

ANNA ZORINA GALLERY

ALINA BLIUMIS

Borders and Bruises

On view: June 2 - July 9, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 2, 5-8 PM

Anna Zorina Gallery is pleased to inaugurate its new Los Angeles Gallery space with the solo exhibition of Alina Bliumis, *Borders and Bruises*. This is Bliumis' first show with the Gallery. The exhibition will feature three bodies of work including the watercolor maps of *Nations Unleashed*, the abstract paintings series *Bruises* and text-based sculptural works *Concrete Poems*. A percentage of proceeds from the exhibition will be donated to Direct Help For Ukraine and BY SOL, an organization supporting politically repressed Belarusians.

Bears, eagles and octopi have been active role-players in satirical maps since the 16th century. With her watercolor series, *Nations Unleashed*, Bliumis pays homage to cartographic curiosities by employing animal symbolism to convey biting political critique. In *Bear vs. Nightingale*, European countries become a battleground of zoomorphic shapes. Here the national animals are seen in mid-clash as the Ukrainian nightingale faces the Russian bear, an eagle representing the West stands alert. Bliumis explores this history of transferring human actions and motives onto primal beings to remove individual responsibility and agency from the political theater. This shift in perspective heightens awareness to this rampant strategy of displacement, compelling us to critically reflect on the fine line that separates fact from fiction in global geopolitics.

Before maps are drawn, history is first recorded on bodies through experience captured in the form of bruises, wounds, calluses. The body is a document of social struggles. For example, in the artist's native country of Belarus, the nation united in response to the rigged election of 2020. These protestors shared the resulting scars of having faced aggressive measures of suppression and brutal detainment across various media platforms, bringing public awareness to the human rights abuse in hopes of achieving justice in the future. These events have triggered Bliumis' watercolor on linen series, *Bruises*. Each bruise painting is numbered in reference to statistics of human suffering. The traumas range from serious to playful, from political prisoners and refugees to unrequited celebrity crushes. The artist represents the bruises as abstract patches of watercolor allowing the pigment to bleed into the weave of the linen in a style reminiscent of Color Field painting. Bliumis engages the expressionist style's association with making an emotional impact through clarity of color and form with an emphasis on celebrating individual expression and freedom of subjectivity. Her paintings are spatial and alive to endow an immortality to the feelings and sensations that underlie these important moments throughout our own personal and collective history.

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If the border is what you fight for and body what you fight with, then poetry in life is a tool for survival. The works within the *Concrete Poems* series depict a literal approach to a visual poetry tradition that takes on a specific typographic arrangement to convey meaning. Inspired by street wall scribbles, graffiti, and absurdist poetry, the artist makes her mark firmly in concrete. Breaking down words into a context that brings new meaning or finds irony in everyday language, *Imagination Nation*; *Mother Other*; *Father Her*; *Slaughter Laughter*. Bliumis exploration of her second language of English finds that even one letter can make all the difference.

The exhibition is accompanied by text written by art critic, media theorist, and philosopher, Boris Groys.

ALINA BLIUMIS (b. 1972, Minsk, Belarus) lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from the School of Visual Art in 1999 and a diploma from the Advanced Course in Visual Arts in Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como, Italy in 2005. Bliumis has exhibited internationally at the Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris, France, the First Moscow Biennales of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia; Busan Biennale, Busan, South Korea; Assab One, Milan, Italy; the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, US; Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris, France; Centre d'art Contemporain, Meymac, France; the James Gallery at The Graduate Center CUNY, New York City; Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio; Museums of Bat Yam, Bat-Yam, Israel; the Jewish Museum, New York City; the Saatchi Gallery, London, UK; Botanique Museum, Brussels, Belgium; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; MAC VAL - Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Paris, France.

Her works are in various private and public collections, including MAC VAL - Musée d'art contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Paris, France; Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris, France; The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Russia; Bat Yam Museum for Contemporary Art, Bat-Yam, Israel; The Saatchi Collection, London, UK; The Harvard Business School, Boston, MA; The National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA and Missoni Collection in Italy.

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