

VALLOIS

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Georges-Philippe
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36

Project Room

ZHENYA MACHNEVA

The Archived Subjects

36 rue de Seine
75006 Paris—FR
T.+33(0)1 46 34 61 07
www.galerie-vallois.com
info@galerie-vallois.com

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Zhenya Machneva says that her last series carried the colours of days in Saint Petersburg: monochromes of greys and whites to represent landscapes of deserted factories from the Soviet era. Then, last year, she had a three-month arts residency at the Cité des Arts in Paris, from which she brought back the colours of works by African artists that she had seen. The works she is showing this autumn are details of the same machines that she had depicted in her earlier series, lighter, sometimes more humorous images. One should not search for any psychological dimension, but instead enjoy a colour experience. Machneva also says that she does not invent but collects what is visible around her.

She studied at the textile department of the Saint Petersburg Stieglitz State Academy of Art and Design and has classical training in painting, often practises drawing and sometimes lithography, but has chosen tapestry textile art as her field of expression. One should not believe that many young artists have taken this path in Russia - the taste for crafts common to many Western artists has not spread there yet. And, unlike the Gobelins or Aubusson tapestry factories, the great factories of 18th century Russia closed their doors long ago.

Zhenya Machneva chose tapestry, which she weaves herself. She bought her loom ten years ago in Finland, because Russia no longer produced any that were good enough. After choosing an image from her photographic archives, she does sketches, then transfers her drawing by hand, line by line. Don't talk to her about Matisse, Hartung or Picasso invited by the Gobelins factory to transfer their paintings into tapestries because, in her opinion, tapestry is not a decorative art. The time she spends on producing a work varies; it can last one week or sometimes two or three months.

She began depicting deserted industrial zones after a visit to a telephone factory where her grandfather worked for forty years and, since then, this motif has never left her. The works she is showing in the exhibition are details of machines less melancholic and more embodied than her earlier work. In *Contact Method*, she even added a piece of wood to which she attached a pulley - something that the Nouveau Réalistes would not have disowned. Reminiscences of Jean Tinguely or Francis Picabia are not there, she says. The dials of *Bouquet* resemble rose buds. *Sans titre (dans la cabine d'une grue élévatrice)* evokes the portrait of a war veteran with severe facial injuries... With its strident yellow, *Guillotine* also depicts another, obviously more violent, relationship with the body.



7th November

15th December

2018

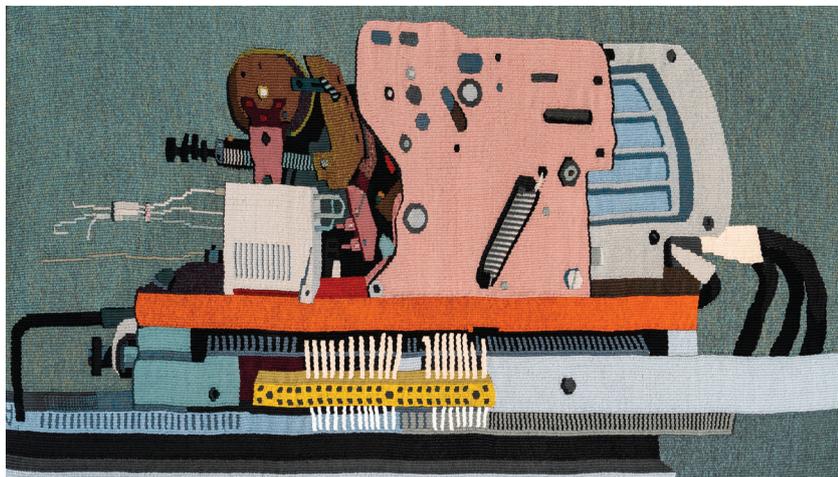
OPENING

Tuesday November 6
From 6pm

FAIRS

Art Basel Miami
12/6 - 12/9 2018

Art Genève
01/31 - 02/03 2019



For Zhenya Machneva, the practice of tapestry and these images of factories are a form of resistance to mass production and to the speed of our time. They are imaginary landscapes of a future past.

Anaël Pigéat