

Harper's BAZAAR

IN CONVERSATION WITH ELLA KRUGLYANSKAYA

The painter on women, art and fashion

BY ZOE DICKENS 23 APRIL 2014



Three of London's leading non-profit galleries, Chisenhale Gallery, The Showroom and Studio Voltaire, have joined forces to create contemporary art commissioning and research programme *How To Work Together*. As the name suggests, the platform aims to see what these galleries, and their artists, can achieve together which they could not have done alone and over the next three years will hold a series of exhibitions, events and an online think tank.

As the first three commissions go on display this month we caught up with artist Ella Kruglyanskaya to talk art, women and fashion.

What drew you to the *How To Work Together* programme?

I was invited to participate in the programme by Joe Scotland, the Director of Studio Voltaire. Studio Voltaire is a great art organisation that nurtures artistic practice in crucial stages of the artist's development. They have a strong record of giving international artists their first opportunity to show in the UK. In addition, this particular programme was collaborative and I was encouraged to experiment with new directions in my work.

Is there a particular theme or influence which runs through the works you have created for *How To Work Together*?

I started thinking about the project a year ago, when Joe invited me over for a research visit. I felt that as a painter I was not a typical choice for a collaboratively themed project, which made it an interesting challenge. Though the title theme was left open to my interpretation, I chose a close, even literal reading of it and decided to make paintings of women engaged in working together. The exhibition features a series of large scale works, an indoor mural made on site during my residency as well as cutout figures on the facade of the building. Those latter ones are taking a break.

Your work largely depicts interactions between or involving women, which are not always positive, what message are you trying to convey with these images?

I think in order to create any sense of drama there has to be tension present, so I try to imagine simple but effective ways to create tension between the figures and their actions. I like the ambiguity of a still image. Unlike a movie, where the action unfolds in time, we're presented with just one "frame" and all the possible pasts and futures of the represented scenario have to unfold in the imagination of the viewer. Though I am the one creating the set ups, I am no more informed about the outcomes of any given painted action, I like thinking about the double meanings created through this intentional ambiguity.

How would you describe your personal style?

Arch conservative.

Do you think your personal interest in fashion is reflected in your work?

The clothes are so important in my work, they cannot be separated from the meaning of the images, so naturally I think about fashion and its history. I am interested in the way certain cuts alter the geometry of the body, the exaggeration of form. I think about the constant recycling of 20th century styles, the idea of "vintage" and how it can simultaneously connote a different time and the present one. Also pattern is a great way to break up the pictorial space in my paintings and add complexity to the reading of the work.

What's next for you?

Studio Voltaire along with Koenig are publishing the first ever monograph on my work, which will launch in the summer. I am really excited about that.

Visit howtoworktogether.org for more information.
