The Purposeful Passion of Gilda Oliver

"Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable."
— George Bernard Shaw.

By VICTOR FORBES

Painting with passion and purpose, Gilda Oliver has been in the trenches of creativity for as long as she can remember. Her work is a dynamic, social force that inspires individuals by attracting the public’s attention and participation and serves to drive the progress of culture from Manhattan to Moscow and points betwixt and between. In her exhibitions from the New York City Contemporary Art Fair to the 25KADR Gallery in Moscow (which will be featuring her work at the RED DOT Fair in Miami, Dec. 2013), the renowned ceramicist, sculptor and painter incorporates elements of diverse styles, techniques and eras to come up with something truly her own in a variety of media.

As director and facilitator of large scale social art projects integrating children and adults in artistic expression and community-building, her recent solo show at 25KADR GALLERY continues thematically the shared visions of gallerists Alise Bulchak and Tatiana Golubeva who like to weave international influences with Russian themes in which social practice meets Malevich, and Zlotnikov channels conceptual art. The young directors are dedicated to this tradition as well as to participating financially in projects of benefit to children’s charities (as is Ms. Oliver). Ms. Bulchak has become world famous for her art collection and was named #1 of the “Top 50 Young Collectors In The World” in the June 2013 issue of Modern Painters magazine. Ms. Golubeva curates the $165 million Faberge egg collection as it moves from venue to venue around Russia and the world.
By incorporating Ms. Oliver into their cross-cultural and cutting edge (yet classically-inspired) group of artists, they maintain the cultural continuum of intellectual and philosophical sophistication by mixing artistic traditions and styles that allow each to resonate across geopolitical boundaries delving into and revealing elements of mysticism, nature and the spiritual life of animals, among other things.

“My personal work also tries to connect to this spiritual beauty,” maintains the artist. “I am influenced by the religious art of the Renaissance and other traditions of spiritual art, particularly depictions of angels and saints. My personal work and community artwork tries to connect people to an interior beauty which often goes unrecognized and unappreciated.”

The artist’s mind and skill sets translate these lofty ideals into community mosaics, projects that she designs to be executed in tandem with community volunteers contributing to the design. Her stated goal is to do something very positive by focusing on places that no longer are funded for art programs. “I go in there and make a museum piece which I then give to the community.” Some of the larger ones have values north of $100,000. “Everything is movable,” she continues. “I build them in 3 x 5 foot panels so they slide into big frames like decks in a card. My goal is to continue the community projects. One mosaic helped attract sponsors who donated generously to fix and staff an Olympic-sized swimming pool, so challenged children could enjoy it. We also built special tables to more easily reach over their chairs.
25KADR GALLERY promotes cultural exchange through contemporary art exhibitions in non-standard spaces through the careful curation of venue and concept.

25KADR GALLERY is implementing art projects and promoting emerging talented contemporary artists. The gallery is encouraging artistic innovation as well as the exchange of cultural experiences from different countries.

Often an artist's natural gift is not enough to make the project successful. Contemporary art objects require the most unique presentation consisting of a lot of factors such as venue, format and concept of show. It is an effect of working with media partners and core audience that is the gallery's mission.

Turning Heads
In Moscow

Viewing Gilda Oliver's work at 25KADR satellite exhibit in Moscow, Fall 2013

Gilda Oliver- Special Angel painting
10' x 8', 2012

Gilda Oliver regularly holds events with "partners" and potential financial supporters for her projects, often bringing them in to work with the children. "So many people are part of everything and yet they might not understand the other person's role. The idea here is to have these challenged kids and their families be recognized for their merits as opposed to difficulties. I look at it as if we are redefining art, in a sense. One doesn't often hear of a group of community volunteers and/or families putting on a Broadway show or making a mural that could be placed on a very important museum wall. I believe with the right director, both can be done. Art can be used to benefit a community and there are many reasons to give the community a work of art: they can display it, which brings an audience; or sell it at auction for funds. Such a project also does something great for the city or little city — bonding the people together in an interactive community project and potentially bringing in tourists.

"Rainbows of Love Over The Rainforest" shows that we are all part of this big bonded work of art and the work of art represents how humanity fits together like a puzzle to help each other, in spite of very strong forces challenging us in nature.

"Nature also has beautiful patterns and the same way the mural fits together via the pieces of the mosaics — these are like the patterns of nature, patterns of life and patterns of mathematics. Rigorous art projects in schools can be used to cross over into the teaching of other subjects as well, for example along with my student/family community mosaic projects I could introduce student's to a new Children's book that uses a sophisticated selection
of words and text. That cross over to other subjects other than just art itself helps students to learn skills of complex critical problem solving. I see humans as a positive force. There’s plenty of focus on the negativity out there so I am showing the positive aspects of families and humans making something worthy of being on a museum wall. They are never looked at as if they are working on an amateurish project, rather I’m taking it a whole level higher than that. People come in and make their tiles and it comes out looking like a giant mandala. The combined forces of us all working together radiates positive energy and color. They’re very vibrant and beautiful, these many pieces of mosaic, and there is such a different art and energy in each of them.”

