

YULIYA LANINA

Arcadian Rhapsody



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

DECEMBER 5 - FEBRUARY 6, 2014

AUSTIN, TEXAS



Honky Tonk, mechanical sculpture, 26" x 24" x 27". Technical development by Theodore Johnson and music by Yevgeniy Sharlat, 2013.

Cover Panel: Still from *Theme and Variations*, stop-motion animation, 10 min. 30 sec. Music by Olivier Messiaen, 2013.

YULIYA LANINA

Paintings in Motion

Yuliya Lanina's exhibition *Arcadian Rhapsody* is a tour of artistic evolution – from Lanina's first mature work, previously shown at galleries in New York and abroad, to the full flowering of her talents with the premiere of her newest animation *Themes and Variations* based on the music by composer, Olivier Messiaen.

The exhibition highlights her unique ability to turn the traditional medium of painting into a multi-dimensional and interactive experience for the viewer. Lanina works across a variety of media including paintings on paper and canvas, sculpture, installation, animated paintings, film, and stop motion animation.

Originally trained as a musician in her native Russia, Lanina became interested in visual art after coming to America as a teenager. "I didn't speak English well enough, nor did I have access to a piano," she explains, "so art became the only natural means of communicating." Lanina has kept a sketchbook from that period filled with drawings, writings, and collages, a sort of visual record of her life. Although she began to create visual art, she retained the sensibilities of a musician, namely an interest in having an interactive relationship with her audience.

She had just begun college in New York when her mother died after a long battle with cancer. Lanina's grief scarred her psyche. To heal her feelings of loss and isolation and to regain the positive memories of her mother, Lanina turned to painting and sculpture to convey her emotional trauma. Through those early years of artistic exploration, she gained confidence in the storytelling potential of visual art.

Interestingly, Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), a mixed-media artist, was also about Lanina's age when her mother died, and grief too propelled her into visual self-expression as a means to heal.

Bourgeois used the term "confessional art," to describe her use of personal trauma, and her artistic exploration of familial relationships. She created a language of personalized symbols and storylines that she used repeatedly in various contexts.

Lanina's visual style and themes are different, but the underlying approach is similar. Like Bourgeois, she uses her private experiences, or confessions of emotion, to speak to larger issues. She creates personalized symbols, often splicing different techniques together to amplify their effect.

Using a personal tragedy as a starting point for her meditations on loss and regeneration, Lanina follows a stylistic path first cut by the early Surrealists. She merges disassociated imagery, or mis-arranged body parts to form imaginary characters that represent the jangled stuff of dreams and imagination. She uses her hybrids to symbolize fractured consciousness, conflicting emotions, disintegration, and resurgence.



Still from *Theme and Variations*, stop-motion animation, 10 min. 30 sec. Music by Olivier Messiaen, 2013.

William Kentridge (1955-) is another artist whose body of work – which includes drawings, stage sets, and animated film – influenced Lanina. His work is informed by his experiences of growing up in apartheid South Africa. Though his subjects are dark, and often despairing, his engaging and labor-intensive presentations introduced Lanina to the inherent possibility of theater and music. No longer constrained by still images, she literally leapt off the page and began working with dance companies, creating costumes, and stage backdrops.



Happy Together,
acrylic and collage on canvas, 40" x 30", 2013.

Believing that the reason to make art is to communicate and interact with an audience, Lanina creates installations built around a "stage," as she calls them. One of them, entitled *Once*, is supported by a pair of seductively stockinged legs of a headless female figure whose hands draw open the torso which is filled with characters and props that appear in Lanina's videos. The stages are intentionally made small enough for one or two people to experience them at a time, insuring that the viewer will be completely immersed in the work of art.

The characters are assembled from found objects and parts of toys. They are chopped up and put back together, much like her painted characters. In *Once*, we see a frozen moment of eerie gloom, as a childhood journey through fear is re-enacted, with the outcome far from resolved.

The stage becomes a set for her next project – a short film, *Mama*. It is presented with a musical score by composer and University of Texas professor, Russell Pinkston. The film follows a child coming to terms with the loss of her mother. Before watching the film, we see the "actors" starring in this and other films alongside their painted publicity shots, a proverbial Wall of Fame. Seeing the paintings, sculptures, and film together reinforces the idea that

the dream presented in *Mama* was created from real stuff. Lanina's interest in dreams is drawn from her personal history, and her work suggests that the emotionalism of dreams, often cobbled unpredictably from real experiences, can offer additional insights into our perceptions of reality.

Even while experimenting with 3-dimensional objects Lanina never stopped drawing and painting. The exhibition features a small collection of seven new paintings on canvas based on collages that reveal her testing out new ideas. These explorations serve as a basis for later animations. There's a clean visual rhythm, with notes of humor throughout her body of work. And while her art is often about loss, it's also about survival and self-discovery.

