

# Victoria Lomasko - Separated World

Opening reception: 6-8pm, Tuesday 14 May 2019  
Exhibition: 15 May - 15 June 2019  
Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 6pm



*Like other artists, I am often asked, "Can art change the world?" I don't believe that art directly creates revolutions, but it does inspire people to live as free individuals. For several years, I have been drifting between the post-Soviet and Western worlds, going back and forth across their borders. This began as a way to run away from the Putin regime, Soviet ruins, and my parents' experience. It has ended up breaking down a great many of my limiting convictions.*

Victoria Lomasko

Edel Assanti is pleased to present Separated World, Victoria Lomasko's first exhibition with the gallery.

Separated World intertwines personal and collective narratives, creating a space of free-association that unfolds like an author's book. The exhibition sees Lomasko move from a methodology of documentary drawing to symbolism; from journalistic analysis of political events to poetry, reflecting subjective feelings and experiences. Shifting between memory, present and future, the exhibition combines site-specific murals, animation, intimate drawings, ceramics and poems.

A decade of intensive travel – initially within her home country in the creation of her celebrated graphic novel, *Other Russias* (2017), and more recently across Europe and the United States – crystallised Lomasko's conception of the contrasts between east and west. The panoramic murals that dominate the walls of the gallery from floor to ceiling throw these two worlds into collision: on one side, Lomasko illustrates the Russian world striving to return to the USSR or the pre-revolutionary era; on the opposite wall, a mirrored modern western world is rendered in nuanced contrast, with expensive universities and skyscrapers sat alongside abject urban poverty.

The murals are charged with autobiographical references – youthful memories sharpened by real world experiences. On the Russian side, a couple represent the figures of mother and father: a dissatisfied Soviet woman clutching a plastic bag and an artist, holding up his painting *Clownery*, mocking Putin's regime. He has brought the painting to a demonstration in Serpukhov. In the background, we see the ruined church where Lomasko's father lived during his childhood after the war. Across the way, on the Western side, we encounter the silhouette of Lomasko herself, "the last Soviet artist", attempting to conquer America. Symbolic landscapes are interspersed with the artist's poetry, musing on her journey across physical, metaphorical and political borders.

Whilst mural paintings were a cornerstone of the practice of the official artist in the Soviet era - charged with the task of relaying the Revolutionary utopian vision to the common citizen - Lomasko sets this familiar realistic vocabulary to the task of commenting on the present moment, against the backdrop of a globalised world where walls are appearing and national identity is entrenching. A stop-frame animation illustrates a recorded conversation with an American professor of Slavic studies, with whom Lomasko discusses the notion of a new Cold War. The exhibition reaches its climax at the back of the gallery where a table, covered in poetic verses in Russian and English, is set for tea for two people – an invitation for an artistic dialogue traversing histories, cultures and doctrines.

Victoria Lomasko graduated from Moscow State University of Printing Arts in 2003. Lomasko draws on Russian traditions of documentary graphic art, exploring the inner workings of contemporary Russian society and its subcultures, such as Russian Orthodox believers, LGBT activists, migrant workers, sex workers, and collective provincial farm workers. Her book *Other Russias* was awarded the 2018 Pushkin House Best Book in Translation award. Lomasko collaborates with various non-profit human rights organizations on creating materials for publication and taught workshops in places of incarceration. Recent solo exhibitions include *Truth, Power, and the Art of Resistance*, Miami University Humanities Center, Oxford, Ohio, USA, 2019; *Apparition Of The Last Soviet Artist*, GRAD, London, UK, 2018; *On the Eve*, Pushkin House, London, UK, 2018; *Other Russias: Angry*, Ellis Gallery, Pittsburgh School of Art, USA, 2017; *Unwanted Women*, Ortega Y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn, New York, USA, 2017; *Bishkek - Yerevan - Dagestan - Tbilisi. Feminist Travels*, Goethe Institute, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2016. Her work features in significant public collections including the Reina Sofia, Madrid; National Center of Contemporary Art, Moscow; Arsenal Gallery, Bialosok, Poland. Lomasko lives and works in Moscow, Russia.

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