

Expression of self: Fine Arts Blount artist finds voice in work

By Shaun O'Malley
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Blount County artist Olga Rader has a message for women:

"Freedom and love can only be found on the inside ... in the heart. You cannot find on the outside what you don't have on the inside."

Rader is a member of the Bunker Art Group, Fine Arts Blount, the Knoxville Art and Cultural Alliance and A1 Lab Arts. Her art can be found on display in Knoxville, various locations in California and is on display at the Blount County Public Library through the end of the month.

A Blount County resident, Rader said she truly enjoys the beauty of the area and people. The influence of East Tennessee is reflected in her most recent works.

Rader was born in Kazakhstan and moved to Uzbekistan where she lived for the majority of her childhood. She left Uzbekistan to attend Moscow University where she obtained degrees in art and animation direction.

She was among the second class at the directing school that enrolled women.

Originally, directing was left to the men in Moscow, said Rader. A teacher once told her that she had a family and kids and should stay home and leave the directing to men. However, Rader would not just sit back and deny her dreams.

Because of the Russian Revolution and World War II, Rader said women had become more integrated into society, and did many tasks previously left only to men.

But running the household was left to women, and within the hierarchy of the Russian government, men remained at the very top.

With a restricted lifestyle, Rader said it was hard to focus on painting and art; many other things took precedence in her daily life. Still, she said she has always been an artist; it is part of her nature.

After living in Russia for 15 years, Rader's first husband asked her what she wanted for her birthday and she simply responded that she wanted to travel.

After Rader was invited by a friend to visit California with her husband, she just "forgot" to return to Russia.

While on the West Coast, Rader focused her attention on her art. Her painting, she said is abstract, usually containing shadows of vivid colors.

The colors are representations of her life in Uzbekistan. While in Uzbekistan, Rader said everyone was immensely friendly and willing to give everything they had — even when they were extremely poor. She said it is this humanity, this friendliness, that gives way to her bright and vivid use of colors — it's happiness from back home that Rader remembers.

Art to Rader is "something unexplainable," but she lets it guide her. "Once you begin to think about it, about the shapes and colors, you create a wall between the art and the artist; it makes it flat."

During her lessons at Moscow University, Rader had one professor who would tell her, "You can make rules out of a masterpiece but you cannot make a masterpiece out of rules."

Rader lives by this statement in her art. That is why she feels artists cannot go into their creations with preconceived notions of what the art will look like.

Rader believes every piece of art takes on its own personality and that all art is made up of energy, pure

energy. She channels this energy in her work, giving spirit, passion and personality to the work.

"The subject of the art, whether it is in doll-making or painting a still life, it is just a way to help express that energy."

While living in the United States, Rader said one of her friends gave her a block of clay. She said she was not sure what to do with the clay so she started experimenting with it until she created her first doll. She gave it away as a present.

After the first, Rader had requests for more dolls, so she began making and selling them along with her paintings. Just like her paintings Rader said she never really has an idea in mind about what she is going to make or what kind of doll she is going to construct.

She said instead she begins forming the doll, and then she steps back and looks at what developed.

Rader's dolls are made with wire inserts which allow them to be animated. After the doll is made, one of the last steps is deciding on the clothes to dress it.

In Rader's free time, she enjoys teaching hatha yoga and tai chi at Clear's Silat Kung Fu in downtown Maryville.

She is also certified as a Fine Arts Teacher from Moscow University, a certified message therapist, and just recently Rader has been employed by BrookHaven Retreat Center. There she will work with women to help them feel "safe, accepted, complete, self-confident, valuable and comfortable ... through skilled therapy, life coaching and medical management."

Rader said she is honored to work with these women because they all have strong and positive energy and have great potential.

For more information about Rader's dolls, which are on display at the Blount County Public Library until the end of the month, visit her Web site at olgarader.com.

Last modified: December 27. 2006 12:00AM