

## Veronika Hapchenko: *Interloper*

solo exhibition at Import Export

28 September - 10 November 2023

Veronika Hapchenko is a recipient of the ING Polish Art Foundation Prize, awarded for her exhibition "Interloper" during Warsaw Gallery Weekend 2023.

Import Export is excited to present "Interloper" – a solo exhibition by Cracow-based, Kyiv-born artist Veronika Hapchenko, focusing on her new paintings from the *Mosaic series*.

Born in 1995, Hapchenko first studied stage design at the National University of Cinema and Television in Kyiv, before moving to Poland to pursue an MFA in Painting at the Cracow Academy of Fine Art. Embracing both painting and object making, Hapchenko works in well-planned series to create powerful images. Her practice draws from extensive research in philosophy, literature, and history of art of the former USSR – which often oscillated between esotericism and militarism in their subject matter. As part of her process, she traces legends and taboos surrounding political gurus and iconic revolutionary artists to then deconstruct and reframe them while using a Ukraine-specific lens.

With *Mosaic series* in mind, Hapchenko began researching Soviet-era modernist mosaics and murals from the territories of Ukraine.\* While originally, they invoked a bright and peaceful future for the union, these monuments are now being destroyed during the Russian invasion and bombardment of the cultural heritage sites. Most recently, Hapchenko turned her attention specifically to the legacy of Ivan Lytovchenko – Ukrainian artist and author of monumental works in public space active between the 1960s and the 1980s. For the exhibition at Import Export, she created a series of paintings in conversation with his large-scale ceramic reliefs and mosaics from Pripyat – the abandoned worker's city that once serviced the Chernobyl power plant. Finalised only a few years before the tragic atomic explosion, the works from Pripyat illustrated the key myths of the USSR – such as the enlightenment of the people through electrification of the rural land or the Prometheus-like figure of Danko with his 'flaming heart'.\* In her paintings, Hapchenko reconfigures the stories and characters originally inscribed in the iconic works by Lytovchenko – now subjected to destruction and natural decay.

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For "Interloper", the artist selected a set of 9 paintings from the Mosaic series. The works were carefully arranged by her within the exhibition rooms, as if the gallery was a set. The environment was outlined by the view of the mountains and two monumental panneaux: the horizontal **demeter (after Ivan Lytovchenko)** in one room and the vertical **vortex**, decorated with science-related symbols, in the other. Drawing further from strategies of theatre, the artist opted for unusual yet relevant heights for placing her images. Hung very close to the floor, the silhouette of Danko is barely visible as a pattern of the monochromatic, old cobblestone. Demeter, the mythical goddess of harvest, hovers majestically over the main exhibition room. Her muscular figure is set against the ominous background of radiation and beaming orange light – accentuated by the luminous effects of Hapchenko's signature technique of airbrush sfumato.

The environment is completed by sets of lightbulbs (**enlightened**), toxic weeds growing out of the cobblestone (**Sosnovsky's hogweed**) and chirping birds (**bullfinches**) – leaving it for the viewers to determine whether they were faced with the landscape post or prior to a catastrophe.

\* The **Mosaic series** was commenced by the triptych **shelter** (2022) – an interpretation of Alla Horska's mosaic **Windfighter** from the "Ukraine" restaurant in Mariupol, commissioned by K1 Kanal Pompidou in Brussels in December 2022. It was presented as part of the 8th Congress of Women and then sold to benefit Divchata ("Girls") NGO in Ukraine.

\*\* The 'flaming heart of Danko' is a motif from "Old Izergil" – a short story written by the now-defamed propaganda author Maxim Gorky in 1895.

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Veronika Hapchenko (b. 1995) holds an MFA in Painting from the Cracow Academy of Fine Art. Before moving to Poland, she studied stage design at the National University of Cinema and Television in Kyiv. She received distinctions in the 45th Painting Biennale "Bielska Jesień" and 19th Hestia Artistic Journey Awards (both in 2021). To date, Hapchenko has had two solo exhibitions with Import Export ("Interloper" in 2023 and "False Door" in 2022) and was also presented by the gallery at the Artissima fair in Turin (2022). Works from her Cosmic and Sci-fi series were included (respectively) in "Citizens of the Cosmos: Anton Vidokle with Veronika Hapchenko, Fedir Tetyanich and the Collection of the International Cosmist Institute" at the Museum of Art in Łódź and as part of the 2023 Art Encounters Biennial 2023 in Timișoara, Romania. Following the commission project by K1 Kanal Pompidou, her painting shelter (2022) was included in the 2023 edition of Dhaka Art Summit, a biennale in Bangladesh hosted by the Samdani Art Foundation. Most recently, Hapchenko's work also entered the Primary Forms curriculum – the educational programme of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw delivered to schools across Poland.