

## THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Luisa Buck, “Here come the girls: Ella Kruglyanskaya’s vivacious vamps,” *The Telegraph*, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2015



*Sexy, sassy and stroppey; Ella Kruglyanskaya’s magnificent “women on the verge” storm the Thomas Dane gallery*

If ever an exhibition had the quality of “va-va-voom” it’s Ella Kruglyanskaya’s current show of new paintings at [Thomas Dane](#). Sexy, sassy – and often extremely stroppey – her magnificent pneumatic women strut their buxom bootylicious stuff and take no prisoners. Red of lip and conical of breast, strapped into classic trench coats, tight pants or clingy frocks and finished off with vertiginous heels and maybe some fishnets for good measure, these dynamic dames rock every vampish cliché in the book – and some. This is high octane art that comes with multiple exclamation marks, with its subjects variously described by their creator as “women on the verge” and in a “state of existential hysteria”.

Born in Latvia in 1978, Kruglyanskaya emigrated to the US in the mid-Nineties and studied at Cooper Union in New York, where she is still based. Over the last couple of years she has been attracting keen art world attention on both sides of the Atlantic by portraying imaginary female protagonists in a style that combines the graphic and the painterly. Her influences range from Fifties and Sixties film posters to Max Beckmann, Philip Guston and the late figurative works of Jean Hélion, and her work knowingly plays with

11 DUKE STREET, ST JAMES’S, LONDON SW1Y 6BN

TEL +44 (0)20 7925 2505 FAX +44 (0)20 7925 2506 [info@thomasdane.com](mailto:info@thomasdane.com)

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politics of gender and representation. “I did not want to be a good woman artist. I wanted to just to be a great painter,” Kruglyanskaya stated in a recent interview.



**Ella Kruglyanskaya, Drawing of Nude with Lemons and Fish Trivet, 2014**

To this end she ups the ante at every turn, grappling with art history’s body-centric fixation with the female form and returning the male gaze with both an amused stare and at times a beady glare. Although never depicted as nudes, her women deliberately and energetically put themselves on display: sometimes they even wear clothes or swimsuits blatantly decorated with giant cartoonish eyes and mouths over their bumps and curves – literally giving the viewer an eyeful. In a specially commissioned site-specific show at South London’s Studio Voltaire earlier this year, Kruglyanskaya set her ladies to work, “grooming, brooming and bricklaying,” as she put it (whilst also clad in some especially jazzy hosiery), with two thundering giantesses breaking out of the gallery to loll seductively outside against its peaked roof, taking a cigarette break while their sisters labored inside.

Now at Thomas Dane, Kruglyanskaya is putting the art world in her satirical sights. In *Puppeteers with a Big Face*, two chic scowling black-clad galleristas carry a giant image of a frowning portrait; while in another a severe bob-haired, polo-necked artist seems to be having a stand-off with the shouting female face she is portraying. *Painter, Exhausted* depicts what looks like a Fifties pinup stretching languidly back in a swivel chair, sporting just a skimpy black slip and striking a pose more commonly associated with the bonnet of a car than the artist’s studio. But this siren has also been in the process of executing a minimal, primary coloured abstract and wears the paint splatters to prove it. Feminism has never looked more fun.

*Ella Kruglyanskaya: Fancy Problems is at Thomas Dane until 3 October*

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/art/83283/ella-kruglyanskaya-fancy-problems-at-thomas-dane-gallery-review.html>