

# INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTIST ASYA MARAKULINA

BY OLGA TRÖSCHER

## “THE WINNER OF CREDIT SUISSE COSMOSCOW PRIZE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS 2018”

### The importance of the role of an artist continues to grow



The Artist Asya Marakulina

Asya Marakulina was born in 1988 in Perm, now she lives and works in Saint-Petersburg. She is an artist, an illustrator and a production designer of animated films. In 2015-2016, the artist won a young artists grant of the Museum of Contemporary Art “Garage” in Moscow. In 2017, she became a participant in the art residence of the AIR Barents program in Norway and in 2018 she won a Credit Suisse Cosmoscw Prize for Young Artists. Asya Marakulina has already had ten personal and group exhibitions in Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Stockholm, Helsinki and New York.

**Olga Trösch:** First of all, allow me to offer my congratulations on receiving the prestigious Credit Suisse Cosmoscw Prize for Young Artists 2018. What does this award mean to you?

**Asya Marakulina:** Of course, this Prize means a lot to me, and it all happened just in time. I was surprised and delighted to hear about this — it’s such a sign of trust and an advance for the future. It is very pleasant to know, that what you are doing is of interest to someone, that the art community is watching your work, and what you are doing gets a response and makes people want to buy your art.

**O.T.** Was this the first Cosmoscw art fair you attended?

**A.M.** Yes, this was my first time at Cosmoscw. I was invited as the winner of the Credit Suisse Cosmoscw

**O.T.** How many artists have been nominated, in total?  
**A.M.** About 20 artists. For me, the nomination was a complete surprise. I was contacted by the organizers and asked to send a portfolio. I sent it without thinking that anything could come out of it, as I participated in Cosmoscw only once in absentia (in 2016 two of my works were exhibited at the fair by the Name Gallery from Saint-Petersburg).

**O.T.** The project features works from the Passages series and embroidery from the “Hidden Seams” project. Please, tell us about these works and what inspired you to create them.

**A.M.** Works from these two series were presented at Cosmoscw art fair. At the main stand, it was the “Rooms” series of embroidery from the “Secret Seams” project, which was made in 2016 and displayed in the Name Gallery in Saint-Petersburg. This is my personal story and the story of my family, very subtly and delicately sewn into the annual cycle with its changes and transitions from autumn to winter and so on. In this project, my method can be seen very well: to always talk about personal and intimate things, using a universal and sometimes even abstract language, so that the viewers could interpret what they see in their own way as much as possible. The second part represented at the fair stand were the works from the “Passages series”. I started doing the “Passages” project in 2014, when I simultaneously studied at the Saint-Petersburg State University to get a degree as an animation film art director and at the Young Artist School of the Pro Arte Foundation for Culture and Art in Saint-Petersburg. At that time, I was interested in urban flows. I myself, as a pedestrian, realized that I often did not think at all where I was going, and my movement was clearly structured. You understand that you are in a flow, going from one metro station to another. At some point, I started to think about it and began to notice how people move, sometimes took photos of public events and read pseudo-social literature. It was my research: for example, I saw a person who was waiting for someone, and his movement was absolutely not structured, he had a strange trajectory. Whereas people who are moving somewhere purposefully — going from point A to point B — their movement is structured. It was also interesting to see how colors, that people wear change during the season. This series had no end, I did not draw any conclusions, I just traced the movement of people in crowded places and how the traces were changing depending on human motivation.

**O.T.** Did you think about any artistic style?

**A.M.** I did not invent or plan anything on purpose. I just removed all the excess things and left only points. All the works were taken from life. In one of the works, the 1st of May parade in Saint-Petersburg is depicted at the moment when the crowd goes across the bridge, and where the river flows. There are empty places as traffic is limited there. I removed all the elements of the city structure and left only points representing people.

**O.T.** Could you please describe your working day?

**A.M.** I work every day, I don’t expect any inspiration, which, in my opinion, is just a fantasy talk. I come to the studio every day. What is now happening at the fair, is also work: interviews, communication.

**O.T.** What was your first successful project, that

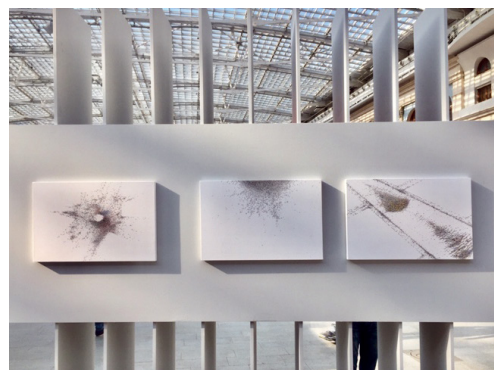
was noticed and appreciated by the professional community?

