

Karen Irvine: So, welcome everybody to our very first ever virtual lecture in photography which is being presented by the Museum of Contemporary Photography and the photo department at Columbia College Chicago.

Karen Irvine: I'm Karen Irvine. I'm the Chief Curator and Deputy Director at The Museum of Contemporary Photography and I'm really happy to have Ana Samoylova here to speak to us this evening.

Karen Irvine: Before we get started, I wanted to make a few general announcements. One is that our next lecture in photography will be on May 13th at 6pm with Sarah Meister who is a photo curator at MoMA.

Karen Irvine: And also, that we have two ongoing virtual programs now. One is on Wednesdays at noon called "Photos at Zoom," which is essentially a photo class being taught by some of our graduate students and staff members using images from the collection.

Karen Irvine: And then every Friday at noon we have a series called "Behind the Lens," where we're doing virtual studio visits with artists all over the country. So those are two really great programs.

Karen Irvine: But Ana Samoylova is a long-term friend of the museums. She moved from Russia to Peoria, Illinois, in 2008, and studied photography at Bradley University earning her MFA in 2011. We got to know her during her time in the Midwest. She stayed until 2015.

Karen Irvine: And in 2014 we were lucky enough to be able to bring in two of her pictures from her "Landscape Sublime" series and her collection which we then exhibited in 2017 in our 40th Anniversary Show.

Karen Irvine: But in 2015 Ana left the Midwest. She moved to Massachusetts for a little bit and then in 2016 ended up in Miami where she's pursued art full time ever since. And that's where she started her "FloodZone," project which she will speak to us this evening about in depth.

Karen Irvine: And I ended up running into Ana at Paris Photo in November last year, and she had just released this beautiful publication of the project called "FloodZone," which was published by Steidl last year and has a really nice essay by David Company in it. And this project has gotten a lot of great attention recently. She was lucky enough to have pulled off a solo exhibition of the project earlier this year at the Contemporary Art Museum at USF Tampa and there are projects scheduled that will hopefully happen sooner than later coming up that Galerie Carolyn O'Brien in Amsterdam and The Print Center in Philadelphia.

Karen Irvine: So without further ado, I will hand it over to Ana and while Ana is speaking, if you have questions, please go ahead and type them into the chat box and when she's done I will read some of them out to her, so that we can have a proper Q&A. So, thank you Ana very much for being here, direct from Miami and go ahead and take it away.

Anastasia Samoylova: Thanks so much, Karen, can you hear me okay? Yes?

Karen Irvine: Yeah, okay.

Anastasia Samoylova: Thank you so much for the introduction. I flipped through. Oh, it's so great to see familiar names. It's just wonderful especially right now that I want to cry.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is- it's difficult time. And thank you so much for tuning in and everybody for joining us very excited to present. Now, how do I, how do I share my screen- right, with the PowerPoint? So, it's not my [gestures to face]

Karen Irvine: Little bar below the bottom edge of the screen says share screen.

Anastasia Samoylova: Okay, so I will share my screen. And I will show my pictures and I'm going to try to watch my time. Great. Share screen.

Anastasia Samoylova: Microsoft PowerPoint, right, and-

Anastasia Samoylova: I'm sorry... just a little- what? yes.

Anastasia Samoylova: Is it doing it?

Karen Irvine: Not yet.

Anastasia Samoylova: Huh. Yeah.

Anastasia Samoylova: Great.

Karen Irvine: Okay.

Anastasia Samoylova: Now slideshow. Full screen now?

Karen Irvine: Yes, super perfect

Anastasia Samoylova: Oh, very exciting.

Anastasia Samoylova: Miami Beach, Florida, it's very hot, very hot 33 Celsius. Where do I look? So big- "Landscapes Sublime," and yeah as Karen mentioned this is, this is my ongoing project. What you see here.

Anastasia Samoylova: A piece called "Lightning" is not a Photoshop manipulated montage. This is a tableau that I assembled in the studio. This is from 2014.

Anastasia Samoylova: And these are- this is an assemblage of images that I sourced from the internet. And then I printed them out and put them together and I will explain later why I did and continue to do that. Whoops. This one is "Beaches," 2014, made back in Peoria, Illinois in my basement studio. So, this turned out to be prophetic, I guess.

Anastasia Samoylova: Since now I have a bit of a view of the beach.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is a more sculptural one and you see a mirror and reflections. It's actually a window in the back. I was doing an artist residency, and this is daylight and strokes. So, this is a sort of sculptural assemblage of printed out vernacular images that are from public domain and creative commons license.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is "Crashing Wave," another mood board. Waves tend to be crashing in photographs, dramatic. So, this is- it's quite kaleidoscopic this one. One of the early images which you see the reflection on the bottom. So very multi-layered.

Anastasia Samoylova: You can see some traces of Cubism and I will get to that. This is "Rainy Window Views," from 2013.

Anastasia Samoylova: Again, a window, the actual window in the background. Those lines that you see- the plastic lines- was actually hurricane protection on that window of the studio that I was using.

