

A black and white collage. The background is a grid of handstands. A vertical strip on the left side shows a film strip. A vertical strip on the right side shows a crucifixion with skulls. The text 'ZOFIA KULIK' is centered in the middle.

ZOFIA KULIK

Zofia Kulik

SPLENDOUR OF MYSELF V (Mother, Daughter Partner)

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Cover: Zofia Kulik, *The Splendour of Myself V (Mother, Daughter, Partner)*, 2007, detail

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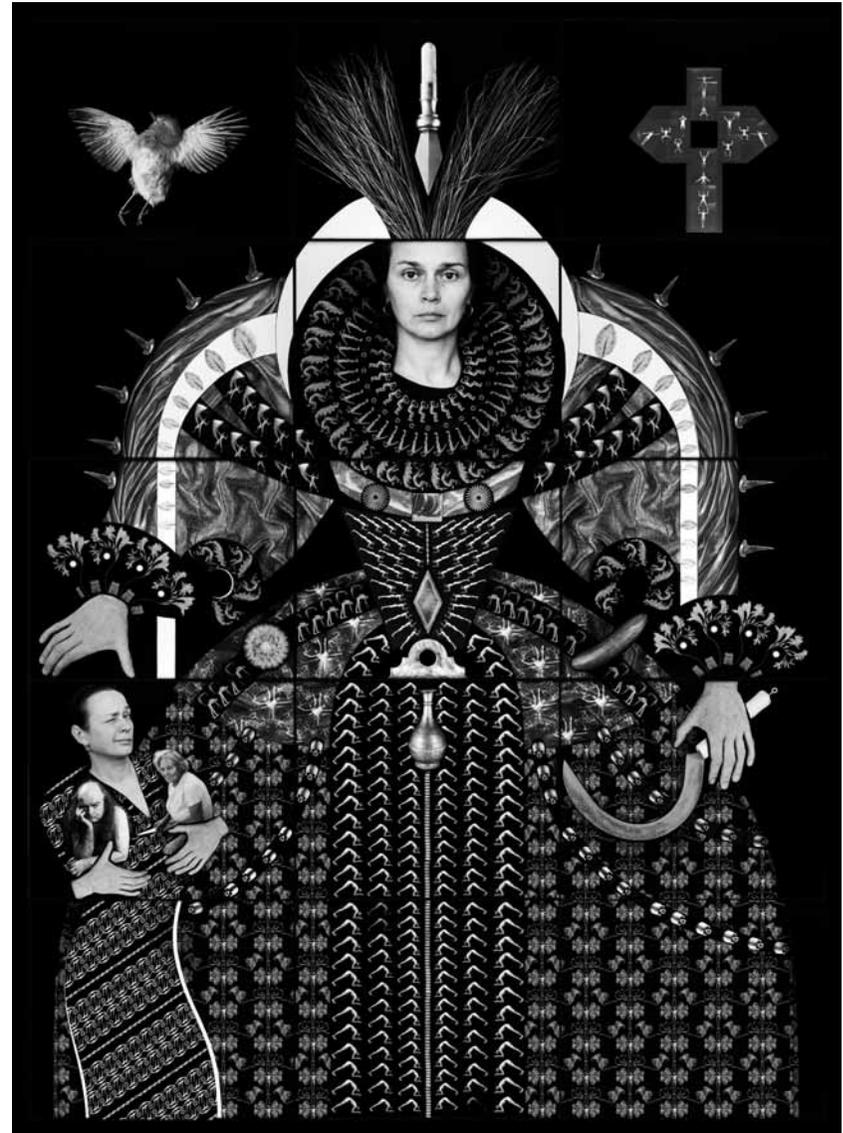
Splendour of Myself

Within the realm of the self-portrait *Splendour of Myself*, Zofia Kulik presents herself as a queen. Where is her kingdom? It lies in the private empire of a photographic archive, a collection made up of preserved or frozen gestures and motifs, a kingdom of ornaments in which forms are constantly repeated and pictures are rhythmically unravelled in time.

