

DARIA EM

Self-space

20.09 – 26.10.2025
Cube. Moscow

Self-space



For me, art is an attempt to encapsulate my emotions and important moments of life in the form of a painting. My works can be seen as portals into my soul, and the act of painting often becomes a kind of ritual. For example, my paintings with animals express emotions tied to certain events and people who left a strong mark on my life. In these works, animals serve as metaphors, embodying people in disguise. My paintings of London's architecture, on the other hand, reflect my inner state during the years I lived there, as well as my feelings and love for the city.

Having spent eight years in London, I formed a deep bond with some of its buildings and neighborhoods. The city became my sanctuary: a safe place where I could feel alive and experience my emotions in the present moment — especially when looking at the skyscrapers of Canary Wharf.

This is my own perception of my work. But how it is received is up to each viewer. I feel truly happy when my paintings resonate with someone — emotionally or visually — and I want to give the viewer the freedom to see something personal in them, without imposing my own ideas.

I believe that the definition and meaning of art is different for every person and every artist. Even for me, the word art has shifted in meaning over time. At this stage of my life, it has become a way of discovering myself on a deeper level — and through that discovery, perhaps also finding a way to understand and even accept the world.

Daria Em

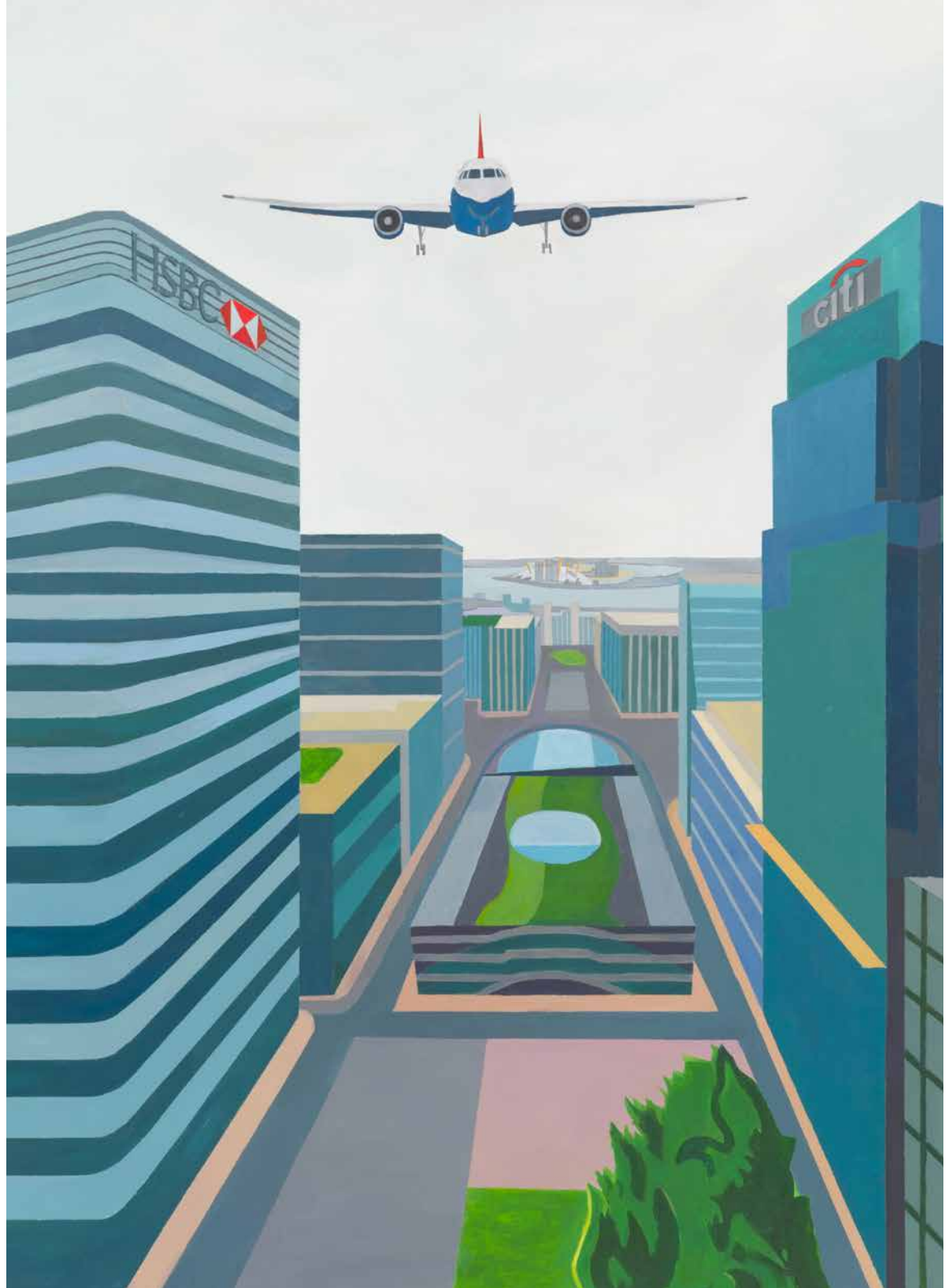
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the producers of the project — Irina Bychkova and Sofia Bychkova, to the entire team of Polyot Gallery, and to the curator Zhanna Bobrakova. I am grateful to my parents, family, mentors, and friends for their support.

