

Lira Kay - Interview for The Streaming Video Art Festival, Edition 6, 2011

***Who is Lira Kay?***

I am an artist, painter, film-maker and curator. Currently based in Boston, United States.

I lived in many countries by now, traveling with my family (I have 5 daughters) and making my art. I was born in Russia, Saint Petersburg, lived in Estonia, England and the last 4 years in France.

In Marseille I use to run my own non-profit art gallery, involving artist from over the world in my projects with exhibitions and film screenings. In July 2011 moved to United States, Boston.

My art work varies from painting and drawing to video art, poetry and music. After 20 years of being exhibiting artist I'm still curious about new forms of art.

I love exploring traditional 'Russian school' paintings, developing my large abstract canvases, practicing meditative drawing, poetry writing. Lately I discovered film and music, curating projects and exhibitions, and there is so much more...

***What is See you tomorrow about?***

'See You Tomorrow' is a video and sound installation, it is a study of artistic experience. I look at the artistic process as at jumping from one reality to another. The film was inspired by Mongolian, Buriatian shamanic chanting.

I have worked with sound before in short films 'Bring me a Baby' and in "Monday Dream" but this time I wanted sound to be a main part of the installation with image supporting the idea.

Why Buriatian and why shamanic? Well, my ancestors on my mothers side are from Siberia and they do practice shamanic rituals to these days. Buriatians are known for practicing a rare combination of Lamaism, Buddhism and shamanism. It is a fascinating mixture of believes that I would like to investigate and find my place in it.

***How did you start with film? And do you have an educational background in art or film?***

I have been a painter for the most of my life, and at some point felt that I need to give time line to my images, let them live, develop and transform. And process to be seen.

As an abstract painter I would go through a series of performances that would translate my 'near-feelings' into something much more substantial - a painting. On the canvas it would manifest it-self with layers of drawing and paint, composition switching and being lost and found again, color messed up with and then purified, idea becoming clearer or leading to a new concept. So on. In film I wanted all that to be depicted. To a point. It is about how do you get from A to B, the journey that have to be made in order of reaching an insight. My first fascination with film comes from watching Andrei Tarkovsky classics, an amazing combination of visual art and storytelling, for me just the right balance of pain and beauty, philosophy and sensuality. In my early twenties I worked for the TV company, 'making' news, I did everything from finding material to presenting and editing, everything except shooting. So more than 15 years later I took a course on film-making in Central Saint Martins College of Art in London and then 2 more years later, after moving to France and having my 5th baby-girl I was completely possessed by video art. Then it felt like just the right form to express and illustrate life as it is. Now it is another way of talking to inner god, just a normal artistic tool, that I love using.

***Could you explain how you work, what themes or concepts you use and what is important to you?***

I am fascinated by shamanic art and methods and enjoy translating intuitive, sensual, dream-like insights into something that can be seen, read and heard. I also love analysing happenings of life and human nature and coming up with some much more intellectualized pieces.

I believe in power of visualizing, that can change your future and sometimes your past. All my work is most of all about process. The time spent on the painting or a film is a time spent in 'heaven' for me. I take art seriously and my-self not. I consider being an artist is just as being a shaman, translator of the feelings and ideas that need to be heard. It is not at all passive state, it's sometimes means becoming a Warrior or a Preacher, sometimes a Mother or a Child and most of the time it is about being a Monk.

Art is important to me just like ability to speak or reproduce. Living creatively is important.

***How long do you usually work on one project?***

Some pieces are quick illustrations, moments that are captured and instantly produced, they would take a day or two. I shoot in the morning and edit in the evening, edit again next day, working on the sound at the same time.

And some other projects, like, 'Dreams', 'Sirens' or video-poetry book are not completed after 2 years, they are continues.

I usually shoot for a week and work with existing material for a long time, reusing it in a different context.

I like working on several pieces at the same time.

Do you carefully plan the production process or do you work more intuitive?

I normally plan the production for the music videos.

With other pieces process can vary from intuitive to extra technical.

In the morning I usually have a plan - to make a video piece. After carefully writing down the production plan I make a step to an unknown and go shooting...

How does the title relate to the work, and how do you find a fitting title?

Title would be suggested way to look at the piece.

I barely leave my work untitled because I'm overwhelmed with possible inference.

I believe in lucky accidents, I like making parallels between seemingly unrelated assumptions.

I always title at the end of the film production, it is almost like a next step for understanding a piece.

***Where do you get your ideas or inspiration from?***

Dreams.

Night and day-dreams, hopes, feelings.

I am very introverted artist.

I believe in universality of human kind, so my feelings will not be far away from yours, my cries and my joys will touch you just as your own. I do not go far for the inspiration it is all in me or very near me.

***How important is sound in film, and if you use sounds, do you create your own or use existing?***

Sound for me is just as important as visuals. I always create my own music. Sometimes I collaborate with other contemporary musicians. In some films I use silence to emphasize the drama. I love using sounds around me (like babies playing or sea waves or wind on the grass and the trees), I include them in the music running them through various filters. I love playing with my voice, creating characters and sometimes languages. Film 'See You Tomorrow' is a good example of the techniques I like to use.

***Where would you place your work; cinema or art?***

It is art, I love seeing my work in the art gallery context. I do not try to meet expectations of a movie. I love to awake reaction in you with abstract imagery and sound.

***Did the web changed your view on art, or your career?***

Yes, sure. A lot of curatorial work I do is done thanks to the web. As well as showing artists I know personally I can include artists I find on the internet. When we announce a call for artists on our gallery website we can reach much wider audience than we could have ever imagined. Our projects become international, the dialogue you can have with the artists and viewers now is priceless. Also since I publish my work on the internet I receive invitations for exhibiting and screening my work from all over the world. I have shown my films in Europe, States, Australia and Asia because somebody found them in this huge melting pot of an art on the web.