



## Chaos Controlled: A Constructivist's Memoir

Jun 10, 2014

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Iva Gueorguieva  
Samsøn Projects  
[www.samsønprojects.com/](http://www.samsønprojects.com/)  
April 18 – May 31, 2014



*The Owl's Failure 2014*, acrylic, hand painted collage, oil on canvas, 100 x 80 inches

Samsøn director and curator Camilø Alvárez first met Bulgaria-born painter Iva Gueorguieva back in 2005 after presenting a lecture at the Skowhegan School in Maine. One of the things that must have drawn him to her work is the fact that Gueorguieva is a collector of images: not technically, perhaps, but rather in the way her work resonates with, and riffs upon, the very distinct visual narratives offered up by artists like Picasso, Dubuffet, and the arid landscapes of Pollock's drip paintings. Formally speaking, the strongest historical connections date back to Constructivism and a host of Russian painters and sculptors. Yet direct links to the past, when discussing the work of a painter who is so vibrantly present, can be misleading.

Gueorguieva, who now lives and works in Los Angeles, structures paint in intricate patterns of disorder while compositionally, the surfaces are chaotic yet muted. Shards of light resembling broken glass intersect with bleak fields of color, slicing through and exposing hidden layers of paint and collage. Lines carve new visual planes creating the need to constantly refocus on the work.

An exhibition standout, *Shelter*, 2014, celebrates the threadlike link between control and chaos, precision and emotional spontaneity. The top left corner of the composition is free of paint or collage. Without markings, it is the only sign of vacant space. The focus lies in the central composition that sprawls outward toward the remaining three corners. Piles upon piles of lines bleed into larger pockets of color. Some of these are overlays, while others are barely visible through new layers of paint buildup. The accumulation of material creates a sense of anarchy and disarray.

*Dog, Grass, Red*, 2014, examines the freeing sense of what can be and the suffocating, engulfing experience of being "all in." Juxtapositions are made repeatedly in the work to reveal, formally, the commotion that sits at the core of Gueorguieva's work. The upper right quadrant of this composition might be interpreted as a darker half because of the weight of its color blocks. Deep shades of purple and royal blue overhang the central composition, creating dangling blue fields above, as one by one they trickle down towards the center. Beneath a middle ground of red, orange and yellow, an earthier composite of collage defines the bottom half of the work. Tension and resistance defines the two edges of the canvas, as the center seems poised to intervene and push out into space.

Gueorguieva's process is focused and intentional, built from small moments of instinctual markings and cuts. The artist uses strips of fabric and deftly slits the surface. She paints directly on each and adheres them flush to the painted surface. During the act of making she remembers and processes. Her mode is diaristic, reflective of documenting the past while reacting directly in the moment. The works manage to evoke sound, movement and emotional spontaneity, all within the confined parameters of a flat canvas surface. Gueorguieva cuts, paints and collages just on the edge of detachment—or connection. Her product is tumultuous, emotive and otherworldly. This exhibition, the artist's first in Boston, represents unconventional beauty that is impulsive, explosive, and utterly spellbinding.

— Pam Campanaro