Zofia Kulik started to produce self-portraits after 1987, which brought an end to her collaboration with Przemyslaw Kwiek. In a sense, Kulik's self-portraits were not possible prior to that date. Between 1971 – 1987 the artist did not act autonomously, never exhibiting under her own name, only as a half of the artist team KwieKulik. The self-portrait came, therefore, as a manifestation of an awakening of identity in the artist. Along with this self-justification came the ornament. Though looked down upon at the dawn of modernism as blasphemy, the ornament served as a way for Zofia Kulik to unravel a vision of history, politics and art, as a continuum of recurring signs and gestures, organised by the artist's individual experience and materialised in her private archive of images.

In the 70ties, within the frame work of KwieKulik, the artist was concerned with the most radical sub-genre of process art, that excludes the picture or work of art as a complete, finite form: "We were never finishing anything", – Kulik has said in one interview; the art of KwieKulik was unfolding as an on-going artistic, sociological and political experiment, with its authors playing the roles of guinea-pigs and taking all the risks related to those roles. After 1987, Kulik decided to create compound photographic compositions. The contradiction between the "open form"¹ of earlier actions and the "complete form" of the later works from the end of the 80ties was overcome by the use of ornamentation. Isn't the ornament the most open of forms, a potential unfinished image?

Between 1987-91, Zofia Kulik implemented about 700 photographs of a naked male model², presented on a black background, striking poses and performing symbolic gestures quoted from ancient Greek vases, catholic iconography, and modern painting as well as Stalinists memorials. This collection of photographs, entitled by the artist *Archive of gestures* had been incorporated into a larger, extensive



The Splendour of Myself V (Mother, Daughter, Partner), 2007, silver gelatine print, 250x180 cm



The cardboard stencil no. 8 of 15 existing masks, which I used to expose the work *Splendour of Myself*, becomes the corset of my dress. Photographed against the light it shows the lace work between the miscellaneous field shapes.

In the darkroom I put this mask on photographic paper and expose individual fields to the light passing through various negatives. My works though they have a collage-like character are not made using scissors, glue or photoshop. It is a technique which I call multiple exposure black&white photography.

archive, created by the artist from the very beginning of her artistic practice. This archive of photographic images, the visual equivalent of life experiences up to the present, constitutes the material of Zofia Kulik's art.

The images of Zofia Kulik are produced as fotomontages, using multiple exposures placed on a photo paper, through precisely cut masks. In this way one work can consist of hundreds or - in the case of more elaborate pieces - even thousands of single images. The represented elements are reduced to the status of a sign; the structure is ruled by the grammar of ornament; based on rhythms, repetitions and symmetries. These photographic ornaments are woven into robes, which the artist uses to clothe herself in her self-portraits - similar to polish devotional traditions, where one "clothes" the painted representations of Holy Mary in so called camisoles, made of precious metals and valuable stones. History is ornamentalised as well. In the works such as *Idioms of the soc-ages* Zofia Kulik reckons with the visual experience of totalitarianism, by weaving presentations from the political gestures and symbols she collects. Her practice, the weaving of images, reminds one of oriental carpets, a reference to which the artist consciously refers in many of her works. The signs that make up these photographic carpets, evoke oriental calligraphy, where the difference between the text and ornament is abolished - just like in the art of Zofia Kulik the borders between discursiveness and decorativeness, tradition and modernity, rhythm and narration, abstraction and allegory are blurred „In a sense it is easy, banal and kitschy“, said Kulik in 1998 “The subtlety of this work relies on its complexity. I feel that a great value of my work is the fact that I'm a talented organizer of compound visual structures. In turn all of the details are simple, like in a common song about love, death etc. My whole work is based on the fact that I permanently collect and archive the images of this world. The complexity of this work comes from the richness of the archive that I possess.”

Stach Szablowski (translation Weronika Bachman and Ron Rocco)

1) Zofia Kulik I Przemyslaw Kwiek were students of Oskar Hansen, the architect, artist, art theoretician and professor at the Warsaw Art Academy, the author of the "Open form" theory

2) The performing model was Zbigniew Libera, self-taught artist, punk, dissident, in the 90ties he had become one of the most important polish artists.

