

**Exhibition title:** The Electronic Diaries (1984-2019)

**Artist:** Lynn Hershman Leeson

**Duration:** May 14th – June 26th, 2022

**Venue:** Simian

**Photography:** GRAYSC

**Images courtesy:** The artist, Simian

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**Exhibition text:**

The Electronic Diaries (1984-2019) An early pioneer of new media artworks, American artist Lynn Hershman Leeson examines the moral, cultural and political derivatives of the electronic evolution. Over four decades, she records herself, documenting not only her own life as a woman in an increasingly capitalist society but the way in which electronic technologies become more and more embedded in our daily lives.

'We have become a society of screens, of different layers, that keep us from knowing the truth', Lynn Hershman Leeson says, illustrating the complex interrelations between the real and the mediated self that works as a thematic undercurrent all through her six-film work series The Electronic Diaries (1984-2019).

In Part 1 of the series, filmed between 1984-1986, Hershman Leeson puts questions of self-image to the forefront, mirroring, cutting and multiplying her own image while revealing intimate details of body dysmorphia, guilt and abandonment. Hershman Leeson offers an eery glimpse into the future of reality TV and social media, as she reflects on how our relationship with screens distorts the truth and creates a gap between fiction and reality.

In Part 2, Hershman Leeson extends her reflections on themes of feminism, truth and control. Here, the character of Dracula becomes an abstraction of the power of mass media and personal traumas, anxieties and obsessions. 'You're not supposed to talk about it', she whispers as black and white images of the cape-clad man move across the screen. Dracula both seduces – and kills.

The subtle hints towards death become a theme in Part 3 where the discovery of a brain tumour puts forward reflections on Hershman Leeson's own mortality. At the same time, a new dimension is added to the electronic diaries which both assume the role of life witnesses as well as an almost religious confessional.

As time and digital technology evolves, Hershman Leeson becomes increasingly interested in moral questions connected to DNA modifications and cyborgs, linking her own reproduction and forthcoming role as a grandmother with manipulation of species and the tyranny imposed by evolution.

In the sixth and final film, Hershman Leeson and long-time friend and documentarist Eleanor Coppola reflect on women's rights through the decades. Here, it becomes clear that even if the media continues to distort and control female bodies and narratives, it also has the power to bring agency to the voice-less. 'Life is the ultimate editing process', Hershman Leeson candidly concludes as she looks back on her life as it has unfolded to the backdrop of the electronic evolution.

*Nanna Balslev Strøjer*

Photos are named in numerical order according to list below:

1. Installation view
2. Installation view
3. The Electronic Diaries (Part 1). 8:46 min., video projection
4. The Electronic Diaries (Part 2). 9:09 min., video projection
5. The Electronic Diaries (Part 3). 14:16 min., video projection
6. Installation view
7. Installation view
8. The Electronic Diaries (Part 4). 7:18 min., video projection
9. The Electronic Diaries (Part 5). 15:49 min., video projection
10. The Electronic Diaries (Part 6). 20:14 min., video projection