshop and how to publish these picture on the internet. Now, I have the great pleasure of living in London - fulfilling my dream every day a little more and finally freely visualizing my ideas without any social restrictions.

F WORD: MARIKA, YOUR BODY OF WORK EXPLORES THE FEMALE BODY, WITH AN INTENSITY AND RAWNESS THAT ARE NOT EASY TO ACHIEVE. WHAT IS THE CONCEPT AND EXECUTION PROCESS BEHIND THE IMAGES?

MARIKA: I started working on this project this spring without initially having any concept or a fixed plan of what I wanted to achieve. I wanted to photograph a woman, to whom I had a very strong attraction, nude. And I was going to photograph her on film, with no digital back-up, as I wanted to explore this blindly, by simply following my instincts, without any initially well-thought setups, in natural light, just improvise and see what comes out. I thought if I can communicate this intense passion through the photograph, it's gonna be an explosion. I shot six or seven films.

F WORD: AND IS THERE A PERSONAL CONNECTION BETWEEN YOU AND WHAT YOU ARE HOPING TO ACHIEVE THROUGH YOUR IMAGES?

MARIKA: Not often my own work impresses me. This one though, it was different. Was it so powerful because of the special connection I felt to her? Maybe. But I knew then that I was going to continue with this project. Then slowly I started asking myself questions - how? why? what am I trying to say, and achieve? Everyone shoots nude and big photography giants have shot nude masterpieces so how is it going to be different? These questions started bothering me and I tried to come up with answers but then I decided I don't need them. Answers will come as I continue working and exploring. Answers are what the viewer feels when they look at the photograph. How they perceive.

There is no right answer. And will never be. My feelings won't always match theirs. I don't want to impose anything. I just work with who I admire the most - female and her body. I explore. and not just them. I explore myself too with and through them. I explore myself both professionally and emotionally.



Photography work by Marika Kochiashvili

F WORD: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS PROCESS?

MARIKA: Every shoot brings me new experiences, new challenges and a massive sense of fulfillment.

F WORD: FOR BEING SUCH STRONG AND INTIMATE IMAGES, HOW IS THE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR SUBJECTS BUILT?

MARIKA: My subjects are women I know. Some very close, some not so much but enough to feel comfortable with them being nude. I shoot women who I have some sort of connection with, be it sexual, intellectual or emotional. There's a conversation and there's trust. Trust is crucial.

I remember one of them freaking out during the shoot as I was shooting a close-up of her vagina and a scar on her thigh. She said she doesn't want porn. I said that's not what my aim is so it won't be porno. We paused and I said that if she doesn't trust me, we might as well stop at this. We continued. I now think that that image is one of the most powerful images of the series with her. I think this is the photograph that gave me a clearer idea of what I wanted to achieve with this project: The scar itself represents some sort of fragility and the rest of the details in the composition translate power.

F WORD: WHEN YOU LOOK AT YOUR OWN WORK, WHAT GOES ON IN YOUR MIND?

MARIKA: Sometimes I think that the main subject of this project is myself. There is an exposition of others trying to observe my own body and sexuality. Is it possible? I don't know yet. It's an ongoing process which might never end. Would I ever be brave enough to expose myself? I find it difficult even when I am alone with myself.

F WORD: WOULD YOU BECOME YOUR OWN SUBJECT, ONE DAY?

MARIKA: I once tried to photograph myself nude. I was in this amazing room in Berlin with unbelievable natural light from the window and nobody to pose for me so I thought, fuck it, I can't miss this light. I photographed myself on an iPhone. It was more an experiment than something I would ever show but an interesting and an important one.

F WORD: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY THAT ATTRACTS YOU TO THE SUBJECT OF THE FEMALE BODY?

MARIKA: They are just so beautiful. I admire female body. I love exploring it physically as well as from a distance with a camera. It's an endless discovery. I love to slowly observe details, shapes. I look at these sculptural forms. I find them stunning. We are so vulnerable when we are naked and yet I find my subjects so powerful. There are so many impositions of what a perfect female body entails. My subjects break the stereotypes of "conventional beautiful body". They are so brave!

F WORD: ANTONIA, YOU AND SIMON HAVE CREATED A VERY INTERESTING AND BEAUTIFUL VIDEO ABSTRACT BODY (LE DEBUT) WHICH WAS SHOWN AT THE EXHIBITION. WHAT WAS THE IDEA BEHIND THE VIDEO? HOW WAS THE PROCESS OF PUTTING IT TOGETHER SO NEATLY?

ANTONIA + SIMON: This is a performative and improvisational work. And it's a series. We agreed on a theme and based on that we agreed on a shooting location. We then improvise - Antonia films, and I style and perform. At the editing stage, Antonia always has to be in a specific mood - usually, it's dark and spacey - and create a story based on the footage and theme we have. She then creates sounds from objects she finds at home or on the streets and those are connected to the chosen theme. It's an improvisational work from start to end.

03:41



Abstract Body by Antonia Luxem and Simon Schmidt

F WORD: THAT'S FANTASTIC. THE OUTCOME IS BRILLIANT AND SO ENGAGING. WE KNOW THAT YOUR CREATIVE SKILLS ARE NOT LIMITED TO ONE OR TWO MEDIUMS, HOW DO YOU FIND CONVEYING ALL YOUR CREATIVE SKILLS TO ONE BODY OF WORK?