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All the small images come from the archive of Zofia Kulik and have been used to create the work *Splendour of Myself*. Each of the pictures is captioned with the artist's annotations.



Zofia Kulik, photo summer 1991. Shutter pressed by Urszula Kwiek, Przemysław's sister. The photo has been taken on the occasion of a photo session, when Urszula posed for me.



Zofia Kulik, photo 1999. The photo has been taken by means of a time release. A photo session with myself.



Helena Kulik, photo 1993. My mother is turning over the whole garden. She collected a few truckloads of garbage; since the World War II the house and the land were used by squatters.



Przemysław Kwiek, photo 2002. I took this photo testing a roll of film Technical Pan 25.

Selected frames from the *Archives of Gestures*, which was made between 1987 and 1991, the model was Zbigniew Libera.





A bird killed by my dog, photo 2001



Dried up thistle leaves, photo 1997.



A wisp of grass and the metal crowning of a banner-staff, photo.



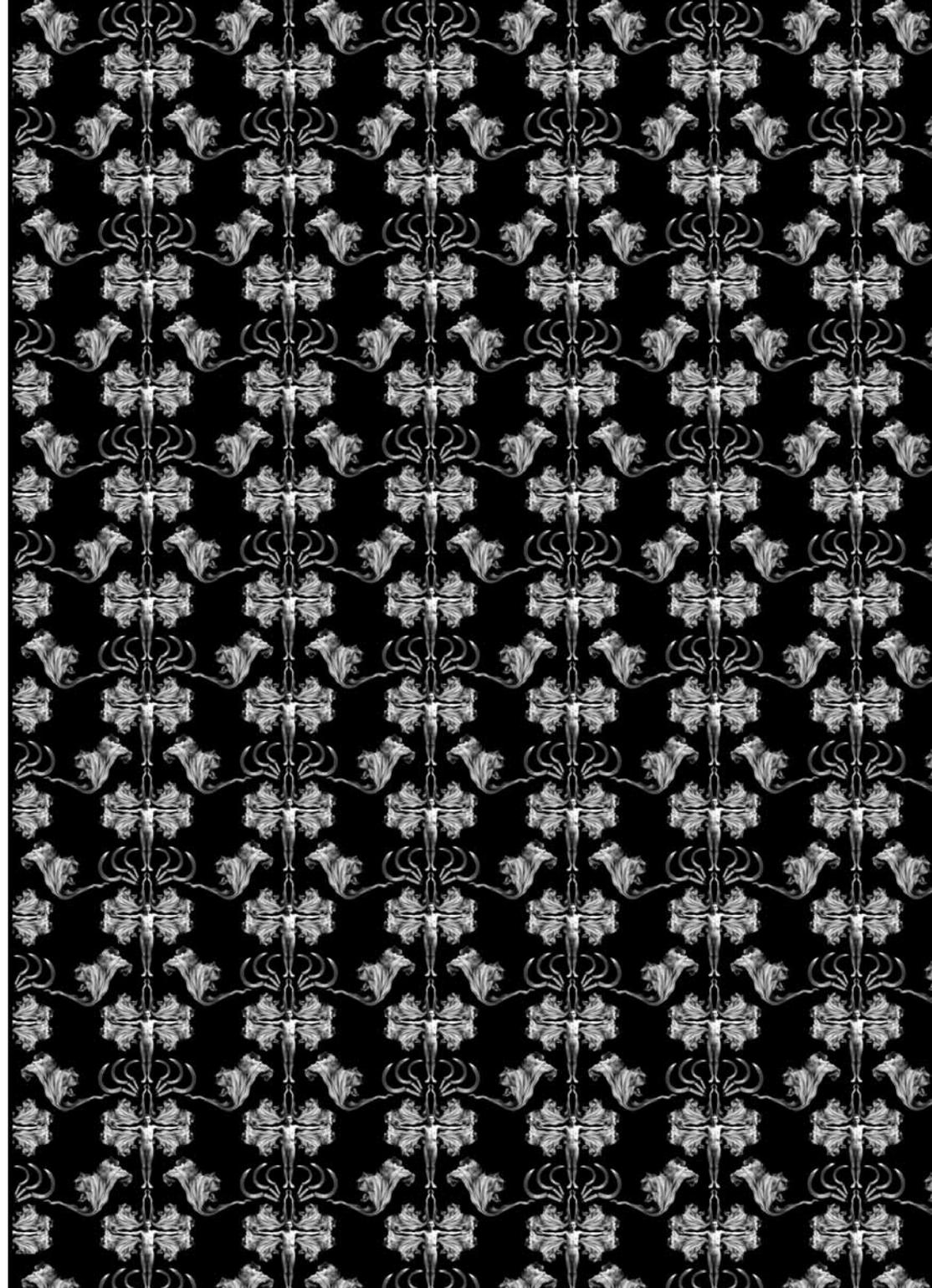
A dried up thistle leaf, photo 1994.

