

Her Name is Prometheus

l'étrangère gallery,
London, 2018



Yelena Popova

Her Name is Prometheus

20 September - 3 November

L'étrangère is pleased to present *Her Name is Prometheus*, a solo exhibition of Yelena Popova's latest work, developed during her residency at Art House in Wakefield earlier this year. Popova was moved by the declining presence of sporting goods manufacture in the region and the story of Klaus Fuchs, a theoretical physicist (atomic spy) incarcerated in HMP Wakefield during the 1950's.

Popova's fascination in nuclear history and materiality informs her interest in the most deadly of man-made materials Plutonium, crucial for the development of atomic weapons. For the exhibition she created a gallery floor-game *Townlets*, a mobile, interactive, plastazote sculpture based on the molecular structure of Plutonium. An accompanying series of woodblock prints, inspired by 'figures' in the traditional Russian game *Gorodki*, suggest different balancing structures to build and knock down. Audiences are invited to play the game in the gallery space and document their own constructions on social media (hashtag #townlets). *Townlets* was recently taken to a swimming pool to become a floating, sculptural set for a propositional synchronized-swimming performance entitled *Her Name is Prometheus*. Together with *Townlets* the works explore non-competitive, collaborative and performative approaches to sport events.

Lise Meitner chair is a tribute to one of the most prominent women physicists who was unjustly excluded from the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for Nuclear Fission, awarded in 1944 to her collaborator Otto Hahn. Meitner never intended her research to be used for military purposes and was firmly against the development of nuclear weapons.

Popova's painting installation as always approaches balance formally and animates space for the viewer (performer?) to enter.

Yelena Popova (born in USSR) lives and works in Nottingham, where she has a studio at Primary. She studied at Moscow Art Theatre School (MHAT) before graduating from MA Painting at the Royal College of Art in 2011. Recent solo exhibitions include *This Certifies That*, Philipp von Rosen, Cologne (2017), *Elements*, Girton College, University of Cambridge (2017), *After Image*, Nottingham Contemporary (2016) and *Unsensed*, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle (2015). Her work has been acquired into the Arts Council Collection, RCA Collection, Saatchi Collection, Zabłudowicz Collection and LWL Museum, Münster.

www.yelenapopova.co.uk



Yelena Popova, *Her Name is Prometheus*, Installation image, l'étrangere, 2018, photo Andy Keate

This certifies that

**Osnova gallery, Moscow,
Russia, 2018**

Yelena Popova: This certifies that

6 March - 12 April 2018 — [Artist's Page](#)

[Artworks & Files](#)

Osnova gallery is pleased to present solo show by Yelena Popova 'This certifies that'. The artist continues relating social and political issues with the formal language of her painting installations, this time pioneering a 'hypnotic abstraction' through the work with computer codes and repetitive circular gestures.

The central piece of the exhibition is This Certifies That that also gives the show its title. It was shown for the first time in 2016 in Popova's solo-exhibition After Image at Nottingham Contemporary. This Certifies That is a code-generated computer performance projected on a wall with sound. A computer in real time generates images reminiscent of Euro banknotes in denomination of 5 to 500 Euro (with convoluted and interlocking Guilloche lines and 3D scans of sculptures from The Collection. Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire, a museum and gallery in Lincoln, UK). The elements that make up the image constantly shift in potentially infinite patterns, at some point the whole sequence crashes, and then rebuilds itself. The visual stream is accompanied by a soundtrack that can be described as an algorithmic composition (sound developed in collaboration with Rebecca Lee, and inspired by Cornelius Cardew's music experiments). A constantly morphing sonic landscape is built from different sources, including sampled audio, human and simulated voices. The computer voices with different accents read sentences which are randomly selected by the machine-world to formulate different propositions.

Yelena Popova was inspired to do this work when reading about a group of anarchists around the photographer, engineer and inventor Leon Warnerke, that attempted to crush Russia's (and with it the world's) economy at the end of the 19th century – by flooding the market with an excess of forged banknotes. So, the global market, the invisibility (and enormous effectiveness) of the financial currents, the fact that the banknotes abstract the value by certifying it, all play a role. But also, the excess of images, goods, currency, and of course, the contemporary problem of algorithm generated Tweets that influence our consumer and political choices. The hypnotic effect of the movement of the capital is formally empathized by the infinitely rotating ring of stars (in the projection) and by the repetitiveness of curvilinear gestures in the adjacent paintings.

Popova's painting installations play against the conventions of painting display, the equilibrium of the installation can be seen as an equivalent of a (still utopian?) dream of balance of the economic powers. The paintings are made with Popova's own medium with the layers of transparent paint creating a bodiless image, similar to the immateriality of digital images.

Yelena Popova, who is 'Visiting Professor at Helsinki Fine Art Academy' in 2017-18, has enjoyed several prestigious residencies in the last couple of years. She has just returned from Mallorca, where she spent a few weeks at CCA Andratx, one of the largest centers of contemporary art in the Balearic Islands as well as the rest of Europe. Before this, she was for one year „Artist in Residence“ at Girton College, University of Cambridge. Only recently one of her paintings was acquired by the New Hall Art Collection at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge, the largest collection of modern and contemporary art by women artists in Europe.



Yelena Popova, *This certifies that*, Installation image, Osnova, 2018

Girton College, 2017



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Yelena Popova, 2016-17 Artist in Residence, opens end-of-year exhibition 'Elements: A Girton Adventure'



'...the weight and meaning of industrialism and feminist thought weave through her works across Girton College'.

Eliza Gluckman, Curator NEW HALL ART COLLECTION, University of Cambridge

Girton's [artist residency](#) dates from 2013. It enables early career visual artists to live and work in the College for up to a year. The hope is that their creativity will be influenced by us – by the history, geography and materiality of the site, by the Fellows, staff and students who inhabit it – and that our thinking and practices might in turn be shaped by their presence.

'Elements' is part of this engagement. It is an art trail created by [Yelena Popova](#), the third incumbent of the artist-in-residence scheme. Yelena's predecessors are [Colden Drystone \(2013-14\)](#), and [Sonny Sanjay Vadgama \(2014-15\)](#), whose end-of-year exhibitions were mounted in the Judge Business School. Yelena, in contrast, entices us on a journey – a tour of the College and of her work, including items co-produced with students.

Visitors are encouraged to pick up a [booklet](#) from the Porters Lodge which includes a map of the trail and a guide to the artworks. We think you will find some iconic spaces transformed by the new exhibits; equally, you will see that many new works are inspired by the environment and operation of the College – 53 acres of gardens, woodland and grounds, mud, earth and ashes, the material trace of past generations, the energy of today's youth.

The artist-in-residence scheme is, in short, part of a unique educational adventure with Girton at its centre. We are grateful to the founders and funders who have made it possible. They are Suling Mead (1975, Economics) and Ruth Whaley (1974, English): two Girton alumni whose vision and energy have, like that of the artists whose work they support, truly made a difference.

Open to the public, admission free. Mon-Sun 9am-7pm until September 25th2017*

*NB Full exhibition available to view until Monday 26th June but please bear in mind when pieces are sold after this date they will be removed.

All pieces in 'Elements' are for sale and the proceeds support both the Artist and the Artist in Residence scheme at Girton. Please see the [tour booklet](#) for some images and price guide. If you would like to purchase any of Yelena's work, please contact Tamsin Elbourn-Onslow.

Email: development@girton.cam.ac.uk or by phone: 01223 765685



Yelena Popova, *For Mind, Body and Spirit*, 2017 Tapestry for Girton College, 180x140cm, Jacquard Weave