

BOMBLOG

ART

VERA ILIATOVA'S TENANTS

By Richard J. Goldstein Mar 29, 2010

Windows fly past as the elevated train ploughs by those buildings impossibly close to the tracks. Any glimpse is too fragmented and momentary to catch a look inside. But, the zoetrope effect spins the imagination out to complete the view, and I wonder how many of those rooms are filled with artwork hoping to be seen and how many sites and non-sites it would take to hold them.

Vera Iliatova takes the group show as an opportunity to reveal the network existing between artists with *Tenants*. Hanging works side by side she gives context, not in terms of style, price tag, gender, or age, but in terms of friends. There's nothing nepotistic about this selection as a genuine sense of family pervades in the hanging and space of the work. Equipped with several studios and a quaintly mismatched kitchen, the 106 Green gallery has much the same feeling as one may find in George Perec's *Life: A User's Manual*, the inspiration behind Iliatova's curating. Perhaps it is the fact that Iliatova is a painter herself that conveys such closeness between artists that a curator or gallerist may have less ease to fully tap into. *Tenants* speaks to the artist as more than a name, but a link in a system of support.



Rochelle Feinstein, *A Wonderful Place to Live*, laser print/oil on linen, 33 x 33", 1991.

Following is an email q&a posed to Vera Iliatova, March 23, 2010.

Richard Goldstein: Is this your first time curating? What inspired you to start curating?

Vera Iliatova: I've been coming to 106 Green Gallery exhibitions since they started about a year ago, and I love the idea of an artists-run venue for artists-curated exhibitions. I was very happy when they asked me to curate a show, and since the space also houses artists' studios, the idea for *Tenants* came to mind.

RG: How did you select the group of artists to work with?

VI: I proposed the idea to the artists who I think would find Perec's book interesting to their process. I was also looking for work that would evoke a range of themes in the novel: from the narrative content to the abstract structure

imposed on the plot.

The structure of the novel is that of an isometric perspective where the writer equally distances himself from every inhabitant of the narrative leaving it for the viewer to weave the story together. It was a perfect curatorial model for this show.

RG: How do you feel your role as a painter influences your curating?

VI: It helps because I am able to see many artists develop their work over a long period of time by coming to their shows and studios, reading about them and by simply hanging out. This was also an opportunity for me to think closely about work that doesn't necessarily relate to mine, and that's always an important experience for an artist.

RG: Are there any commonalities you see between the artists that the exhibition brings out?

VI: Apart from the fact that I think they are all great artists who inspire me in my own studio? I found many surprising connections once the work was installed, and I think the show really evokes the mood of the novel.

RG: What level of involvement do the artists have in the process?

VI: Once I explained my idea for the show to the artists, I had several studio visits and email correspondences with them. Several artists made work specifically for the show. Others gave me some options to choose from, but in every case the decision of what to include was mostly made by the artist.



The 106 Green kitchen.

RG: How did you first come across George Perec's *Life*? Did the book change your perception in anyway?

VI: I started reading the book a few years ago, and re-read it last summer. It is impossible not to have your perception affected after reading the book. And it is especially enjoyable to read it while living in a densely populated apartment building in Brooklyn. The kitchen at 106 Green looks straight out of Perec's novel.

RG: Are there any other writers that influence your painting and curating?

VI: I am currently reading Joan Didion, and I just finished reading some novels by Marguerite Duras. I am sure some aspects of these books will resurface somewhere in my paintings.