If there is one defining characteristic that Lanina's generation in general has had to face, it's change. As did Kentridge, she turned to animation to portray feelings of loss and adaptation over time. Her animated pieces *Dodo-Valse* and *Birds and Bees* depict her



Still from *Theme and Variations*, stop-motion animation, 10 min. 30 sec. Music by Olivier Messiaen, 2013.

ever-morphing characters moving through an ever-transforming environment. Masterfully set to music, the pace is fast, and the rhythm of the action is smooth, if turbulent. The pieces suggest that in a world of constant change, we might secure, or at least steady ourselves through our own regeneration.

Interested in having her paintings move, Lanina has created what she calls animated painting. Her latest one, entitled *Honky Tonk*, is composed of painted cutout characters and scenery, some attached to motorized tracks that move the objects



Still from *Theme and Variations*, stop-motion animation, 10 min. 30 sec. Music by Olivier Messiaen, 2013.

around to a synchronized soundtrack written by her husband and frequent collaborator, Yevgeniy Sharlat. "The combination of characters, scenery, and music turns painting into a mini-performance, a sort of flattened version of the balaganchik, a Russian puppet show," Lanina explains, adding, "It's a meditation on the repetitive patterns in our lives, on our constant engagement in compulsive acts without aim or resolution."

In *Theme and Variations*, her latest stop motion animation, we see Lanina's ideas subtly refined. The images are layered with a lush painterly undercoat that adds visual warmth. Change unfolds at a more contemplative pace, as fullness becomes loss and then loss becomes rebirth. The music is beautifully incorporated, allowing the viewers to drift along this cycle. The animation unites the mind of the artist and audience through a moment of creative meditation, with one variation flowing out from another and another, endlessly.

We once thought of animations as, well, animations, but due to new technology, they have become a cutting edge way to bring contemporary paintings to life with new dimensions. Lanina doesn't see the difference in anything but the medium. "It's still my painting, but now it does all the things I wanted it to do; it has music, it moves and changes, and engages the viewer in an open-ended storyline."

In the past, conceptual artists were often uninterested in the visual, the idea being the most important element. For Lanina, born into a world of hyper-visualization,

visuals matter. She uses her hybrid visuals and engaging performances to portray her underlying concepts. Her distorted, provocative figures signal our innate desire to find and to understand the patterns and symbols buried in their jangled bits and pieces.

Recently, Lanina returned to her earliest work for inspiration. Now, as a mother herself, she wanted to re-explore the tragedy that first ignited her art, with her new perspective. She is currently working on a multi-media opera about the psychological impact of losing one's mother at a young age.

Dancers have worn her art, and have danced in front of her projected paintings; motors have pulled her art on tracks. She's hung it, dangled, and draped it. Painted, filmed, wound, and programmed it. She's dressed and undressed it, sawed, glued, and drawn art. Still, she continues to explore new, persuasive dimensions of communication.



Barbershop Quartet, acrylic and collage on canvas, 40" x 30", 2013.

Lanina was never shy about performing, or coy about her intentions to communicate her stories, and we feel our way easily into her art through the emotions and ideas it evokes in us.

Julia Morton is a writer based in Austin, Texas.

YULIYA LANINA

Lives in Austin, Texas

EDUCATION

- 2010 Hunter College, CUNY, New York, NY/ MFA in Combined Media
- 1996 Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, NY / BFA in Painting and Drawing

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS SINCE 2006

- 2013 *Not a Sad Tale*, GGallery, Houston, TX
Reinberger Galleries, Cleveland Institute of Art, Cleveland, OH
Honky-tonk Belles, Figureworks, Brooklyn, NY
Our Texas, Russian Cultural Center, Houston, TX
- 2011 *Mama*, Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, London, UK
Birds and Bees, NY Studio Gallery, New York, NY
- 2010 *Mechanical Mishka*, Elements Art Gallery, Perth, Australia
A Very Short Story, Sara Nightingale Gallery, Sag Harbor, NY
- 2009 SIGGRAPH Asia, Yokohama, Japan
Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2008 ADA Gallery, Richmond, Virginia
- 2007 2x13 Gallery, New York, NY (two-person show)
Flight of Fantasy, The LAB Gallery, New York, NY
Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, DiVA Art Fair, New York, NY
- 2006 NY Arts Beijing Gallery, Beijing, China
Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul, Korea (catalog)

