

The thesaurus has no entry for **goddess**, saying only "see god," which offers us good person, sun, thunder, war, and so forth – not *wrong*, yet not quite the flavor. **Daemoness** is closer, but let's try,

Galina Manikova, *nordic-russian goddess*

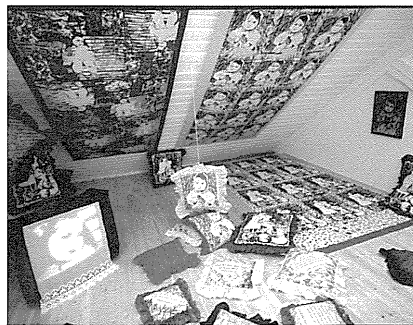
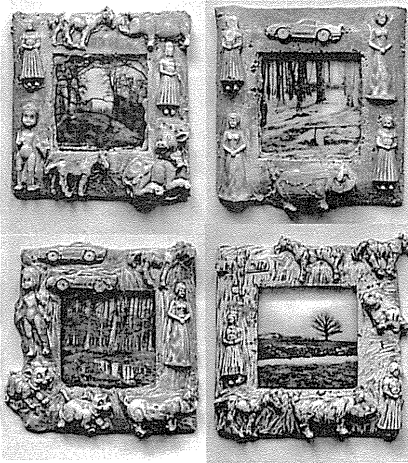
She commands lightening bolts from her finger tips, makes art from fire and earth in media ancient as the dawn of history, pours molten aluminum like other women pour afternoon tea, strides cheerfully (and sometimes nakedly) through every incarnation of photography, then onward into digital media of such awesome power that analog persons speak the very names in awed tones, as of yaweh.



But Galina is also wise and practical. She suggests that we not dwell on technical details in matters digital. "People will laugh if you say something just slightly incorrect." I am relieved to be off the hook, and go on to ask about a scan showing a 19th-century German railway station from the outside. We see clouds in the windows. Are they photos or reflections?

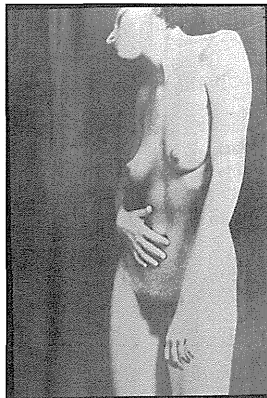
"If you look closely you will see some naked bottoms and breasts in-between the clouds. The installation was directly on the windows, huge images of enlarged details of the naked female body, called 'Landscapes of Loneliness,' and very much about age: 40 crisis, my own fattening and wrinkling body built into a kind of topographic map. The lines are wrinkles, but at first glance, look like a drawing or map. The windows could be seen in town from all directions. There were 12, each 3x9 meters, and one big image on plexiglass hanging in the middle of the room. They began as 6x7 cm camera negatives projected onto lithographic film, making a positive image. I did the project in a month, living in Berlin, working at the Potsdam Academy of Art. I worked like crazy. The two German "boys" who organised the project were teachers at the academy – and terrorised me the entire time, because I was doing everything wrong. "Oh, but you cannot use a concentrated developer, it is not right... this film is not supposed to be used that way... you will never get a good result...you are going to bring shame on our heads," and so forth. Then came success and much attention from the press. Oh, they really hated me at the end! Later I saw a film of Detective Derek (a German television series) where the main character was a prostitute named something like Halina Malikova. I was ready to sue, but then I started another project and forgot about it."

When Galina arrived in NYC last summer, she had two projects: First, to pick up an ice pack, one of those rubbery bags with the screw top you fill with ice and flop onto your fevered brow, as in old American movies. She went from drugstore to drugstore, but all were staffed by folks unfamiliar with old American movies and had no ice packs. Then at last, success, and the trophy triumphantly applied in the record-breaking heat. The second mission was to master and exploit the new video camera attached to her wrist, a little thing with a tiny bright screen, sound, and every other digital trick – powers that would have required a

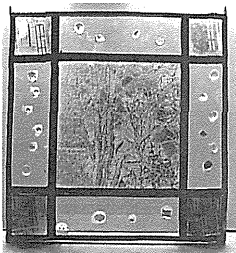


Top, hand-coated emulsions on glass framed in cast aluminum; Center, fabric and objects photo silk-screened; Bottom, Berlin: "bottoms and breasts" on transparencymounted in the windows.

