

FORT GANSEVOORT

Zoya Cherkassky: *American Cooking*

Fort Gansevoort, 5 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY

Opening: Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 6-8 PM

On View: September 16 – November 7, 2026



“It’s my first year as an American. I [am] trying to understand what it means to arrive somewhere that already feels familiar.” (Zoya Cherkassky)

New York...Fort Gansevoort is pleased to present *American Cooking*, the gallery's fifth exhibition with Ukrainian-born artist Zoya Cherkassky. Drawn from her experience as a double émigré to the United States, Cherkassky's new paintings and drawings explore ordinary moments and rituals through the eyes of someone encountering a place that feels both familiar and unknown. Long recognized for an assertive figurative style, Cherkassky here transforms scenes of everyday life into deftly executed, psychologically nuanced works rooted in social observation. In *American Cooking*, the artist's penchant for color, detail and wry humor find new expression through encounters with everyday America.

Cherkassky left her native Ukraine as a teenager and moved to Israel following the collapse of the Soviet Union, only to leave Israel in the aftermath of the October 7 attacks in 2023. She ultimately settled in Long Island, New York, where she now resides. Cherkassky's latest work reflects her adjustment to life in the United States as an immigrant navigating ideas of identity, belonging, and cultural performance. Rather than simply documenting her new surroundings, Cherkassky uses painting and drawing to mediate

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between simple observation and the pursuit of understanding and empathy. As Roger Malbert observed in the survey publication *Drawing in the Present Tense* (2023), the artist's work offers "perspectives...more subtle, complicated and penetrating than straight reportage or social commentary. They embody a process of investigation and reflection, of thinking through drawing."

The exhibition at Fort Gansevoort takes its title from a vintage cookbook Cherkassky found near her Long Island studio. Intrigued by what struck her self-described "foreigner's eye" as stilted food photography accompanying strange recipes, she began making small watercolors inspired by the book's images, thus reconstituting a genre of modern photography that she considers a descendant of still life painting. Cherkassky describes these watercolors as part of "an exercise in learning a new language—a way of reading a dictionary, memorizing unfamiliar words, and trying to make sense of a new cultural vocabulary."



While food is a recurring motif across the works in *American Cooking*, it serves Cherkassky less as a subject than one entry point among others into a broader exploration of American life. Moving from delicatessens and markets to playgrounds, subway cars, sidewalk tableaux, and the changing seasons outside her kitchen window, she captures fleeting moments and overlooked details that become clues to expansive and complex stories. Cherkassky's paintings—some powerfully vivid, others as lightly rendered as a glimpse—reveal her conscious engagement with visual tropes of Americana, drawing equally from observed material culture and the history of American painting in a search for what she has described as the "nerve of America."

Inspired by a visit to the famous downtown Manhattan delicatessen, *Katz's* (2026) captures the atmosphere of a much-loved institution. In Cherkassky's composition, a scrum of locals and tourists is seen queuing at the counter while those already served concentrate on their meals in the classic alone-in-a-crowd manner familiar to New Yorkers. But the artist's true subject appears to be the worker pushing a cart of pickles away from the action and toward the kitchen—a reminder of the requisite labor that hums in public but often goes unnoticed. By contrast, *A Family at the Table* (2026) presents a private scene of an upper-middle-class family gathered for a home-cooked Shabbos dinner. Among the diners, with their Magen David (Star of David) and yarmulkes, sits one young woman draped in a *keffiyeh*, the distinctive patterned scarf recognized internationally as a symbol of solidarity with



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Palestinian resistance. Locating the Israel–Palestine conflict within the warmth of a suburban dining room, Cherkassky frames the fundamentally human nature of conflict as manifest, demanding our willingness to seek means of coexistence.

Cherkassky takes on a bona fide icon of American culture with a double portrait titled *The New American Gothic* (2026). Here, the artist and her Nigerian husband pose in front of their Long Island home in a playful homage to Grant Wood's famed 1930 painting, which resides in the Art Institute of Chicago. Wood intended his most famous canvas to convey a positive, comfortable image of rural American values as the Great Depression was challenging national confidence. But where Woods' stalwart Midwestern farmer holds a pitchfork, Cherkassky's African-born spouse grasps a menorah. At a moment when more honest, fluid ideas of American identity are increasingly proscribed and contested, Cherkassky's image serves as a reminder that "Americanness" is an ever-evolving reality.

Building on a practice that has long examined migration, identity, and everyday life, *American Cooking* further establishes Cherkassky's distinctive voice in contemporary figurative painting, extending that tradition through artworks that are formally inventive, psychologically astute, and acutely attentive to the social fabric of the present.



About the artist

Zoya Cherkassky was born in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1976. As a teenager in 1991, she and her family immigrated to Israel. Cherkassky recently relocated to Long Island, New York, where she currently lives and works. She attended HaMidrasa School of Art at Beit Berl College. Her work has been shown internationally at institutions including The Jewish Museum, New York; the Neubauer Collegium, University of Chicago; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Heinrich Böll Foundation Gallery, Tel Aviv;

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Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin; Thaler Originalgrafik, Leipzig; and Guelman Gallery, Moscow. In 2018, the Israel Museum presented the artist's first solo museum exhibition, Pravda. From 2023–24, The Jewish Museum, New York presented the solo exhibition 7 October 2023. Cherkassky's work is held in the permanent collections of the Alexander Library for Jewish Studies, Columbia University; Alfond Collection of Contemporary Art, Rollins Museum of Art; El Espacio 23; Figge Art Museum; the Israel Museum; The Jewish Museum, New York; the Jewish Museum Berlin; the Jewish Museum Vienna; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the New York Public Library; the North Dakota Museum of Art; the Sheridan Libraries at Johns Hopkins University; the Tel Aviv Museum of Art; the University of Michigan Library; the University of Toronto; and the Weisman Art Museum, among others. Cherkassky is represented by Fort Gansevoort in New York City.

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Caption and courtesy information:

Zoya Cherkassky

Katz's, 2026

Oil on linen

55 x 75 in

Zoya Cherkassky

Dinner with a Cat, 2026

Watercolor on paper

18 x 24 in

Zoya Cherkassky

A Family at the Table, 2026

Oil on linen

47 x 67 in

Zoya Cherkassky

The New American Gothic, 2026

Oil on linen

27 x 23 in

Zoya Cherkassky

Shrimp-Oyster Gumbo, 2026

Watercolor on paper

13 x 9.5 in

All works: © Zoya Cherkassky. Courtesy of the artist and Fort Gansevoort, New York.