

PIEROGI

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Opening Reception:	Sunday, 23 February, 2020. 6–8pm
Hours:	11am to 6pm, Wednesday through Sunday, and by appointment
Exhibition Dates:	22 February through 5 April, 2020
Exhibition Location:	155 Suffolk Street New York, NY 10002 (between Houston and Stanton Streets)

DARINA KARPOV

Between the no-longer and the still-to-come

Pierogi is pleased to present *Between the no-longer and the still-to-come*, an exhibition of new work by Darina Karpov, on view from February 22 through April 5. This will be Karpov's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery and will include paintings, works on paper, and porcelain sculpture.

The title of this exhibition draws from Nick Flynn's poem "Tattoo" about a transitional state, a state that is embodied in Karpov's work: a frozen, arrested moment between the scene forming and dissolving, the gathering and the dissipation.

In the five years since her last solo show, Karpov has gone through emotional and life changing events, including the birth of her daughter and her daughter's diagnosis of childhood epilepsy at the age of two.

"In dealing with my daughter's condition, I recognized a strange irony and connection to my own childhood. As a child

I was diagnosed with epilepsy after a fall, since I had experienced a couple of seizures, though they never returned. In the Soviet system"—Karpov was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Russia—"epilepsy was considered a psychiatric illness and all epileptics were 'blacklisted' in the psychiatric dispensary, which meant their potential, including education and job opportunities, would be limited. I was 'marked,' remaining on a blacklist until my mother's friend (who worked in the dispensary) stole my medical records."

Over the years, as an artist, Karpov's process has often involved the rendering of tangled thoughts, skeins of memory, and the mapping of synaptic connections in her mind. This imagery, often abstract, and in her earlier work figurative, is rooted in her childhood in the Soviet Union. The entanglement, confusion, anxiety of that time collides with a child's sense of wonder, free association, and vision. That process has become more meaningful in dealing with her daughter's condition.

In the last few years, Karpov branched into three-dimensional work, sculpting and creating reliefs in porcelain. The process emerged organically from her drawing practice. Cutting through, layering and collaging her drawings naturally led her to work in relief, eventually to build and carve porcelain clay. The need to create three-dimensional objects also arose from giving birth, "as if I had given birth to a new form of drawing." Working in porcelain, Karpov works on an intimate scale, hand building the abstract, semi-figurative objects. She then carves, creating various relief patterns on the surface while the pieces are leather hard. Once they are bisque fired, she applies underglaze to cover the surface in the intricate patterns and figurations. The initial form and relief of the earlier stages echoes the drawing—creating a dialogue and interplay between various modes of mark making.

The series of orb structures are initially thrown on the wheel. They are meant to be viewed as single works, and as groups of small pieces, ranging in size from 2.5 to 6 inches. These pieces are inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson's spiritual essay "Circles," in which he refers to the different beginnings and endings in the life cycle that merge, creating endless circles. In his essay, he begins with a small representation of the first circle—an eye,



As It Flies, 2019, Flashe and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72 inches

then slowly works his way toward outer circles, none overlapping, infinitely expanding. This work resonated with Karpov's interest in circular, nonlinear storytelling, her spheres serving as small story portals, or pods.

Karpov's current work has also brought her back to large-scale paintings, which have become much closer to her drawing process. In these paintings, she focuses more on color and a range of gesture, using the figuration found in her drawings. In these recent paintings, certain objects and situations recur as if in a dream or a memory from childhood or early adolescence. "These include objects strewn over the dilapidated communal apartment I grew up in, scenes from abandoned, industrial parks and yards of the apartment buildings where we gathered as teenagers, and electronic equipment that my father worked with as an engineer." Many characters reappear from old sketches, culled from various sources. Even though much of her work is essentially abstract, she is constantly drawn toward storytelling, culling from cultural myths and cosmological structures which are open ended and circular. With this influence, her sculptures often assume spherical form. The detail in her sculpture draws from folk and craft objects, especially Russian crafts and Soviet-era propaganda porcelain, as well as the early 20th Century Russian "World of Art" movement, which in turn drew from earlier Russian folk and craft traditions. In addition, her work finds inspiration from Japanese ukiyo-e prints, manga, and ancient ritualistic objects.

Karpov is a member of the first generation of contemporary artists to emerge from Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Born in St. Petersburg and trained at the Moscow Institute of Technology, she attended the Maryland Institute College of Art before receiving an MFA from Yale University. Her works have been included in exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Neuberger Museum, and the DeCordova Museum. Her work is included in numerous public and private collections including Princeton University Art Museum, Zabudowicz Trust (London), among others. She is a recipient of a 2011 Leon Levy Foundation Grant, a 2009 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, and a 2008 National Academy William Paton Prize. She has been awarded residencies and fellowships at MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, Ucross Foundation, and two printmaking residencies at the Lower East Side Print Shop. Her work was featured in *Frozen Dreams: Contemporary Art from Russia*, by Hossein Amirsadeghi (Thames & Hudson). She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, NY.