

BIO

The inhabitants of the far end of the Russian Far East have a special name for Russia. They call it Materik – the continent or the land – separated from them by an ocean of snow covering a land rich in all the elements of Mendeleev’s table. It is also the land of hell exposed by Varlam Shalamov in his Kolyma tales, the land of gulags where prisoners died in open-air mines. The ore was transported by the Kolyma Highway that crossed the Soviet towns lost in this ocean of snow, mining towns with decrepit half abandoned building blocks. Nowadays, the only people who live there are the visiting miners, lured by wages as high as terrible are the working conditions. But some prefer to call it the road of bones, where the bodies of 250,000 forced labourers were buried under the asphalt. This road traces its way to Magadan, the port overlooking the Sea of Okhotsk. The port seagulls’ cry announcing to many their return home is mentioned by the legend of prison culture Mikhail Krug in his song Magadan. Vladimir Kartashov grew up in the north of the city. His identity documents show only one word for his address: Tundra. His father was a sailor and, working in marine trade between Japan and Russia, he took his family there. His parents separated when he was 12 and Vladimir went to live with his maternal grandmother in Siberia. She was a descendant of Asian ethnic groups that inhabited these territories long before the Russians. She was a shaman and taught her grandson some of her ancestral knowledge, including the reading of dreams. Only 14 years of age, Vladimir leaves his grandmother to settle alone in Novosibirsk, a big city a few hundred kilometres from home. He wants to go to an art school, but without financial support, he has to pay his rent with the money he earns online playing World of Warcraft. He rents a room in a kommunalka flat, a co-living inherited from the Soviet era, which he shares with an ex-convict who’s been just released after 30 years in prison.

Vladimir didn’t just play on the internet, he was growing up there. As a “gamer”, he earned his income online to pursue his artistic education, but the web offered him access to the global culture which did not exist in the place he was born. Web was also where he devoured Greek mythology and its human tragedies, echoing the mystical sensitivities passed on to him by his grandmother, something that can also be found in the world of online games. On the other hand, thanks to his education in Novosibirsk, he acquired the technical mastery of the Russian art school. Today, Vladimir is transmitting his online experience into the offline world using the old painting techniques, putting his work at the intersection of his origins and the global and digital culture he belongs to.

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In 2017, after a scandal caused by his graduation work, Vladimir left Novosibirsk for Moscow. For his professors’ request to paint an allegory of Soviet generals, winners of the Great Patriotic War, he responded with a diptych denouncing the war that tramples on human lives. Five years later another conflict in Moscow forced him to leave the country.

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When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Vladimir was still liable for military service. He had to join the army, otherwise he could have been tried for desertion. He quickly left the country and took refuge in Italy. Today, what Vladimir is going through is not only a personal or national, but also a family drama. His father, being a sailor, has had children in many places. So Vladimir, who condemns the war, has a brother who left Siberia, volunteering to fight in Ukraine, but also a sister in Ukrainian Mariupol, of whom Vladimir has had no news since then. The Russian Far East and Siberia exude a powerful, almost magnetic force, but the lack of prospects makes these realities heavy and often suffocating for the people who live there.

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The exceptional vital energy drawn from his land Vladimir combines with the breath of contemporary and digital culture, as well as the special spirituality present throughout his artwork in his quest for Arcadia, the Greek utopia of an idyllic land in harmony with nature. If from the tundra Vladimir came as far as Europe, the odds being so low, it is no longer a matter of

chance. It is because his art, his cultural references and the themes he evokes are intrinsically universal.

CV

EDUCATION

Born in 1997 in Novosibirsk, Russia
2017 Graduate of the Novosibirsk Art School, "Fine Art"
2017-2018 Open studios Winzavod
2017-2019 Institute «BAZA»

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2023 "HESYOYAM "Church of Sant'Agostino, Pietrasanta
2022 Christmas exhibition, The Project Space
2021 «Aurea Saecula», Triumph gallery
2021 «Innocentmischiefs.Technorococo»Jart Gallery. Curator: Sergey Khachaturov
2019 ARCADIA: VR-project, ZIL Culture Center
2019 Personal exhibition "Pattern Recognition", The Foundation of V. Smirnov and K. Sorokin, Moscow
2017 Personal exhibition "Come to see me". Curator: Kirill Preobrazhensky. START, Winzavod, Moscow

SELECTED PROJECTS

2023 Biennale Le Latitudini dell'Arte, Berlin, Germany
2023 "Stream the dream", Milan, Italy
2020 «Bird concert»Tsaritsyno Museum
2020 «A wave of dreams» triumph gallery
2020 «20:20.Timestopped»,Moscow museum of modern art. Curator: Alexander Burenkov
2019 «Inthe fog ofwar»,gallery khodynka.Curator: Alexander Burenkov
2019 «Cosmorama XVIII»,Museum of Moscow. Curator: Sergey Khachaturov
2019 «Random dreams generator», Gogol house
2018 Exhibition-installation“Hypnosisof space. Imaginary architecture. The way from antiquity totoday”.
Curator: Sergey Khachaturov. GMZ Tsaritsyno, Moscow
2018 Exhibition“Victoryoverwhite”.Curator: Andrei Parshikov. Open Studios, Winzavod, special project of
the VI Moscow International Biennale of Young Art
2018 Exhibition“Strange,Lost, Unseen,Useless”.Curator: Anatoly Osmolovsky. Red Hall,
Winzavod, special project of the VI Moscow International Biennale of Young Art
2017 Group exhibition, "Over There, Where No One Dreams: from Sacred Geography to Non-Place". Curators: Daria Kamyshnikova, Vladislav Efimov. MMOMA, Moscow