

Artist of the week 171: Margarita Gluzberg

Moscow-born visual artist who uses hidden cameras and luxurious painting to chart the mysterious pull of materialism



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Face up ... Margarita Gluzberg's *The Consumystic V*. Photograph: Margarita Gluzberg and Paradise Row

You can't help but get lost in [Margarita Gluzberg's](#) art. Take her vast, poster-sized drawings where pin-up girls, sports stars and haute couture creations overlap and dissolve into each other. Or the dark paintings, as glossy as high-end magazines or polished boutique windows, with carefully arranged plates of food disappearing as light reflects off their shiny surfaces. Covetable items come in and out of focus, creating a light-headed haze of consumer cravings.

Gluzberg was born in Moscow in 1968, and her early years were dominated by a longing for all things western, from jeans to bubble gum. When she moved to London aged 11, the new cityscape full of bright billboards and shops bore a stark contrast to the ad-free, bare concrete landscape of the declining USSR. It was an impression that stuck. From one of her earliest projects (photographing window-shoppers on Bond Street back in 1992) Gluzberg's work has channelled capitalism's mysterious pull on the public.



Talking shop ... The

Consumystic IV (Handbag and Spheres). Photograph: Margarita Gluzberg and Courtesy Paradise Row

While her drawings might recall [Surrealist photography](#) or the [collisions of early montage](#), her latest exhibition (spookily titled [Avenue des Gobelins](#) after [Atget's famous shop-windows series](#)) marks the first serious showing of her [photography](#). Her black and white images, created with an old Pentax camera, turn the calculated allure of department store displays into a world of irrational wants.

In these double- and triple-exposed platinum prints, the faces of fashion models from makeup counter advertising become spectral sirens, emerging from escalators or jumbled piles of stripy clothing – traditionally [the devil's cloth](#) – to lure shoppers to their inevitable fate. Meanwhile, glimpses of lingerie, jewellery and designer handbags sparkle elusively in slide projections on graphite-dusted screens.

What emerges is the sense that it's not the diamond necklaces or snakeskin clutches that matter. (As that [Barbara Kruger Selfridges campaign](#) pronounced: "You want it, you buy it, you forget it.") Instead, Gluzberg's work depicts what we're always left with: the endless fug of desire itself.

Why we like her: For [Hairstyles for the Great Depression](#) from 2009. Gluzberg has been making hair drawings since the 1990s, exploring this luscious surface beyond which lies the unknowable brain. Here we get textured depictions of round, crimped and curled bobs suspended in a soft, pencilled halo.

Camera obscura: True to their subject's voyeuristic nature, Gluzberg's photos of shops and shopping are taken clandestinely, with a hidden lens.

Where can I see her? At [Paradise Row](#), London W1, until 21 January 2012.

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