Anastasia Samoylova: And interestingly, that concept continued to follow me all throughout these years. So now we have actual hurricane season coming and it's been three hurricanes in the past three years for me in Florida. So "Rainy Window Views," has some actual rain droplets.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is a detail on the bottom. So, you can see it's all physical and the straight lines on prints themselves are from scoring them with exacto knife.

Anastasia Samoylova: Alright, so my explanation, some background info. I was one of the early adopters of Flickr, which was before Instagram. I was still living in Russia.

Anastasia Samoylova: And actually, I was studying environmental design at a Russian State University for the Humanities. So, I was making models of various spaces and living in Moscow, which is, you know, like any huge city is mainly made out of concrete and skyscrapers. So, getting away [to] nature was sort of a special occasion.

Anastasia Samoylova: But I could traverse these boundaries via online travel. So, scroll images and Flickr was this community when it was just sort of starting out back then. I remember joining several groups and noticing certain tropes emerging. This is my version of canyons.

Anastasia Samoylova: I was also- to help pay for college, I was also working as a shop window decorator at this sort of high-end furniture store in Moscow. And then part of my responsibility was- among arranging those objects, was to sort of lure people in, the random passerby in the street, with careful lighting and props and color. So, the space of the window that you see sort of this shallow space. I think it comes from there.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is a video of how I set them up.

Anastasia Samoylova: It takes a couple hours, but this is a condensed time lapse.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, these are my canyons being put together until it becomes canyons. I have never been. I still haven't been, but very much like to go but I sort of already can imagine the space because so many images of it exist.

Anastasia Samoylova: This was my vision of America before I moved to the States from Russia.

Anastasia Samoylova: I was taking some lessons in photography, but I was studying mainly Architecture and Environmental Design, as I said. The number one destination for me was Yosemite. I'm studying Ansel Adams and Carleton Watkins.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, this is sort of my assemblage here and that leads me to "Black and White Mountains." When I arrived at the space-

Anastasia Samoylova: Whoops, to the Yosemite. It was nothing like that. It was more like Stephen Shore. You have to stay on your path, there are plenty of tourists, rather than Ansel Adams I thought. Then I started questioning this illusionistic ability of photography. And since I was pretty much self-taught in photography back in Russia, I picked up a camera just to document the spaces. I was making models of environments.

Anastasia Samoylova: My thesis project in Moscow was a reconstruction of an abandoned streetcar depot with available materials; with recycled materials from the site.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I was building models by hand- paper models that I had to photograph and that's how I learned photography. I noticed how lighting can transform the scale of the space in the picture.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then the picture always has the sort of finite edge. So, I was really drawn to formal aspects of a picture as an object as well. So, I had to print things out and then sculpt them. So, the sculpting part comes from- from there. From my practices of a budding architect back then.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is a video of black and white mountains being assembled. I noticed that a lot of mountains were converted to black and white, even if they were shot digitally initially. And the type of photography I'm talking about is the sort of user shared image archives- like Flickr or now we have Instagram.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is not even a black and white image. These are actually in color. You can see some gradations and tone.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Glaciers," here from 2014.

Anastasia Samoylova: So reflective materials- props. With "Glaciers," -this was inspired by a funny story.

Anastasia Samoylova: There was a feud between two photographers. One won a contest- here's that story. Actually, I think it's a big story from 2015; I thought it was really funny. One on the bottom left won a contest with monetary award, and then the top right, she sued her claiming that it was her image that was Photoshopped. So, and then she won the contest.

Anastasia Samoylova: It turned out there were two tourists on the same boat, on the same cruise in Chile.

Anastasia Samoylova: And that inspired "Glaciers." But something, you know, it's a really multi layered work. You can't really take it at face value. It's playful, it's sort of this model of a constructed world, the idea that these ephemeral images that I find online then take this physical shape and then they're reconstituted into a new environment.

Anastasia Samoylova: But highly sort of constructed artificial look of that environment is really just a metaphor for constructiveness in photography, you know, a photograph is always a construct in my understanding.

Anastasia Samoylova: But it has this very real power to influence our understanding of the world. And as somebody who moved around quite a bit and moved continents- I'm always sort of questioning this imagined reality and then encountered reality.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then the ability of photography to I guess relay an accurate picture of the world, you know, especially with landscape. I thought would be, you know, Sublimes can be- I call them Sublimes now- can be with variety of genres. But I thought landscape would be particularly illustrative of that of that ability. And sort of photography's shortcomings too.

Anastasia Samoylova: How do you transform a three dimensional, you know, Vista into two-dimensional picture plane and then- right, and then try to understand the world through that.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I've never been to Chile. But this is sort of how we're picturing glaciers and of course we know that they don't necessarily look as blue and as enhanced in real life- its only particular lights and glaciers are melting at rapid speed.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is an image from- it's just from Facebook- and just to point out some formal aspects of these assemblages that look like collages. My past- my past work in Russia was really influenced by this "Amazon's of Russian Avant-Garde," -the six women listed here.

