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Artisle Talk | Marina Fedorova

Immersive Sensory × Dreaming Universe

Russian contemporary artist Marina Fedorova and art incubator Sputnik Partners present a thematic exhibition at ART021 Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair, booth P13, featuring six works from Marina Fedorova's large-scale art experience project "Cosmodreams", including paintings, 3D printed sculptures, video art and AR/VR digital art. In this issue of Artisle Talk, we are honored to have a face-to-face online interview with Marina and her team. Please follow us to enter the Cosmodreams world!

A: Artisle | **M:** Marina Fedorova

A: I've noticed that you have 6 pieces of artworks on display at this year's Shanghai Art021, which are like a capsule of the Cosmodreams exhibition. Can you give us an overview of the main concept of the whole art project?

M: What is really important in my project is the combination of traditional art and the latest technology. I used to be very conservative, for example, five years ago I limited my medium to easel painting and watercolor, or creating some geometric shapes. Then I realized that for artists, new technology is like paint on a palette, a form of artistic expression, and I began to use it as a bridge between traditional and emerging art. The reason for this idea is that today's younger generation spends most of their time staring at their smartphone or iPad screens, and we want them to shift their attention from the screen to the scenes constructed by VR to better experience the charm of the paintings. So we created over 100 paintings and a dozen life-size sculptures, and then created a "virtual museum on the moon" for them that can be visited in three different ways. In addition to viewing the images or small videos on YouTube or our website, the full 19-minute version can be viewed in the planetarium dome or on a large screen. Or put on your VR glasses and take an immersive tour to the museum.



Art021

For the paintings, we designed a WeChat app for Chinese viewers, where an AR effect appears when you scan the work with your phone, and you can see what scene I had in my mind before I started the painting. Usually exhibition visitors have to guess what the artist is trying to say when painting, but this format allows me to directly tell the story of what happened when I was painting.



Alice, 2021, by M. Fedorova

A: What is the meaning of the work "Alice", in which a woman in a space suit shows a confident posture?

M: This is actually a series of works, the protagonist is Alice, and the background of the story is related to my experience of being born in the Soviet Union. Lewis Carroll is a very famous science fiction writer, and his works depict Alice's adventures from kindergarten. Alice was to my childhood what Harry Potter was to my children, a hero who grew up with us. It's funny how I imagine Alice growing up and what kind of woman she will be when she grows up. In the creation of this series, I photographed the paintings to create a scene for her growth and to create a sense of reality. In this work, she is an explorer on the moon. In other paintings, the audience can also see her travels in real life.

A: The sculpture "Alice and Dragon" is a 3D printed work, what kind of story does it tell?

M: "Alice And Dragon" also comes from my imaginary world, a planet where you can be friends with dragons, where any species can coexist in a friendly way, Alice is also the embodiment of my ideal character, she is hard-working, tough and likes to explore new things. The entry point of this work is a dream, presenting a world that I have conjured up.

This work is created using 3D technology, which can accurately and subtly render my drafts. Every change and modification of details in the process is very important to my creation.



Alice And Dragon

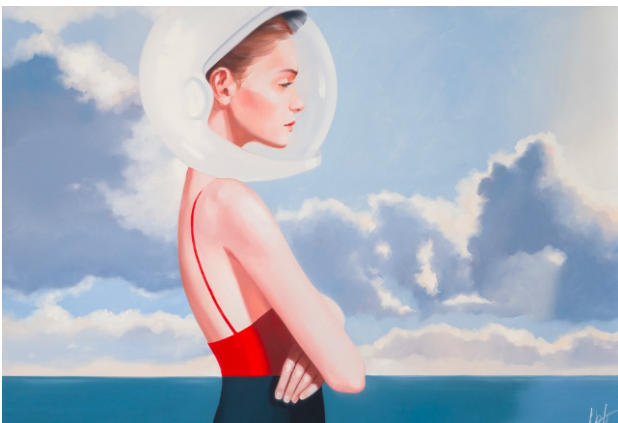
A: The sculpture “Cosmodreams Matryoshka” is also a 3D printed work made of fiberglass. Why did you think of using the concept of Russian Matryoshka to create this work?

M: For me nesting doll and cosmonaut are two symbols of Russia, and Matryoshka is one of the most popular souvenirs of the last hundred years, being extended into various forms of products. I wanted to embody these two elements in the Matryoshka and combine them with the concept of cosmic space.