Daria's project unfolds around the notion of Self-space — not a physical realm, but a deeply personal space of self-awareness, where one encounters the self. For the artist, London emerged as a space-catalyst. Its urban fabric is presented not merely as a backdrop, but as an embodiment of internal landscapes: a space of emotional revelation, past situations and significant relationships. The restrained, often melancholic urban designs carry the weight of personal experience.

The images of animals serve as keys to decoding this experience. They are not inhabitants of the city, but rather functional guides and metaphors. They exist beyond specific time and culture, like archetypal totems or mythological figures, embodying inner states, mental processes and deep connections. Their presence within the urban setting transforms it into a theatre for the artist's internal drama.

Creating a space for dialogue is Daria's central aim. She shares an intimate map of herself, projected onto the city, yet always seeks resonance. The viewer is invited to empathise through recognising their own feelings and memories. The works become mirrors of personal experience, sparking a quiet yet intense dialogue. This communication — through a personal myth and a versatile archetype — is an essential feature of the artist's poetics. Daria's Self-space is at once her inner territory and an open invitation to a shared exploration of the inner self.

Zhanna Bobrakova, Curator,
Art Director of Cube. Moscow



This painting represents my love for Canary Wharf, an area of London where I used to live.
The plane carries my grief for leaving it. Some people say Canary Wharf is soulless or has an artificial kind of beauty — but in a way, that's exactly what I love about it. If it has no soul, I can pour mine into it.

Plane (In Between)
2024
Acrylic on Canvas
105 × 75



Canary Wharf 2.0
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
150 × 170

Into the night we walked, and I was able to feel the reality around me with no fear. But maybe that was all just an illusion.



Into the Night
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
150 × 130



Making this painting was a kind of ritual that set me free from the foul emotions I once felt because of an addiction to something that was never available to me. The feelings had been intense and intoxicating, and I decided to seal the object of my suffering — here, represented by an animal figure — in a glass box to move past it. This painting was emotionally difficult to create, but also healing in its own way, because it allowed me to fully accept that part of my past.

Black Cat in a Glass Box
2024
Acrylic on Canvas
100 × 100



Dream!
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
100 × 120



This is my first self-portrait — at least in human form. I felt the urge to make it to show what this exhibition is really about: **accepting myself** as an artist and overcoming creative block by making my debut.

The wolves behind me represent two parts of myself that I sometimes refer to as my feminine side (the black wolf) and my masculine side (the white wolf).

These wolves have existed in my inner world for a long time, and I felt it was essential to include them in the portrait — they are my own metaphor. I imagine them protecting me when I feel unsafe; they serve as both my wings and the grounding force I can lean on.

