



REDSEA Gallery's newest artist is Ukrainian IRA VOLKOVA, a graduate of the Kharkov Art College and Kiev National Academy of Fine Arts. Ira lives in Kiev and is well-known for her hyper-realistic yet ethereal paintings of pink peonies. We find out more about the person behind the canvas.

Flower Power

Tell us a bit about your background and how you discovered your love for art and painting?

I grew up in the south of Ukraine in a small town. I can say that my childhood was happy and bright; it seems to me that during that period I accumulated so much sunlight that I still give it back in my paintings.

I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. It was enough for my parents to give me a sheet of paper and pencils – and I was busy for several hours. So I had no difficulties choosing a profession; from early childhood, I firmly knew that I would be an artist.

Most of your paintings feature pink peonies – and we're told you even grow your own flowers! What do these flowers symbolise to you?

I started painting flowers as still-life paintings. During college, I made a lot of copies of paintings in the Flemish style, but the desire to do something new, the search for my own style, led me to want to concentrate on the depiction of flowers in large formats.

Peonies are amazing with their diversity, and gradually different varieties of these flowers began to appear in our family garden. I had the opportunity to observe them for more time and be inspired by their beauty. There is a delight that begins with an unopened bud and ends with a moment of lush flowering. Peonies are like a kiss on the breath – an inhalation. It's a pink silk that you want to touch. Peonies are also a passion I can share.

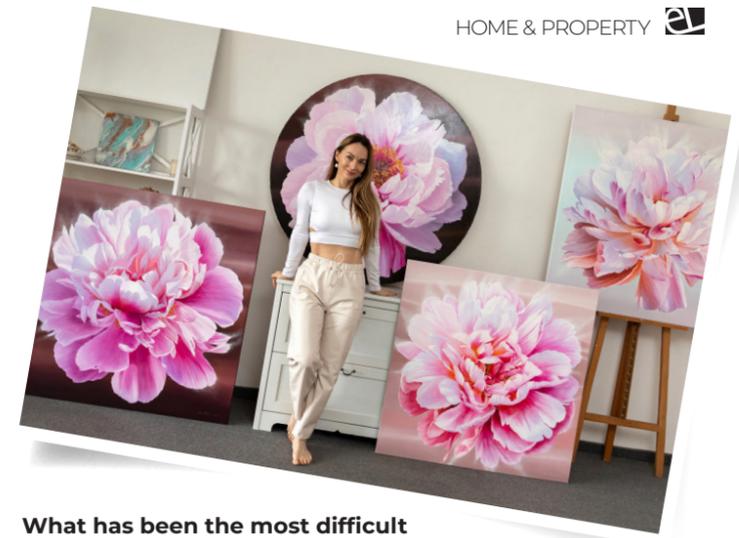
What do you think people feel or experience when they see your paintings?

Even the most common object changes when you try to draw it. You understand that you did not know it; you even never really saw it. That's why I love large format; it allows people to see much more than what they're used to seeing. And I think that this new discovery impresses the viewers of my paintings.

On my canvases, I deploy a whole macrocosm of petals, the play of light and shadows, and the glare of the sun glare. Beauty is a promise of happiness, as someone famous said.

Do you have any rituals or routines that you follow when you create art?

I wake up every day at 5.30 in the morning and at 8am I'm already in my studio. Over a cup of tea, I answer the questions and comments of my followers, and then I start working at the easel. I only stand when I work, so I can see the whole painting from different angles – and only in daylight because it conveys colour best.



What has been the most difficult part of your creative journey so far?

I can say that the most difficult time in my life was the moment when the war started in Ukraine, but my creativity helped me live in the most difficult times. My work saved me and gave meaning to my daily routine. Now I'm just grateful for every day I've lived, the opportunity to work and do my usual things. This is happiness.

What is your favourite work that you have created and why?

All my works are a part of my life that has remained on the canvas, so I love all of them.

What's the most valuable advice you've ever received as an artist?

One of the greatest discoveries that man makes, one of the greatest surprises, is to find he can do what he was afraid he couldn't do. Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it into small jobs. The art of small steps has been my motto in recent years.

If you could collaborate with any other artist, who would it be and why?

It would be interesting to work with a Flemish artist of the 17th century. I still can't imagine how you can draw such complex floral compositions without having a Canon or at least an iPhone at hand.

What are your hobbies or interests outside of painting?

I have always played sports, and when the pandemic began and all gyms were closed, I unexpectedly started running. I could soon run a half marathon in training, but my biggest passion is trail running – when your running path is the mountains. I love nature very much; it's a great exercise for residents of a city.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists who are just starting out?

Doing what you do best in life is best. Don't try to follow or imitate someone, but look for your strongest points and improve them. Play your game to your strengths.



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