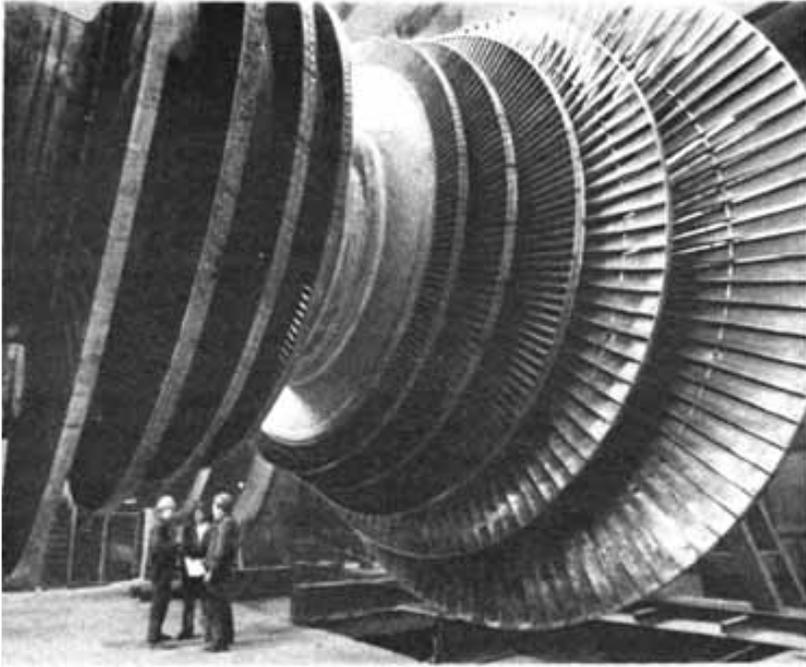


A poppy button. These flowers grow wild in my garden, photo 2000.

What is this flower, where did I get it from? Photo 2000.

Deseñ 11 (wings), 2008, silver gelatine print, 120x120 cm





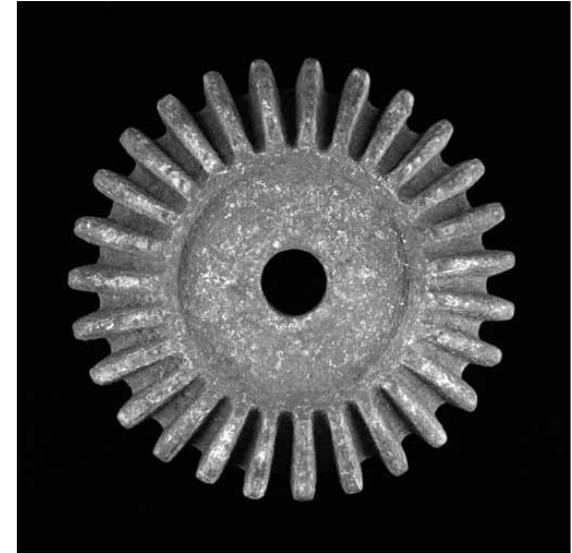
Do budowy turbin, podobnych do tej, jaką montuje się w jednej z radzieckich elektrowni atomowych, potrzebny jest wysoko rozwinięty przemysł. Dzięki kooperacji kraje RWPG zajęły jedno z pierwszych miejsc w świecie w dziedzinie budowy maszyn dla elektrowni atomowych.

