



Photo by Laura Schaeffer

Klára Hosnedlová: Memories of the Future

INTERVIEW | ENGLISH | ART | KLÁRA HOSNEĐLOVÁ

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In her complex and multi-layered installations, KLÁRA HOSNEĐLOVÁ explores the ideologies of the recent past and examines how they manifest themselves in our material reality today.

Through a continual, almost filmic process, Klára Hosnedlová constructs enigmatic environments and creates interwoven narratives within them. In this conversation she spoke about her labor-intensive, autopoietic process of arming, as well as her inspirations and meditations on the cyclical nature of time. An interview by CHRISTINA GIGLIOTTI.

When I first saw your embroideries a few years ago, I thought they were actually paintings because they looked so realistic. Why did you decide to work in this medium?

A lot of people think that they're paintings, and I think it's actually a good thing. I don't really emphasize the embroidery technique, but rather use it as a means to express myself. I studied painting in Prague, and it never crossed my mind that I would embroider one day – I just wanted to paint. The painting studios at the art academies in Czech Republic are mostly led by men. I remember painting large canvases while at the Academy, telling myself to make them bold and powerful. Luckily, this phase passed quickly for me.

During this period of transition, I started to look for more meditative ways of art production and slowed down the whole process. It's more enjoyable, regardless of what my work ultimately looked like. It's a cliché, but the joy of making things was of the utmost importance to me then.

I never studied the technique of embroidery, nor did I consult anyone involved in it. I started to use cotton threads like one would use oil or acrylic paint. I don't think of any limitations when I work. Instead, I always try, be it in the embroideries themselves or in installations, to express what I dream about. I also never think ahead how complicated something might be or how I might arrive at a final result.

Your installations have become more complex over time, as though you are creating entire interiors or fully-functional domestic spaces. These settings feel partially like time-capsules from past decades, yet simultaneously futuristic in a utopian or modernist way. What draws you to modernist architecture and design specifically?

It is not just modernist architecture, but also that of the 1970s and 1980s. I'm attracted to this style because, as someone who was born in 1990 – a year after the Soviet Union fell and Czech Republic became a democratic country – I view that architecture in my own way, and create my own stories and worlds within it, without the gravity of those times necessarily. There are quite many splendid works among what was built during socialism by authors who tried to work freely, despite the fact that there was almost no free art.

Then in a sense you are directing your performers, and ultimately the viewers to explore this era as well by way of your installations?

Yes, definitely. The era and also the failed ideology. I see the performers as explorers, in a sense that they too are discovering the scenes or settings I create, and interacting with their surroundings.

The performative element of your work challenges the positions of performer and viewer. Your performers are active only in front of you, and the audience sees the traces of these moments in photographs and your embroideries.

This has been natural for me from the very beginning. Each photo session with the performers comes with a new series of embroideries. All of my projects follow one after another by means of a performance, and out of this event, material for new embroideries emerges. I call it 'performance' as it is simpler to describe it this way for other people, but for me it is rather like a sketch of something that is about to come. It's a private act that is important in my work, and I wouldn't present this to the viewer by means of a live performance. The installations and objects are ready to interact with the performers, for whom I prepare a variety of activities to take place. Then the performers leave the scene, and just their traces remain. The viewers can only imagine what may have taken place.

How do you direct them?

It's mainly about having them interact with objects, tools and settings that are unknown to them. Perhaps these environments seem familiar, however, I like to think that they are discovering scenes from the past, and completely repurposing them in a contemporary way. So for example they may find outdated tools or gadgets, and utilize them for something completely different than the object's original use. This element is important for me because I feel it's necessary to connect to the past in a way that may be useful for our current selves, or for navigating the future.

One of my favorite songs is "The Past is a Grotesque Animal" by the indie band Of Montreal. It feels easy and kind of natural to want to abandon everything that happened in the past and only look forward. What do you think?

Our past very often serves as a crutch for us. Without any knowledge of the past or lessons learned from past experience, I don't think we can really make progress. So for me I wouldn't consciously leave everything, but, sometimes I feel that if we could skip the past, this might create a nice place to hide for a while. Certainly this couldn't last long, however, I do look forward to this possibility, but at the same time, these trembling moments of anticipation always taste bittersweet.

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