

Kings, Queens & Canvases

By Shamus Sillar

AT JUST 24, ANNA BERZOVSKAYA

has achieved national and international recognition as one of the most promising stars of Russian art. This month, REDSEA Gallery unveils a new collection of more than 25 of Anna's unique paintings. We asked the artist about the striking fairy-tale imagery in her work.

When did you start painting?

At age five. I always liked to dream and invent pictures. I could sit all day long making sculptures from play-dough and creating new worlds.

Who are the princesses, knights and queens in your paintings?

They're not just people in costumes from the 16th and 17th centuries. They are symbols: a knight symbolises courage, for instance, while a king is a symbol of power. In my paintings, though, they all have the same feelings as the common people, and do the same things as them.

Each painting seems to tell a dozen different stories. Does everything fit into an overall story or are there random elements at play?

In my opinion, the sense, meaning or implication of a good painting can be realised in the first two minutes of looking at it. But there must still be some mystery

or second meaning so a person can try to find the answer in the picture. I think through my pictures deeply, and you will rarely find something random in them. Many people who buy my paintings write to me to say that every time they look at the picture, they find something new. This brings me a lot of pleasure.

Are there any modern-day messages in your work?

I don't differentiate between modern and traditional art. Art is either interesting or not; beautiful or not. I create metaphorical scenes; they're not just about people of the 16th and 17th centuries, they're about people in general. It doesn't matter when the person lived; in his heart and soul, he would always be a knight, a king or a romantic person.

Five O'Clock

Tell us a bit about your work routine.

I regularly paint eight hours a day. I wake up in the morning, have breakfast and go to my studio. In the evening, I do sketches for new paintings. Sometimes I paint one picture a month; sometimes it takes two months because I put it aside and come back to it again. I also paint several pictures at once, to save time – while one picture is drying, I can be making another.

Where in Russia are you from? Do real-life elements from your home appear in your paintings?

I was born in a small town not far from Moscow. Our house is modern, but my husband and I collect different old objects: kerosene lamps, lanterns, samovars – they're all portrayed in my works. You can also find my relatives and my pets!

I've read that dreams inspire your paintings. How do you translate your dream ideas to the canvas?

When you're working for a long time and you cherish a particular idea, you are

deeply involved with that idea. So, the inspiration comes immediately – even when you're sleeping or having a shower. I then start making sketches straightaway.

You're a successful artist at a young age. Why do you think people like your art?

Difficult to say. I think everyone can find something close to them in my art. And everyone can find something different. In my mind, if an artist has something to say, and this is something new and unexpected, this artist will be popular.

What would you like to be doing when you're 30?

Artists should study their whole lives. If you're 30, that doesn't mean you know everything and can do everything. You should cultivate your abilities, improve yourself all your life. I think that when I'm 30, I'll still be painting. I have lots of new ideas for future exhibitions.

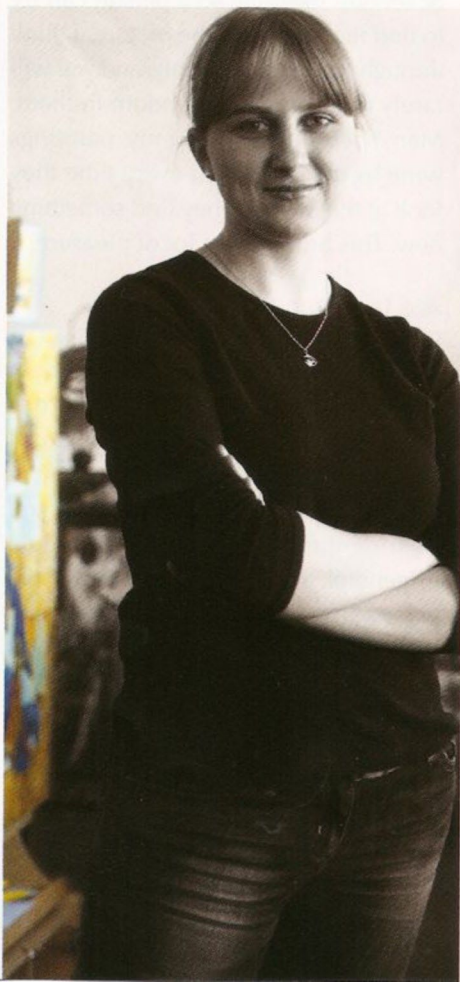
What do you do when you're not painting?

Watch films, read interesting books, ride horses, or just walk my dog in the forest when the weather is fine.

Been to Singapore or Southeast Asia before?

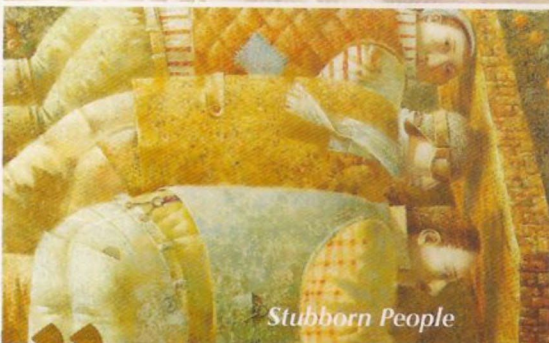
This will be my first visit to Singapore – I've only been to Hong Kong. The nature and the people are new to me in this part of the world, and the colours are fresh – bright, rich and lively. **A**

Anna's exhibition runs from 21 May to 19 June at R&DSEA Gallery, Block 9 Dempsey Road, #01-10 Dempsey Hill. Call 6732 6711 or visit www.redseagallery.com for more information.



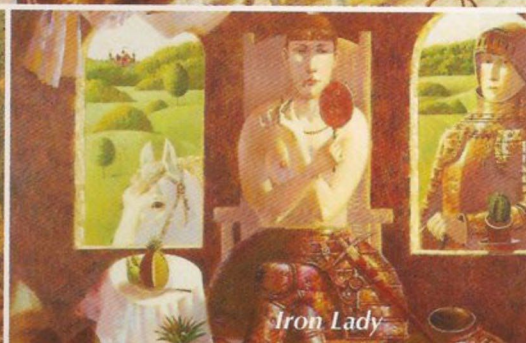
When a person has everything – a castle, good food and good clothes – he can still want something more; maybe love, maybe something else.

Gold Fish



Stubborn People

This picture is from the series where adults behave like children. It happens in our life as well.



Iron Lady

A lady can be different, even like iron, but at the same time she still stays just a lady.