

Philipp Figge
Dr. Philipp von Rosen
Figge von Rosen Galerie
Potsdamer Straße 98
10785 Berlin
T. 0049-30-2639 2971
F. 0049-30-2639 2972
berlin@figgevonrosen.com
www.figgevonrosen.com

Yelena Popova, *Unnamed*

Opening: April 27, 2012 at 6pm

Exhibition runs from April 28 through June 30, 2012

We are pleased to announce the opening of *Unnamed*, Yelena Popova's first solo exhibition at the gallery on April 27, 2012 at 6 pm during Berlin's Gallery Weekend. Popova's project *Unnamed* is a very personal reflection on the secrecy of the cold war and the notion of opacity and transparency.

Secrecy and materiality, on the one hand, and the invisibility of the radioactive contamination on the other hand, are the main themes Popova investigates with her installations of paintings and drawings.

In the cinematic essay in two parts *Unnamed* Popova combines autobiography, history and poetic reflection on uneasy heritage of the Cold War. By blending historical footage, blurry home videos and street scenes she recently recorded, Popova tells the story of her hometown in Urals, a secret settlement founded in 1945 and closely linked to the Soviet nuclear production and the nuclear disaster, which happened there in 1957. In the second, more nostalgic part of *Unnamed*, Popova draws analogies between the city where she grew up and an Estonian town attributing to them a high utopian potential: Despite severe travel restrictions, the inhabitants of both cities enjoyed many advantages during the cold war, as if they were living in an isolated Soviet paradise.

The West became aware of the nuclear catastrophe of 1957 only 20 years later through a book published by the Soviet biologist Zhores Medvedev, which presented a research on effects of radiation on mammals and birds in the area of Ural's disaster. The following indiscernible contamination becomes visible in the series *Mutatis Mutandis* (from Latin: necessarily changes had been made) of bird drawings that Popova created using the pages from a bird spotting book by adding deformations and mutations to the meticulously drawn ornithologic representations.

In the second exhibition space Yelena Popova shows an installation of paintings, in which she shifts the cinematographic examination of the dualism between the power of the unpresent and the debility of the present to a more formalistic level. Stylistically the painting series *Untitled* seems deeply rooted in constructivist sensibility. However, the forms Popova depicts with strongly diluted, still bright colors are mostly round and organic, reminding us more of the 21 century deconstructivist architecture than of the modernist approach in post revolutionary Russia. In adding several translucent layers of color on linen, Popova creates a spatial, even sculptural effect. With old recipes from historic painting books she is able to generate colors, which maintain the rough texture of the canvases present while the unstable compositions almost disappear. The interest in the frame as an object is continued in the way how the artist installs the painted canvases in groups, pointing out the gravity of the medium by placing them directly on the floor, mounting them by leaning one painting on the other, supported by little wooden forms or rusty handles.

Yelena Popova, born in Ozersk in 1978, graduated 2011 from the Royal College of Art in London. Her work was or will be shown in the Saatchi Gallery, London, the Outpost Gallery in Norwich, The Zabłudowicz Collection, London, and the Red Mansion Foundation, London.

For additional information and / or images, please contact the gallery.

FIGGE / ROSEN

FIGGE VON ROSEN GALERIE