

FRESH PAINT

INSPIRING NEW ARTWORKS, STRAIGHT OFF THE EASEL

VERONICA SMIRNOFF

The memory of growing up in the USSR around the time of its demise is at the heart of Veronica Smirnov's work.

Although she came to Edinburgh in her teens, later studying at the Slade School and the Royal Academy of Arts, her visual language still references a Russian sentiment, albeit filtered through cultural references from across the world. She now lives and works in London, and has exhibited around the globe.

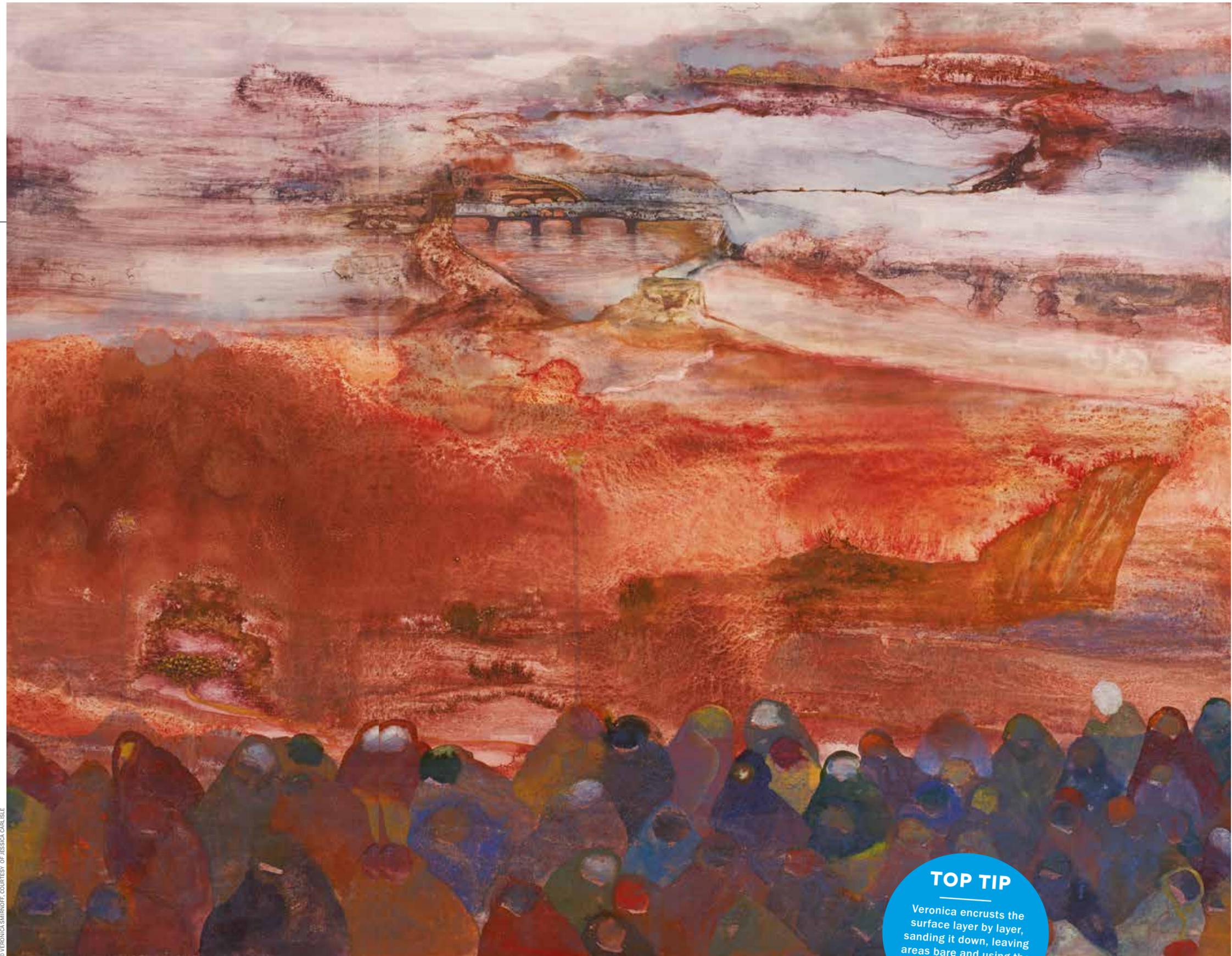
With its elements of folk art, Veronica's work explores the memories of places and people she left behind – as seen in her recent egg tempera painting *What Rocks Think Of*. It was inspired by the nature of the pigments, which came from minerals and stones ground into powder, and originated from loose sketching and the marking down of ideas. This resulted in the different registers and object positions in the composition. A sense of menace and foreboding looms in the blood-red landscape as people huddle together in the foreground. Veronica says it represents a “kind of uneasy calm after some cataclysmic event,” and that, “as one of the figures looks up, there's a sign of life, hope and the universality of human struggle”.

Creating work with egg tempera is a laborious business. “I start with mixing the paints,” Veronica says. “Each colour is reviewed individually by adding the egg yolk emulsion. I use the studio's floor to apply paint horizontally in blobs and splatters onto a board.” The process is dictated by the fluidity. With this painting, Veronica says, “the yolk in the emulsion was starting to indicate its finite decomposing quality, which impelled a looser way of applying the paint.”

Inspired by the Aristotle quote, “Nothing is what rocks dream about”, this is a painting which reflects how giving something form is a work of belief and imagination as much as a physical process, and reminds us that behind even simple iconography lies a complex web of ideas. Veronica Smirnov's solo show *The Greater and Lesser Ways* is at Jessica Carlisle gallery, London W1U, until 4 March 2017. www.jessicacarlisle.com; www.veronicasmirnov.com

RIGHT *What Rocks Think Of*, egg tempera on wood, 70x90cm

© VERONICA SMIRNOFF. COURTESY OF JESSICA CARLISLE



TOP TIP

Veronica encrusts the surface layer by layer, sanding it down, leaving areas bare and using the pigment particles to build texture