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Come in...and be captivated...



Photography by Margarita Kareva; <http://kareva-margo.ru/>

Interview with Margarita Kareva

Far from the mundane reaches of the modern world, fantasy becomes reality in the haven of a wintry Russian wood. Richly infused with the symbols of our early literary heritage, when we first were exposed to the idea of enchantment, surreal scenes of woodland creatures, heroines and villains dare us to dream our own stories.

Photographer Margarita Kareva's camera is not only her passport to the many regions of our world, but also to the many realms of imagined worlds fostered by personal and collective imagination. The unspoken understanding between photographer and audience is that the photo is not simply as we see it, the content not simply as we might categorize it with recognized facets or associations, but rather, defined by how we feel, dream and interpret it for ourselves.

Maidens, enchantresses, mirrors, coaches, cottages, stone towers, dark forests, moons, meadows, jellyfish, carousels, wings, horses, owls, stags, flamingoes, bears, unusual hedgehogs on leashes and zebras invite us to step outside the ordinary, amongst ancient elements of wood, earth, water, fire and metal. Traditional Russian folk attire—including ornate headpieces that are stories in and of themselves, ornamentation with pearls, fine fabrics, bright colors and the look of fur signature to cold climate apparel—makes an appearance in Kareva's photography as a nod to the historic styles of eras gone by. Flowing gowns, cloaks, Victorian ensembles and crowns of flowers, butterflies and gold further signal the departure from commonplace to whimsical.

Digital editing and effects artistry paired with meticulous attention to the details of props, costumes, subjects, settings and shooting technique, create these photographs that are leaving viewers spellbound. Kareva only began her quest of immortalized beauty and fantasy to everyday life in 2011. With ardent fans spread across social media and photography sites, she has over five million views and nearly forty-five thousand followers on the photo community of 500px and twenty-five thousand on her Facebook page. She travels extensively, conducting workshops, photo shoots and master classes around the world. Though we've focused on her artistic photography, her skill for visual storytelling in the form of unique, dramatic shots, extends to her wedding/couple photography and fashion/advertising work. An image of a bride with a

floral crown at a faded ivory piano in the middle of the forest, candles presiding over her playing, demonstrates this versatility.

Kareva and I discuss the importance of imagination, the difficulties of life leading to the greatest opportunities, expanded horizons through travel, the shaping of one's character through their passion and loving an art form that gives personal meaning in its expression.

*The interview was conducted with the assistance of a former contributor of ours that I engaged to act as a translator. Special thanks to Farida Samerkhanova for her help in this process which was a first for us (scroll down page for bio following the interview). The answers are as close as possible to the original, with our having drawn out the subtle meanings and nuances of the subject as best we could.

Interview with Margarita Kareva by Nicole M. Bouchard for *The Write Place at the Write Time*

1) Having only begun photography a little over four years ago, your photos are some of the most enchanting I've ever seen. If your photography tells universal stories in a universal language, what personal story are you telling as you travel the world as a photographer? Beyond what you have learned about photography and Photoshop and what you offer to teach others, what have you learned about yourself through these creative experiences that have become your "biggest passion in life"? What have you learned from others as you travel and get to work with different individuals on your photo shoots?

I've had a lot of hard moments in my life, for which I am grateful, because they have made me who I am at this moment.

Perhaps if things had been simpler and I'd been absolutely happy, I would never have taken up photography.

My hobby opened the world to me. My circle of friends has grown to enormous proportions. I always get acquainted with interesting people as I travel around the world, expanding my horizons.

In a sense, with the help of photography, I got out of my shell (before I was typically introverted) and learned to appreciate and understand others.

2) The original fairy tales like those discussed in the 17th century Parisian literary salons, were meant to portray archetypes, symbols and themes of life. There can be truth in fantasy and fiction. You've stated that you draw inspiration from fantasy books, fairy tales and the written word. What particular fairy tales and fantasy books are the most meaningful and inspirational to you? How do you feel these stories and photos like yours, convey symbolic truths? Or do you feel that fantasy is mainly a necessary escape from ordinary life and a way to add beauty to a complicated world?

I don't have any particular favorite fairy tales and don't set out to associate my photos with any particular books, as I prefer that everyone looking at my photos would invent their own stories.

I love books, but mostly for the fact that in my childhood, they contributed to the development of my imagination, which today, helps me on set. I usually find inspiration for my photography in a number of other sources.

Sometimes I do give names of well-known fairy tales to some series of my photos, but I do it mainly because there is an expectation for them to be titled this way.

I'm not specifically trying to reproduce fairy tales, but I do bring fantasy to photographs, because it's something absent from everyday life. Besides, deep in my heart, I still remain a big kid who dreams of magic.

3) Your photography features elaborate costumes, settings and props. Tell us what goes into preparing a photo shoot (costumes, setting, background, hair, makeup, models...).

My photographs seem complicated only at first glance.

In fact, it is often just beautifully decorated fabric. The crown can be a lace cloth with cheap pearls; and the dress is often made overnight from some curtains.

Sometimes I use the example of a finished designer dress or consult on a design (I often work with designers all over the world).

I find sets for photo shoots on the road, often in the most ordinary places that you can find in any city. It could be a regular park or building.

It is important to use imagination and visualize the image and place.

4) Your photography focuses on nature and the maiden archetype of females. They say that a woman's life consists of three stages: maiden, mother and crone. In the maiden stage, a woman often pursues the dreams, desires, ideas, paths and curiosities that will define her life. Whether you portray heroines or villains, they mainly seem to be within this similar age demographic. As the maiden stage is characterized by discovery, selfhood and beginnings, is this primarily why it suits your imaginative work?

What a complex way of thinking about it! My thought process for the work isn't deliberately deep and philosophical. I just photograph the female subjects as skillfully and beautifully as possible.

5) What do you love best about photography and what are your plans for the future?

I love photography because it gave meaning to my life. I feel that I am an artist. I can realize fantasies in photos and share them with people.

As for my plans for the future, I aim to continue to develop the work I'm doing in this field.



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**Translator for
the interview:**

Farida
Samerkhanova

Farida Samerkhanova is a Canadian poet, short story and nonfiction writer. She graduated from Bashkir State University, Russia. Her native language is Tatarian, her second is Russian, and English is her third—which has become her passion. Her poetry and fiction benefit from the triple identity of the author. Some poems and prose pieces published in North American literary journals appear in both English and Russian. They are not translations—they initially come to her mind in both languages. She fell in love with imagery upon arriving in Canada to study English. Her creative work is influenced by the beauty,

wonder and peace of Canada's natural settings, life experience, travels and lyrics by Leonard Cohen.

Her poems, short stories and essays have appeared in *Canadian Stories*, *Inscribed: A Magazine for Writers*, *The Maynard*, *Ygdrasil: A Journal of the Poetic Arts*, *Danse Macabre*, *Seeding the Snow*, *The Write Place at the Write Time*, *Calliope*, *Word Salad Poetry Magazine*, *Tower Poetry*, *Of(f)Course: A Literary Journal*, *Other Clutter*, *Poetry Super Highway*, *The Legendary*, *Lit Up Magazine*, *All Girl Thing*, *Mad Swirl*, *The Poetry Ark*, *The Blotter Magazine*, *Gemini Magazine*, *blink-ink*, *Canadian Immigrant Magazine*, *Subtle Tea*, *The Tower Journal*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Jack Magazine*, *The MoonFlower Café*, and dozens of others.

Her poetry collection is titled, *Maple Leaf of Hope*.



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*Here we would like to thank featured past and present subjects for permitting us to interview them. It was an honor to be able to discuss life, literature and art with them.

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