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Color is the Key

RUSSIAN ARTIST ANDREI SHAROV'S LOVE OF COLOR HAS TAKEN HIM FROM THE WORLD OF HIGH FASHION TO THE PAINTED CANVAS. BY JOSHUA ROSE



No matter the medium, no matter the art form, Andrei Sharov has been guided by color throughout his creative career. It began first when he worked as a fashion designer in Russia early in his career, then influenced his thinking as a set designer in theater—where he created scenery and costumes for more than 40 productions—then automotive design and then, finally, it became a prominent part of his first love—painting.

"Painting is color," says Sharov. "I feel the urge to paint, and I paint. I work rather fast. I try to finish a painting without much delay in order to preserve the emotion."

Sharov was born in Moscow in 1968—the artist still keeps a large studio on the Arbat, a pedestrian street in the historic center of the city—and studied fashion design at the Moscow Technical University after serving three years with the Soviet Army. Then, in 2006, Sharov was admitted to the Moscow



1 Andrei Sharov in his studio.
2 Sofist Woman in Blue, oil on canvas, 47½ x 47½"

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Union of Artists, as a career as an artist was something he had been interested in pursuing since childhood.

However, his success in fashion was something that was recognized early on. He was awarded the prestigious Chaika (Seagull) Award for his costumes for Maupassant's *Bel Ami* at the Mossoviet Theatre in 1997. His fashion career began with his Vesenny Primry collection in 1992 and led, ultimately, to the creation of his own fashion line, Bureau 965.

Sharov's mother was a mathematician, and his father was a physician, but the two

encouraged his studies in art from an early age. He studied painting and drawing as a child and then continued to study fine arts in college and then later at the Union of Artists. Even today, he feels profoundly influenced by artists such as Gustav Klimt, Vincent van Gogh, Willem de Kooning, Andy Warhol, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. "People really find his work refreshing," says Okassa Sakmatina, who represents Sharov in the United States at her Schmatina Gallery and has shown his work at art fairs in both his country and Paris. "People are always impressed by the amazing color he



3 Nude #1, watercolor on paper, 13 x 21"
4 Portrait of Anna, acrylic on canvas, 39½ x 47½"



uses in his paintings and also see a continuation of a tradition started by artists like Matisse and Chagall."

One of the things that Sharov is best known for is his painted portraits done in an abstracted expressive style. This style derives from his use of emotion throughout the creative process and his inclination toward feeling rather than merely just seeing his subject matter. It is an idea that carries through his entire body of work.

"He is deeply engaged by states of feelings," writes critic and curator Lily Wei, "embodied as much through the treatment of the paint as through facial expression. One portrait is that of a girl with an abundance of soft brown hair and a freshly brushed red hat that recalls Modigliani in the pure oval of the face, the extended line of the nose. The eyes are cast down, the mouth omitted, her thoughts enigmatic. But it is

the richly textured, tremulous markings that bear the burden of expression, and the picture is all the more compelling because of serene brushwork."

Sharov's studio in Moscow is a haven and an escape for him, a place where he can create and be free. He plans on working in New York City soon, as well, and enjoys painting in a variety of places.

"When I'm locked in my studio working, I don't allow anyone in," Sharov says. "I am just lost entirely in my painting during my studio time. Today, I mostly work in the tradition—canvas/oil. But it was not always this way. I tried many techniques, some of which I developed myself. To tell you the truth, I love to work in different studios. I love my studio in Monaco. Last year, I rented a studio in Paris, and this summer I am planning to rent a studio in Amsterdam."

5 Jack, acrylic on canvas, 59½ x 39½"
6 Pink Nuts, oil on canvas, 28 x 31"
7 Peers, oil on canvas, 31½ x 39½"

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