

Zoya Cherkassky | Rough Ideas | December 2020 | Curator: Maya Frenkel Tene

The title of this exhibition already alludes to its content – different themes and ideas that have been preoccupying Zoya Cherkassky for the past decade, which she scribbles, draws and paints on paper. Some of the works in the show were made as sketches or studies for large canvases, while others were created as works on paper in their own right. In her practice, Zoya has been consistently exploring numerous themes in parallel. She works on each painting through a process of collecting visual material, gradually allowing the images to come together and crystalize into a full painting. Sometimes she would go back to past ideas that have ripened over time. The current exhibition asks to shed light on her "behind the scenes" processes and to uncover some of her practice strategies. It features works in various stages of progress, in which one can often spot corrections, erasure marks, and overall modifications to the composition.

The Soviet past continues to be a central part of her body of work, yet it is portrayed differently than in her 2018 project "Soviet Childhood." While in the 2018 exhibition Zoya returned to personal memories in her childhood, in this exhibition she chooses to broaden her view into a collective Soviet memory – like leisure time, sports, cinema and cultural icons. In two of the paintings in the show, for example, we encounter portraits of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, two Italian immigrant anarchists who were convicted of double-murder and executed in Massachusetts in 1927. Their controversial story has had substantial social impact in the former Soviet Union, in particular due to the common view that the erroneous ruling stemmed from an anti-communist bias. In a different painting, Zoya takes the liberty to invite a duo of Socialist revolutionists, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg – both admired by millions of Soviet citizens at the time – for a musical Teatime.

In a different series of paintings, Zoya chronicles views of her daily life and immediate environment of both her home in Ramat Gan and her studio in south Tel Aviv. The residents of Neve Shaa'nan and Shapira districts – both the locals and passerby – drug addicts, sex workers, immigrants and refugees. The mythological Bialik Street, on all its kiosks and lingerie shops, is portrayed in total contrast to its neighboring orthodox areas of Bnei-Brak. For Zoya, the daily life of the orthodox community, so far removed from her own, has been a source of curiosity and fascination. The disparity between

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these two neighboring communities and their estrangement from one another stand in opposition to their physical proximity. The theme of the border that runs between Bnei-Brak and Ramat Gan has recently been at the center of media news covering the public outcry against the spread of COVID-19 from the first city to the latter.

Also featured in the show are numerous series of etchings made in The Etching Workshop at Kibbutz Cabri over the past year. To Zoya the chemical etching technique is a new medium that had become a significant part of her oeuvre. The layered and complex process of engraving necessitates meticulous planning and execution, as well as a steady hand and a confident engraved line.

In the past year Zoya illustrated two children books: 'Dad's Wild Costume Parade' is her second book collaboration with the acclaimed author Galia Oz, a recipient of The Prime Minister's Prize for Hebrew Literary Works. Their first book collaboration 'Will our cat ever love us?' was awarded Best Children Book of 2018 by Hapinkas, along with rave reviews on its outstanding text and original and vivid illustrations. The heroine of the second book Zoya illustrated, 'Tali Under The Table' by Tamar Weiss-Gabay, is a witty and rebellious young girl that one day proclaimed herself a porcupine, and refused to come out from under the dining table. One cannot overlook the resemblance of the young and playful Tali to Zoya's own five-year-old daughter. The original paintings accompanying these books are on view at the gallery's project space, "Rosy".

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