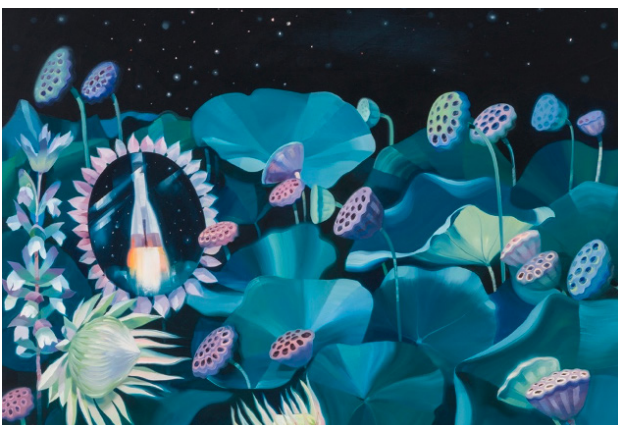
When I first created Matryoshka I chose ceramic as the material, and then hand-painted 10 finished pieces as a limited edition. Then I realized that it could be more than just a souvenir, it could also be turned into a more striking large size piece and at the same time spread the image better. So I combined it with our new technology to create a scenario where Matryoshka or her belt can be scanned through a MiniProgram and the audience can see Alice flying out from it. This is another attempt in my creative process to combine traditional cultural elements with modern technology.



Cosmodreams Matryoshka



Sunset, 2018, by M. Fedorova



The Mystery of the Third Planet, 2018, by M. Fedorova

A: The works “Sunset” and “The Mystery of the Third Planet” both give us a new perspective and imagination of what life in space will be like in the future. What was your inspiration or point of entry when creating these scenes?

M: The background of “Sunset” comes from the current environmental changes, due to the decline of the earth’s air quality and air pollution, we often can not watch the sunset outside, and even in the future when the air pollution is more serious we need to wear helmets to go out. The heroine’s background is the earth that has been destroyed, and I want to provoke people to think about the current environment in this way.

“The Mystery of the Third Planet” is actually my reflection on “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”. The main character Alice travels to different planets, and on the planets she travels to, there are “mirrored sunflowers” that record the history of the planet, and when people pick the flowers, they start to rewind time and can see the history of the planet. This inspired me to use lotus flowers instead of sunflowers, because they look more like alien creatures to me and fit my imaginary alien world. The whole picture is actually an expression of my inner feelings.



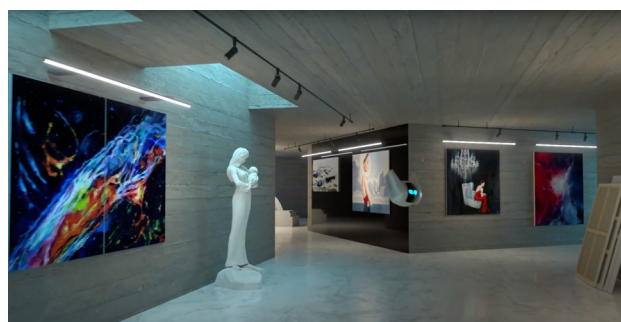
Moon Studio

A: If we need to migrate to outer space in the near future, do you look forward to living there?

M: It's difficult for me. Actually, I seldom leave my current living place and fixed working environment, and I am also full of fear of new life and strange world. But I have been fantasizing about life in the space world, imagining what it would be like to live there, and then constantly refining my thinking about my work. I hope that through my thinking and exploring in my creation, I can eliminate my fear of unknown worlds.

A: The work "Moon Studio" shows us the creation of art in outer space. Is this your ideal working environment?

M: Yes, this is my paradise. I often wonder, if I have the opportunity to live in an imaginary world, then why not have a studio on the moon? It seems to me that most artists are introverted and like to find an isolated place to live and create and observe the world in their own space. And I happen to yearn for a creative environment with a very small space, where I can live in seclusion like a hermit and create art.



In the creation, the paintings were born first, then the video. Another idea behind this video is to create a concept where I plan to make a gallery-like hidden space in a building on the border between Germany and Austria and then create it in seclusion and hold some pop-up events to show the work to curators and collector friends. I even want to have an exhibition on the moon, so the concept is more like an encounter between real life and my imaginary world.

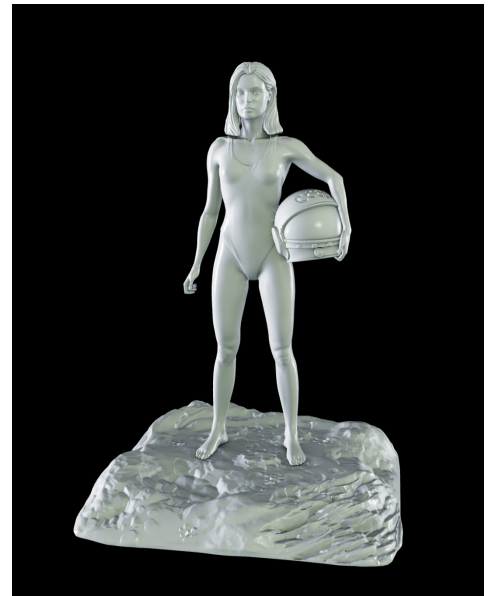
A: The work "Space Art Odyssey" tells us the story of a space traveler exploring the unknown universe through video, the sculptures in the video are in a broken and missing state, such as "Space Lady", "Alice 1", "Alice 2" and "red luggage", some of the main characters are missing a leg and some are missing body. Why did you choose such a form of expression? Does it have any special meaning?

