

DIAMOND DOLLS

Hormazd Narielwalla

'A fabulous and fascinating addition to the Bowie universe.'
— **Dylan Jones, OBE**

'*Diamond Dolls* is a stunning anthology of drawings, built up from discarded Savile Row brown tailoring patterns. Hormazd elevates these hollow outlined figures into ceremonious beauty and magic.'
— **Russell Tovey**

'What people regarded as a pose on my part was actually an expression of my need to assert my own true nature. And it was precisely what people regarded as my true self which was masquerade.'
—Yukio Mishima, *Confessions of a Mask*

Diamond Dolls by Hormazd Narielwalla is a limited-edition artist's book that celebrates the iconic figure of David Bowie. The publication is based on a series of Narielwalla's signature collage images and explores themes of adornment, identity and transformation.

For the artist, as a young gay man growing up in India, Western culture hardly permeated. 'It would seep in very gently, drop by drop. Then in the 1990s MTV started broadcasting music videos from the West and my first glimpse of David Bowie was from the 1970s, with his bright red hair and glass-like eyes. His beauty captured my imagination immediately.'



Diamond Dolls artist's book, edition of 300

As John O'Connell writes in the introduction to *Diamond Dolls*, Bowie was 'fascinated by the relationship between artifice and authenticity'. The singer's shape-shifting ability to project different personas through dress, make-up and performance is the subject of Narielwalla's images. At their basis his dancing dolls explore the desire to transform into another self.

Working over a repeated template of Bowie's 'Ziggy' face and dancing form, he has constructed 36 individual identities, each of which is defined by highly elaborate, decorative costuming. Cipher-like, the embellished figures carry references to the gender-fluid traditions of *kabuki* and *onnagata*, which were an influence on Bowie's approach to challenging conventions about identity and sexuality.

Conceived as a sculptural object in three parts, the book is the artist's ninth in a series of award-winning publications. A collaboration between Narielwalla and Concentric Editions, it pushes the boundaries of lithographic printing into the territory of an art medium. Designed to stand like a series of shoji screens, it reflects many aspects of Japanese aesthetics that Bowie admired. The original collage images are reproduced both front and back to reveal the 'artifice' of cutting and pasting involved in their construction. Details – including the distressed gold foiling of page edges and abstract patterns de-bossed into the surfaces of the book covers – gives the opening and arranging of the book, a performative quality.

Diamond Dolls will be on view at various locations throughout July, including J.P. Hackett, No. 14 Savile Row, the label's dedicated bespoke studio space and one of London's most exquisite early-Georgian townhouses. The book will be exhibited alongside Narielwalla's work permanently on display at the location; a set of abstract works that revitalise bespoke Savile Row tailoring patterns as unique paper collages. *Dimond Dolls* can also be seen at Essie's showroom at 62 Piccadilly, London, Mayfair. A ninth-generation dealer of the world's finest luxury Persian rugs, established in 1766, Essie recently collaborated with Narielwalla on the design of the studio's first ever 'art carpet.'

Diamond Dolls will be launched on 15 July with an exhibition of the book in the Eagle Gallery Cabinet Room / EMH Arts, 159 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3AL.

Narielwalla (b.India) lives and works in London. Since attaining a PhD in Fine Art from the University of the Arts, London (2014), he has gained increasing recognition for a practice which combines collage and drawing with an on-going exploration of the artist's book form. His solo exhibitions include *A Study on Anansi*, Paul Smith, London (2009); *Lost Gardens*, South Bank Centre, London (2016) and *Rock, Paper, Scissors* Eagle Gallery / EMH Arts, London (2020). He has participated in group exhibitions including *Block Party* – a Crafts Council national touring exhibition (2011); *No Turning Back*, Migrations Museum, London (2017); *Midnight's Family, 70 Years of Indian Artists in Britain*, Ben Uri Museum, London (2019). In 2018 he was commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum to make a series of prints to accompany the exhibition *Frida Kahlo: Making Herself Up* and in 2020 his collage *Bands of Pride* was the first work of an Indian émigré artist to be acquired by the Ben Uri Collection. He won the Paupers Press Print Prize at the UK International Print Biennale in 2016 and his artist's book *Rock, Paper, Scissors* was shortlisted for the Trinity Buoy Wharf Prize in 2020. Narielwalla's work is held in collections including the British Library, National Art Library and TATE Archive. He has made eight artist's books to date which range from unique, sculptural forms, to longer run limited edition, fine print publications.

