

ARTISTIC TANGO

A COUPLE MARRIES MODERN IMAGERY WITH TRADITION

WRITTEN BY BRIELLE M. FERREIRA PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC HAUSER

For Igor Kozlovsky and Marina Sharapova, life has been a string of happy coincidences. From their chance meeting while both students at the Mukhina Academy of Art and Design in St. Petersburg, Russia, and their last-minute entry into an immigrant lottery that granted them green cards for United States residency, to the tremendous success of their collaborative works, the couple's joint history is as charmed as their art. In fact, there's only one small hitch in their near-perfect equation: They're married. "It's really hard, as husband and wife, to work together all of the time," Kozlovsky laughs. "But after 27 years, we're still here, so I think we're doing something right."

That "something right" is articulated in the complex pieces they create, which merge abstract images with rigorously achieved realistic forms. In all probability, it is the differences in their artistic styles that best illuminate their romantic alliance—picture-perfect proof that opposites attract. Where Kozlovsky's manipulation of color and texture is chaotic, throwing and splashing paint on large canvases positioned on the floor, Sharapova is deliberate and exacting. "I do a lot of drawing before I commit to a figure," she notes. "I like to do research and see a variety of things prior to coming up with new ideas." As such, Sharapova amasses inspiration from the works of the great masters, bestowing classical forms with a new life that only the eclectic backdrop of Kozlovsky's contemporary contributions can promise.

Perhaps the best example of this thread-thin line between past and present is the duo's "The Walkers" project. Aside from portraying motion in traditionally static images, it also captures the couple's wandering spirit. "We borrow creativity from everything," Kozlovsky says. "If we could, we'd live everywhere: Italy, France, St. Petersburg. We feel like people of the world." But for now, their Evanston studio is where they cultivate their roots, taking advantage of the beat of a city they find beautiful and modern. It is here that they have discovered the keys to a successful artistic partnership, and a contented marriage. "We work in a huge studio," Sharapova says conspiratorially, "with a brick wall between us!" igor-marina.com

IGOR KOZLOVSKY AND MARINA SHARAPOVA ARTISTS

