

GRETTA SARFATY

15 September – 28 October 2023

Our show focuses on Sarfaty's historical *Transformations* series. Based on photographs the artist entitled "auto-photos", these paintings use the language of Pop Art (at the time in its heyday) as a feminist critique of the movement. The artist depicts the "deformation" of her own face, bringing disquiet about the feminine, as she battles for the right to her own body through the construction of an androgynous presence.



Auto-Photo Book Cover, 1976
Photolithography on acetate

On the lower floor, the artist creates a new installation composed of the original photolithographs on acetate she used as printing films for her first book *Auto-Photos*, 1978. Early on in her career she was one of the few women participating at a formative performance festival at Centre Georges Pompidou (1979) in Paris, the Journées interdisciplinaires sur l'art corporel et performances (with Dan Graham, Lea Lubin and VALIE EXPORT among 30 artists), with *Evocative Recollections*.



In the 1960's and 70's, female artists began to break down the hegemonic male gaze more visibly by taking over the representation of the female body through their own perspective. Artists like Carolee Schneeman, Yayoi Kusama or Shigeko Kubota were mainly addressing this matter with performance. Meanwhile, Gretta Sarfaty (at the same time as artists such as Friederike Pezold

in Austria, Geta Brătescu in Romania, Eleanor Antin and Cindy Sherman in the USA) used photography and auto-fiction to take control and expand on the representation of women. In front of her own camera, Gretta Sarfaty proclaims herself as an autonomous artist. She addresses the viewer directly by staring, facing or even screaming at the audience.

“I wanted to break down stereotypes of beauty used by the medias at the time.”



Sarfaty has been questioning and undermining stereotypical images of women through various media since the early 1970s. She began with her Metamorphosis series of paintings and drawings of bodies in process of psychological and physical transition, laying the foundation for her future work. In 1974 she founded the Collective Grupo Gral, including Gretta Grzywacz (Sarfaty herself), Rosa Figueiredo de Albuquerque, Astarté Giesbrecht and Lya Amaral Souza). In the years that followed, she developed several correlated series (Auto-Fotos, 1975; Transformations, 1976; A Woman's Diary, 1977), which she eventually brought together in the artist's book Auto-Photos in 1978 (republished in 2021). Sarfaty expanded her performative and photographic practice by transferring the resulting images into prints, drawings, and oil painting. This serial practice of edition and reproduction is at the core of her practice.



Transformations XII-A, 1977
Oil on paper bonded on wooden fiberboard

In the early 1980's Sarfaty moved to New York City where she developed further her painting practice of self-portrait and analysis of gendered relationships. Notably with the series *My Single Life in New York*, 1984-1987. She also became an active cultural activist and organized various curatorial projects notably with Willoughby Sharp (1936 –2008); and was co-founder and co-editor of the conceptual art publication “Avalanche Magazine”.

Recently, Sarfaty's work has had a new phase of recognition, starting with an exhibition at Central Galeria in São Paulo in 2019 and the republication of her seminal artist book *Auto Photos*; followed by Galeria Nuno Centeno in Porto in 2022; and new major acquisitions by Serralves Museum, Porto; Reina Sophia in Madrid; and the Hall Foundation in the USA.