

ALMA HASER

THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS'
GALLERY



08 JUL 2016
14 AUG 2016

PRINT SALES GALLERY
ALMA HASER
COSMIC SURGERY

⊕ The Photographers' Gallery
16 - 18 Ramillies Street
London W1F 7LW
Oxford Circus
tpg.org.uk



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ENGLAND



Combining photography with collage and origami techniques, Haser's work seeks to expand on traditional portraiture and reflect on the concerns of millennial and future generations.

This will be the artist's first UK solo exhibition and includes prints from her critically acclaimed series Cosmic Surgery (2014-16) alongside never before seen 3D portraits and free standing paper sculptures.

Inspired by notions of surveillance and the increasing prevalence of beauty treatments, Cosmic surgery is imagined as a medical procedure to help obscure one's identity from watchful government eyes or simply as a form of aesthetic improvement. The final prints are a kaleidoscope of facial features and curious shapes both unsettling yet compelling in their intricateness and construction.

Shortlisted for the Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize at the National Portrait Gallery in 2012 for her piece 'The Ventriloquist', a portrait of two childhood friends, Alma has gone on to win third place at the 2012 Foto8 Summer Show and then the Magenta Foundation's Bright Spark Award in 2013 for her 'Cosmic Surgery' series. Her work has been exhibited worldwide.

PRICING STRUCTURE

2D PRINTS

Edition of 10	
60 x 60cm	
Editions 1 - 5	£500 +vat
Editions 6 - 8	£750 +vat
Editions 9 - 10	£1000 +vat
AP1	£1500 +vat
AP2	£2000 +vat

3D PRINTS

Edition of 5		
30 x 30 x 5cm		
1 - 2	£800 +vat	(includes frame)
3 - 4	£1000 +vat	(includes frame)
5	£1250 +vat	(includes frame)

3D SCULPTURES

Edition of 5		
12 x 12 x 12cm		
1 - 2	£500 +vat	(includes frame)
3 - 4	£650 +vat	(includes frame)
5	£1000 +vat	(includes frame)

EMERGING: ALMA HASER'S "COSMIC SURGERY"

AUGUST 30TH, 2013

LATEST ISSUE



EMERGING: ALMA HASER'S COSMIC SURGERY

Emerging photographer Alma Haser speaks to Wonderland about her origami-inspired portraits in "Cosmic Surgery."

Alma Haser's photographic work may not have been around for long but it is definitely making waves. Since graduating from Nottingham Trent University, she has received an abundance of recognition; named by the British Journal of Photography as one of the four best graduates of 2010, recently shortlisted for the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize shown at the National Portrait Gallery for 'The Ventriloquist', and her work has featured in 10 exhibitions internationally. Not bad for someone who only graduated three years ago.

Haser's intricately abnormal portraiture 'Cosmic Surgery' has in particular gained a lot of attention, having received third place Peoples Choice Award at the Foto8 Summer Show 2012. Wonderland spoke to her about the series, along with origami, travel and an evolved future generation.

You come from an artistic background, how has your upbringing influenced your work?

I am extremely lucky to have two parents as artists and to have had such a great childhood filled with creativity. I am always taking [inspiration] from my past experiences and getting advice from my family. I couldn't see myself going down any other route other than art.

Where do you find your inspiration?

From films, books, stories I hear about on the radio or read in the daily newspapers — [they] all trigger ideas in my head that then create new projects.

You travelled on a round-the-world trip when you were younger; did that have an influence on your creativeness?

Yes, of course! I would recommend for anyone to travel and see as many places as they can. I can get immersed into learning about each new culture for example Japan has been a big influence on my work; it's the catalyst for my origami obsession.

Having been chosen as one of the four best graduates of 2010 from the British Journal of Photography, how has your style changed since graduating?

My style has changed quite a lot. I would say I became a little freer with my ideas and process. I did however become very stuck just after that article was written. I didn't know where to go from my degree show, what to create and how to make my name in photography. But I soon became aware of the freedom and that I was the only thing holding my creativity back. I would often use myself to experiment my ideas, to see if they worked before trying them on anyone else.

Cosmic Surgery is both unsettling yet strangely beautiful, was that your intention to unnerve and fascinate at the same time?

Yes, I am always trying to make work that either confuses or invites the viewer to take a closer look.

Origami is used in Cosmic Surgery and has been included in previous projects, how did it become a feature in your photography?