SIMON: Indeed. I don't really like to limit myself in the way I express myself - maybe it is because I do not have a traditional education in either photography or graphic design or performance art. What I really enjoy is making use of all my creative muscles - curiosity, imagination, and appreciation - that can get expressed through stills or video, behind or in front of the camera. Especially with the help of this exhibition/project, I really enjoyed combining different skills and getting involved in all aspects of putting together a body of work without a client's brief or commercial gains. There are so many talents all of us have, we just need to push certain boundaries to discover them!

F WORD: YOUR PHOTO EXHIBITION INCLUDES BOTH IMAGES OF MALE AND FEMALE SUBJECTS AND YOURSELF. WHAT IS THE CORE MESSAGE OR INTENTION OF DOING SO?

SIMON: Exactly, that is what I am trying to express with my work in general - there is a sense of equality and finding beauty in him, her and myself. Being gay, you get confronted a lot with homosexual issues or how you are part of shaping the scene, however, I don't like to put myself into a specific box when it comes to exploring myself; or my sexuality. The beauty of women, as well as the beauty and love towards oneself, plays a huge part in my work. It is the naivety that by finding yourself, you will find the beauty in her as well as him. I cannot really explain why but I always took pictures of myself, portraits of myself in different fashion or scenery - probably because I did not have access to shooting models or people when I started out. Since then, I cannot really seem to get rid of putting myself in the scene too. It's like experimenting yourself, a D.I.Y project if you will!



Photography work by Simon Schmidt

F WORD: AND WHY USE THE BODY AS AN OBJECT OF EXPLORATION?

SIMON: If you look at my pictures you won't see a lot of skin or very body-focused visuals, the body for me stands more for the personality and how we make use of it expressing what you want to say. The videos I am working on in collaboration with Antonia, are an expression of senses. So far we have worked on "The Ritual" and "Speed" and moving forward I want to make use of the (my) body in expressing that. I used to dance professionally and I cannot help myself moving or acting out different emotions - devastated, emotional or full of joy. For me, it is the most obvious language... (and frankly, words are not my strength).

F WORD: YOUR ABSTRACT BODY OF WORK (PAINTINGS AND FILM) PRESENTED DURING MEDULLA SHOWCASE A RATHER INTRIGUING PERSPECTIVE. HOW WOULD YOU ELABORATE ON YOUR IDEA AND FINAL WORK?

ANTONIA: There are so many concepts which I try to grasp and feel I can never do, however much I read about the subject, and I find it easier to understand concepts through my video work. At the moment, I am intrigued by human visual and temporal perceptions. Cosmos Echo forms part of this - I heard sounds captured in space and I couldn't "get it", in the sense that my brain couldn't visualize anything concrete - it was simply a constant sequence of random images of things I knew from my everyday life. But I couldn't see what those sounds looked like in the "real", that is, when you are in space. It was fascinating and it was also extremely frustrating. Only after repeatedly looping the track and meditating on it, could my brain create new images, this time abstract and more representative of what I imagine space to look like.

As for my paintings, they are pure self-expression - it's a way of releasing tension and built-up emotions within me onto the canvas. I've got a kind of addiction to painting what I see are human faces, but they are all so distorted that I'm not sure what other people see. All I see is those faces, each with really strong and painful looks. Painting is also interesting for editing videos, as the video can be seen as a canvas - especially since I like to distort video images as well as my paintings... There is an interesting connection between painting a canvas and editing a video.

F WORD: WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF CREATING ABSTRACT WORK AND YET BEING ABLE TO SHOWCASE WHAT YOU ENVISION AND/OR FELT?

ANTONIA: My initial visual idea is never exactly there in my final work. Of course, there are traces of it and the mood is present. I suppose that's what drives the creative process: this constant attempt to replicate what you see in your mind. Even when I get sudden 'flashes' of images, they never look the same in the final piece. It is frustrating and yet again, I wonder whether it really matters anyway. Interestingly, this brings us back to perception – I'll never be able to know what and how others perceive things, just like I will never know how that which I think I'm perceiving looks like in the 'real' world. Maybe you just can't see inside your own brain.

F WORD: HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THIS IDEA OF BODY?

ANTONIA: In Abstract Body, 'body' is the physical human body and is represented by the performer. This series is for me more similar to painting than my other video work: it's an improvisation and it plays with distortions. In Cosmos Echo, 'body' is twofold. It's the 'external world' on the one hand, and the physical human body on the other. The 'external world' is perceived by the body and the mind, and we tend to interpret it as a unity, for example, 'everything else outside of myself'. The physical body decodes and senses this external world and transmits that information to the brain.

WORDS: DYLAN WRIGHT

IMAGES AND VIDEO: COURTESY OF ANTONIA LUXEM, MARIKA KOCHIASHVILI AND SIMON SCHMIDT

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FILM: Y TU MAMA TAMBIEN



ALFONSO CURAZON AND Y TU MAMA
TAMBIEN

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GRACEFUL UNCONVENTIONALITY

It was a chance meeting with an old photograph dating back to the 1800's of a Japanese horse-drawn delivery cart and it's unassuming courier, that inspired iconic - and by f...

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NOSTALGIA

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