

Art for the Armchair Psychologist

Tomorrow evening, the **Meyer Milagros Gallery**, at 155 Center St., will host an artist's reception for renowned Russian-born oil painter **Galina Perova**.

The classically inclined Perova focuses on realism. The bulk of her canvasses are concerned with landscape, portraiture and the figure, and still-life; the Meyer Milagros show concentrates on the latter.

Two small oils over the gallery door depict desert flowers from Utah, where Perova now lives, but that is where Western representations end. The show is packed with luscious, glossy compositions, and Perova's mastery of light and form is immediately apparent.

Her juxtaposition of objects is fascinating, oh-so-exciting to us armchair psychologists. Her works are packed with symbols: symbols of woman, fraternal imagery, domestic bliss, sexuality. Lutes, flowers, tapestries, roosters and cockatoos appear. Simple foods, their textures explicit, practically tangible, are set on satin, earthy table-tops. On one canvas, a peasant loaf with its top split open provides its own light. A skeleton key hangs on the wall behind; nails and loose change are scattered next to the bread.

In "**Still Life with Cantaloupe**," a green fly sticks to the fruit. Green at the rind, the cantaloupe spills seed over the table, and a tiny moth of orange, black and white clings to the table's edge. All are set against the smoothest background of an icy fjord-water green. I went home and ate cantaloupe.

Perova's paintings are descendants of her own Russian history, and she incorporates thin, shimmering layers of oil against textural detail so realistic it approaches trompe l'oeil. Perova uses her oils to full potential.

Perova moves between limited and limitless color palettes, and though one can see these paintings are the work of a single artist, her subjects are treated as if each is its own fairy tale. Be reminded of Van Eyck, De Chirico, and Hungarian-inspired color. But it is all Perova.

Her reception runs 6-8 p.m. Thursday. For more information on the artist and exhibit, phone 733-0905 or visit www.meyer-milagrosgallery.com.



"Pears on Red" an oil painting by Galina Perova