

Galina Manikova by Galina Manikova

There is no home, there is no homeland, there is no mother tongue. Horten, Norway, Feb. 29, 2000

I was born on the island of Sachalin on the 8th of March 1953, one day before the death of Stalin. My parents were military doctors, surgeons both of them. They were sent to the Japanese island of Sachalin right after World War II, when it was occupied by Russians. I had a Korean nanny the first year of my life, but then they sent me to my grandparents in Moscow. It was too hard to raise small children on Sachalin.

So I grew up in a big apartment at "Kuznetckiy most" street, behind the Bolshoi theatre. My grandfather was a medical doctor too, my grandmother was a lawyer by education, but worked as a stage designer at the Bolshoi. I did not see my parents or my older sister again until I was five. I went to school in the very centre of Moscow and knew all the small streets and old churches. I still consider myself a Moscovite.

My father, a high officer in the military, was lucky to survive Stalin's purges. Sakhalin was exile, but better than inside the barbed wire. He was "released" and returned to Moscow after 8 years. I was reading forbidden literature (Solzhenitsyn, etc.), copied by hand and passed along; we often had only a few hours to read a book. By the age of 15, I came to a serious confrontation with my father on politics. When I was 17, I moved out and went to live with my boyfriend and his parents. They were Jewish, Zionists, and dissidents. When they applied to leave for Israel, they suggested I marry my boyfriend in order to join them in their application. So I did. My father arrived at the ceremony at the Moscow Marriage palace with a militia convoy. There was a dramatic confrontation, but I managed to escape arrest by my father's army. We went into hiding for a few months, when, suddenly the family was refused permission to leave for Israel, while we two, 18 years old, were given a permit to leave within five days. And so we did.

There was a traumatic episode at Sheremetjevo Airport before departure. I was examined by a urologist and a gynaecologist in front of an army of toll controllers. The whole purpose of it must have been to humiliate me. I fainted from shame and hatred and woke up on a plane to Wien [Vienna]. When we landed in Wien, I remember that we were marched through a corridor of armed soldiers and then placed behind barbed wire at a special camp for Russian Jews on their way to freedom. The next thing I remember

were the flowers and the oranges in Tel-Aviv. It was the end of December, 1973. My fur coat from Moscow was kind of out of place. And so was I.

I had no contact with my family for the next 15 years. My father had condemned me: both he and my sister lost their jobs for my being a deserter and an enemy of the people. Under "occupation" in my passport, they had stamped PARASITE.

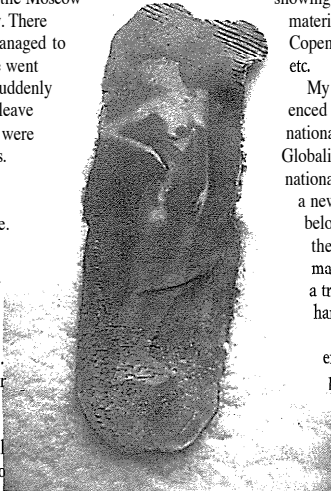
The next 13 years of my life were spent in Israel. I went to art academy Bezalel, 1974-79. My son was born in 1975; I was divorced in 1977. At the academy, I began to specialize in photographic methods for ceramics, such as silkscreen, lithography, old emulsions. My postgraduate research was on direct projection on photoemulsions. Slowly I moved from clay to other materials and surfaces, but I still consider photoceramics my major field of expertise. I was offered a teaching position at the academy after graduation, at the same time working as a designer for a porcelain factory in Tel-Aviv.

In 1982 I married for the second time, this time a Norwegian, who specialised in Chinese dialects. It was not so easy for him to find an occupation in Israel, so in 1986 we moved to Oslo, where I lived until last year. Divorced in 1988.

I am a member of Norwegian Artists Association, Norwegian Craftsmen Association and Free Photographers association. Over the years, I've had a series of exhibitions and teaching projects, showing my work in different materials and techniques in Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, San Francisco, etc.

My "culture" has been influenced by many traditions, my national feelings are confused. Globalisation and migrations of nationalities in Europe have created a new group of people who belong to the same race as me, the race of hybrids, mixed masters. Perhaps that makes me a true cosmopolite. Still, it is hard to appeal to the masses.

The feeling of isolation, exile, follows me. That is probably why I have worked so much with the subject of identity. Another new subject is about age, getting older, being a woman. But life is not over yet.



from Nul 1

I could not sleep. I took 3 beautiful sleeping "dolls" with my tea to bed last night My whole body was shaking with lust. My skin was soft and damp and my lips were open and trembling. My desire was so enormous, I could not breathe, it overflowed every cell and pore, it poured my blood all the way down to my fingertips and toes, and there it was waving, pressing, pushing, touching my skin from within, drawing new lines and curves for a gypsy girl to read. I wanted to get up and go find you, touch your lips with those fingers, touch your balls with my toes, let you pick up the rhythm and sing to my music. I wanted to tune your body, your skin stretched on the drum of your bones. I wanted you. I wanted you to play me as a flute. I wanted to feel your lips and your tongue, your hands pulling my strings apart and together. Your hands all over me, gentle and strong, careful and rough, soft and hard, understanding and hurting, making me scream from pain and frustration. I wanted you to penetrate through my nostrils, pierce my brain, so that I can stop thinking, thinking, thinking... so that only a pure sensation of feeling, emotion, vibration is left. I wanted to forget myself, to hide, to disappear, to dissolve myself into you, get lost inside of you, die and get buried there forever. I wanted to touch you from within, caress your inner parts, touch your chest from the other side, hold your pulsating heart in my hand and feel you feeling what I am feeling. I wanted you.

Left, cyanotype on a stoneware slab, about 170 cm long. The kiln shelves were only 150 cm, so it hung out a bit. The picture was taken on the snow outside.