Anastasia Samoylova: You can see some resemblances here- painterly, architectonic. So, the moving planes of that space, the angular, you know, the dynamism of those lines- the distorted space.

Anastasia Samoylova: Alexandra Exter is really is one of my favorites here.

Also known for her theater sets. I studied her for my Environmental Design. The way she renders and sort of disrupts the space.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is one of the sketches that Alexandra- of a theater set.

Anastasia Samoylova: Barbara Kasten- a name very familiar to you in Chicago.

Anastasia Samoylova: A diptych here.

Anastasia Samoylova: I discovered, Barbara- actually, after moving to the states. I was not familiar with her work back in Russia, but it all made sense to me. The influence of, you know, Avant-garde, Bauhaus, and then for Chicago's Moholy-Nagy and so forth. I was delighted to discover her work and then spend quite a bit of time with it.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is my "Desert Mirages."

Anastasia Samoylova: In terms of the name of the project- "Sublime." The sublime part refers to what is an aesthetic category or there's a picturesque- the beautiful and the sublime.

Anastasia Samoylova: Talking about Kant and Schopenhauer's reading aesthetic theory at the time.

Anastasia Samoylova: And Schopenhauer illustrated his concept of a sublime with examples from nature. So, something as grand as desert mirages- you know, a desert landscape can overwhelm an individual. So, the scale played a role. And again, you know, shrinking them to this postcard size. I'm sort of wondering whether the sublime can be translated into photography. This is my forest.

Anastasia Samoylova: And again, you can see the parallels. This is Natalia Goncharova my absolute favorite.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is the time of Cubism, and Rayonism, Futurism. And her thing was, "Everythingism," which I absolutely adore. She's unafraid to try it all out and she has excelled in all her pursuits.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Aspen," from 2013. Again, release of disruptive space. This is a simple one. You see the recognizable elements within the smaller fragments. "Trees and Fog." This one's sitting behind me, because I had four exhibitions cancel this spring, because of the virus.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Storms," here. And you can see some studio crops in the top left.

Anastasia Samoylova: There're some paintings woven in and it's reflective. "Rainbows," sort of questioning of the lives of images.

Anastasia Samoylova: How they travel- you know, how they reached me on the internet- this is "Double Rainbows," - and then where do they go from there?

Anastasia Samoylova: Well this one in particular moved on to become a cover of this catalog with a perfectly suited title of the recent biennial in Germany called the "Lives and Loves of Images." So, on the right is the cover and it unfolds on the left side.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then the images were presented really sort of in a tame manner.

Anastasia Samoylova: Like I usually present them in a gallery or museum setting at Wilhelm-Hack-Museum Ludwigshafen. And they put me next to Richard Hamilton which I was delighted about so I had to include that on the right side.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then in that same museum, I discovered Olga Popova- is another favorite. One of those Amazon's of Russian Avant-guard and I had my little "Landscape Sublime," book with me. So, the comparison is right there.

Anastasia Samoylova: See the same angle reforms. So, this project has as much to do with painting as it does with photography. Sort of the method is very painterly- it's additive. You know, I start from blank and then I fill my tabletop space with elements. It's all very intuitive and there's definitely an element of play with that. It takes a few hours. There's a choreography involved. I have to run back and forth from the camera, and nothing is scripted in advance.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is another piece that's in the Biennial, "Four Seasons." This is large- one 26 feet long panorama.

Anastasia Samoylova: Which was initially- interestingly, speaking of lives of images- initially was a commission for public art for Mount Sinai Hospital in Miami Beach.



Anastasia Samoylova: And I figured that the small elements would allow patients who sit in the waiting room to sort of unwind a bit.

Anastasia Samoylova: In the distance, it looks sort of like a sort of textural really abstract piece, but upon closer look- which this is a huge piece- you can see all the calendar imagery within. Here it is in the museum in Germany.

Anastasia Samoylova: A couple years ago these were presented as public art in Brazil as these large billboards.

Anastasia Samoylova: And I really enjoyed that scale. So, I kept going with this public art commissions. This was not a commission- I just printed out the images, but further on I've been taking some commissions.

Anastasia Samoylova: Like this one which was perfect for this project called "Layovers." I'd been traveling quite a bit last year and some travels involve multiple stops in my flights. So, running through the airport, I would see, you know, postcard images of the places that I have not visited, but sort of- it again builds that imagined world in your mind and in your memory. Like running through Madrid, or, you know, in this case Paris. So, these are called "Layovers," through multiple stops and the imagery- sort of postcard imagery that you will encounter at an airport.

Anastasia Samoylova: Here's detail. This is New York to Miami. And all of those flights went through Miami- my roots of sort of imagined places, based on the images you see while passing through an airport. This one- it's called "Six Real Matterhorn's."

