

Kosmoopera: between cosmos and cosmogony

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ABSTRACT. The Kosmoopera exhibition research project started in April 2019. A year later, the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Paris invite you to discover the works of Valentina Mir. The exhibition event take place on April 7, 2020, a few days before the Russian National Day, which commemorates the first human journey into outer space. Thanks to the kindness and support of Konstantin Volkov, chairman of the CRSC, Valentina Mir joins the Institute and meet the cosmonauts G. Padalka and A. Borisenko on several occasions. A. Borisenko will be present at the opening and will hold a conference.

RÉSUMÉ. L'exposition Kosmoopera est un projet de recherche qui a débuté en avril 2019. Un an après, on pourra découvrir les oeuvres de Valentina Mir au Centre de Russie pour la science et la culture à Paris. Cette exposition événement ouvrira ses portes le 7 avril 2020 à la veille de la fête nationale russe qui commémore le premier voyage de l'homme dans l'espace le 12 avril 1961. Grâce à l'amabilité et au soutien de Konstantin Volkov, le directeur du CRSC, Valentina Mir a pu fréquenter l'Institut et rencontrer à plusieurs reprises les cosmonautes G. Padalka et A. Borisenko. Ce dernier sera présent lors du vernissage et tiendra une conférence à cette occasion.

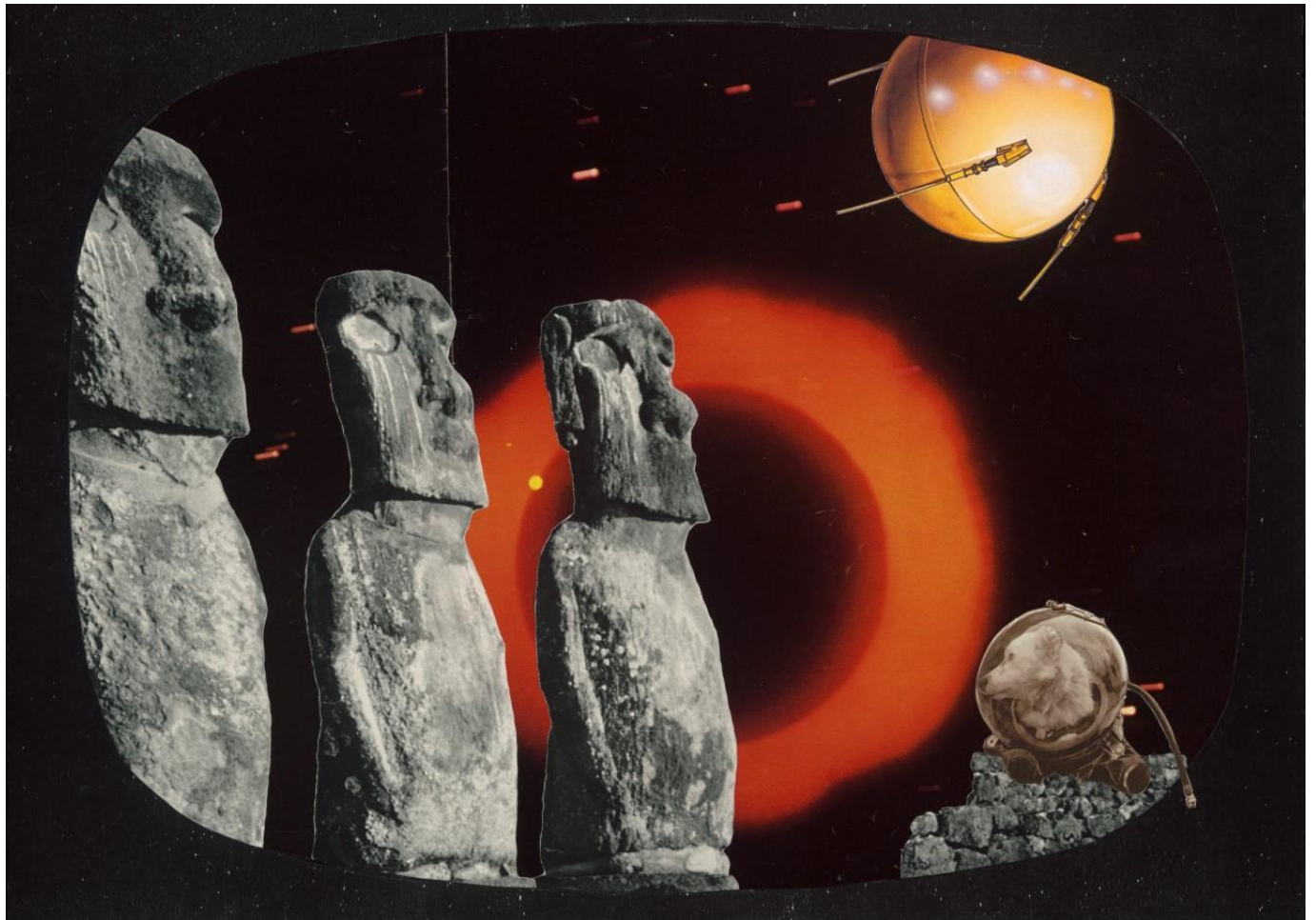
KEYWORDS. Valentina Mir, miramorphoses, kosmoopera, collage, Gagarine, Padalka, Borisenko, cosmonaute, Konstantin Volkov, CRSC.