I used to watch a lot of Japanese films and read about Japanese stories and myths one of which stuck in my mind. 'Sadako and the thousand paper cranes,' a true story about a girl who lived in Hiroshima at the time of the atomic bombing by the US. She developed leukaemia from the radiation and spent her time in a nursing home creating origami cranes in hope of making a thousand of them. She was inspired to do so by one of the Japanese legend, that one who created a thousand origami cranes would be cured by gods. However she only managed to make 6644 cranes, and died in 1955. People in Japan now fold a thousand cranes in memory of Sadako, and leave them on her grave. I found the story so compelling, it inspired me to create my series 'Paper' which are each accompanied with a short story.

A lot of reviews have said the faces look futuristic and alien-like, could they be a possible insight of an evolved future generation?

I actually have this in my project statement, so I guess they got that from what I said. But yes I always like making work that has an otherworldly feel, and 'Cosmic Surgery' in my eyes, are the next generation. The parents are not disfigured by the origami because they are like us.

Its interesting to hear what people say and how they interpret the images, some say its to do with cosmetic surgery (a play on the title), some say its how we are becoming unknown and unrecognisable. But it's really up to you to decide.

You've said before about wanting to hide your true identity, why is that important to you?

I know it is hard to hide your true identity, but I try. As I said before I used and still do self-portraiture but away hide or disguise my face. I started it because I was shy but also because I didn't want the work to be prominently about myself. By making myself anonymous I was allowing people to relate to the work more freely. It wasn't about me it was about the girl in the picture who could also be 'you.'

I also think its fascinating that most photographers, unless really famous or a big self-portrait photographer/artist, are anonymous. You know of their work but you hardly ever see their own portrait. I guess I like this anonymity.

Tell us about any future projects you're working on right now.

I have many in the pipeline, but I rarely tell anyone about them before they are finished. So you'll have to wait and see.

JENNA GARRETT PHOTO 04.10.15 0:00 PM

EXQUISITE ORIGAMI ... MADE OUT OF HUMAN FACES



Alma Haser's photos have everything necessary to make a stunning portrait—fashionably dressed subjects, precise lighting, and perfect poses. But it all goes awry when you look at the face. Or what's left of it.

In her series *Cosmic Surgery*, Haser transforms her subjects' faces into a complex geometry of eyes, noses, and mouths. While it might look like Photoshop magic, she handcrafts each portrait. It's a painstaking process of making the photo, cutting out the face, folding it like origami, and then making a photo of the finished image.

Haser was born in Germany, but spent most of her life in England. She studied photography at Nottingham Trent University, where she also developed an interest in origami. But it wasn't until after graduating that Haser struck upon the idea of combining the two. "When I took self portraits, I would never want it to be the subject so would often cover or hide my face," she says. "I was trying to find some more ways of doing this, and liked the idea of using masks. So it made sense to combine my love for origami and masks."

She began by creating elaborate folded shapes and attaching them to her face. Interesting, yes, but not particularly easy or comfortable. After giving the problem some thought, it dawned on her that she might use the face within the photo to create the mask. She made the first portrait in *Cosmic Surgery* in 2012.

The title grew from Haser's dyslexia, which caused her to mistake the word "cosmetic" for "cosmic." The same visual confusion applies to the images—more than a dozen in all—which can be impossible to read at a glance. Even those close to the subjects occasionally do not recognize their loved ones in the photographs.

As to the subjects, Haser photographs people who strike her fancy, be it a friend, a relative, or a stranger she meets on the street. She's most interested in people with distinctive features and style. "I go for unusual looking people who have slightly oversized eyes, lips, noses—whatever I don't have basically," she jokes.

