

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Katya Grokhovsky: *FANTASYLAND*
jc lenochan: *UNDOING WHITE MESS*

March 20–May 2, 2021

Opening Day: Saturday, March 20, 4–8 PM. Timed entry required, check www.smackmellon.org for more information.

Artist Talk: April 18, 3–4:30 PM

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Left: Katya Grokhovsky, *Postcards from America*, 2020, digital painting and collage. Courtesy of the artist.
Right: jc lenochan, *Get smart again*, 2021, mixed media, 6" x 14" x 5". Courtesy of the artist.

Smack Mellon is pleased to present two new solo exhibitions, **Katya Grokhovsky: *FANTASYLAND*** and **jc lenochan: *UNDOING WHITE MESS***, opening concurrently on Saturday, March 20, 2021. In these two exhibitions, each artist is exploring the state of American culture, addressing politics around immigration and racism, displacement and dispossession, capitalist greed and economic disparity. **Katya Grokhovsky's** landscape of excessive consumption speaks to the seduction and ultimate failure of the American Dream, while **jc lenochan** exposes the systemic racism that undergirds the very foundation of this country and persists in American society today.

Katya Grokhovsky
FANTASYLAND

Katya Grokhovsky works in installation, performance, sculpture, video, painting and drawing, exploring ideas of gender, identity construction, alienation, labor, history, and the self. Through research and autobiographical experience, Grokhovsky builds worlds and characters that examine and underscore stereotypes, assumptions, prejudices, and injustices. She is interested in the histories of migration and displacement, while

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enacting the bodies of the historically oppressed, in relation to the preconceived social order. Many of her projects deal with protest and freedom through failure, via radical and humorous actions: reclaiming the body through pleasure, chaos, and refusal, residing in the space of absurd grotesque and nostalgic kitsch.

At Smack Mellon, Grokhovsky presents *FANTASYLAND*, a site-specific mixed media installation that explores the rise and fall of a fantastical empire and its uncertain future. Using a variety of mediums and objects, such as giant plush toys, inflatable beach balls, deconstructed and re-assembled mannequins, an unfinished carousel structure, recycled parachute canopies, wallpaper, a glowing neon sign, and performance videos, the artist underscores American society's surplus of objects, brutally intoxicating consumerism, and unbridled desire for material possessions that form an ironic, ultimate beacon and capitalist symbol of freedom. In this work, Grokhovsky investigates the American Dream through an immigrant lens, exposing a desirable yet unattainable mirage. *FANTASYLAND* reveals the eternal human longing for a better life and for connection that remains hidden and festering beneath the polite façade of shopping malls, big box stores, and marketplace websites. In this post-industrial landscape, the enchanted forests and docile characters of Disney fairy tales become sinister metaphors for the "land of opportunity," an alluring veneer for a wasteland of human-made, consumerist debris.

Born in Ukraine and raised in Australia, Grokhovsky is a New York-based artist, curator, and Founding Director of The Immigrant Artist Biennial. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. Grokhovsky has received support through numerous residencies including The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts (EFA) Studio Program, School of Visual Arts MFA Art Practice Artist in Residence, Kickstarter Creator in Residence, Pratt Fine Arts Department Artist in Residence, Art and Law Fellowship, The Museum of Arts and Design Studio Program, BRICworkspace Residency, Ox-BOW School of Art Residency, Wassaic Artist Residency, Atlantic Center for the Arts, Studios at MASS MoCA, NARS Residency, Santa Fe Art Institute Residency, Watermill Center, and more. She has been awarded the Brooklyn Arts Council Grant, NYFA Fiscal Sponsorship, ArtSlant 2017 Prize, Asylum Arts Grant, Australian Council for the Arts Grant, and Freedman Traveling Scholarship for Emerging Artists, among others. Grokhovsky earned an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, a BFA from Victorian College of the Arts, and a BA in Fashion from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

jc lenochan

UNDOING WHITE MESS

Drawing from his experience in academia and critical discourse, jc lenochan's work scrutinizes the way that history is taught, which narratives are given voice, and which ones are suppressed. In *UNDOING WHITE MESS*, lenochan employs a process of deconstructing objects and de-circulating institutional relics, posing a series of questions about the acquisition of knowledge. In this body of work, he reconfigures everyday commodities, such as books, furniture, and tools in order to rethink the way that they can be understood, to open up their potential meanings, and to initiate art's transformative function. Through investigative research, drawing, riffs on traditional sculpture, and performance based installations, lenochan's interests engulf ideas of re-appropriation of

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historical imagery and misrepresented educational lessons that possess an entrenched colonial mentality.