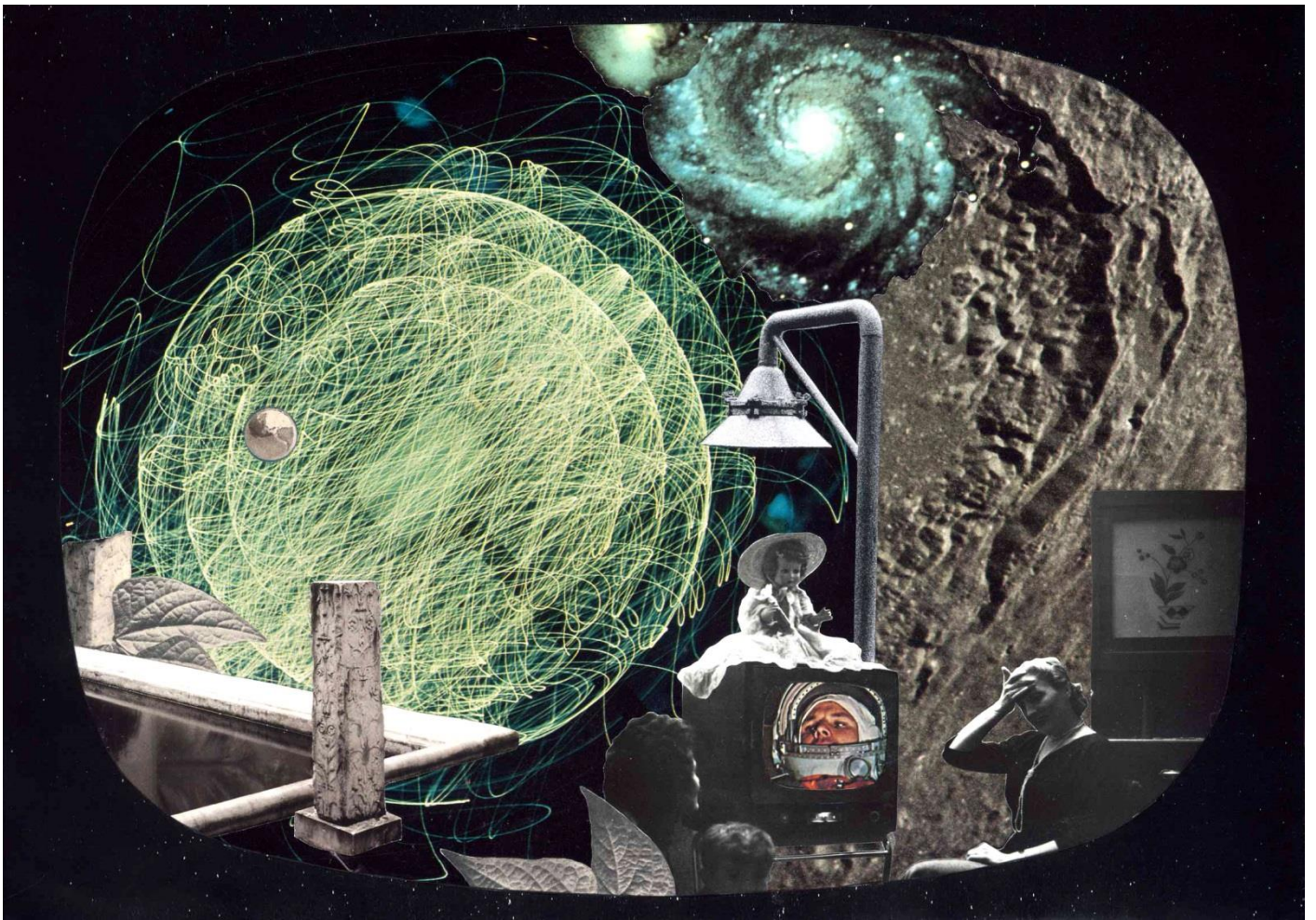
MOTS-CLÉS. Valentina Mir, miramorphoses, kosmoopera, collage, Gagarine, Padalka, Borisenko, cosmonaute, Konstantin Volkov, CRSC.

