

# Anna Demovidova

## “Women: Food for the Eye”

The series of paintings by Anna Demovidova “Women and Food“ may also be called “Still Lives with Women.“ The ladies in these canvases are treated as equal in all aspects to fruit and insects. Representatives of the “better sex” are served at the table. A male artist with such a barbaric view on the opposite sex would run the risk of being suspected of sex discrimination and male chauvinism. But the creator of these images is a woman, and that forces us to take a closer look at what is depicted in such bright colors and with such unexpected perspective.

The young women in these compositions may be perceived as objects in a garden or a kitchen scene. Insects crawl by them without caution, as if they were fruit instead of animated creatures. Meanwhile the human figures dramatically decrease in size and begin to relate with the insects in the same proportion as a pear compares with a fly crawling on it. The figures are passive and sometimes completely still. Some are asleep with head falling back or curled up in a ball; others lie in semi-consciousness, demonstrating complete indifference to the surrounding world. If actual fruit could become conscious, they would take on these very same poses and expressions.

However, not all the heroines are apathetic. Some are perplexed: how could this happen to them? Some are even scared or angry. Yet these emotions are somehow passive or without hope, as if they are borrowed from that previous life in which they were ordinary women. Now, as they lie on platters and in vases, or in beds of lily pads - doomed to be eaten - human expressions are irrelevant and out of place.

So, what is the intent of the creator of this strange series? Protest? Introspection? Complex metaphor? The artistic realm of Demovidova is open to many interpretations.



One may bring up the question of woman in society, especially in Russia, birthplace of the artist. There a woman is still often perceived as food for the eye, a decorative plant, an object of admiration, but not as a subject of initiative. Judging by their looks, it is clear that all of Demovidova’s heroines are young, modern, and energetic. Nature, it seems, has given them great potential, but society has decided otherwise.

We may look at these paintings from yet another view and suppose that there really is no drama here. Instead there is a full harmony of these human creatures with nature and its derivatives: fruit, flowers, and insects. There is such a world in which people, plants, and animals are spiritually similar and of equal greatness. Is not this what is called nirvana?

With no less reason we may also suspect that this series is a collection of dreams of the artist, as with Dali’s dreams. In this case all these ladies are emanations of the artist herself. They are Anna in various contortions and mental states. She sees herself this way in her uneasy dreams and in sharing what she has seen with the audience, she is asking her viewers: what is happening with me? Such riddles do not have an answer even for their inventor. But the process of inventing the answers brings such an aesthetic pleasure.

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