Self-Portrait
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
140 × 250

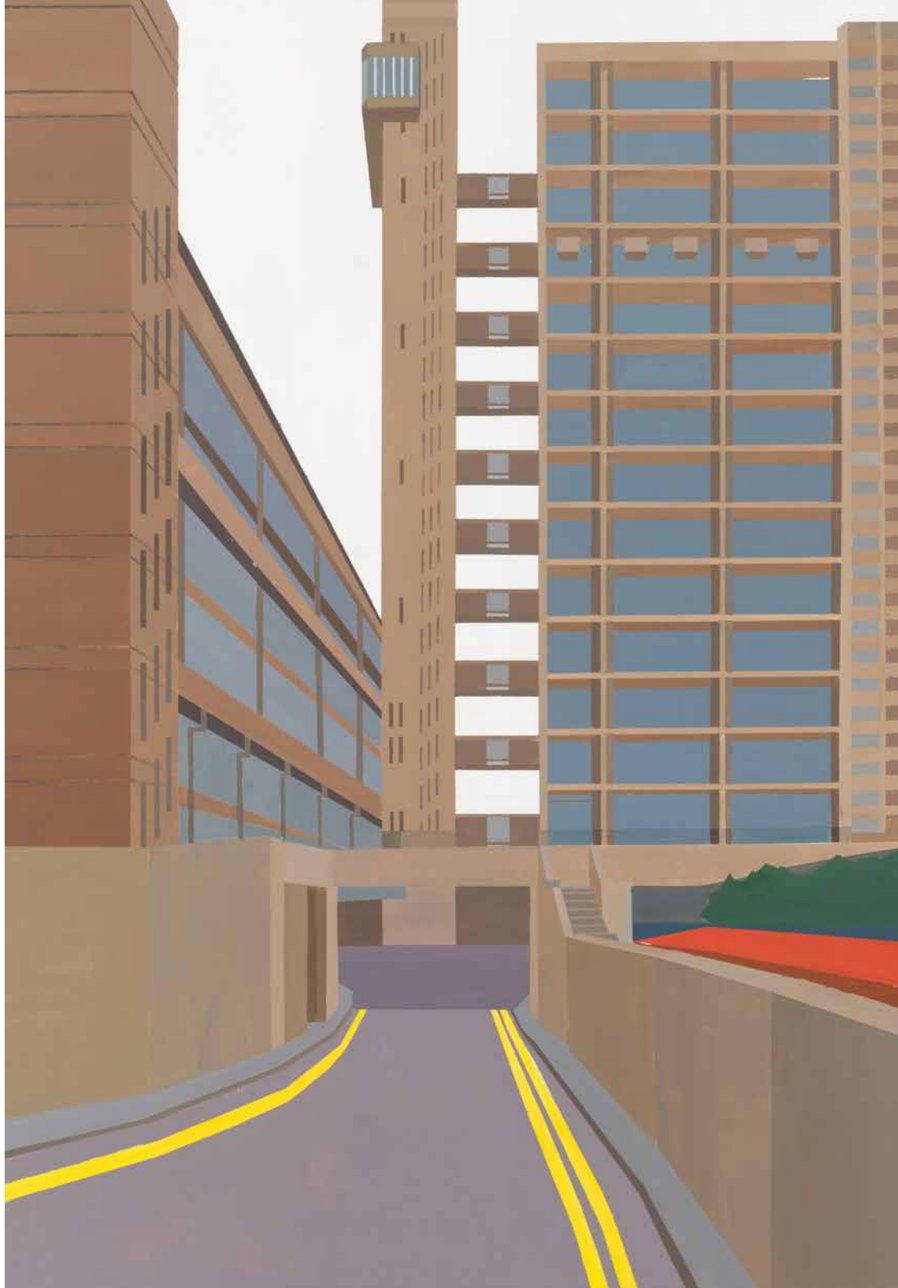


Green
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
100 × 120



Trellick Tower
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
150 × 100

Exit
2025
Acrylic on Canvas
130 × 130



This was the first painting I made after a long break — a piece that helped me break through artist's block and return to painting. It felt like a bridge back to myself, and the act of creating it was a quiet kind of liberation. Despite its small size, the work carries a strong presence: the seagull is a deeply personal symbol that I associate with London and with freedom. It's a reflection of my inner state — of what I feel when I think about freedom, about London, and about coming back to myself.

Reflection of a Seagull
2024
Acrylic on Canvas
70 × 60



About the Artist

Daria Em lives and works in Moscow and London. She studied Fine Art: Painting at UAL: Wimbledon College of Arts and completed a foundation program in Art & Design at Camberwell College of Arts. Later, she received an MA in Arts & Cultural Management at King's College London.

From 2022 to 2023, Daria gained professional experience working at Tate (London) in the HR department. In July 2025, the artist took part in her first group exhibition in Moscow — "Inner Cities" at Polyot Gallery. This catalog is dedicated to Daria's debut solo exhibition.

ПОЛЁТ

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