Anastasia Samoylova: There are seven Matterhorn's there, but the there's one from Disneyland, which is a fake one and it has a waterfall.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, Matterhorn only looks like that from one particular point of view. And again, this is really a gestural metaphor.

Anastasia Samoylova: For, you know, photography, having that singular point of view and one perspective and sort of pointing that out. That it's never the real thing. Right? This was a commission for that same biennial- it's the facade of the museum.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is sort of it when you when you search for Matterhorn on Google Image Search, the one that comes out is all sort of snowy. But realities- no such thing.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is a great pairing I thought- was Casper David Friedrich on the left in the Aperture magazine issue "Spirituality."

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is my Google image search on the top left for Matterhorn. And so, you see the snow. And this, again, this sort of how it builds the image of itself in our minds. And on the right, the issues with Matterhorn.

Anastasia Samoylova: Now, Google image search for climate change photography produces results of predictively melting glaciers and suffering polar bears. I had to put in photography because climate change would just produce a lot of graphics. So, wondering about- right- about picturing the world that we can't quite see. A world that's changing- how do you picture the change? Moving to Miami in 2016 was the was the hottest summer on record.

Anastasia Samoylova: I'm a Nordic person. This was really wild for me- everything so- with being sort of a studio person for years. Studio-based artist, even with photography was always constructed imagery. I realized I don't need to make anything up anymore. Miami's already sort of a live scale collage.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, this one is as is- just a construction billboard. I noticed that Miami is truly sort of plastered with the ideal images of itself. It's always promising to the better world.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is "Construction in South Beach."

Anastasia Samoylova: At first- this is one of the earlier images. It is not really one of my key ones. But I think it's important to mention- for a couple years this wasn't really a project. I was trying to understand the place in this new environment and questioning this sort of dichotomy between the presented image. The image of these coastal towns as we imagine them- based on, you know, again, the projected picture, right? That we find in advertising, on TV, or media versus the streets I was walking in and what I was seeing. And the high tides, low tides. This is the high tide in Key Largo. So, this is before I knew I had a project going. Another construction- so just noticing images within images.

Anastasia Samoylova: Always this sort of contrast.

Anastasia Samoylova: This worker- this place Normandy Shores- is really experiencing climate gentrification right now.

Anastasia Samoylova: Another construction billboard. To me it looked like one of those cubist paintings by Goncharova.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I kind of found my city, found me. This is called "Fountain," from 2017. This place is no longer there. I can't find this building. It's gone. It's really rapidly changing. Miami is very quickly developing despite all odds, and so are many cities in South Florida- West Coast as well.

Anastasia Samoylova: In 2016 we had our first Hurricane Matthew, which wasn't too bad. I was mainly scared and sort of starting to research what to do. In 2017, we had hurricane Irma which was sort of approaching as category five and hit us at category three which is bad enough.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is actually the day after Irma. This is my son and our flooded garage. I live in one of those tall condo buildings. It's an older building from the 50's. So, we didn't evacuate we actually could not evacuate. There was mandatory evacuation, but there was no gas anywhere in town.

Anastasia Samoylova: I really did not want to be stranded on the highway trying to escape. So, we stayed in figuring out our windows were original in the building from the 50's, so we were sort of okay. Lost power for a few days- damage was significant.

Anastasia Samoylova: But I really did not want to sort of add to this already vast ocean of images of disaster. I did not want to do any sort of trauma repertoire with these. So, I wanted to take a subtler approach. This is a pool in our building after Hurricane. These are chopped up mangrove leaves that just flew over.

Anastasia Samoylova: We were one of four families that stayed in this huge building.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, speaking of sublime I've certainly experienced that. This is Miami River.

Anastasia Samoylova: The majority of images I release are metaphorical and allegorical and not what you would expect from the title which I like.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is not even flooding. This is just developed land. So, the kind of land that's being developed is on the left. And then on the right you see the waterfront houses and they're plenty of those. So, you can imagine that with rising seas- none of that is really long term.

Anastasia Samoylova: I'm just- yeah. I encountered these huge manatees'- alligators. This manatee on the left is in quite polluted Miami River- just downtown. These two pictures are a few days apart.

Anastasia Samoylova: Roughly from the same spot- just sort of looking around.

Anastasia Samoylova: Manatees on the bottom left- clearly, lost their protected status. They're no longer considered endangered. So, there are problems with that. And they're getting injured by quickly passing boats. Not everybody's obeying the speed limit in these rivers. And these are all manatee zones.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is just my reflection. Again, speaking of layers.

Anastasia Samoylova: The complexity from "Landscape Sublime," is still there, but this just my reflection. I think of Vivian Meyer and Lee Friedlander. Sort of continuing the genre of, you know, trying to sort of understand what your place in this environment and how we can really put roots down in a place where the only secure roots belong to mangrove trees.

Anastasia Samoylova: Painted roots on an old building.

Anastasia Samoylova: I did not want doom and gloom- mood in the project. So, this is really about- maybe stubbornness, and about this resilience and about pointing our attention to how much bigger this natural world is than we are.