M: I've been trying to combine all my creations, and I hope that one day I can have a big exhibition with hundreds of my works in one place. So I hope to tie all the works together through the same elements, whether it's painting, sculpture or video.

In the future, we may leave Earth, inhabit the Moon, and perhaps continue to explore new galaxies. The Moon is becoming like an Earth outpost, similar to the place where aliens or Earth visitors arrive first before visiting Earth. There will be a museum that tells basic information about the Earth, such as water, fire, air, and plants, and of course about art and its importance to life on Earth. The tone of this video is sad. Because at this time humans may have left the earth, and that is why they were asked to destroy these sculptures, because time has passed for centuries and they have forgotten a lot of life on earth, and only space travelers can see the life of earth in the past when they visit the museum. So I hope my work can record these images and provoke people to think and tell us that we have to cherish and protect what we have now.



Space Art Odyssey



Alice 1, 2021



Alice 2, 2021

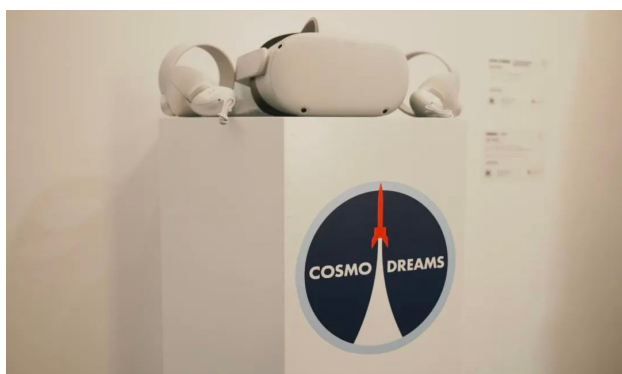
I always believe that we should protect the earth first and then explore space, rather than just trying to escape, and that is the message I try to convey from the work. We have to try to protect what we have, and that is the meaning of the sculpture that there is still a part left in the destruction and not completely destroyed. I also hope that in the future space museum, we can see the beautiful past of the Earth.

A: When viewing your work, the audience can enhance the visual effect and experience through VR devices. What role do VR and AR tools play for you? Do you think they are an integral part of your work? And how do you understand the relationship between new technologies and your work?

M: It is still important to me that the audience sees the real work, and nothing can replace that real experience. My exhibition has been postponed since the beginning of the epidemic and I just started to think about how to put this exhibition in a virtual world and develop a virtual moon museum. I'm not quite sure about the number of viewers online; we have uploaded a virtual version on YouTube, and viewers can choose to wear glasses to see it. There may not be too many people using it at the moment, but I believe this technology will be spread more widely in the future, and I think we should enjoy the convenience that new technology brings us.

A: Did you encounter any difficulties when creating a piece of work with the technical staff? What are the different experiences of the team when creating?

M: I'm proud that I have a very good team and we've been working together for many years, going through the motions and understanding each other. I'm a realist and I'm very aware of my problems, and sometimes I don't quite understand the limitations of the technologies we use. For example, when creating the Moon Museum, I wanted visitors to be able to enter the museum using different avatars and to meet and interact with the artists in a virtual world. But my technical team would suggest to me that this concept is not achievable now and will take years to realise it. Although our fantasy is unlimited, our capacity is still limited. So I hope that in the next few years technology can advance and allow me to complete my ideal lunar museum.



Cosmodreams Solo Exhibition 2020

A: All of the works in the Cosmodreams project have been exhibited around the world, with the first exhibition taking place in September 2020 at the Erarta Museum in St. Petersburg, the largest private museum of contemporary art in Russia. In March this year, there was also an exhibition at Art Dubai 2023 in the Digital Art Section, followed by Art021 in Shanghai. What do you think of the different experiences of having these exhibitions in different countries, or what are the similarities? Any special experiences you can share with us?

M: In each country I exhibit in, I incorporate some local culture to reflect the local context. For example, for my recent participation in Dubai Design Week, I created a special work called "Martian Nights", which was inspired by "Nightmare in the Sky". In it, I created a white mosque and thought about how Muslim architecture could fit in with space architecture.

Next year I will have an exhibition in Chengdu where I will show Moon pandas. It's a sad work that also explores environmental issues, the need for pandas to live in a kind of bubble incubator due to the lack of living environment on earth, and also tries to explore how they can be preserved in the future. The place where the work is exhibited is very important to me, I think every country and city is different and I want to make a connection with the history and life of different regions.

My biggest dream is not just to have a traveling exhibition, but to have all my works on permanent display in each country, and to bring elements of different countries around the world through my creations, which would be very interesting.

Translated from Chinese.

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