

Kira Sokolovskaia – In the City and Beyond

Visual Description

This is an exhibit by Kira Sokolovskaia with 9 pastel artworks. The works are mostly hung 1 to a panel and are matted and framed in different styles of frames. There are four double-sided panels, covered with a light grey linen, stacked in a line, running north-south. The panel faces also point north-south. The panels are numbered 1 through 8, with 1 being the northernmost panel, 2 being the south-facing panel on the rear side of panel 1, and so on, through panel 8 being the southernmost panel. I will describe five of the works.

Kira Sokolovskaia was born in Moscow, Russia, but grew up in a rural area where she was surrounded by forests, fields, and streams. Since then, her major love is nature, although she likes to show the beauty of the everyday world around her, too. She is mainly stricken by composition first, and then by the color- and these two objects inspire her imagination. She describes her style mostly as “contemporary impressionism”.

Kira received her formal academic education in Russia, in the Stroganov Moscow State University of Arts and Industry, Graphic arts faculty. Kira was a member of the Society of Russian Artists, an active member of the Federation of Canadian Artists, Master Pastelist in Pastel Artists of Canada, and currently a member of the Burnaby Artists, and New Westminster Artists as well.

Currently, she is a full-time student at SFU, Archaeology Major. She lives in Burnaby with her husband, two children, and a cat.

She also works as an illustrator, where she uses various techniques, sometimes including pastels, collage, and digital media. She is a member of SCBWI of Canada.

Panel 1 – Cozy Day (soft pastel on sandpaper, 20” x 17”)

In this wintery scene, a bungalow is hit by late afternoon sun while much of the yard is in deep, purple shadow. On the bottom 1/3 of the image, the front yard of a small house is visible, covered in a thin layer of snow. The yard is steep, with unshoveled stairs rising up through two terraces to the front of the house. There is an old-fashioned, unlit lamp post on the first terrace. At the top of the yard stands the house, a simple single-story building which dominates the top 2/3 of the image. The house is slightly uneven, looking a bit like it curves to fit the hill where it sits. There is a wrought-iron railing on the front stairs and two large windows on either side of the front door looking out toward the street. In the window on the left a figure with chin-length red hair looks out toward the sidewalk. The front of the house is in shadow, but the left side is brightly lit, as well as the leafless tree behind the house. On the peak of the roof of the house, looking out toward the street and lit up by the sun is an orange cat. With the tree behind, the cat is not immediately visible, and it seems almost as if it's hidden in plain sight. The work is matted with a tan-coloured mat, and has a thin black frame.

Panel 2 – Lynn Forest (soft pastel on La Carte pastel board, 25" x 19")

This pastel shows a clearing in a winter forest. Like the previous image, this one has a light cover of snow which is in bright blue shadow. Close to the right hand side of the image is a path going through the wood, and on either side of the path are two large stumps. Smaller trees continue the line of the stumps across the page, and beyond the line of stumps and trees is a clearing. On the far side of the clearing, a thicker stand of trees is hit by bright, low-angle winter sunshine. We can just see their trunks and the tops of the trees are hinted at the top of the work, but we don't see much in the way of branches or greenery. The light on the tree trunks is a peachy colour together with a greenish yellow, highlighted with deep purple and a rusty red. Behind the line of trees is a pale blue sky. A few rays of light fall on the path, but the rest of the scene including the stumps is in deep shadow.

Panel 3 – One Mile Lake (soft pastel on sandpaper, 19" x 27")

This image is in a portrait orientation unlike the others I have described, and depicts a tranquil nature scene. In the foreground and bottom 2/3 of the picture is a deep blue lake with lily pads floating on top but with space in between for clear water to show through. Just about in the middle of the image vertically but over on the right hand side, figure drifts in a yellow kayak with a yellow paddle balanced across the lap. They wear a pale red baseball cap and life jacket. The lake reflects the sky with the texture of a few clouds, and at the far shore toward the back of the image, the lake reflects a mountain which rises along the top of the work. The sides of the mountain, which is a single mass with three distinct bulges across the page. On the left, the mountain is flatter and covered with snow. A few bare rocks show through. In the centre, the mountain has more of a peak, but only a bit of snow, and on the right, the mountain is much lower and flatter but without snow. The side of the mountain facing us is rendered in deep blues, purples and turquoises, seemingly in shadow. There are darker stripes indicating gullies or ravines. Between the bottom of the mountain and the lake is a flatter depiction of trees and grass in various shades of green and yellow. Right in the middle of the piece, and on the far shore of the lake is a small wooden footbridge, reddish in colour, possibly in a Japanese style. The little bit of sky visible above the mountain is blue, with the texture of the sandpaper showing through. The overall feeling is of extreme calm.

Panel 6 – Red, Red, Red (Soft Pastel on La Carte pastel board, 19" x 12")

This smaller work is of a house in New Westminster on a bright fall day. The house itself is behind two matching trees at the sidewalk level which are covered in leaves. The leaves are various shades of deep red, orange, lighter red and pink. The trees are offset slightly, with the left hand tree right at the edge of the page and the right hand tree further set in, and reaching to the centre of the page. There are a few fallen red leaves on the sidewalk and road. Two people walk along the sidewalk in the between the two trees, heading toward the left of the frame. There is a figure all in blue with a red baseball cap in front, and someone with dark hair, a red top and blue pants behind. They second figure appears to be dragging a suitcase behind. On the far side of the sidewalk is a half-level wall where an orange cat sits in the sunshine, tail hanging down. Similar to the Cozy Day scene, the cat is almost camouflaged as it's similar colours to the leaves on the trees. Dappled shade from the trees falls on the sidewalk, wall and road. A few bright green hedge cedars are behind the retaining wall, then the house behind. The trim of the house and some of the roof reflects the pink and red in the trees' leaves. The two stories of the

house are not very visible behind the trees, with blinds drawn in the windows. A bright blue sky behind indicates a beautiful fall day.

Panel 7 – New Westminster Christmas (soft pastel on sandpaper, 19" x 15")

This image is of a snowy winter scene with a large dark yellow house glowing in an early evening light. A curved drive slopes up from the bottom left of the picture, and on the drive an adult in a red toque and scarf pulls a child on a red sled. Blue and textured snow lies piled on either side of the drive, and covers the roof of the house and the branches of the large dark tree that hangs over the drive and the house. In the bottom right, a short stone pillar marks the start of the drive, and behind it, a large tree rises with thick, intersecting branches. The tree dominates the right side of the image. Behind it, the house, with its complex architecture of entrances, gables, windows, porches and steps, glows with a warm light. Right in the middle of the image is a glowing red, faceted lantern, likely hanging from the tree. This light is also reflected on the snow on the ground in spots. The roof of the house is covered in snow and blends into the colour of the sky. The texture of the sandpaper is visible through the image and lends texture and a sense of grittiness to the picture.