Diamond Dolls is co-published by Concentric Editions and EMH Arts, London, in a limited edition of 300 copies, pre-publication price £190. ISBN Number: 978-1-9997891-8-3

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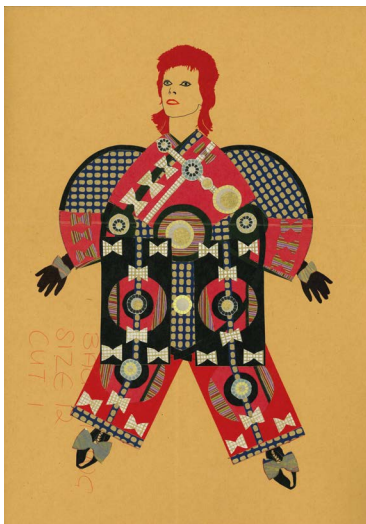
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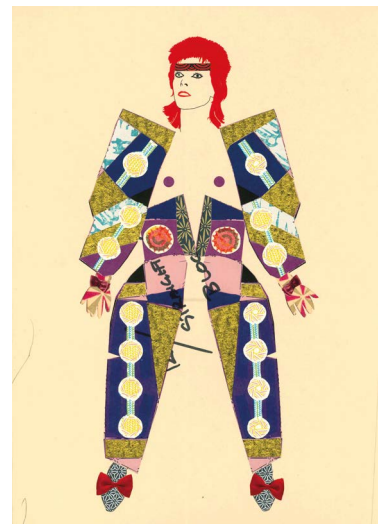
(Above) *Diamond Dolls* artist's book, edition of 300



Diamond Dolls No.32, 42 × 29.7 cm



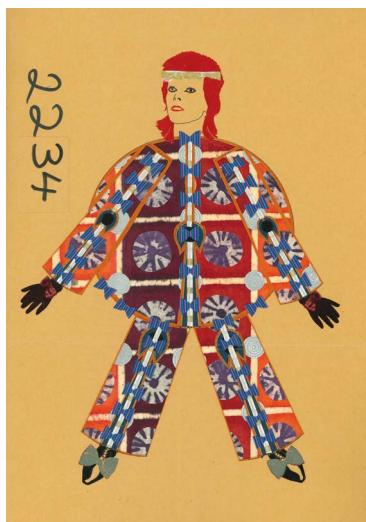
Diamond Dolls No.18, 42 × 29.7 cm



Diamond Dolls No.7, 42 × 29.7 cm



Diamond Dolls No.26, 42 × 29.7 cm



Diamond Dolls No.34, 42 × 29.7 cm



Diamond Dolls No.4, 42 × 29.7 cm

Notes to Editors

Websites:

www.narielwalla.com

www.concentriceditions.com

www.emmahilleagle.com

John O'Connell is the author of *Bowie's Books* (Bloomsbury, 2019). Born in 1972, he grew up in the West Midlands and read English at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University. He is a former Senior Editor at Time Out magazine and has written for The Times, The Guardian and New Statesman. He lives in south London.

Concentric Editions was set up in 2018 out of a love of print and the artistry that goes into making great books. Based in London and working as a collective of designers, printers, binders, photographers and artists, Concentric Editions creates exceptional books that astound in their content and quality. An approach which combines genuinely collaborative creative relationships with cutting edge print technology and highly skilled craft, has resulted in multiple awards for their publications. *Paper Dolls* by Hormazd Narielwalla (co-published by Concentric Editions and Sylph Editions), was the winner of the Best Limited Edition & Fine Binding prize at the British Book Design Awards and one of four publications that won the Fine Art category at the UK Print Week Awards (2019).

EMH Arts was established by Emma Hill in 1991, as a publishing imprint to foster collaborations between contemporary artists and writers. Publications are developed through a project-led approach using a wide variety of print mediums, including hand set letterpress, etching, wood-engraving, four-colour lithography and digital print. EMH Arts has published over 25 artist's books, many of which have been exhibited internationally and are held in collections including the British Library, the Gutenberg Museum, the New York Public Library, TATE, V&A and the Yale Center for British Art. In 2020 Hill collaborated with Hormazd Narielwalla on *Rock, Paper, Scissors* – a meditation on the work of the sculptor Barbara Hepworth, conveyed through a sequence of 100 collage images.