

From Russia With Paint Brush

Elena Bulatova's creative freedom flourishes in her new American home

BY JIM POWERS



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Elena Bulatova will stage the grand opening of her art gallery as part of the Backstreet Art District's 'Art Walk' from 6-9 p.m. Wednesday (April 3) in South Palm Springs.
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Her claim to fame growing up in Alexandrov, Russia, about two hours outside of Moscow, is that Ivan the Terrible lived there at one time.

Chances are, [Elena Bulatova](#) will have plenty to brag about her new home in Palm Springs.

The emerging artist is coming off a blockbuster year in which she sold more than 100 paintings, creating a springboard to open her own gallery in the [Backstreet Art District of South Palm Springs](#).

Bulatova will piggyback on the [Backstreet Art District's monthly "Art Walk"](#) with the grand opening of her gallery from 6-9 p.m. Wednesday (April 3) at 2652 S. Cherokee Way. The "Art Walk" allows patrons to peruse all of the galleries during the first Wednesday of each month.

"I really enjoy painting," Bulatova said. "It gives me an opportunity to meet all kinds of people. I think the main reason is that I want to make something I love. When you love something, you enjoy it and you never work a day in your life."

Her paintings explode with vibrant colors featuring significant splashes of metallic paint and the use of mixed media. She has enjoyed this past season of art shows because it gave her a chance to interact with potential customers and reveal the motivations behind her work.

"I think it's good to bring a young vibe and something fresh," said Bulatova, 30. "All of my work is very bright, very colorful and very positive. I like to bring energy and positive message in my paintings."

Bulatova began painting at a young age, and the arts were an integral part of her childhood. She sang in the choir, played violin and piano in music school, and the violin in chamber orchestra.

"In Russia, it's important that arts be part of your education," Bulatova said. "Russia is big in the arts. We have a lot of museums, so when we traveled the first thing we see is art everywhere. I was close to art all my life."

As she grew older, Bulatova began incorporating other interests in public administration and economics. After graduating from Moscow State University in 2006, she was the only Russian student to receive the prestigious Fox fellowship in 2007 to attend Yale University in New Haven, Conn.

Bulatova had been outside the country once before on a visit to France, and she wasn't sure American culture would offer anything new to her.

"I was not so excited to go," she said. "What is there left to see? This pop culture is everywhere. I know everything about America. I was amazed at what I saw. I was at one of the best schools. I was really lucky to be there. It really changed my life."

What Bulatova found was a country which embraced her desire to engage, offered an open door of endless opportunities and didn't judge her by her gender.

“I feel much happier here, more free than I did in Russia,” Bulatova said. “I feel there is a different attitude toward women, and more opportunities. Now I understand why so many people from all over the world come to America because it’s not just because they want a better life, but because they have special skills they want to apply. America gives them that chance.

Since arriving in Palm Springs last year, Bulatova has split her time between painting and helping to run a related business called [Artisto Fine Art with Efraim Mashiah](#). Artisto Fine Art is a mobile art gallery that supplies art to galleries and consignment stores in the Coachella Valley, Los Angeles and San Diego.

Artisto has more than 600 paintings in its collection, and offers free interior design consultation to help choose affordable art pieces for a home. Bulatova noted the service is particularly helpful to snowbirds setting up a new or vacation home.

“If they want to decorate their home, they have to go through all of the galleries which takes time, and you have to understand what you want,” Bulatova said. “We help simplify the process.”