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS SINCE 2007

- 2013 *Now and After*, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia
Russian Pavilion (Armory Show/ Miami Art Basel Week), New York, NY/Miami, FL
Sara Nightingale Gallery, Sag Harbor, NY
- 2012 Elements Art Gallery, Perth, Australia
State Museum of Modern Art of the Russian Academy of Arts, Moscow, Russia
Satoshi Koyama Gallery, curated by James Jack, Tokyo, Japan
Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, North Miami, FL
- 2011 MUSE Center of Photography and the Moving Image, New York, NY
Kravets/Wehby Gallery, New York, NY
Arizona State University Art Museum, Temple, AZ
- 2010 *The Festival of Ideas for the New City*, New Museum, New York, NY
Kravets/Wehby Gallery, New York, NY
Pierre Menard Gallery, curated by Lisa Paul Streitfeld, Cambridge, MA
International Santa Fe Biennial, El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM
- 2009 Beijing 798 Biennale, curated by Raúl Zamudio, Beijing, China (catalog)
Ekaterinburg Gallery of Modern Art, Ekaterinburg, Russia
Galapagos Art Space, presented by the Brooklyn Arts Council, Brooklyn, NY

Thomas Jaeckel Gallery, curated by David Gibson, New York, NY

- 2008 Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, London, UK
ArtBots, Science Gallery at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
Yeosu/Seoul Biennial, curated by Raúl Zamudio, Yeosu, Korea (catalog)
Dam, Stuhltrager Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Syfy Movies With a View, Dumbo, Brooklyn, NY
Coney Island Museum, Brooklyn, NY
FusionArts Museum, New York, NY
- 2007 Nathan A. Bernstein & Co. Ltd., New York, NY
ADA Gallery, Richmond, VA
Contemporary Art Center, Moscow, Russia
KunstFilmBiennale, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany
Russian Museum of Contemporary Art, Jersey City, NY

SELECTED PRESS

- 2013 *Top 10 Artists in NYC now*, Revolt Magazine, NYC
Krasotki Kabare, Dinara Gutarova, Our Texas, Houston, TX
Yuliya Lanina at Figureworks, Enrico Gomez, Wagmag, Brooklyn, NY
- 2011 *Iskusstvo na vybor*, Pavel Lembersky, Snob Magazine, New York/Moscow
Art & Technology, ARTonAIR.org, radio host D. Durning, New York, NY
- 2010 SBS Radio, Melbourne, Australia
Mechanical Mishka, Australian Art Review, Wahroonga, NSW, Australia
- 2009 *Scene One*, Art ReView, New York, NY
Personal Disturbances at Dam, K. Narizhnaya, Greenpoint Gazeta, Brooklyn, NY
- 2008 *Sound of Science on Sheffield Live!*, radio host Professor N. Sharkey, London, UK
Pre-pubescent Bosch, Carla Gannis, NY Arts Magazine, New York, NY
Artwalking, Asuncion and Ratzabi, WG News + Arts, Brooklyn, NY
- 2007 *Shows Star Butterflies*, Katya Kazakina, Bloomberg News
Play with Me, Fred Hatt, NY Arts Magazine, New York, NY
- 2006 *Play with Me*, James Kalm, Wagmag, Brooklyn, NY
Journey, Beijing Today!, Beijing, China
Funsters, Kam Yoonjo, Seoul Arts Center Magazine, Seoul, Korea
Transfigurations of Queen Butterfly, James Kalm, Brooklyn Rail, Brooklyn, NY
Celebrating Female Fertility, L. P. Streitfeld, NY Arts Magazine, New York, NY

SELECTED AWARDS/RESIDENCIES

- SODA (Perth, Western Australia) (2011), BluePrint Fellowship (COJECO) (2011), Yaddo Fellowship (2010), SIGGRAPH Asia Travel Scholarship (Yokohama, Japan) (2009), William Graf Travel Award (2009), NY Arts Beijing Residency Scholarship (Beijing, China) (2006), Award of Excellence, Manhattan Arts International (1997)



Still from *Mama*, short film, 6 min. 30 sec. Music by Russell Pinkston, 2013.

Women & Their Work

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Betsy Clements

Quincy Adams Erickson

Lindsey Hanna

Karen Hawkins

Heather Wagner Reed

Deborah Sayre

Elisa Sumner

STAFF

Chris Cowden, Executive Director

Rachel Koper, Program Director

Lisa Choinacky, Operations Manager

Debe Bentley, Gallery Shop Manager

Thanks to BAH! Design, Theodore Johnson, Riley Cassel, Yevgeniy Sharlat, Russell Pinkston, Julia Morton, Andy Howell and Melanie Harris De Maycotte. This publication is supported in part by the Andy Warhol Foundation.

Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 35th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,874 artists in 286 visual art exhibitions, 120 music, dance and theater events, 15 film festivals, 23 literary readings and 501 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, the New York Times, ArtForum and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant

in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches over 950 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and
their work

1710 Lavaca St.
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 477-1064
info@womenandtheirwork.org
www.womenandtheirwork.org

