

Introducing Daria Irincheeva

BY SCOTT INDRISEK, MODERN PAINTERS | NOVEMBER 10, 2014



Daria Irincheeva
(Photo by: Ruy Sanchez Blanco)

Raised in a math- and tech-focused family (“My father’s a rocket scientist,” she explains, speaking quite literally), Daria Irincheeva came to the arts a bit late. Growing up in Russia, she initially planned to become an astrophysicist. “But then I thought—so much bureaucracy, statistics, and calculation, I’d become an alcoholic,” she jokes. “Especially in St. Petersburg, where there are only 30 sunny days. There’s an observatory there, but you’d be sitting, watching the clouds, reading Dostoyevsky, and drinking.” As a result, she left telescopes and equations behind in favor of an evolving sculptural practice, albeit one that retains a conceptual imprint of her earlier career path. “I want to reenter my passion for science,” she says, “from an artistic perspective—where I can

take only the best, poetic parts of it.”

Irincheeva relocated to New York a few years ago to study at the School of Visual Arts; she concurrently served as the director of the irreverent, now-shuttered Family Business gallery in Chelsea. In her Greenpoint, Brooklyn, studio, the artist makes delicate, inventive installations out of a hodgepodge of materials: color cards or carpet samples pilfered from Home Depot, driftwood, concrete, bubble wrap, faux-woodgrain contact paper, and living plants.

A show this past fall at Postmasters Gallery in New York, titled “Circadian Rhythms,” purported to be a sculptural survey of an average office drone’s existence. Pieces with titles like *Gazing at a fish tank at 7pm*. Weekend used a simple compositional logic—including exuberant squiggles cut from color sample sheets—to personify the celebratory mood of a Friday night. Together in the space, these works looked paradoxically provisional and finely calibrated, both casually arrayed and intently arranged—an aesthetic that perhaps fits Irincheeva’s conception of a science tempered by poetics. “The compositions changed so many times while they were in the studio, just cooking,” she says. “Every day I’d come in and change a bit, and then it all fell into place—the whole narrative became straight and measured, rhythmically, and it started talking.”

The sculptures have a certain appealing precariousness as well, partially a nod to Irincheeva’s childhood in St. Petersburg. In the 1990s her family was gifted a fixer-upper apartment—“but it was in such bad condition,” she says, “that we were always reconstructing the environment. We didn’t have money to do it properly, so it was always inventing: How can we make it look like it’s okay? Now it’s the same thing, a continuation of that.”

Family heritage also informs a series of video works, most specifically *The Child Was Untitled #2*, for which she collected trashed plastic bottles from Times Square and elsewhere, using them to construct a lumpy, inelegant raft that she floated around the Far Rockaways. “In my family there’s a tradition of making rafts out of whatever,” she says. “It was started by my grandpa-

ther, a physicist, who would calculate how many balloons you'd need to float a family of six. Then we'd go floating down the Volga River." Other performative video pieces find Irincheeva interacting with her environment in equally unexpected ways: lying nude on the sand of a Portugal beach and pinwheeling in a circle, sitting on an escalator in a New York City subway station and erecting a rudimentary teepee around herself. (A previous attempt to pull off the same piece in Russia was unsuccessful. "There, the metro is a military object," she says. "Every time I would come there with my teepee, this lady would start yelling: 'Stop doing that! Be normal!' ")

At the moment, Irincheeva is once again thinking about video, accumulating footage using a small, low-budget Samsung camcorder: boats cutting down the river, a swarm of flies in the park, the reflection of a prism on asphalt. She's fascinated by the way everyday accretions of objects can resemble unintentional sculpture, as in one clip of a tree log festooned with fungus and Osage oranges that she shot near Inwood Hill Park. "I don't want to get stuck in something I feel comfortable with," she says. "I started by working with found materials, combining them together, taking super-unromantic lost objects and making compositions and a type of music out of them. Now I want to bring that experience into videomaking."

She's also brainstorming a children's book for the Russian market—there is, she says, a serious lack of quality literature for the youngest citizens of that country. Appropriately, given Irincheeva's fixation on cheap consumer goods that mimic the appearance of natural materials, the story will be about a "piece of moss who doesn't know if he's real or plastic" and who journeys through various office spaces in search of an answer to his existential dilemma. "I love working with something that tries to look like something else," she explains. "I very often use this kind of fakeness. It's also from personal experience: Growing up in the Russia of the '90s and aughts, there were so many fake things: fake structures, fake people trying to be something else. Cheap solutions: You want to be like marble, but you only have money to buy plastic."

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