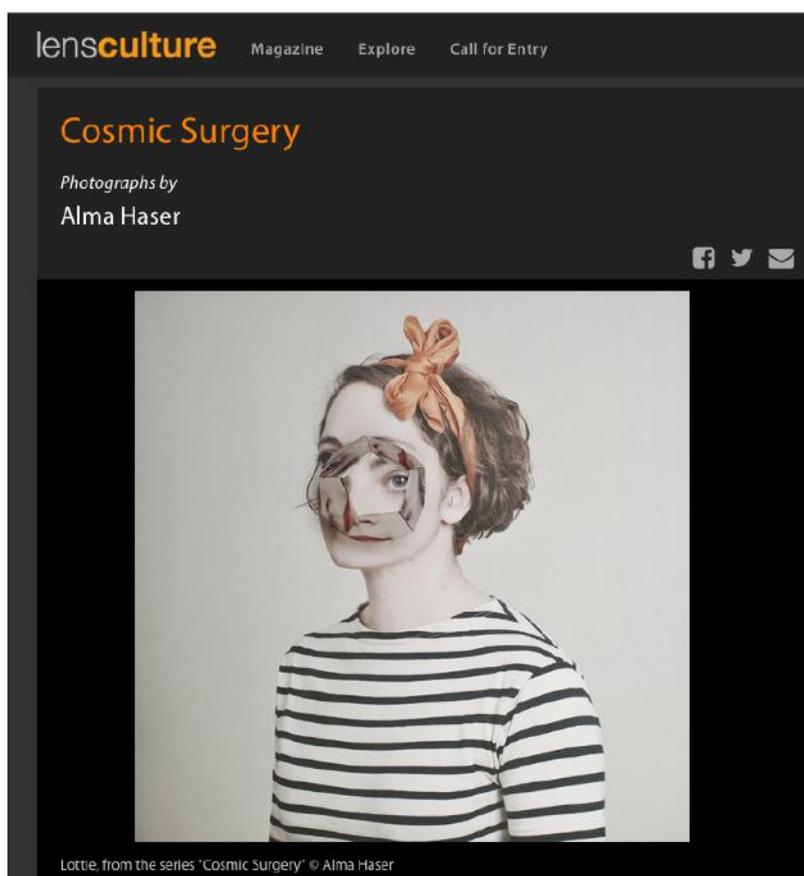
The real work begins after she photographs them in her studio near Hastings. Haser prints one large portrait and as many as 90 smaller images of the person's face. Then she'll spend hours meticulously

folding the photos into complex shapes inspired in part by kusudama origami, a Japanese paper-folding technique. Once she's got a shape she likes, Haser places it on the large portrait and photographs it. Depending on the complexity of the face, the process can take as long as 24 hours.

The final result playfully subverts traditional portraiture by combing multiple techniques to obscure and enhance the subject. And it was an excellent way of illustrating *In a Perpetual Present*, a WIRED feature about Susie McKinnon, who lacks the ability to remember her past—or imagine her future. Haser photographed three models to represent McKinnon throughout her life, each origami portrait growing more complex as she ages.

“The woman is there, and all the pieces are present,” Haser says, “but the faces are unrecognizable; as McKinnon can't recognize the emotional experiences of her own life.”

SELECTED PRESS LENS CULTURE



If we lived in a universe where space could be flattened and folded to create a new dimension, our faces might look like those in Alma Haser's portrait series, *Cosmic Surgery*.

She does this by superimposing folded origami structures over original same-size photo portraits — taking 3D to 2D via photography, and then back to 3D with origami, only to be reduced one last time to a 2D image of an image, albeit with a *trompe l'oeil* 3D illusionist effect...

These disquieting “portraits” bring to mind cubist and surreal art as well as bug-like multiple vision and kaleidoscopes.

One unexpected side effect, for me, is that suddenly details in each photograph become increasingly important and integral to the success of the images as a whole. So, I notice the scruff of hair on the back of a neck, or the weave of a sweater, the general posture of the sitters, the hint of tattoo peeking out from a lacey blouse. — Jim Casper



Alma Haser: Cosmic Surgery

Work / Photography

Photography: Alma Haser amazes us with her folded stories

How to make the portrait shot more interesting? How about photographing your sitter in position, making multiple prints of those images, folding the prints into a maddeningly complex origami modular construction, placing it in front of the sitter's face and then re-photographing the entire pose from scratch? Sound complicated? It's just part of the process for the fantastically talented photographer Alma Haser whose work *Cosmic Surgery* saw her shortlisted for the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Award back in 2012.

One year later, one Magenta Foundation's Bright Spark Award under her arm, three exhibitions down and a nomination for the Taylor Wessing Photographic Award for the second year running, Alma's work is getting more attention than ever.

And we can understand why; her work tempts us in, hinting at a hidden narrative lurking behind the portrait, the unsettling images of mothers holding children with manipulated faces, once familiar, now unnerving, or the young woman looking out of the shot as she transforms into something alien yet somewhat beautiful. So Alma leaves us trapped somewhere between desire and disgust, unsure whether to trust the utter magnificence of the final shot.