Ms. Oliver leaves open spaces on the big murals — hundreds of areas where people can create their “family emblem” on a mosaic noting that people will come to see their family’s works and people who work on these projects bond and form friendships. “Everything relates back to the same theme in my paintings, part of who we are is that we have the ability to work together for a greater cause, and that’s exactly what we’re all about.”

For her, art is something that touches people’s spirit. “At one point everything that you used, wore or gave as a gift was made by hand or selected from nature. Art, dance medicine and storytelling — culture was a tangible expression of personality and your connection with nature and other people. This is why community murals have such a powerful effect on those participating and those viewing. Children and adults who have impediments to participating in a society reliant on surface connections can realize their beautiful interiors and be recognized for their spiritual gifts made manifest.”

In addition to her interest in and work with children, Ms. Oliver is devoted to animal rescue and has started a drive on hatchfund.org http://bit.ly/1h4ARwL to raise money for her project dealing with...
the theme of injured or homeless animals that were rescued and the bonds that form between these animals and their rescuers. “I hope,” she writes on the website, “that my show will bring attention to these causes and promote the work that animal shelters and rescue workers do each day to save the lives of these animals. Although it seems that all we do is read about negative things in the news every day, I feel that this loving bond between rescued animals and their rescuers will create a positive change that can influence our lives with a light that overshadows any darkness that may be out there.”

If you are in Miami during art week, make it a point to visit the 25KADR gallery at Red Dot (booth E110) and meet Ms. Oliver and her gallerists and absorb and return some of this wonderful art and energy.

A special thanks to the sponsors: Courage Lion Unlimited and Champions For The Challenged for their unending support. Pierce Steel who donated past and present project steel frames for murals. Dahl Tile who gives the tiles and Hatchfund.org.

“...I hope that my show will bring attention to issues of animal rescue endeavors well as promote the work that shelters and rescue workers do each day to save the lives of these animals.”

—GILDA OLIVER
Founded in March 2010 by Alise Bulchak and Tatiana Golubeva in Moscow, the primary mission of 25KADR Gallery is to promote the works of talented contemporary artists and to provide recognition for the innovative artistic methods utilized by individual artists, collectives and organizations in creative fields.

“Art is a representation of a dynamic, social force that inspires people and defines our culture,” says Ms. Bulchak. “At the same time it has an extraordinary ability to shift our attention to many pressing social issues. It is due to this power of the art that we are dedicated to creating a non-for-profit movement to support the growing generation of Russians, evermore requiring extraordinary social recognition and protection.”

The projects and exhibitions of 25KADR Gallery are first and foremost designed to entice awareness through contemporary art from young as well as older patrons to critical issues of modern life. “We strongly believe,” maintains Ms. Golubeva, “that art is capable of accurately reflecting the problems facing societies throughout history, and has been proven successful at inspiring means to their resolution.”

The ideology that 25KADR GALLERY fosters is based on the principles of the creative association, “The World of Art”, and early 20th century activities of Sergei Diaghilev — art critic, patron, ballet impresario and founder of the Ballets Russes, from which many important dancers and choreographers would arise. This was the time of the formation and incipience of “new” art in Russia, a period known as “The Silver Age” during which Diaghilev started holding exhibitions of foreign art in St. Petersburg and in which the culture thrived. A per-eminent proponent of this era was Romain Tirtoff — known to the art world as Erté — who grew up in this era and was influenced by every element of it as he created what came to be known as Art Deco. During this time, Faberge came to be a favorite of the Tsar and his work is still internationally collected. In fact, Ms. Golubeva was Curator of a major collection of Faberge eggs when the Russian billionaire Victor Vekselberg bought them from Malcolm Forbes’ estate.

Fast-forward to today and we find Ms. Bulchak and Ms. Golubeva constantly searching for unconventional solutions, looking for a unique venue especially for each exhibition project. The space can be a factory loft or a historic building. Their search for a venue for Gilda Oliver was a challenge. “The first thing that impressed us was her amazing palette, choice of subjects, and of course the size. On the one hand we wanted to do an exhibition in a historic 19th century manor, but on the other hand, the ceiling of the structure was too low and the pictures would be cramped. So we found a great place — a 19th century Vsevolozhskys House with very high ceilings and lots of space. Getting in that

Alise Bulchak and Tatiana Golubeva was impossible to imagine because it is part of a historic building. The first floor, with classic interiors of the 19th century, was decorated with flowers and a jazz orchestra played and people just descended on the ground floor. I think that was one of the best shows of the gallery. Besides, working with Gilda is a pleasure!”

The gallery also runs a charity to support orphans. “There is a monstrous situation that occurs in our country with street children and orphans. We try to help as best we can which is another reason we held the Gilda Oliver exhibition. Her compassion for both children and animals — and those who rescue them — inspires us continually.” Her solo show follows a tradition of 25KADR weaving international influences with Russian themes in which social practice meets Malevich and Zlotnikov channels conceptual art. Mixing artistic traditions and styles allows each to resonate across geopolitical boundaries revealing mystics, nature and the spiritual life of animals.

The Gilda Oliver show further establishes 25KADR as a force majeure in contemporary culture as it continues to host ground-breaking exhibits in exciting new venues.

25KADR GALLERY

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