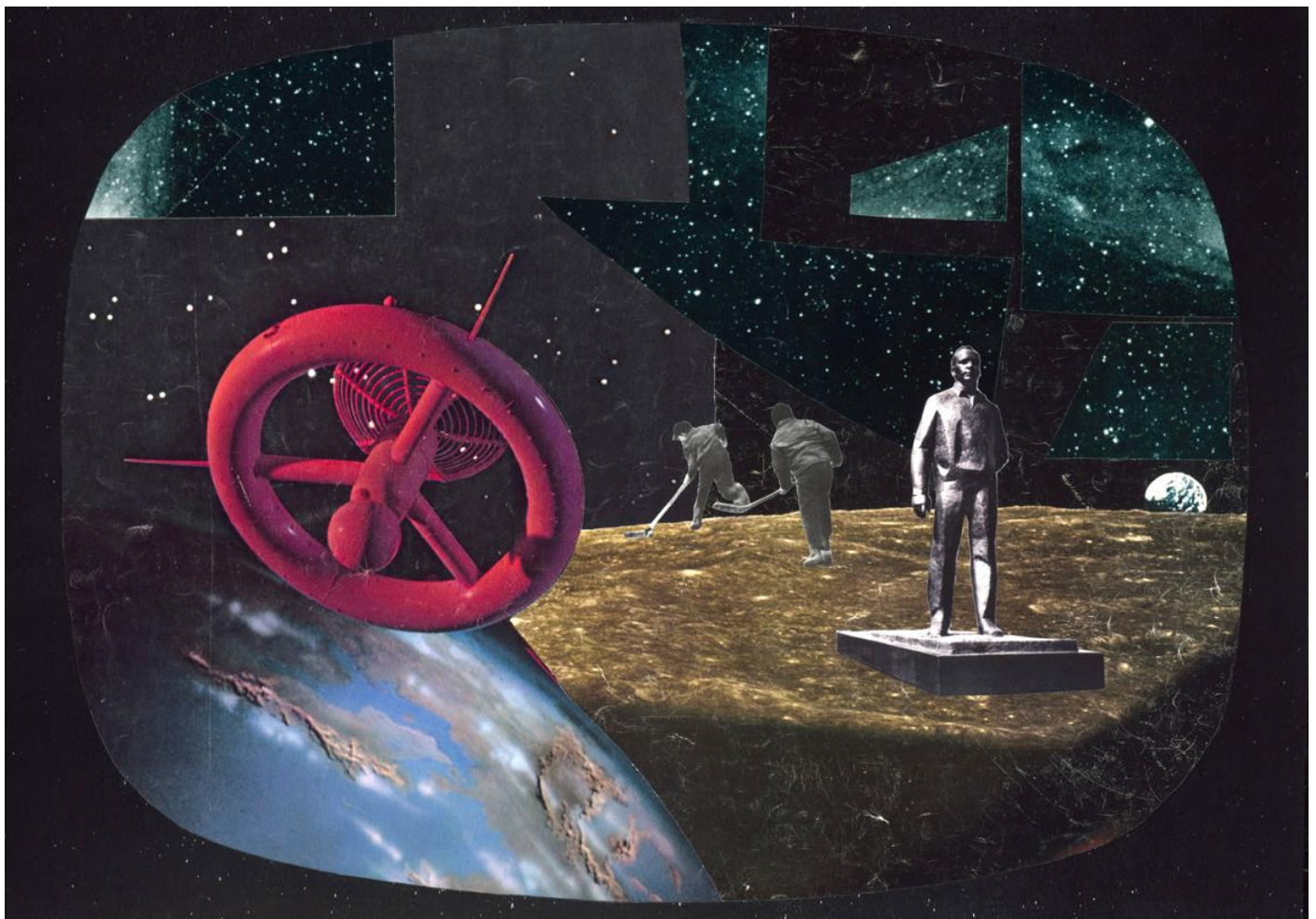
From Europe to Russia, Valentina Mir pursues her itinerary of artist-traveller of the Cosmos today in Paris. The scope of her initial work stretches out far beyond usual borders in her Kosmoopera. Her artworks unfold astonishing visions to reveal a new Cosmos, both inventive and expressive. Using a process of collage/re-composition, Valentina Mir propels us into this new unknown which seems familiar at first but then eludes us. Her depiction of space as spaces could remind us of the Russian techniques of photo-montage. But her work also uses a form of deframing. She offers us an invitation to undertake a much longer journey into the Cosmos, alternating forms and backgrounds, conciliating movement and space time, colour and black and white. Punctuated rhythmically by mysterious signs, by more and more colourful but also fragmented references made up of traces and dynamic imprints, resulting from the different media supports used, this composite work offers us a whole series of interstellar meetings. Her Cosmos evokes the nostalgia of new territories to be conquered and also of territories which are finally inaccessible. By exploring the space time of the cosmonauts flying ever closer to the edges of the earth and the sky, Valentina Mir trespasses into their frontiers to render them possible and visible. Based on the Soviet adventure of the Cosmos, her art can be conceived as an original tale of a journey out of time. But how to apprehend this new, utopic journey towards the Cosmos? In an initial approach reminiscent of the silent Soviet movie “Aelita” by Prazanov in 1924, when the conquest of Mars appeared as the much criticised metaphor of a new utopia. But here, her more personal galaxy is revisited in a jumble of space figures where the vessels wrap themselves around us to carry us off towards new phantasmagoria. These Miramorphoses are between sky and earth, between photography and painting, between verticality and horizontality. They form strata of diverse images, piled up one on top of another or juxtaposed, mingling Mark Rothko and Valentina Terechkova, Alexei Léonov and Vera Moukhina, Tatline and Lenin, Strelka with Belka...They irrigate and bring to life all the time this reinvented Cosmos as a personal crossroads between straight lines, curves, surfaces and depths. Although apparently

