
Eva & Adele.

Interviewed by VENUS NEMITZ
Portrait by JOSEPH KADOW

How did Eva and Adele become EVA & ADELE?

Adele: I believe it had already started with our births, our childhoods, our developments. Both of us were independently engaged in transgressing the limits of gender. I have always been fascinated by the word 'hermaphrodite', and have had it explained to me a thousand times. I was never interested in playing with dolls. Grown-ups would ask me, "when will you get married?" And I said, quite seriously, "only to a man with breasts." The transgression of the limits of gender in its binary division consist of what is male and what is female. That's what I doubted from an early age on, that it's just in these two categories alone. And then I became an artist and that was the lifelong search for a solution. Not only a solution in the professional sense but also in life. When we met, it was like "Oh, Yes!" But it was also difficult, to unite two artists, two bodies of work, which had already begun to bloom. Everything happened very quickly when we decided to become EVA & ADELE forever.

Eva: Actually, it was a sacrifice for both of us. I had such beautiful blonde hair. Before we met, I took a photo series with a Polaroid camera where I tried to portray all types of women that I knew. My interest in gender transgression started in my childhood, in a very childlike way, but still with joyful commitment.

A: Because you already owned such great girls clothes and handbags.

E: I built up a repertoire of different costumes with the help of my grandmother. My parents and their visitors had to witness my performances. That's also when I collected my first experiences of peoples reactions, people from outside. And their everyday life. It was good to have these experiences. Back when we decided to become EVA & ADELE, harsh words have sometimes flown through the air, and also hit us painfully.

A: That was 30 years ago, you have to imagine.

E: We are actually surprised that things have changed so much since then. We believe that we've contributed a lot ourselves. Fortunately, the media



has been involved from early on, affectionately inclined.

A: We've believed and claimed from the beginning, that the distribution of our image is a work of art in itself. Our image started spreading throughout the world, people took snapshots and showed their families, their children. Our image has always been a talking point, which is great for diversity and representation, so that people could become familiar with this image, so that they wouldn't be afraid of us. Above all, our appearance was portrayed as a success story and the enforcement was incredibly important to us. When somebody threw a beer can at us or harassed us, we always kept calm, wouldn't let ourselves go, kept a smile on our lips, a success story in itself.

It sounds as though you have always been EVA & ADELE, even before you met.

A: Yes, we just didn't know it yet.

E: We can really say that. And to know, today, that there was always a connection, even when we didn't know anything about each other, when we grew up far apart from each other...

A: Yes, I have always believed that we somehow got close to each other with our different biographies. The moment we were established as personalities, we met. Because we were full-grown, strong personalities by then, we were able to figure out how to combine us.

Was there a distinct moment in which you knew you would never again be 'just' Eva or 'just' Adele?

A: It was a change in shape, you can say. And also a decision.

E: We definitely wanted to continue to be artists. It really means becoming an artist and being recognized as such, and it hasn't been that easy for us. There were also many obstacles along the road.

You decided to shave the hair from your head and dress identically, to visually become one. Was that a conceptual decision?

E: That was the deciding factor. We came late for the 20th century and early for the 21st century. And we saw a big opportunity in that. We have been to all the big art events, big art markets like Basel and Paris and where they all are.

A: But always as a performance and a performance arena. The performance and our image, along with the art, was offered for sale. It was important to us to become known internationally. We went from Stockholm to Poland via France, Spain, Italy, and the US.

How would you describe your Art?

A: We are conceptual artists. Recently someone said to us that we represent the sensual embodiment of conceptual art. I like that. Art is often so barren, restricted. It was very hard in the beginning. People have tried to narrow us down. But we are passionate painters and we integrate different media- photography, sculptures, videos. That's exactly who we are. We love that.

E: We have elevated the amateur photograph to a piece of art through our work. Everybody took pictures of us. At that time, with analog cameras or disposable cameras with plastic lenses. We, in return, asked them to send us the pictures, which often ended up being used in our works or as a basis of a drawing or painting. We've

just finished a project that was started 20 years ago.

A: Since we are the living artwork, every picture taken of us becomes a piece of our work – no matter who snapped the picture.

Do you feel like social media is imitating your art?

A: We were already doing social media before social media. With the dissemination of our image and the communication about the images. Because the center of our work is also communication and distribution of our image, as well as personal conversation.

E: It's also a lot of fun to meet people. I am very shy and it is fantastic that people come to me, to start a conversation.

Being art 24/7 must be exhausting at times. How do you relax?

A: When we come home, to our studio, to our pictures. This is our world. We listen to music, go from one floor to the next or just sit on the balcony and listen to the birds.

E: Whenever we step into the studio. We always look forward to travel, just so the longing becomes stronger, just so we can feel the works waiting for us. Certain things evolve while traveling.

We've talked a lot about you as a union, about your similarities. In which ways are you different?

A: From a human point of view, we are very, very, very different. Eva is more restrained, and I am often more spontaneous or think out loud without censoring myself, which Eva would never do- not at all. We are very different in temperament. I appreciate Eva for her carefulness. I'm more casual with things and Eva can be super strict, in such a nice way. You can say Eva benefits from me and I benefit from Eva. We are two extremes.

What happens when you don't agree?

E: We have to convince each other. In my artistic development, very much like Picasso, I had to erode a huge mountain of art history and work through it. It was a very tough school. Adele, on the other hand, did a lot of work with zest and spontaneity. Which sometimes led to big arguments, but we always came to a point where we thought, "now it's getting interesting, enriching." We came up with things through our quarrel that might have otherwise been suppressed.

A: The nice thing is, we trust each other and are not afraid of such disputes. We have developed a very good culture of debate, based on mutual trust. We may say the most horrible things where others may have divorced 50 times over, but we laugh about it in the end. We wouldn't endanger EVA & ADELE for personal reasons, that'd be total nonsense. EVA & ADELE is our invention and we want to keep and enforce it. And obviously, because we love each other.

E: I have to say something about love. We've just got married ten days ago. We first registered our same-sex partnership in 2011. Before that, I had to work through the whole transsexual section of bureaucracy.

A: That was the process of having Eva recognized as female, which made it possible for us to have a same-sex civil partnership. And now, we have transformed the partnership into a marriage. And I never wanted to get married, never, since the option of marrying a man wasn't one. Now we call each other "my wife" all the time.

