

FEATURED
PHOTOGRAPHER
**EMILIA
MARTIN**

We See magazine aims to support and promote women photographers in print as well as online. On the following pages, Polish photographer Emilia Martin talks about her photographic practice

A CONVERSATION ABOUT PHOTOGRAPHY WITH EMILIA MARTIN

by Jekaterina Saveljeva

City/Country

Hague The Netherlands (but I’m originally from Poland).

What do you enjoy most about photography?

What I enjoy most about photography is the encounters and collaborative processes.

My photography usually involves people, but it doesn’t always necessarily mean photographing others.

Sometimes it means working with others, being inspired by others or photographing others through places or things. I believe photography is by its nature a collaborative process – we need to understand people, places, things in order to photograph them. There needs to be some chemistry between a person photographing and a person or an object photographed. This chemistry is something I’m deeply interested in, it’s also something that we can see in the photographs later on. I like to think of photography as an encounter happening between a photographer and what we can later see in the photograph.

Was there anything that inspired you to start making photos?

I think it was a natural desire to try and discover myself through photography. Photography is such an instinctive process – it helped me to navigate myself through the world so many times. It’s also a perfect diary tool. There hasn’t been one motivation or one inspiration, but definitely a strong desire to capture some magic, some tension, some emotion, some essence.

I started taking photography very seriously when I worked for Emirates as a cabin crew – I was constantly flying somewhere else, never knowing anybody, and so camera became very important to me. I think that there is a reason why photography and travelling go together so well – camera is a perfect tool to discover and investigate a new, unknown place.

What is your favourite object/subject/topic to photograph?

I feel like all my projects deal to an extent with the theme of identity – who am I, how do I function within bigger contexts, how does society shape my reality. I love photographing people because I feel like when I do that I can never be sure exactly of what will happen. It keeps me alert, keeps me present and opens doors to serendipity. Serendipity is something that definitely excites me in photography and in life.

Do you feel it is important to share your vision on social media?

To be perfectly honest with you – not so much. I feel like social media is not really a good place for photography. It’s been designed to entertain, to scroll. Selfies are blended with pieces of art, personal stories with advertised product. I acknowledge the fact that social media is a wonderfully democratic space to be – it has its obvious strengths. Social media provokes many questions: what is art anyway? What is “good art”? What makes one thing valuable and other not? I believe these are very important questions to ask.



I personally enjoy sharing my work in other places, but I still choose to participate in social media.

Who do you think is your aimed audience?

I don’t come from the artistic family. My mother has been a very creative person and my father is extremely sensitive, but art wasn’t really present in our everyday. I would like to aim towards the audience that is not necessarily high brow. I want to open conversations that are personal and emotional, I want to engage people and create things that are accessible and inclusive.