Anastasia Samoylova: And with climate change, we all know that the earth will be- well, it won't be fine. It will survive. It's us who are threatened.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is "Manatee Rescue Van."

Anastasia Samoylova: Again, pictures within pictures.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is not even a storm or anything. This is just the high tide in this old estate from 1910's in Miami called Vizcaya.

Anastasia Samoylova: It's absolutely beautiful and they're struggling to maintain the premises.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is "Street Crossing in Little Haiti." Climate gentrification is a real issue here in Miami.

Anastasia Samoylova: What used to be, of course, the most lucrative properties were waterfront- like those houses that I showed you earlier. But now developers and all the wealthy are moving to higher ground and Little Haiti is one of those areas. And so, the original population of Little Haiti is being kind of priced out of it.

Anastasia Samoylova: This was in- this is just last year. This is a street where my studio is, and this is simply high tide. So, it's called "King Tide," where the tide is higher than the predicted high tide.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is right around the corner from the convention center that used to host our famous Miami Beach Art Basel. Which is now a field hospital for COVID.

Anastasia Samoylova: This, I thought, was also a good layering to show that climate- show gentrification period. Roosters and then in the background you see the new building by Zaha Hadid, Downtown Miami.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Road," this is aerial photography. This is near Merritt Island.

Anastasia Samoylova: This was one of those... funny story- I will talk about the book. This is an image I took the day before I had to fly and submit my macapp for the book. I thought I just I needed something- some action shot because most of the images are really sort of still.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then there's this perfect grouping on Miami Beach dried on the left.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is, again, lesson learned. I was walking around- I kept seeing chicken heads. And this is the setting where the manatee is roughly.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, downtown Miami- yachts, skyscrapers, and this floating head. There's no body. So, this is a ritual. Somebody explained to me- finally, in the street- that this is a Cuban/Haitian ritual of century animal sacrifice.

Anastasia Samoylova: And I thought of "FloodZone," is also, you know, since there's so many metaphors woven in and it's so layered as the sort of mythological flood as kind of a society that's really, that's really ready for change. For cleanse.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Pink sidewalk," in the Faena District in Miami Beach. This is after Irma.

Anastasia Samoylova: This pink sidewalk is sort of a beautiful pink line throughout the entire island of Miami Beach. And this is when I started laying those pictures out together and I reached out to brilliant editor and writer and curator- David Company whom Karen mentioned.

Anastasia Samoylova: I started sending him the images for pairings.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is now in the spread in that book.

Anastasia Samoylova: Another pairing here. "Roots," on the left. I love the camouflage on the right. Again, this could have been my set from "Landscapes Sublime," but this is just there. I keep encountering these gems every day.

Anastasia Samoylova: Yes, "FloodZone," is a product of three years... 2016... four years of shooting almost weekly. The success ratio with "Landscape Sublime,"- I knew I would have a piece by the end of the week, for instance, but here it's unpredictable. "Green Mold," I thought looked kind of like Rothko and my son thought that it looked like a forest. So that made it into the book. "Ruin of Tabby (Shell) Construction," in Georgia. So, with floods in their four states there. And this shows one of my influences- Walker Evans. I actually just sort of verbatim recreated almost the point of view.

Anastasia Samoylova: And ended up in this exhibition called "Walker Evans Revisited." So, three of my ruins- one of them is in the book. Another one there- installation. Evans is a major influence of mine for many reasons. You know, he's acknowledgement that images really form our understanding of the world, and he frequently photographs pictures within his pictures.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is in Florida as well. And he photographed in Florida quite a bit. Actually, did a commission for Karl Bickel, "Mangrove Coast."

Anastasia Samoylova: On the bottom left in the first edition- first edition contains 32 of his images and further editions didn't have as many- 1942. But you can find the book on the top- that's available.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Park Avenue,"- another billboard. This sort of trompoy. Again, my pink sidewalk in Miami Beach. And the hotel that sort of was gutted from the inside and the facade was left and it's sitting in that state for the past three years.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Concrete Erosion." I was told that these might be- so, this is a bridge above a highway- I was told that these might be chemicals and that's why there's that color.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is one of the two staged photographs- on the left "Hand." It is a cut out of a hand in water and I set it up while at an Artist Residency. So, there are two still lives. On the right- "South Beach Reflection," the color palette is quite important.

Anastasia Samoylova: Miami- our deco district- our famous Miami Beach Art Deco district was initially white and then it was all recolored to attract tourists. Mainly pinks and violet and turquoise- all these pastels. Another homage that you might recognize here- a covered car... Robert Frank, of course.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I really don't have any ruin photographs here. I wanted to steer clear from any clichés, but this is the one ruin that I just couldn't pass up. "Dome House," in Cape Romano- the story is so curious. It's only accessible by boat now. It looked like this sort of creature from Dali painting or... it looks surreal. Anyways, the story is- it was built on land. It was not in water- in '81. I thought it's much older than that, when I saw it, but it's built in '81 by this old oil magnate.