revealing a playful and stylistic simplicity, her collage processes in fact dissimulate her highly personal and demanding research on the image: that of a Cosmos in suspension which gradually becomes the quest for her own Cosmogony. As if this research were oscillating around the perpetual movement of images, prompting us in equal measure to work on associations and to meditate on the infinite. The representations inserted and glued together in these Mirs are transformed into a whole kaleidoscope of impressions, shattered, renewed. They participate continuously in a process of metamorphosis of the images. The latter become inexhaustible, reminding us of their multiple and de-multiplied sources. Her artworks constitute so many stories decrypting the relations between collective and individual memories. The texture of these reassembled images not only reveals the mythical and glorious past of Soviet cosmonauts, conquerors of the useless, but seems to re-transcribe their gestures, their voices, their confidences, their anxieties about always wishing to explore the infinity of space. Coming back to earth in Vostok 1, Yuri Gagarin, the tutelary figure, described these transformations : “ The spaceship was surrounded by flames. I was a cloud of fire hurtling towards the earth!” Prophetic words which would confer for all time his status as an earthly star, both asteroid and celestial angel, although proclaiming that he had not met his God! Besides Yuri Gagarin proposes in the conclusion of his autobiography “Road to the Stars” (1961) his own pacific vision of space declining the World (Mir) under the angle of Peace (Mirou) “ Mir Mirou : we do everything for peace!

We cannot forget that this Soviet space adventure took place in a context of international tension and a period of cold war, where the Cosmos became the field for new competition to win the supremacy of space. Gagarin’s words add a retrospective nod to Valentina Mir’s pictures which propose her peaceful and artistic vision of the Cosmos. Here the images are linked in the form of a tale. Behind each story there could be a latent part of the Cosmos. It is not a case of depicting an abstract Cosmos but rather of recreating a more intimate Cosmos where one image might hide another. In a sort of visual history, Kosmoopera playfully prompts us to find the hidden images which will make others emerge. The energy of this universe does not only reflect the atmosphere of our planets, but offers us the possibility to set off on a voyage in space time around galaxies in movement. Thus these Miramorphoses do not only rehabilitate our collective memory but also question and reinvent the Cosmos of those who walked in space. The iconography of Kosmoopera is deployed like a zone of new virtualities, going beyond the heroic epic of the conquest of space. Valentina Mir does not merely recompose in depth the imagery and the fantasy of a mythical epic. Conceived as a true work of research, Kosmoopera elaborates a new movement towards the infinite. Her Cosmos becomes a novel invitation to travel along an ever more colourful path at the crossroads of different temporalities, those of yesterday and of today. But this journey reveals her own Cosmogony. If Valentina Mir allows us to reconstruct a nostalgic vision of Kosmoopera, inviting us to accompany her here on future adventures, she also engages us to tame this series of cosmic mysteries and to project our own imagination into them.









Valentina Mir is an Italian artist who currently lives and works in Paris. For a number of years, she has devoted a specific attention to what we could call « medium of memory ». Her artistic production is set at the intersection between the analysis of an individual memory and her attempt to understand the way by which that memory becomes part of collective imagination.