

ArtReview

How to Work Together: Ella Kruglyanskaya

Studio Voltaire, London 11 April–8 June

There's nothing coy or reticent about the cartoonish but expressive modern young women depicted singly or in pairs in Ella Kruglyanskaya's exhibition, which includes big colourful paintings, a wall work, two large cutouts – installed above the entrance to the building – and accompanying preparatory drawings. Whether up scaffolding with paint rollers in hand (*Wall Painting*, all works 2014), vigorously conducting an unseen orchestra (*The Conductor*), building a brick wall (*Bricklayers*), performing a song and dance while dressed as housemaids (*Singing Maids*), straining to zip a friend into a too-tight dress (*Zip It*) or sashaying down the street (*Fruit Envy, Gatherers*), these are ladies energetically getting on with life. At the same time, with the exception of the jeans-clad bricklayers, these women appear not to have compromised their sense of dress or expression of their sexuality for the sake of practicality. All normal-size women with curves, they're dressed in the type of smart skirts or dresses, coloured tights and

heels more appropriate for sitting at a desk than stretching up on a scaffold.

The Latvian-born, New York-based Kruglyanskaya's exhibition is one of three separate commissions resulting from a collaborative three-year project of shows and events called *How to Work Together*, initiated by established not-for-profit London spaces Studio Voltaire, Chisenhale Gallery and the Showroom. The exhibitions at each space are autonomous, with the collaboration taking the form of a general sharing of knowledge, research, ideas and promotion of the exhibitions and related events. The 'working together' theme is also responded to individually by each of the artists; Céline Condorelli at Chisenhale and Gerry Bibby at the Showroom being the other two exhibitions in this initial programme.

It's too early to know how successful the project as a whole will be, but in terms of the working relationships between the women in Kruglyanskaya's commission, the artist has introduced as much ambiguity

as exuberance, ably communicated through the flourishes of her economical but precise marks. In the mural-style *Wall Painting*, for example, two women are shown painting the alcove of the gallery's back wall: the woman on the left is painting it mustard, whereas the woman on the right is painting it pink. They may be working together on the task, but they've obviously got different ideas. The two women building the brick wall: is the flushed, open-mouthed expression on the face of one and the defiant, almost aggressive posture of the other an indication of a serious disagreement? And the housemaids: is the dust being nonchalantly tipped from the dustpan of one onto the leg of the other an accident or deliberate? Either way, it's this injection of personality, along with the exaggerated shadows that the artist paints around her figures, as if spotlight from the front, that gives these paintings not only a feeling of depth but of emotional high drama.

Helen Sumpter



Wall Painting, 2014, acrylic on wall. © the artist.
Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York