

Some Magazine Studio Practice

A Magazine For Visual Inventors Issue #18 Summer 2024

LISA SMIRNOVA, LISA TIEMANN & MAX RÖDEL, JOSEPHINE RAIS,
ANNA NEZHNYAYA, TOPYA, FILA GRAPHIC LAB

slanted

I Want to Soften the Viewer's Heart

Interview: Iuliia Krasnoperova
Photos: Lisa Smirnova

Lisa Smirnova is a textile artist from Moscow who has found a new home in Cascais, Portugal after the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. She has been working with textiles for many years and keeps experimenting with textures and shapes. We spoke to her about her current studio and how she manages to convey her ideas, dreams, and messages through her art.

Photo: Maria Pavlovskaya

SOME





Do you have a daily routine?

My workday begins with a short workout or run, followed by breakfast and a stroll with the dog. Then, I work on current tasks, usually involving a creative or organizational process. Evenings are typically spent with family. Before bedtime, I read a book, jot down ideas that came up during the day, or watch reels with funny animals.

Can you tell us about your workspace/studio?

Currently, my studio is one of the rooms in our house. It's arranged very simply: a few large tables, chairs, and open shelves for storing materials.

Please tell us, what would your dream studio look like?

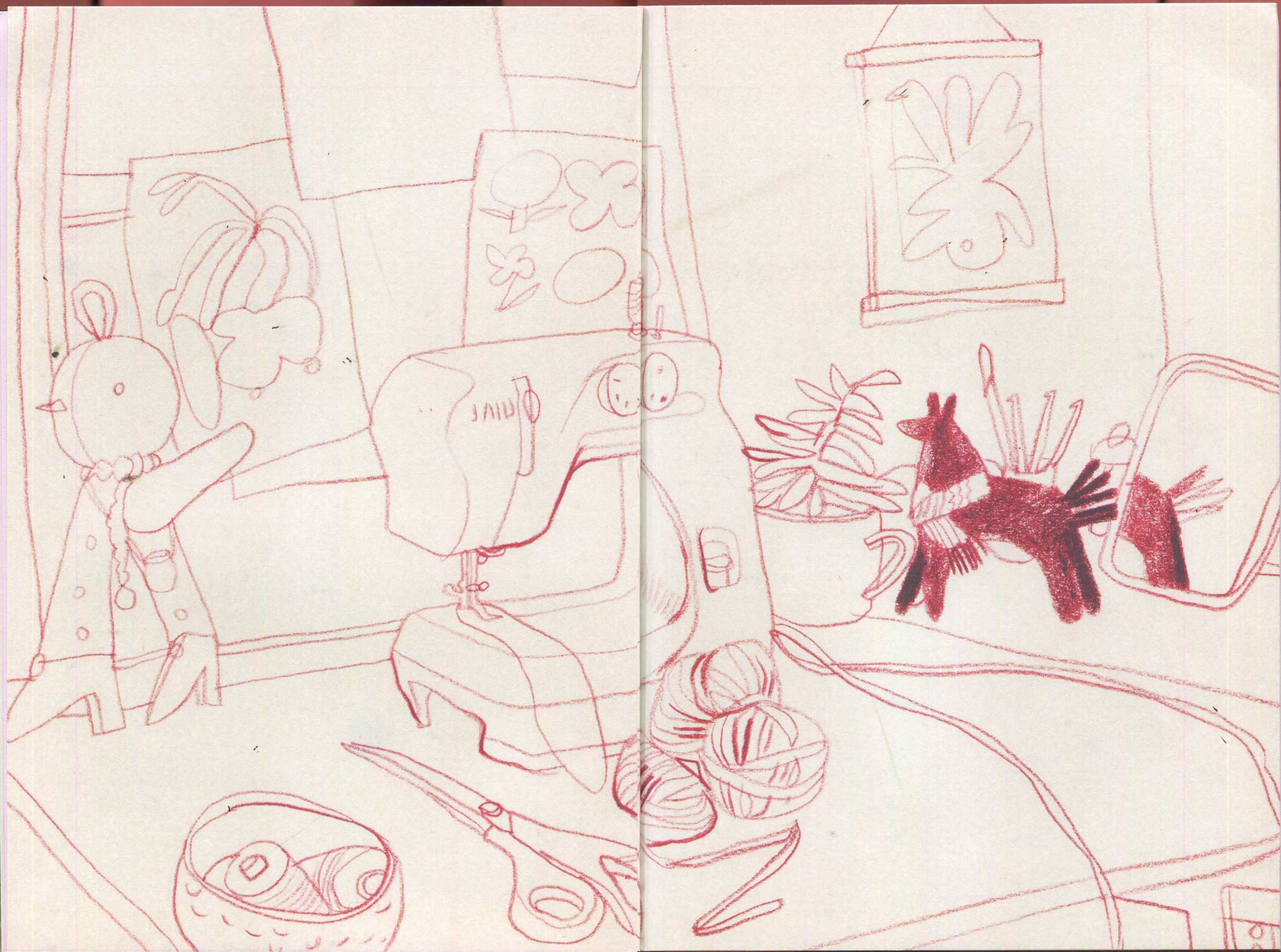
I see the home studio setup as temporary. I hope to find a new space for a studio next year. My dream studio would be in a nice area, with a beautiful and bright space and high ceilings. There