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Above left: installation view; Right: cyanotype (ca 2 meters high); Left: one of a series of cyanotypes and brownprints on glass, framed with hand-cut glass in lead trim. Left below: "Papa, 1996," framed in cast aluminum, 20x30 cm.



mainframe not terribly long ago.

What do you call that camera?

Digital video camera... Sony DCR-TRV900E... Video... Video-wonder.

Do you still use it?

Almost as much as I used the Nikon. I still use the Nikon and the Mamiya, but I drag the Sony everywhere — for a quick sketch into Photoshop, for documentation, for producing video films, for CD-rom productions, for the Internet, etc.

Her CD-Rom, "Nul I," and as much of Galina Manikova and her epic, tragic, triumphant life as can be conveyed in a brief autobiography are in the folder that says "Galina" to me from my

harddrive every day. I e-mail for an update. Galina replies with delight.

I have been thinking about you so many times during this last year (a year ago already!), still digesting our conversations. I am a total fatalist, as all literate Russians are, so coincidences fascinate me. Anyway, my visit last summer, and all the details and ideas of our contact made a deep impression. Yes, Viva l'Internet!

And the latest:

I moved in with Svein a year ago, leading to total confusion and disorder in all matters for both of us all year, because I began renovating his house in Horten. It's difficult to survive with that going on on three floors. For the first 6 months, my studio was still in Oslo, 1-1/2 hours drive away, with half of everything in boxes here and the rest there.

There? bad news and some good. The authorities decided to make rental apartments of the building in Horten she'd hoped to get for a school.

But I am not giving up on the idea of the "Alternative alternative" centre of art, craft and photography. The director and curator of the National Museum of Photography, also situated in Horten, encourage me. They expect to get their own new building next year, and I may get the old one, which would be even better. So I still hope.

There was a bout of double vision.

I am OK now, but they could not tell me why I had it or if it could come back. Doctors blame virus infections when they do not know what else to say. They checked my head and brains and promise they are OK. I am just happy to be able to use my eyes again. But, after a half year of driving along E-18 road back and forth to Oslo, with each eye seeing in its own direction, I decided to rent a little studio here in Horten, two small rooms, and a darkroom. It's in the absolute centre of town, a little building

glued onto the side of a bigger house. Very cosy. But I had to put in electricity and a water toilet. (There was only the kind of outdoor chemical bucket system Norwegians love to freeze their bottoms on in rough winter weather.) Now I have invested so much money in that back yard beauty space that I shall ask them to bury me under the toilet with a plaque: "She liked to do it at room temperature with the odour of roses."

The space is not large, but I never have enough space, so I use a lot of fantasy (my best "facility"). I have a big Durst enlarger, a few tables, two computers, two printers, a scanner, a CD-burner, some chemicals, some home-made silkscreen frames. That is about

all.

When renovations are finished here, I will build an apartment in my house in Oslo to rent out and cover some expenses. Now my life is still very much about painting (the walls and cupboards) and drawing (architectural plans and technical sketches). But I actually love it - sculpting the spaces for living I am a bit proud of myself when I find smart solutions and unconventional ones. As the guy who helped with the carpentry said, you always get it your way anyway.

We know about Galina? always to Jerusalem and her education there. In Norway, she did two more postgraduate years, researching cyanotype on textiles and clay. Since then she has taught "sporadically" all over Scandinavia, but as guest lecturer, never staff. "I will not waste my time on their silly school programs and politics. And I am not fond of kissing fat bottoms of the boys." In the Norwegian art scene that is a definite part of the fame. (That never happens here!)

I repeat the homily Iran by John: "Examine your motives and be clear about the purpose of your pictures." Galina shrugs through the ether:

If you can live without doing art, you should. I can't help it. It just comes out. I cannot live without it. It has always been the most important thing for me, I have nearly sacrificed my son to it, just as Abraham did with Isaac.

There have been excellent moments, nevertheless. Last November Galina had a show north of Oslo in a town called Aas - photographs of oak trees and houses on glass in different colors and sizes (as at left). The show sold out completely, 70 pieces. This May I had an exhibition in Bodoe, so far north it took four days to drive there. That was an installation titled "Climax Values," three rooms, with video and slide projection, a darkened room with transparent textiles. Photographs were of an old naked woman, texts were about a woman getting old. This included videos and two frames filled with transparent plates of very thin porcelain, lit from behind. It

looked like magic.

Did you always plan to be an "artist"?

