

Art & Photography

Ciao, See You in Uranus! – In Conversation With Marianna Simnett

With SLEEK, Marianna Simnett talked about escaping to another planet, restrictions, emotions, and her own shop. Photography by Lotte Thor and Styling by Joana Zibat.

9 November, 2023



Marianna wears CREOLE D'Heygere EARRINGS Larucci SHIRT Prototypes BRA Kasia Kucharska SKIRT J.Kim SHOES Milista.

It's a rainy Friday morning when SLEEK meets the British-Croatian artist Marianna Simnett. The window separates us from the howling wind that spreads across Berlin. Marianna is sitting on her couch, her hair up, a casual t-shirt, and a big smile on her face. "Let's begin", she says widening her blue-grey eyes, "there is so much to do!".

Whoever has seen Marianna's work before knows: there are dreams, there is drama, there are legends and mythical creatures like Medusa. There are dead animals and costumes from classic suits to futuristic headpieces. Sounds, instruments, and paintings – there are layers. Because Marianna is no normal artist. She does whatever she envisions – follows whatever she feels. Recently, she launched her online shop [SIMNETT](#) and used her imagination once more to break the stereotypical image of an artist.

With SLEEK, Marianna talked about escaping to another planet, restrictions, and emotions.





LEFT Marianna wears DRESS Olya Kosterina.



Marianna wears CREOLE D'Heygere EARRINGS Larucci SHIRT Prototypes BRA Kasia Kucharska SKIRT J.Kim SHOES Milsta.

SLEEK: Maybe you can start by telling me what the goal of your shop is?

Marianna: I have always been inspired by Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas's 'The Shop', which they founded in London in the Eighties. Together they sold signed fagpackets, stickers, badges, or little drawings. It was honest and punk. I loved it because artists normally don't do shops. Having a shop is a bit embarrassing and tacky. There is an odd taboo around artists making money, it's all hush hush and supposed to be kept a secret. So, I decided to start my own shop selling luxury merch made with love at affordable prices.

S: I really like the term 'merch' you're using. It's very provocative. But do you have the feeling that through your shop and the need to sell the items, you have to follow certain trends and target groups? Does that affect your creative freedom?

M: Very much the opposite. The shop is a liberating space. Every piece I make echoes a large-scale project. The difference is that you can take a piece of it home as memorabilia. It's hard to carry an opera or an installation. My integrity as an artist is not compromised, and I don't have to pander to a target audience – it's all one story. Personal, meaningful and a lot of fun. The beeswax candle set is cast from my childhood flute and named after my flute opera GORGON. The ashtrays are casts of my own mouth and inspired by someone I met at Torture Garden who likes to eat ash. It connects to my macabre sense of humor, to myth, storytelling and fairy tale – to dreams and possibilities.



LEFT Marianna wears SHIRT Prototypes EARRINGS Roussey RIGHT Marianna wears DRESS Yume
Yume.





Marianna wears SHIRT Marianna Simnett JACKET & SKIRT Riz Poli CANISTER HOOPS D'Heygere
NECKLACE Stylist's own SHOES XXX.

S: Would you consider yourself a spiritual person?

M: I think I'm interested in different energies and forces. I have sharp antennae and an extremely sensitive body and brain. I read people and situations quickly, sometimes too quickly. It's important to me to be sensitive to different energies or emotions in a room. That's my job — to work with and bring out feelings.

S: How do you work with your own emotions?

M: I become totally immersed in everything I do, and I purposefully engage with extreme emotions. I get into a certain state of heightened commitment. It's a sort of inseparable bond between me and the work, a bit like getting into a role as a method actor. Next year I have a show at Hamburger Bahnhof, in line with UEFA Champions League 2024. Everything in my life is football at the moment: I'm going to the games, training at the gym, immersing myself in the crowd, the politics, the passion and the violence. I guess I dive so deeply into the projects, that it's not about one singular emotion anymore. It's more about a level of commitment. For the shop I'm designing my own tricot collection and perhaps some jewels and medallions.

S: You are staging yourself quite often for your own work and are addressing the transformation of the body – you can also see that in the campaign for your shop. Who is that person you transformed into here?

M: Yes, that's right. I need to perform different characters. Because I carry many different personas. One is very studious and hardworking, not necessarily the glamour girl. But I'm also an extrovert and love to dress up. That's why I wanted the shop and the editorial to be full of glitter, sparkle and about feeling alive. So, in the pictures, taken by the wonderful photographer Lotte Thor, and art directed by Romy Strasser, we wanted fire, glitz, rawness, but with a sprinkle of mischief. I wanted it to feel playful, mystical and magical. There is an Alice in Wonderland vibe playing with scale, blowing me up, shrinking me down. If I could keep anything from the shoot, I would love to have the Rapunzel hair. Or the black dress by Olya Kosterina – it had an amazing square cut!





LEFT Marianna wears DRESS Prototypes BELT D'Heygere SHOES Yume Yume RIGHT Marianna wears DRESS Olya Kosterina SHOES Merrfer.



Marianna wears XXXX.

S: Your watercolour prints in your shop are all about escaping to another planet. Where would you escape to right now?

M: Yeah, it's a series I made, because nearly every conversation I have leads to our planet dying. We are longing for somewhere safe to go. I would escape to another planet just like in the prints. Like 'Ciao see you in Uranus!' A place where human and non-human species, plants and technologies live together harmoniously. It's the utopian dream that there are other life forms waiting for us with open arms. The colours on that planet would be full of vibrant, rich pinks and greens.

S: What do you wish for the future for yourself, but also in general?

M: I just wish for intimacy and loving friendships. I wish the world would stop being so violent. For my own work I wish to continue expanding, like being in a spaceship where the horizon just keeps on going and never stops. I think that's what I have been doing for quite a few years. I keep growing tentacles. The world is too entangled to force into a box.

S: What would you tell your 10-year-old self today?

M: That's a good question. I would probably tell myself to have faith that it's going to work out. I had wanted to be an artist since I was three. But I was quite a worried and troubled kid. Today, I would just shake my ten year old self and say 'Relax! It's okay!' I always had a lot of anxiety back then. So, I would like to be just kind to that child. Because it's not nice to be an anxious child. It doesn't seem fair to have that pounding feeling so early on. I had a difficult upbringing, I never had peace. But I also know that's what gave me my drive.

S: Do you feel like you're at peace now?

M: It's double-edged. I've grown to really know myself, on a very deep level, so my inner confidence is now very strong. I still see my demons all the time. But they don't attack me anymore. They are just there, lurking in the corner. You know, it's like I can see them trying to push their way in and I smirk and say 'I see you, but I don't want to talk'. Sometimes the dark feelings, if channelled correctly, are the ones that inspire the most. Life is a spinning circus. And I love it.



LEFT Marianna wears TOP & SKIRT Melisa Inca EARRINGS, TIGHTS & SHOES Merrfer.

Take a look at Marianna's shop [here](#).

Credits:

Creative Direction & Implementation: Romy Strasser & Till Kammertöns

Art Direction & Production: Romy Strasser

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Photography & Post Production: [Lotte Thor](#)
Photographer's Assistant: [Szymon Stepniak](#)
Styling: [Joana Zibat](#)
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Hair & Make-up: [Victoria Plekhanova](#)
Talent: [Marianna Simnett](#)
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