The reproduction from a folder titled *On the Way to the 21th Century* printed in 1988 by the publishing house of the Press Agency Nowosti (Moscow), in Polish language.

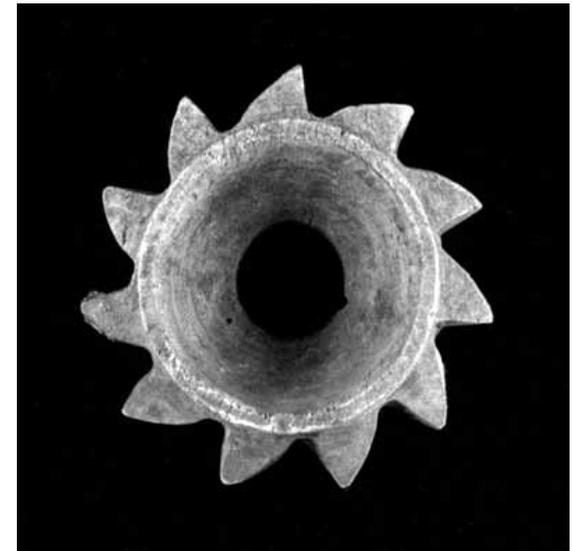
Caption below the photo:

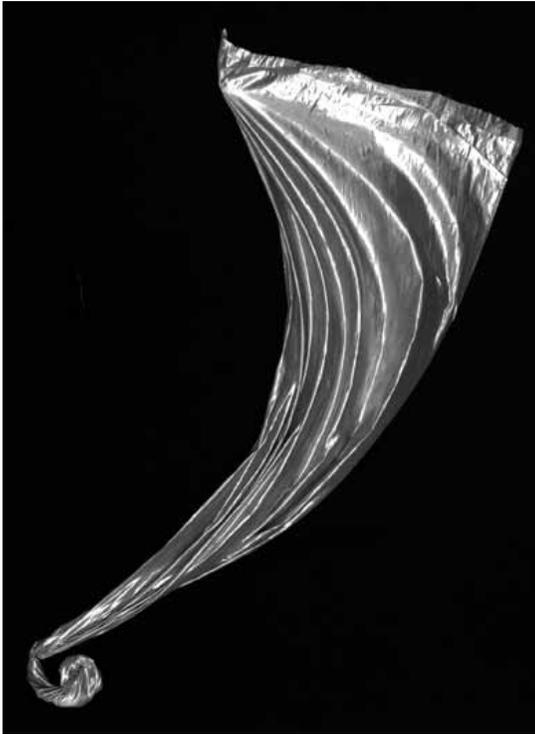
To build a turbine similar to this one, which is assembled in one of the Soviet nuclear power stations, a highly developed industry is necessary. Due to their cooperation, the RWPG countries took a leading place in the world regarding the building of machines in the domain of nuclear power.

A cog-wheel made from a material similar to a terrazzo, photo 1994.

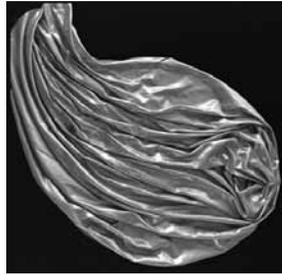


A cog-wheel or gear, wooden, photo 1994.





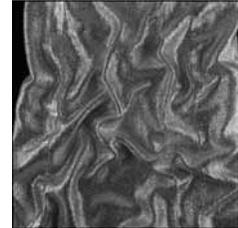
Fabric with metallic gloss, in reality it has a vivid green colour, photo 1990.



A piece of glass from a broken bottle, photo 1994.



Golden, flowing fabric, photo 1997.



A brass or copper vase, borrowed from my brother in 1988, photo 1994.





My hand catching a cucumber, photo 1994.



My hand catching a dandelion (the flower is named in Latin *Senecio vulgaris*). It is a useful herb, used as an agent for stopping excessive menstrual bleeding.

