

## **STANKA TSONKOVA – USHA**

Born 1952

### **About the artist:**

Stanka Tsonkova - Usha was born in 1952. She graduated from the School of Photography in 1973. She began working with classic gelatin black and white photography, but soon started experimenting with double exposure, collages, overpainting on photography, manipulating negatives by hand and experimenting with the whole process of development. Her photographs are deeply personal, saturated with emotion. The subjects of her photographs are the people around her, friends, loved ones, people she places in imaginary worlds. Usha combines abstract elements with the realistic, uses the defects of paper and masters the interaction of developers to manipulate her photographs. Experiments with photographic chemicals, processes and materials have given her the freedom to extend the boundaries of the specific purpose of photography as a document reflecting reality as it is.

These attempts she shares in her teaching and lecturing practice at the National School of Art in Sofia; the National School of Culture in Gorna Banya, Sofia, the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts (NATFA) in Sofia, the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, the Atrium in Berlin; the Free University in Kreuzberg, Berlin, the Kyoto University of the Arts, the Tokyo Polytechnic University, the Star and Shadow in Newcastle, UK.

Stanka Tsonkova has had over 20 solo exhibitions in the country and abroad: in Berlin, Tokyo, New York, La Rochelle, Bratislava, Budapest, as well as numerous collective exhibitions: in Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, New York, Houston, Paris, Berlin, Prague, Amsterdam, Tokyo, etc.

Recent group exhibitions: 2019 /Open Art Files: Notes and Footnotes, curated by Vera Mlechevska and organized by Open Arts Foundation, Kapana Gallery, Plovdiv, 2020 /Genealogy, ONE Gallery, Sofia, Sparks of Imagination. On the Frequencies of the Beuys, curated by Vera Mlechevska, Square 500 National Gallery.

She has received awards in salons for contemporary art and experimental photography: 1990 – the Art of the Day salon in Budapest; 1986 and 1989 – Grand Prix in the New Artistic Pursuits Salon in Royan, France; 2003 – a 6-month scholarship of the Japanese Foundation for the Embrace-Stone Garden project in Tokyo.

Her works are part of the collections of the National Library in Paris; the Musée de l'Élysée in Lausanne; the Shadai Gallery in Tokyo, Japanese Foundation; the Zental und Landesbibliothek in Berlin; the National Art Gallery in Sofia; private collections in the USA, Japan, France, England, Germany, etc.

**Selected Awards:**

2003 Grant from Japan Foundation for the project "Embrace-Stone Garden"/6 months/  
2001 First prize of The Review of Bulgarian Photography/1990-2001/ Photographer of  
the decade  
1990 Award in the Art of Today-Budapest, Hungary  
1989 Grand Prix-SIRP, Royan- France  
1986 Grand Prix-SIRP, Royan-France/Salon International of the Research  
Photography/

**Museum Collections:**

Zental- und Landesbibliothek Berlin 2008  
Japan Foundation, Tokyo 2003  
Shadai Gallery, Tokyo 2001  
City Art Gallery, Plovdiv 1998  
National Art Gallery, Sofia 1994  
Musee de L'Elysee, Lausanne 1990  
National Library, Paris 1990

**Publications:**

2019 Catalogue "Open Art Files: Notes and footnotes"  
2013 EYEMAZING book  
2012 NYArts magazine, December  
2012 EYEMAZING Magazine, Spring issue  
2010 Imago- Slovak photomagazine- portfolio "The self- portraiture of Stanka Usha  
Tsonkova: Broken Mirrors fixed with duct tape" by Rafaelo Kazakov  
1990 "Pour la Photographique" by Ciro Bruni-Paris

## STANKA TSONKOVA – USHA

### 1. *Homage to Rodchenko*, 1989

9 collages, 50 x 70 cm each, overpainted photography, copy machine prints, colored paper, ink

**Edition:** Unique

**Ownership history:** The Artist



**STANKA TSONKOVA – USHA**  
*Homage to Rodchenko, 1989 (details)*



## STANKA TSONKOVA – USHA, *Homage to Rodchenko*, 1989

### About the work:

This series of 9 pictures politically addressed the totalitarian communist system. Inspired by Russian avant-garde from 1920s and devoted to its outstanding contributions to the history of modern art. The work consists of collages made of hand-made manipulated images of party members and paper copies assembled with red and black paper, suggesting as obituary notices.

In the early days of Soviet union Alexandr Rodchenko was a prominent figure in the Russian Avant-garde. His photo collages and unusual camera angles made him pioneer in the field of photography. In the 1930s he fell from grace with the Soviet regime. Rodchenko began to make more conventional work, such as photo books on party leaders. After his death it appeared that in the books he had blacked out the faces of victims of political purges. Usha took Rodchenko as her inspiration for a series of newspaper clippings and photo copies in which former Bulgarian party leaders have been rendered unrecognizable. The red and white elements suggest the idea of obituary notice on a bulletin board.

The series won one of the grand prizes at S.I.R.P. Royan /Salon International of Research Photography/ in April 1989