Artist is a very obliging title. I am more like an honest hard worker with a decent knowledge of techniques and methods, especially photography, since the academy in Jerusalem. I had a photographer-boyfriend there, too. We talked and read and discussed everything in photography. Fortunately, we were very different, so we did not damage each other, at least I hope not. And we had a lot of wonderful teachers!

That education was, naturally, in Hebrew. How many languages does she speak? "Only four: "From 8th to 10th grade, Galina went to an "English" school in Moscow where "We learned that famous sentence: "Lenin said, the best way to see London is from the top of a bus."

How about the expertise in digital?

I started working with video in 1988, making my first video production for an exhibition at Henie Onstad Centre for Art ("Blue and Fireproof"). The museum had a digital lab where artists could work, a low-band production. By the time I mastered that technology, it had died out. Then came the high-band. I learned that and it went away. I started high-band beta technology and computer editing. Then the High-8 period and computer editing. And it died again. In 1994 I started working with computer editing programs for video, using AVID and a heavy machine. That's one I'm glad isn't around anymore!

On Disk Nul, I find again (after trial & error, error, error - the controls are top secret) Galina? cri de coeur (page 13), written in English! As noted, we felt many resonances, in our thinking and our work - the use of text, mixed media, frames, and so forth. Her written "voice," however, told me in one moment what I hadn't realized about myself: My "voice" (page 16) is ironic New Yorker. Hers (at least from this vantage) is essence of Russian, a 21st-century Dostoevsky with a female lead. I ask: fit? OK to include that lament, which is stunning, but intimate.

It is OK with me. I have published it once, I can publish it twice.

Disk Nul is an Atelier Nord production. That's a centre for digital and video education for artists in Oslo, with government support and lots of equipment artists can rent for a few bucks. It was there for a year in 1994. The disk can be ordered for about 400 NOK, or \$50. [www.anart.no. Or, kristin@anart.no for information]

My favorite screen looks like a design, or label, in saturated red, in saturated red, and green, plus insects and quotations from folks like Sigmund Freud and Lydia Lunch. I suspect those phosphors can never be matched in another medium, but where did it come from?

I scanned a color photograph into Photo-

shop and manipulated the image there.

By yourself?

I did the frames, or "pages" entirely myself. To put it all together there's a Director program, which gets you from page to page. That's the part you liked the least. I was very disappointed with it myself, but had no time to learn the program before publication, so I had to use an 'expert.' It's a very complex tool. I want to work in that medium more than any other, but do not have the patience for the manuals. If I find an inspiring teacher, then I will reach perfection.

Does the phrase "I am a Camera" mean anything to you?

I have not heard the expression, but I identify. Actually, it bothers me that I need a camera to see the world. If I have a camera with me, I am not available to other people or purposes. Friends say it's impossible to walk beside me. I once went on holiday without a camera so I could relax. That was when I started working with pinhole.

"I am a Camera" was a memoir by Christopher Isherwood of between-the-wars Berlin. The phrase meant a taking in, a recording of the life. I'm thinking, Galina is a handheld video camera.

I am not a very easily handheld person, that's for sure.

Editor's Note: Galina Manikova is called "daemones" in the sense of "a supernatural being between man and god, possessed of extraordinary drive, enthusiasm and effectiveness" (Webster's). JS

Having taught summer workshops in Barcelona for 5 years, Galina thinks now of new locales. "I love to travel; it would be wonderful if somebody wants me to come and share my expertise on photographic transfer to alternative surfaces. I can build courses for different audiences, ages, and levels." "Some plans are cooking, but she invites other inquiries, imagining "a working trip to see the world." But, "one week to ten days are best. And I prefer no more than 10 students, otherwise they do not get enough personal attention." Galina Manikova <galina@online.no>

Tech notes:

The Very Large Negatives

I used Agfa lithographic line negative film 00711 P, which comes in rolls of 30 or 60 meters, from 60 to 180 cm wide, exposed by projecting 6x7 camera negs with a regular darkroom enlarger onto film nearly 2 meters (6 feet) long. I managed to process them manually in horizontal trays. Dragging them up and down through baths much smaller than the film was very messy, but it worked.

Later I found a firm that let me work nights on their reprographic machines (big projector on wheels and processing Jobo), using their day-old paper chemistry that they threw out next morning. Then one day the film melted on the roller, and so ended a nice relationship. I never got a chance to do that again, but I still use those positive images.

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Galina's New York

At night, 19 of thousands, millions, of shots from that "video wonder" strapped to Galina's hand last summer. Note that 2nd from top and bottom right are of backyard at P-F Atelier (to show what expert framing can do).

