

In *A vanitas portrait of a lady*, an early 17th century self-portrait attributed to the Dutch painter Clara Peeters, a woman sits somberly at a table, adorned in rich fabrics and jewels. Before her is an elaborate tableau of precious gems, dice, exquisite flowers both dead and alive. A gold chalice has been tipped over, spilling coins over a lush red tablecloth. A soap bubble floats beside the woman's head, a typical motif from this period symbolizing the brevity of life.

Originating in Flanders and the Netherlands in the 16th and 17th centuries, *vanitas* still lives were composed of objects symbolizing the promise of death, a reminder to the viewer of the futility and emptiness of life's ornaments and pleasures. Despite its morbid existential foundation, the exercise of still life painting eventually became increasingly elaborate, and in many cases served as a platform on which artists could flaunt their painterly prowess. With her second exhibition at Gavin Brown's enterprise, Ella Kruglyanskaya introduces a group of paintings rooted in this paradoxical tradition. Kruglyanskaya spent a month in Rome creating the works in the show, a suite of paintings in egg tempera, as well as frescoes painted in situ at the gallery, a deconsecrated 8th century church.

Kruglyanskaya presents modern women dressed in bold fashions. Their accessories, bright silk scarves, stilettos, hats, and gloves, playfully recall *memento mori*, each of these wares a cheerful reminder of the triviality of ornamentation. The superficiality of the women's ephemera is paradoxically captured on traditional materials resilient to time and designed to last.

Ella Kruglyanskaya (b. 1978 Latvia) lives and works in New York. Kruglyanskaya completed her MFA at Yale School of Art in 2006. Solo exhibitions include Tate Liverpool (2016); Tramway, Glasgow (2016); *'Fancy Problems,'* Thomas Dane Gallery, London (2015); and *'Grafika,'* The Power Station, Dallas, Texas (2014). Kruglyanskaya was included in *'Lost for Words,'* Murray Guy, New York (2016); *'The Extreme Present,'* Aishti Foundation, Beirut (2015); *'Tight Rope Walk: Painted Images After Abstraction,'* White Cube Bermondsey, London (2015).

*(This document was automatically generated by Contemporary Art Library.)*