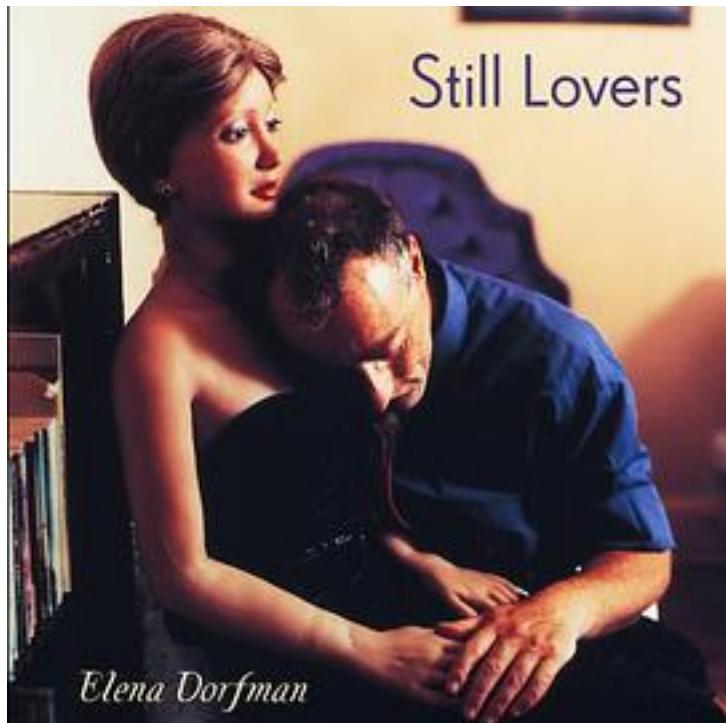


Still Lovers



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Since the beginning of human history dolls have served as symbolic selves, as icons for religious fervor, effigies that represent different sides of the psyche, as surrogates in therapy sessions, as child's play and adult fantasy. They are the vehicles of our cultural imagination, proxies we animate with our ideas and ideals. In *Still Lovers*, Elena Dorfman explores the complex relationships between life-sized, synthetic sex dolls and their owners. For many, the idea of the sex doll conjures images of the kitschy inflatable, but these expensive, highly realistic dolls, which owners customize to the smallest detail, are far from silly, and they perform more than a sexual role for their owners. What started for Dorfman in 1999 as a playful curiosity - a project about 'men

having sex with 125 pounds of perfectly formed synthetic female' - rapidly became a serious exploration of the emotional and psychological ties between the owners and their dolls. Her candid wonderment and non-judgmental approach present a fascinating glimpse into the personalities that owners invest in their dolls and the zest with which they attire them. The dolls become sculptural beauties, sex kittens, companions, and family members. One woman owns several dolls that represent different aspects of her personality and sexuality, while another owner, a military officer, dreams of marrying his 'Rebecca.' A suburban owner drinks coffee on the couch as 'Taffy' lounges nearby in her crotchless negligee. A family goes about their morning routine with 'Valentine' at the table in a demure cardigan and straw hat. Dorfman's deft treatment of the subject and neutral color palate keep the images firmly grounded in a documentary tradition and, thus, depict the subjects outside of the visual schema associated with fantasy. The result is that we as viewers –though we know the dolls to be passive and inanimate – begin to believe in the owners' vision of these dolls. Though the dolls' flesh may be synthetic, the love and attachment for the doll is very real, and the roles these surrogates perform are active and fruitful. Dorfman's images confront the concept of the ideal woman and her place in the home. They also challenge our notions of love and show the imagination's powerful function in achieving and sustaining it.

作者介绍:

Elena Dorfman is a fine art and magazine photographer who documents extreme circumstances and unusual subjects. Her work has appeared in the New York Times Magazine, Marie Claire, GQ and Elle, and her books include *Here & Now* and *The C-word: Teenagers and Their Families Living with Cancer*. She is exhibited widely in the US. Represented by the Edwynn Houk Gallery in New York, her images are in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

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