

FORT GANSEVOORT

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An Artist's Devotion to the African Diaspora

By Ruby Sutton – April 19, 2023



Zoya Cherkassky's "Hard Day's Night" (2023). © Zoya Cherkassky. Courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort

Raised in Kyiv and based in Tel Aviv, Zoya Cherkassky is a painter whose work depicts moments of cultural collision in everyday life, drawing from her own memories and those of her friends, family members and ancestors. Spurred by her connection to Tel Aviv's Nigerian community through her husband, Sunny Nnad, as well as her sustained curiosity about the immigrant experience, Cherkassky's latest body of work focuses on the African diaspora in Europe, Israel and the former Soviet Union from the 1930s to the present. "The Arrival of Foreign Professionals" exhibition, now on display at Fort Gansevoort gallery in New York, is named after a painting by Cherkassky's great-great-uncle Abram Cherkassy, which she encountered while visiting the National Art Museum of Ukraine in Kyiv a few weeks before the Russian invasion. Cherkassky's bold brushwork adds a sense of movement and gravitas to her scenes of everyday life, as in "Hard Day's Night" (2023). Through careful curation of detail — a TV screen showing a soccer game, smoke emerging from a factory out the window — Cherkassky places her vibrant depictions of social life within a larger historical framework. In "Party at the Dorms" (2022), Cherkassky drew from her sister's memories to depict a 1980s party. Describing how Russian women would sometimes awkwardly adopt American fashions during this time period, she points to the woman in the picture wearing a cheetah-print dress and blue leggings. "Cultural clash," Cherkassky says, smiling. "The Arrival of Foreign Professionals" is on view through June 3, 2023, fortgansevoort.com.