**A.M.** It was a project made in 2014, I remember it very clearly. At that time I was studying at the Pro Arte Young Artist School and the exhibition was made there and became, one might say, the starting point in my career. At the university, where I studied at the same time as at the Young Artist School, I was advised to send a portfolio to the co-called residence (creative work shop), after which I got a reply and was invited to the city of Lanaken in Belgium. At that time, I did not understand, how it all worked and I was curious. It turned out to be an unusual residence, because its owner was a businessman, and the residence was a



Exhibition View, CosmoscwArt Fair

production site, where worked full day, we were paid a scholarship, and at the end (after 1.5 months) we had to leave all the works there, as a product. Out of these works, the owner compiled collection, possibly for sale. However, it was my first residence, and I did not know how it might work. I lived according to the rules and made my observations. As it turned out, in general, an artist, living in a residence may go somewhere, take some time away, whereas we had to always remain inside the residence, work really hard and produce art. A kind of art camp, where artists are workers, and where there is a clear time-schedule. Therefore, I, realizing the absurdity of this situation, simultaneously began to make notes about our life there. I just collected information, made sketches, wrote down phrases, it somehow happened by itself. When I returned home, I had a lot of material, and



Asya Marakulina, Project “Passages”

the curator of the Pro Arte school program, Natalya Khvoenkova, suggested that I make a report on the residence. I decided to make a report in the form of an exhibition. There were a lot of good reviews as I had managed to convey a complete immersion in the closed world of the residence.

**O.T.** What was the next stage of your creative activities?

**A.M.** After that, I received a young artists scholarship from the “Garage” museum, which is a one-year grant from the museum. It all happened at the same time: I graduated from the University and from Pro Arte the same year and immediately received a grant from the “Garage”. During one year, they pay a scholarship is being paid to an artist so that he/she would not have to think about money and would be able to do his/her own projects, which was exactly what I did for the whole of the following year.

**O.T.** What are your new creative plans?

**A.M.** There are several projects on which I am now working: one of them is about bars and grates in the urban space, and right now it is at the stage of accumulation of material. Also, there are some currently unfinished series that I will continue. When I return to Saint-Petersburg, I will start working on a small exhibition in the Nabokov Museum. Simultaneously, I am starting cooperation with the Marina Gisich Gallery in Saint-Petersburg.

**O.T.** Asya, in your opinion, what is the role of an artist in society?

**A.M.** This is a question I have been constantly reflecting on. On the one hand, some people think that artists are somewhere else, they live their own life. On the other hand, when you go somewhere, first of all you focus on sightseeing and museums. There are entire cities, the attractiveness of which is mainly due to art and artistic institutions. For example, the Hermitage in Saint-Petersburg or the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, etc. Big art fairs and other art events attract huge flows of people.

The artist’s field of activity is constantly expanding — artists collaborate with designer brands, with perfume and cosmetic companies. In fact, everything is dissolved in each other. It’s just that in Russia it is less felt, because art is still contained in certain places and institutions. In Europe, art is among people — it’s in the streets, in public spaces, offices, even in crematoriums. That is, art is a full-scale practice and part of life. In Russia, the general public has somewhat different ideas: art is either something very elitist, or just a hobby, when you have everything already, then you need and decide to entertain yourself and pamper yourself with something. I am from a simple family, my mother is a doctor, my father is an engineer. Art has never been given much importance to; the reality that surrounded me was determining that it is more useful to do the cleaning than to draw something. I used to have complexes about it, and I had to work really hard on myself to get rid of them. Now I travel around Europe and see that art is a very important part of life, that a lot of money is being invested in art, museums are becoming new temples, that are built as works of art in themselves. Therefore, the importance of the role of an artist continues to grow.



Asya Marakulina, Project “Passages”

CREDIT SUISSE COSMOSCOW awarded the annual Prize for Young Artists for the third time. The winner received a grant, an additional prize of mentoring support from art experts and the art trip to Switzerland. Credit Suisse also acquired the art work by the Russian artist Asya Marakulina for the bank’s Moscow office.

COSMOSCOW International Contemporary Art Fair was launched by Russian collector and philanthropist Margarita Pushkina in 2010 and aims to bring together both Russian and international collectors, galleries and artists.



Asya Marakulina, “Hidden Seams” Series. Embroidery

Prize for Young Artists 2018. This is so great, because it is not easy, in general, to be a young artist (although not very young, since I’m no longer 20, but not yet 35). Moreover, at some point it becomes quite difficult when you understand that art is taking up all your time and effort, however, it is still difficult to live and rely only on your creative work, then doubts arise and you can stray away. There are no guarantees, you do not know whether you will have any projects or ideas in five years. And this Prize is a sign for me, that it is necessary to continue to do what I am doing, probably, do more global projects. It is simply a sign, that there is a potential to be developed, that gave me additional self-belief and made me confident that this is important.