

Thriving on Chaos

Garage's curator Snejana Krasteva loves eclectic Moscow

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Garage Museum of Contemporary Art

After several years working and studying contemporary art in china, Bulgarian Snejana Krasteva obtained a degree in curating at Goldsmiths, university of London. In 2013, she moved to Russia to work at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art as a curator. Krasteva is now married to Russian artist Sergei Rozhin.

I grew up speaking Russian, but when I moved here it was a bit funny in the beginning, heavily influenced by Bulgarian [a slavic language with the same historical roots as russian but with significant variances], I imagine. I still have a bit of an accent, which no one can quite place. My mother is Russian, but I had never been to Moscow until the early 2000s, when I came to visit from Beijing with my then Russian boyfriend.

I was still very young and impressionable. Arbat Street for me back then was super exciting—all the art, and so on. I remember being shocked by the number of drunk and

homeless people and the people on the streets seemed hostile and grumpy. But when I fainted on the metro [one day], everybody helped me, it was amazing actually. Some guy literally carried me to the station.

I was born in Plovdiv, which is the second-largest city in Bulgaria. Hardly anyone outside of the country has heard of it, people only know Sofia, the capital, and Burgas and Varna, seaside resorts. But Plovdiv is actually much older and more beautiful than Sofia.

When I came to Moscow I found a home, because it's my culture.

I have Slavic roots, I understand and speak the language, I look like a local, there are no barriers of any kind. I like Moscow, the city is very impressive. I like chaotic cities, I don't like beautiful cities. Like St. Petersburg is too beautiful for me and at the same time, I find the architecture there monotonous. I like Moscow's eclecticism, these clashes of different eras you see practically everywhere.

I used to live in an apartment building right in front of the Greater Church of the Ascension. It's where the [famed Russian] poet Alexander Pushkin got married. I would've stayed there but I needed a larger apartment because I got married myself.

I found my husband while doing research for the Garage Triennial. I chose two regions for research: Siberia and the Urals. When I came to Yekaterinburg, I was completely exhausted after Siberia. He was the first artist on the list I was scheduled to meet. After three days, he said he loved me and wanted to marry me. He dropped everything – his work, his family – and moved to Moscow with me.

I like to go to Dom 12, I like that it has a courtyard. I come from a culture where coffee is really the number one priority — there are lots of cafes with tables on the streets in Bulgaria. I really miss that in Moscow. Dom 12 is nice and cozy, an unglamorous restaurant with OK food that's not too westernized. It also has a nice crowd, a lot of my friends go there.

Recently I started going to Untitled bar. You see everyone there, it's like going home, a little art society hangout. When friends arrive I always suggest going to the Academy of Science building and the upstairs bar there, Sky Lounge. It's very expensive, so just get a glass of wine and enjoy the view.

I need to leave Moscow every once in a while, I think every month I need to get away for three days. I like to go to friends' dachas [country houses]. There's Sergiev Posad not far from Moscow, which has a beautiful monastery. I also like to go explore weird places, like Novo-Kuryanovo, a village built inside an experimental railroad on the outskirts of Moscow.

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