would be plenty of room for large-format paintings, material storage, a quiet and secluded atmosphere, yet with occasional visits for collaborative projects. On weekends, I'd organize workshops and film screenings there.

Did emigration change your studio practice and approach to the creative process?

Upon leaving, I abandoned my old studio, gave away materials, and left behind old paintings and drawings. It took time to adapt to the new environment and explore the materials available in Portugal. For example, I couldn't find thin wool threads of the same texture I used for embroidery before, inspiring me to learn punch needle embroidery, a technique adaptable to various threads, including knitting yarn, abundant and diverse in Portugal. This limitation brought diversity into my projects, and I'm grateful for that.





Where do you find inspiration, and what motivates you to engage in creativity?

I notice two types of motivation. The first, which I consider somewhat toxic, involves feeling that receive love and attention through creative expressions, motivating me to act and create. The more pleasant motivation is when I feel more complete, and creativity becomes a joyful experiment and a game. In those moments, I don't chase the result, allowing myself freedom, and I pay close attention to the feelings that arise during the process.

What does your creative process look like when working on a project with someone else?

The collaboration process can be divided into several significant stages: introduction, identifying common values, and dividing responsibilities. After the main idea of the project emerges, and a clear plan is established, it becomes easier for me to bring some lightness and creative chaos into the process.

What sets your works apart from other artists?

About the same as what sets one person apart from another. At first glance, differences may not seem substantial, but with a loving and attentive eye, the distinction becomes evident.

Do you have any specific rituals in your creative process?

I like to start working on a new painting in a perfectly clean studio.

Do you listen to music while working, and if so, what kind?

Music makes me dreamier and more relaxed. During work, I prefer to maintain focus and concentration, so I find podcasts, interviews, or documentaries on topics that interest me more helpful.

Who provides feedback, and with whom do you discuss your works and the creative process?

I don't always feel the need to discuss the process, but when doubts arise, I can talk about the work with my husband or a friend whose taste and opinion I trust. More insecurities arise during the preparation of educational workshops and courses, in which case I seek advice from fellow artists who, like me, have found themselves in teaching.

How has your style changed and evolved over the years, and what influenced these changes?

I think my style has become more relaxed, incorporating more abstract narratives, and, as I feel, I've developed a better feeling of color. These changes likely occurred through experiments with different techniques, collaborations with other artists, and, of course, psychotherapy.

Photo: Anastasia Zhebtikova





How do you deal with creative crises or difficult tasks in general?

I try to fully experience crises, allowing them to unfold for as long as necessary to comprehend all complexities. During particularly challenging moments, I can go for weeks without engaging in creative activities. If faced with a difficult task, I also try to give myself enough time for its resolution, breaking down the process into components to understand what specifically evokes complex emotions. Sometimes, I delegate parts of the work that may not be interesting for me to handle independently.

Do you have a favorite tool, material, or format that you often use in your work?

Textiles have remained one of my favorite materials for many years.

Is there a favorite place for your creative pursuits?

When I get tired of working in the studio, I go to a small park near the ocean. There's a secluded clearing with a tree that provides a comfortable spot to sit for hours on end.

Can you recommend an exhibition, book, or album that has left an impression on you?

"Walk through walls" by Marina Abramovic, "Con todo el mundo" by Khruangbin. And the exhibition by Joana Vasconcelos at the MAAT in Lisbon this year

What are you trying to achieve through your art?

I would like my works to soften the viewer's heart. I want people to feel joy and hope, to remember that in our chaotic world, one can still find places filled with beauty and tranquility. I hope my paintings can become one of those safe places. ●

lizasmirnova.com
Instagram: @lisa_smirnova