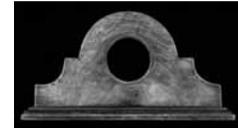


A skull borrowed from Jasio Rasiński. I don't know where he got it from, photo 1994. Jasio died in 2007.

A sickle bought in a garden shop. It's never been used in a garden, photo 1994.



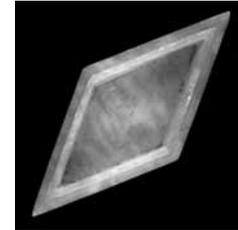
A wooden clock's cover, photo 1994.



Five cartridges, photo 1994.



An alabaster vessel, photographed from the top, photo 1994.



A metal twist stick (remains of a braid) with two holes, one on each end. A part of an unknown object, photo 1994.



ZOFIA KULIK

born in Wrocław, PL in 1947.

She graduated from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, Sculpture Department in 1971. From 1971 on, she started an artistic duet with Przemysław Kwiek, named KwiekKulik. They ran an independent Studio for Art Activities in their private apartment in Warsaw.

Solo Exhibitions (selection, after 1987):

- 2005 *From Siberia to Cyberia*, Museum Bochum, Bochum; Kunsthalle Rostock, DE
- 2004 *From Siberia to Cyberia*, Zachęta Gallery, Warsaw; Bunkier Sztuki, Krakow, PL
- 1998 *The Human Motif IV*, National Gallery, Prague, CZ
- 1997 *Symbolic Weapon IV*, Polish Pavilion, XLVII Biennale in Venice, IT
- 1996 *The Human Motif III*, ZONE Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Group Exhibitions (selection, after 1987):

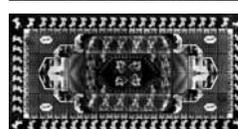
- 2008 *Schengen Women*, Skuc Gallery, Ljubljana, SLO
- 2007 *1,2,3...Avant-garde*, Centre for Contemporary Art (CSW), Warsaw; Sala Rekalde, Bilbao
Documenta 12, Kassel, DE
- 2006 *Interrupted Histories*, Museum of Modern Art, Ljubljana, SLO
Egocentric, Immoral, Outmoded, Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw, PL
Police, Bunkier Sztuki, Krakow, PL
Deep Light, Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven, Wilhelmshaven, DE
- 2005 *1900-2000 Warszawa – Moskwa*, Zachęta Gallery of Art, Warsaw; The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, RUS
- 2004 *E.U. Positive*, *Kunst aus dem Neuen Europa*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, DE
- 2003 *Architecture of Gender*, Sculpture Center, Long Island City, USA
- 2000 *2000 + ARTEAST COLLECTION*, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, SLO
- 1999 *After The Wall*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, S
- 1996 *New Histories*, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, USA

The exhibition has been curated by Monika Branicka and Asia Žak, Berlin 2008

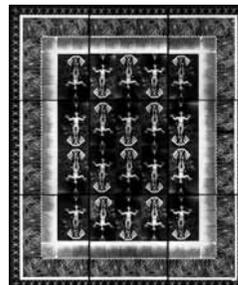
All the exhibited works:



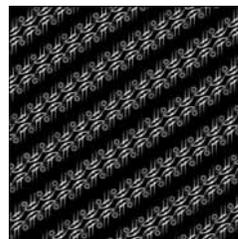
The Splendour of Myself V (Mother, Daughter, Partner), 2007, silver gelatine print, 250x180 cm, edition 3+1 AP



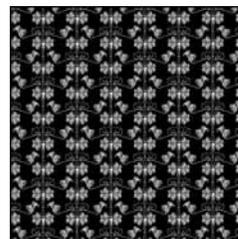
The Human Motif I (photo-carpet), 1989, 240x480 cm, silver gelatine print, edition 3+1 AP



Libera - Christmas Tree, 1990, silver gelatine print, 180x150 cm, edition 2+2 AP



Deseń 10 (chain), 2008, c- print, 120x120 cm



Deseń 11 (wings), 2008, c-print, 120x120 cm

