

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

**Ella Kruglyanskaya**  
***This is a Robbery***

Preview: 10 March, 6-8pm  
Exhibition dates: 11 March – 23 May 2020

***Part 1***

3 Duke Street, St. James's  
London, SW1

***Part 2***

11 Duke Street, St. James's  
London, SW1

'I remember thinking that painting the figure was almost obscenely obvious and therefore stupid. I painted things all around it, disembodied hands coming out of edges of the rectangle, disembodied hair, clothing, patinated furniture, knitted objects. Finally, I realized that what I was interested in was the figure. It seemed banal. Then I realized I am also interested in feelings.'

Ella Kruglyanskaya

For her second London exhibition at Thomas Dane Gallery, Ella Kruglyanskaya displays her deeply original streak—part-rebellious, part-classicist—and continues her focus on the gendered and expressionistic histories of painting albeit with a more personal and introspective drive. The exhibition takes the form of a continuous collage in two parts across both gallery spaces. Each includes a profusion of works on canvas, egg tempera panels and works on paper, unpacking the traditions of portraiture, still-life, trompe l'oeil and the *memento mori*, scrutinising her own artistic output throughout.

*This is a Robbery* forms a counter narrative in which expectations are upturned and the usual hierarchies of techniques and genres are levelled to an even ground. In *Part 1* at No.3 Duke Street, Kruglyanskaya plunders her own aesthetic sensibility and formal concerns through try-outs of still-life, where representations of paintbrushes and the Act of Painting itself cohabit with revisions of Josef Albers' *Interaction of Colour* book cover, trompe l'oeil techniques and graphite sketches. *Part 2* at No.11 Duke Street, contains Kruglyanskaya's expected female figures along with solitary kinds of self-portraiture that imply a narrative of 'the robbery', where seclusion, performance, cliché and fantasy proliferate.

The women in *This is a Robbery* still reference the buxom vixens typically imagined in Kruglyanskaya's work, yet their previous combative tone and hyperbolic representation has mellowed into a more evasive, dramatic and suspicious register. The tensions of psychological unrest reckon with the practice of painting, typified by the sweep of the paintbrush itself—its smear becoming a motif capable of both providing and eliminating form.

A recurring feature of Kruglyanskaya's practice is her negotiation of the viewer. The signature distance between 'her' women and the onlooker has shifted here. Whether coupled in adjacent pairs or lounging alone in despair, ecstasy or comfort, Kruglyanskaya's women compel the viewer to address the historical weight of painting as well as her own place as a painter and the compulsion to objectify. Throughout, Kruglyanskaya maintains a sense of humour, particularly in her migration from drawing to canvas. Trompe l'oeil techniques superimpose the raw, graphic activity of drawing upon the permanency of finished painting. In another instance, painted elements appear like abstract cut-outs for a collaged portrait which serves, in fact, as a backdrop for a still-life painting.

Kruglyanskaya's work is somehow indissociable from her tumultuous and unusual biography: growing up in Soviet Latvia before it gained independence, she was singled-out and taught art from a young age, discovering a myriad of sources including German expressionism, film and popular culture of the 1950s and 1960s. After abruptly leaving the country in the early 1990s to settle in the US, Kruglyanskaya 're-learned' her trade at Cooper Union and later, Yale School of Art, allowing her to bridge academicised art history with popular culture. The economy of Kruglyanskaya's draughtsmanship—seen here in her gestural drawings of cropped torsos, isolated objects and unmoved figures—alludes to her experience in New York, designing junk mail content as an advertising art director.

Kruglyanskaya's ability to communicate feeling through the practice of drawing and painting is exemplified in her consideration of drawing as a conduit for the self, much like handwriting. As Kruglyanskaya says, 'my drawings are not preparatory sketches. They are the material. They are nothing, a throwaway piece of paper and everything cumulatively. I think this (non) dichotomy is important.' Whether shifty, despairing or fixated, *This is a Robbery* displays the loot of a voracious and versatile imagination, always 'on the verge'.

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Ella Kruglyanskaya was born in 1978 in Latvia, and now lives and works in Los Angeles. Selected solo exhibitions include: *Ella Kruglyanskaya*, Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (2018); *Ella Kruglyanskaya*, Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, England (2016); *Fancy Problems*, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, England (2015); *Grafika*, The Power Station, Dallas TX (2014); *How to work together*, Studio Voltaire residency and show, London, England (2014); *Little Vera, kim?* (with Sanya Kantarovsky), Contemporary Art Centre, Riga, Latvia (2014). Selected group exhibitions include: The Ljubljana Biennial of Graphic Arts (2019); Baltic Triennial, Contemporary Art Centre, Villnius, Lithuania (2018); *Ella Kruglyanskaya & Matt Paweski*, Lulu, Mexico City, Mexico (2018); *Tainted Love*, Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France (2017).

For exhibitions and sales enquiries please contact François Chantala: [francois@thomasdanegallery.com](mailto:francois@thomasdanegallery.com)

For press enquiries please contact Alex Bennett: [alex@thomasdanegallery.com](mailto:alex@thomasdanegallery.com)

Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday 10am-6pm, Saturday 12pm-6pm or by appointment.

Admission: Free

Tel: +44 (0) 20 79252505

Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus

Instagram: [@thomasdanegallery](https://www.instagram.com/thomasdanegallery)

Twitter: [@ThomasDaneLDN](https://twitter.com/ThomasDaneLDN)