This work delves deeply to expose and confront cultural bias, perceptions of otherness, and racial fabrications. A mural sized chalkboard drawing depicts a “de-racing machine,” which resembles an industrial factory for erasing racial perceptions. Sculptures made of books that explore the history and politics of race and class in this country are cemented shut. Growing out of this sculptural work is a new series of text paintings with block letters embossed into cement. The embedded messages confront the systems that have been built and continue to depend on white privilege. By challenging assumptions and recombining them with personal/historical narratives, lenochan’s work embodies Socratic methods of questioning and humor as a post-colonial pedagogical strategy for dismantling the manipulative perspectives of the dominant ideology. The artist asks, “What role has pedagogy played in shaping history and our current social condition or cultural climate?” In this way, lenochan continually engages the possibilities of critical discourse to rethink the canon of art history in order to create a new way of seeing the world as a new human in undoing whiteness.

Multi-disciplinary artist jc lenochan’s recent exhibitions include solo shows at Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT, and The Gateway Project in Newark, NJ. His work has also been featured in group shows at BronxArtSpace, The Drawing Center, NY; Tarble Arts Center, Charleston, IL; Harvey B. Gant Center, Charlotte, NC; and the National Czech and Slovak Museum, Cedar Rapids, IA, among many other venues. He is the recipient of the Pollack Krasner Grant, Artist in Residence at Art Omi, Denniston Hill artist residency, Artist in Residence at the Newark Museum, Franklin Furnace Grant, The Brodsky Fellowship for print and paper innovation, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, Puffin Foundation Grant, SIP Robert Blackburn Fellowship, Fountainhead Residence in Miami, Step Up Artist at Real Art Ways, Open Sessions at The Drawing Center and a New Jersey Council of the Arts fellowship/grant. He earned an MFA from Rutgers University’s Mason Gross School of Art, and he has also attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

PROGRAMS

ARTIST TALKS

Sunday, April 18, 3–4:30 PM

Hear from artists **Katya Grokhovsky** and **jc lenochan** about their current solo exhibitions. Grokhovsky will discuss the themes of migration, displacement, and consumerism in her mixed media sculptural installation *FANTASYLAND*, and lenochan will speak about the issues of race, class, and social injustice that he is confronting through his work in *UNDOING WHITE MESS*.

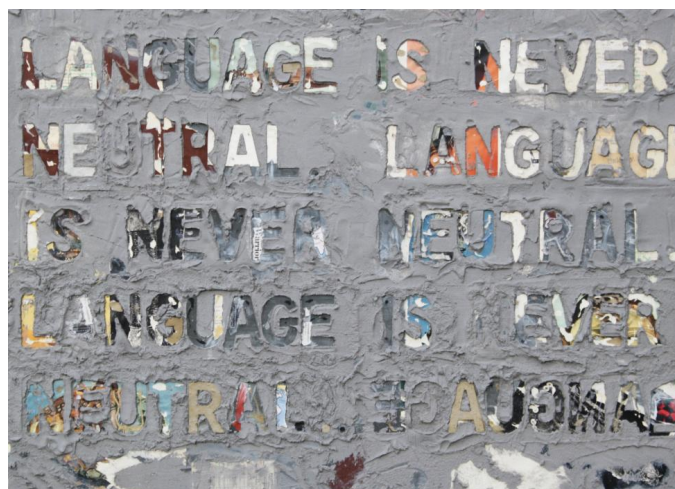


Image: jc lenochan, *language is never neutral*, 2018, discarded journals and concrete on canvas, 36" x 48".
Courtesy of the artist.

PERFORMANCE

Katya Grokhovsky: *Becoming American*

Saturday, May 1, 4 PM



Image: Katya Grokhovsky, *Becoming American*, 2020, video still. Courtesy of the artist.

Activating the site of her *FANTASYLAND* installation, **Katya Grokhovsky** will give a live performance of *Becoming American*, which explores the place, memory, alienation, and displacement of an immigrant protagonist. The 40-minute performance

incorporates Grokhovsky's autobiographical narrative of double migration from Ukraine to Australia to the United States, an artistic investigation of identity through family histories and lineage, and indoctrination into consumerist culture. Through movement, repetition, gesture, and voice, *Becoming American* seeks to find hope, strength, and a sense of belonging in a new world.

These exhibitions are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, New York City Council Member Stephen Levin, and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and with generous support from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Robert Lehman Foundation, Select Equity Group Foundation, many individuals and Smack Mellon's Members.

Smack Mellon's programs are also made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and with generous support from The Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund of The New York Community Trust, Jerome Foundation, The Roy and Niuta Titus Foundation, Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation Inc., and Exploring The Arts. In-kind donations are provided by Materials for the Arts, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs/NYC Department of Sanitation/NYC Department of Education.

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