



Noyes
Museum of Art
STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

Education Guide

February 15 – April 10, 2024

Elena Samarsky

Exhibition Overview:

As a self-taught artist, I surrender to motion and color in its purity and fullness. My intent is not to arrive at a preconceived visual display but to reach stasis, the elusive balance between feelings of turmoil and stillness of the canvas. By using bold, colorful strokes, I arrive at a multi-layered texture that showcases the struggle of creation.

Coming of age in Ukraine, I was exposed to Eastern European avant-garde art and iconography. However, it was not before I moved to Vienna when I first approached canvas. A few years later, in Oxford, during my Ph.D., I had my first exhibition. In my 20s and 30s, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to live in Vienna, Berlin, and London, submerge in European art, and examine it through historical and intellectual lenses. Although I became fascinated with 19th-century and Impressionist art, in my practice, Art Informel, a European equivalent of Abstract Expressionism in the US, influenced me. Finally, my relocation to New York City, and my exposure to the collections of abstract expressionism, has solidified my connection to this form of creation.

For me, the essence of art is not the motif but the act of creation itself. In this sense, a finished piece displays the struggle of the material put into motion. The latter describes not only the velocity of the gestures but also the tensions between brush and canvas, hand and brush, and paint and tool. The struggle is articulated through broken color, uneven saturation, crude application of the paint, forceful removal or forge of base layers, and scratching, scraping, and peeling of the surface. Paraphrasing the art critic Harold Rosenberg, at some point, the canvas becomes the boundaries arena, depicting not a picture but events. This is true for me.

Artmaking is a physically and emotionally draining process that requires being present and absent. Creation is locked in a continuing motion, seemingly stripped of intent. The brushstrokes seem chaotic at first glance, but there is a deliberateness in the subconscious actions. There is an inner logic and progression to the movement. While the gesture starts naïve and peaceful, it invokes the turbulence of the creative process as the piece evolves on the canvas and within me. It stops when a state of euphoria or discomfort is reached, culminating with total alienation from the final piece—a total transformation from being actively involved to being a detached observer. At times, it generates a strong feeling of abandonment and emptiness.

The act of creating is a lengthy process. Paintings go through several phases and several lives. Some might take years to finish. Those pieces are examined and reworked periodically. The existing layers are sometimes covered completely and treated as a new background, while their details provide the necessary texture for the next layer. In such a way, the painting is a mimicry of life itself, where events and experiences are layered on each other, creating a unique character. Indeed, this multi-layered texture, dents, bulges, gouges, and scratches result in a unique arena. An arena of struggle awaited to be discovered, reexamined to reveal the true scope and depth hidden in the art of making.

The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University · <http://www.noyesmuseum.org> · (609) 626-3420

The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University · www.artsgarageac.com · (609) 626-3805

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