Anastasia Samoylova: And you see on the bottom- the graph of what the rising sea has done to that house. So, it was eventually destroyed by hurricanes and shore erosion.

Anastasia Samoylova: I was reading "The Drowned World," by J.G. Ballard at the time. You see the wonderful iguana in the foreground- sort of thinking of oversized reptiles and then... bam! So, this gator came really close.

Anastasia Samoylova: It's really an easy photograph but sort of visually, it worked. So, it made it to the cover of the book. So, the gator's rear end is the cover. Again, thinking logically. This is me arriving at Steidlvilleville in Göttingen with my own moquette of the book. So, printed out all the images and the sequence.

Anastasia Samoylova: David Company- the editor- was the one who proposed it to Gerhard Steidl and then Sheidl likes everything physical form.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is me waiting for him to come in and approve the moquette. Which he did then. This little video of some spreads from the book.

Anastasia Samoylova: It has more pictures- it's over 80 photographs and about 50 of them have some reference to water.

Anastasia Samoylova: But not really any doom and gloom. They do have sort of a sense of irony sometimes and... yeah, a whole wide variety of approaches.

Anastasia Samoylova: Three years of work and four states- Florida, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Anastasia Samoylova: And next, "Lives of Images," my first museum solo that I was really lucky to have this January. So, the gator made it to the facade of the museum.

Anastasia Samoylova: I made a model of the space. It was interesting- really dynamic space and I just couldn't have dreamt of a better space for my first museum solo. Its angles, again, sort of the Russian Constructivism, the Cubism of 1920's in Russia, and this triangle- so huge triangle. And I came up with these billboards in the middle for my billboard pictures. So here it is in space.

Anastasia Samoylova: I couldn't believe the wonderful curator, Sarah Howard, said "yes," to my model and all these insane colors. To me of course, the colors reference Miami, you know, it's slightly aggressive, the lines are really dynamic. It could have, you know, it could be a giant sort of shop, which a lot of Miami does feel like an outdoor mall.

Anastasia Samoylova: The colors are really sampled from the environment.

Anastasia Samoylova: And this is "The Road." These are prints on metal. "The Manatee." The entrance and this is how they were framed and paired together. Some really borrowed from the book. Some more pairings. "The Domes," on metal. "Eggs," framed. And again, speaking of lives of images, the one on the far-right- "Square lake," in Miami. This is right near the Everglades to Bizarre lake. This was made up initially on a commission for a magazine- for Bloomberg Business Week. This is how it looked like at first, and they provided the helicopter. So, I was flying there without a door with a really long lens and as my first flight, and I thought it was going to be the last flight.

Anastasia Samoylova: "FloodZone," is not ending. This is just its first iteration. So, these are my plans for "FloodZone II,"- Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York.



Anastasia Samoylova: Next iteration will be Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. I need to revisit Indiana and then potentially other coasts of Florida. And then there's "FireZone," brewing.

Anastasia Samoylova: And as, you know, a working photographer/working artist- it's all to funding dependent. Whenever I get a commission. Whenever I get a grant. I already went out to Virginia to photograph in Tangier Island. Which is remarkable- sinking really quickly.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, these are the very early images.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is potential "FireZone." Again, that was a commission for Bloomberg in California. So, just in 2019, "Saddleridge Fire," here in Santa Clarita.

Anastasia Samoylova: I've never seen anything more apocalyptic than California after fires.

Anastasia Samoylova: And the books that I was reading at the time and I would highly recommend if you're looking into researching the subject is these three- "Unhabitable Earth," by David Wallace-Wells, "Rising," by Elizabeth Rush, and "The Water Will Come," by Jeff Goodell.

Anastasia Samoylova: Really easy to read. They don't sort of kill you with statistics.

Anastasia Samoylova: This is mine, so "FloodZone," is available at "www.steidl.de" It just came out in the states in January. It's available on other shops too but steidl does ship for free and on the top is my Instagram.

Anastasia Samoylova: Was is it... thing? This is the book. I think my time... Is my time up- just trying to watch it?

Anastasia Samoylova: Did I do it?

Karen Irvine: Perfect. Thank you, Ana. Thanks very much.

Karen Irvine: Awesome. We have a few questions that have come in and while you have the publication up- Eva Zebrowski is asking if you could speak about David Company's essay in the book and tell us a little bit-

Anastasia Samoylova: Well David is a brilliant writer. He edited the book and then it's just written in his style. And I knew that his style would leave the interpretation of the project wide open. It's doesn't serve as the sort of definitive statement about the project.

Anastasia Samoylova: Because to me, it's more complex than by all means, you know, a documentary represent- you know, a document of climate change.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, as I, you know, as I outlined some of my other influences and with David's knowledge in photography- yeah, I highly recommend you read that one. It's available online too if you don't want to buy the book.

