

Svetlana
77 Madison Street
New York NY 10002

Lena Tutunjian
she_stays_underground_western_life

November 10 – December 17, 2017

Gallery Hours:
Thursday-Sunday, 12-6pm

Approached from the outside, from a culture bound by blood ties and communal interdependencies that do not naturalize an ego, the image of free will projected by the western individual is a powerful seduction. Autonomy appears as something real, self-actualization somehow “rational.”

But in a world of contactless payment, “free subjectivity” depends on the account balance linked to a (registered) oyster card, which determines whether passage is permitted from Zone 1 to Zone 6, point A to point B. The location and terms of employment dictate the route and hour of travel, just as the hostility of the housing market does the duration of the journey.

Even deep in the underground, the control society’s androcentric institutions persist: the couple-form, the protestant ethic, private property, economic retrenchment.

The video animates a loop of the artist’s commute to work in the London Underground. In the violent impact of two trains crashing, an allegorical scene of sperm-meets-egg construes an immaculate conception—what ultra-conservatives think of as life—with all the delirium of a metropolitan missed connection.

Two tables spatialize the tension between the alienated individual and the nuclear family unit. (‘There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.’ —Thatcher) Filling the void, cold “information” is consumed via motherboard, absent a father figure.

The drawings are based on carrier bags sold by the UK supermarket chain Asda, the symbol of the campaign for nuclear disarmament, and the cruel expectations of romantic love.

—Kari Rittenbach

Lena Tutunjian was born in Doha and lives in London.