

The Lights of New York City Shine on the Ancient City of Kazan

As part of the lead up to its millennial celebration, the Republic of Tatarstan, recently mounted a major exhibition of the works of well known Tatar-American painter Mounira Gareeva-Stott, in Kazan, its Capital City

“The Lights of New York, in Kazan”

Most American's have never heard of Tatarstan or the Tatar people, though they are the largest minority in Russia. These were the steppe people who with the Mongolian invaders, were the “Golden Horde” that dominated Russian life for centuries until brought fully under Russian control when they were defeated at Kazan by Tsar Ivan the Terrible in 1552. In the place of the ancient wooden city destroyed by Ivan rose up a beautiful city of stone, rich in Tatar and Russian architecture. The Kazan Kremlin (or fortified central city) is smaller but more beautiful than its famous counterpart in Moscow, and was fully restored for the August 2005 celebration of the city's 1000th or millennial year. The Kazan Kremlin is simultaneously dominated by the largest Mosque in Northern Europe and a large Orthodox Christian Cathedral, reflecting the religious tolerance and inter-cultural life of the city.

In preparation for the final event of the Millennial Celebration, which included hundreds of leaders of states and of peoples, the republic organized a number of events featuring the accomplishments of the Tatar people. One such event was the, “The Lights of New York, in Kazan”, mounted by the Artists Guild of the Republic of Tatarstan and supported by the republic's Arts Foundation. This one-woman show featured thirty works by Tatar-American artist, Mounira Gareeva-Stott. Ms. Gareeva-Stott is known in the New York and Connecticut area for her uniquely abstracted paintings of sweeping aerial Manhattan cityscapes. The exhibition included several large works dominated by her “Manhattan Night”, a series of eight, seven foot high panels totaling nearly twenty three feet in width.

Local critic, Tatyana Leskova, described Ms. Gareeva-Stott's work and the exhibition in these words, as reported by Vostochny (or Eastern) Express, the city's principle newspaper, “an urban American motif is blended with the soft affectionate nature of the Russian soul. The Kazan audience is presented a rare opportunity to look at contemporary life in America.”

Several works have subsequently been acquired by local institutions, including three works by the National Museum of Fine Arts of the Republic of Tatarstan (Night Crossing; From the Empire State Building, Day, № 2 and Manhattan Dusk). The exceptionally lyrical and moody work, “Manhattan Mist” is now owned by the republic's Conservatory of Music, and the Presidential Palace has acquired the diptych, “Arrow Masses”.

Prior to immigrating to the United States where she lives with her husband and son in Oxford, Connecticut, Ms. Gareeva-Stott was a long time electrical engineer in a defense research institute in Moscow, Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and along with that the defense funding for the institute, she chose to pursue her life-long passion for art. She obtained certification ‘with distinction’ from the Moscow College of Artistic Professionals in 1992 and worked for a time painting still-lives in an academic style. In 1999 she immigrated to the U.S. and entered the Master of Fine Arts program at Western Connecticut State University, receiving her MFA in 2004. There, working with Margaret Grimes, and noted visiting artists including Marjorie Portnow, William Bailey, Yvonne Jacqueline, Susanna Coffey, Robert Berlind and Hugh O'Donnell, her work transformed from its former academic style to a creative new formulation. The massive buildings and skylines of Manhattan in a variety of poses have become her primary subject matter, and her style has become a moderately abstracted one capturing the moods of the city by day by and night, in sunlight and mist.

Ms. Gareeva-Stott has recently exhibited works in Manhattan; twice this year at the Blue Mountain Gallery and once at the No-Ho gallery, both in Chelsea. The most recent regional exhibition of her works was the WCSU alumni show held in October at Alumni Hall on the Danbury, CT campus