Karen Irvine: Excellent. Another listener is asking about what your theory of the sublime is based on and whether it might be based on Edmund Burke's- oh, sorry I'm jumping around- a philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful.

Anastasia Samoylova: Yes, precisely- that's what it's based on. I should have quoted him- I forgot him.

Karen Irvine: Excellent, so the idea of the sublime kind of being able to trigger these strong emotions as part of it. Great. Excellent.

Karen Irvine: Have you been able to shoot during the pandemic? And, if so, has it changed your practice? Someone is asking.

Anastasia Samoylova: Um, yes. I still go out- it's bad, I guess. But I pretend that I'm exercising. So, I'm just wearing my sneakers.

Anastasia Samoylova: Of course, I'm wearing the mask. I found a N95 mask from the time that I was restoring old furniture. Those really lucked out.

Anastasia Samoylova: Yeah, I walk with my camera. Just a week ago we had massive king tides- half of Miami Beach was flooded. So, you see masks, construction- that is essential, somehow, and its ongoing- and then cars in water. I was not very successful with my pictures on that day. I think I was overwhelmed.

Anastasia Samoylova: But yes, I'm still photographing it's just my range is a lot smaller now. Yeah.

Karen Irvine: If we go back to "Landscape Sublime" we have somebody who's interested in how you determine what props and objects are incorporated into the photographs? And then someone else wanted you to kind of go back over the process- and whether they're done digitally and on the tabletop, etc.

Anastasia Samoylova: Um, yes. They're all done on the tabletop. Try to pull up one of the videos. So, here.

Anastasia Samoylova: Looks like- there it is. You see it's very- it's really basic prompts. Foil and pictures and mirrors and colors and paper and the setup.

Anastasia Samoylova: Sometimes I scrap the whole thing and I do it over again. It's so... it's quite animated. There's sort of like a dance involved. I put them up. I run back to my camera, you know, it's digital camera.

Anastasia Samoylova: And so, with three tablets- I'm digital native person. I got my first five-megapixel camera back in Russia, and that was the hottest thing popping on the markets- it's pre-iPhone. All that film just never stuck with me. Yeah, so it's all physical assemblage.

Anastasia Samoylova: One day I hope to make an immersive environment where you can walk into it. And I already have sketches of that. But again, you know, with small studio, you really need a location where you're going to assemble it all.

Karen Irvine: Another listener is asking if you could tell us a little bit about your "Breakfasts Project,"- inspiration for the project and are the photos and the images your own or are they out of magazines or books?

Anastasia Samoylova: Oh no, they're books. So, I didn't, you know, I thought I would run out of time. This is my other project- and this is what I'm doing, actually, right now during COVID because I can make them on my balcony.

Anastasia Samoylova: "Breakfast," was really a transition between "Landscapes Sublime," and "FloodZone." When I moved here, I really needed some inspiration. And, you know, you can't be a good writer, without reading a lot. And I don't think you can be a good photographer without looking at a lot of pictures. So, I have a collection of a photo books. And since I was no longer teaching- is what I was doing in sort of prior life- I could finally have breakfast. So, I was not rushing to my morning class and I could lay out a little coffee and fruits over photo books that I have or then you know, get from library. Well, it's- none of the books have been damaged- no issues.

Anastasia Samoylova: I'm really careful and pretty skilled at arranging those basics to likes. But the project is very sort of pictures generation. It's like a homage. At times it's a bit subversive. But there is a book in the making... I hope.

Anastasia Samoylova: To be honest, I'm looking for a publisher to send me more books. So, I can have breakfast with their books. And then it's going to be sort of an illustrated anthology of art books.

Karen Irvine: Nice, you're busy.

Karen Irvine: Okay, questions keep rolling in.

Karen Irvine: Could you talk about what the conversation was like with Aperture in terms of printing your photographs for the spirituality issue.

Anastasia Samoylova: Um, oh well, right- they just used it. I don't know there's no, there was no... oh- because I'm not using any authored images. I'm not using any copyrighted images.

Anastasia Samoylova: Now it's the conversation that I'm interested in having on the larger scale. So, with "Breakfast," I am actually crediting all the photographers and even the books in the end- and captions.

Anastasia Samoylova: And then with "Sublimes," all of those images are either public domain or creative commons. So, flicker has this creative common license enabled. For my public art commissions, I get images from stock libraries. So yeah, I'm not sort of doing any copyright infringement.

Karen Irvine: Mm hmm.

Karen Irvine: Oh, one of my colleagues would like to ask you if- could you speak about your choice to include the black and white images within the color?

Anastasia Samoylova: Yes. So, one of the breakfasts was with Evelyn helper. And she combines both black and white and colored images of her New York series.

Anastasia Samoylova: Which I really liked. So, all of the images are digital, but some, you know- in this day of course, the original space is color if you're shooting digitally. So, the choice to drop that color is the choice

to... in a sense to abstract the image a little further. And when color doesn't really contribute anything... hmm, I thought it would be distracting. So, I removed it. But- which is still contributed to the overall nonlinear but still narrative of this story of "FloodZone."