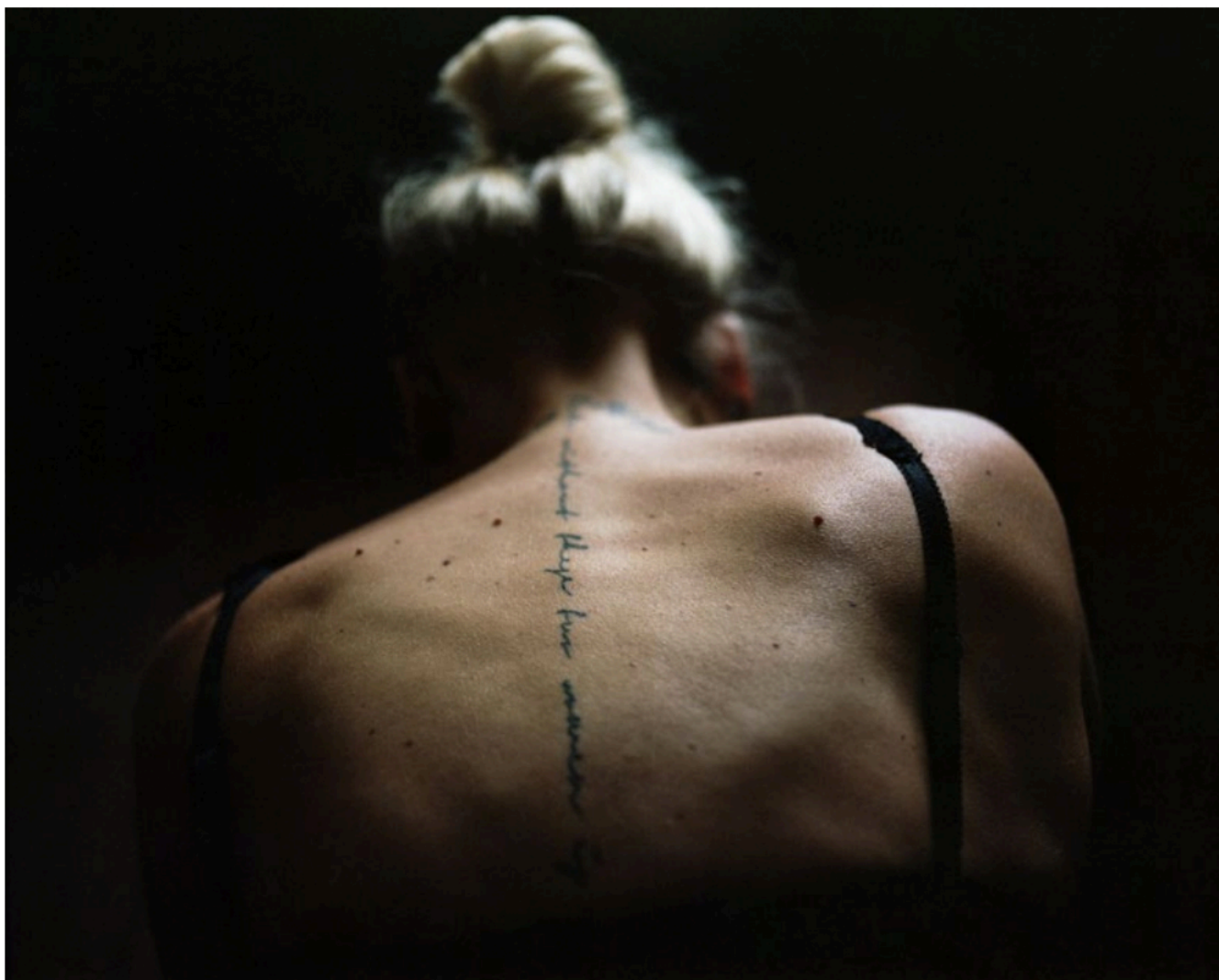
Do you like working on stories at home/in your local community? If yes/no – why?

I believe that choosing to work on a story or a project is a huge commitment. It requires a huge amount of dedication and time. Considering this, it just makes sense to me that I should commit to topics and themes that I deeply care about. I always work on things that are close to me, that I deal with personally or I can refer to on a very personal level. It feels

very important to me, and I feel like I can learn something new about myself with each project. This learning process is something that really excites me.

Do you think photography could change someone’s life? In what way?

I don’t believe that photography can be an antidote to present day problems. It’s not going to solve poverty, won’t stop wars or hunger. I believe the visual culture we have accepted and are used to is so problematic. Should we continue on photographing violence and therefore normalise it, or should we rebel against it? Should we continue photographing impoverished people or should we give them the privacy they deserve? I don’t know answers to these questions but I believe these are complicated discussions to have. But I also believe, that photography is first and foremost an encounter between people. If you get at least two people with open hearts and willingness to be real and honest, magic can happen. It has certainly changed my life. ■





OUT

by Emilia Martin

After a period of fascination with liberty, outwardness, open borders and the European Union, Poland has turned its face towards Catholicism and nationalism in recent years. With this, inevitably, has come repression of freedom and choice. The ruling party, elected into Presidential office in 2015, has openly attacked LGBTQ minorities and turned a blind eye to the rising levels of aggression and discrimination directed at them.

Grey Communist era housing blocks, smog, financial stresses and strains and the lingering feeling of unease at being “the other” in a hostile society. This is the landscape in which Magda and Daria are living their love story.

I was born into a very grey, patriarchal, religious society that had a very strong idea

for who I was supposed to be. I felt like I had entire set of roles prescribed to me. I was rejected by my mother and I was constantly punished for the way I was thinking, the way I behaved or the dreams I had. I can understand the feeling of being “the other” in the hostile environment, and even though my situation has been so different, I’ve realised that both me and girls had in common way more than we could have once admitted. The camera has become a mirror.

Daria once told me that if a photograph on social media is hashtagged “#girlskissgirl”, “#polishlesbians” or “#girllovesgirl” it tends to go viral. They say if they use them too often, they feel bad about themselves.

“As if you’re creating a caricature of yourself?”, I thought out loud. She quietly nodded.