Anastasia Samoylova: So, there is a certain little bit of a formula in the book, all the color images are- most of the older color images are vertical and they have a border. And then the black and white images are actually full bleed.

Anastasia Samoylova: There it is here. So, it creates this certain rhythm.

Anastasia Samoylova: And those are joint decision with the editor.

Karen Irvine: Okay, Brooks Plumber would like to know when you're shooting now- Do you try to find scenarios you can use specifically for "FloodZone," or are you just looking for aesthetically interesting scenes and realized later that they fit in. Do you have any plans for images that don't fit into "FloodZone?"

Anastasia Samoylova: Oh, that's a great question. I think about it all the time. And since I'm trying to keep it- pun intended- fluid because "FloodZone," came out of a very fluid process of just accumulating those images and then it was a really careful edit that made this into a project.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I'm continuing to think along those lines. And if I see something that interests me. I'm not going to just pass it by.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, I have this sort of sub-folder of street photography, and so, on. There are other projects that I'm considering. Yeah.

Karen Irvine: Hmm. And someone would like to know about your sense of styling. Your experience in gift and styling that's so central to your previous projects and how you think that might be evolving in "FloodZone?"

Anastasia Samoylova: Well, that's a great question. Yeah. So, with "Landscape Sublime," they're sort of sleek, you know, they're kind of like packaged views- almost ready for sale.

Anastasia Samoylova: There's a bit of darkness in that project. So, the commodification of landscape. You know, it's one thing to shrink a landscape to like the scale of a plastic water bottle and then what that water bottle does.

Anastasia Samoylova: Yes, the aesthetic is important and in "FloodZone," I think I kept some of it. At least I tried- it works with a color. So, it shows through the color, you know, the use of color.

Anastasia Samoylova: There's fairly shallow space in most of "FloodZone,"- apart from the area of images, um,- my pictures, you know, a lot of them sort of have walls. And there's this sleek- again aesthetic. They're sort of seductive. And that's intentional. They're meant to kind of lure you in like those images of billboards that sort of pose as better world.

Anastasia Samoylova: Does that answer it?

Karen Irvine: I think we'll address- yeah, she says "Yes, totally." I think we'll address one more question about being in the plane- the aerial shots and how they're done, and then I'll read one comment. After you tell us a little bit about the airplane.

Anastasia Samoylova: Oh, that was fantastic. So, this was a commission from Bloomberg Business Week was the photo.

Anastasia Samoylova: Square lake- and so is this- another commission. This is a helicopter. They sent me a reference- a National Geographic from the 80's and they said, "can you do something like that?" And Florida's so flat, you really have to be above if you want to see the geography of it.

Anastasia Samoylova: So that was the logic behind it. The stories- one was on genetically modified cattle. The other story was on saltwater intrusion and skin aquifer. So, it's sort of not exactly "FloodZone." But since we are in the "FloodZone," I use them in the book.

Anastasia Samoylova: To answer the question. Yes, I was on a helicopter and I had to rent a really long telephoto.

Anastasia Samoylova: So, and then it wouldn't fit in a helicopter. So, we had to remove the door, and then we strapped me in. But I realized the strap is basically like your plane strap. It was terrifying. Actually, and then later on when I solicited some feedback on my photo, I took a sort of selfie sort of parting with the world.

Anastasia Samoylova: That you're supposed to tape it, so I got all kinds of helpful tips afterwards. But initially yes, I'm flying in a helicopter it's leaning, there's no door. I'm just rolling on sheer adrenaline the whole time, but it was epic. And I would like to do it again.

Karen Irvine: Alright, well it looks like that's most of the questions and we're coming up on- I think we're at an hour, but I'll read one last comment from Lindsey Palmer. She says she really enjoys how your work transitions from creating your own tabletop landscapes in assembling themes to finding and making images of landscapes. The styles feel so different, but when you see them together in this presentation. It feels like a natural progression.

Anastasia Samoylova: Thank you so much. Thank you. I need to write this down.

Karen Irvine: Exactly, we'll have to capture all of the comments and questions, somehow, and send them to you.

Karen Irvine: One last minute one. Are you inspired at all by David Hockney? Some of your work made this listener think of 3D versions of his joiners.

Anastasia Samoylova: There's so many things I'm inspired by but absolutely, yes. Okay. Yes, the layers- of course.

Anastasia Samoylova: There's some breakfast there that acknowledge precisely that. You know, it's sort of what you're made of. Or your visual memory comprises what you come up with, even with sort of documentary photography and repertoire.

Anastasia Samoylova: Yeah.

Karen Irvine: Well, excellent. Thank you so much! We're all going to give you a mental round of applause for your wonderful talk this evening. It's really nice to see you.

Karen Irvine: Thanks everyone for being with us. And please tune in for upcoming programs. Thanks, Ana. Best wishes everybody! Take care and we'll see you again virtually soon hopefully.