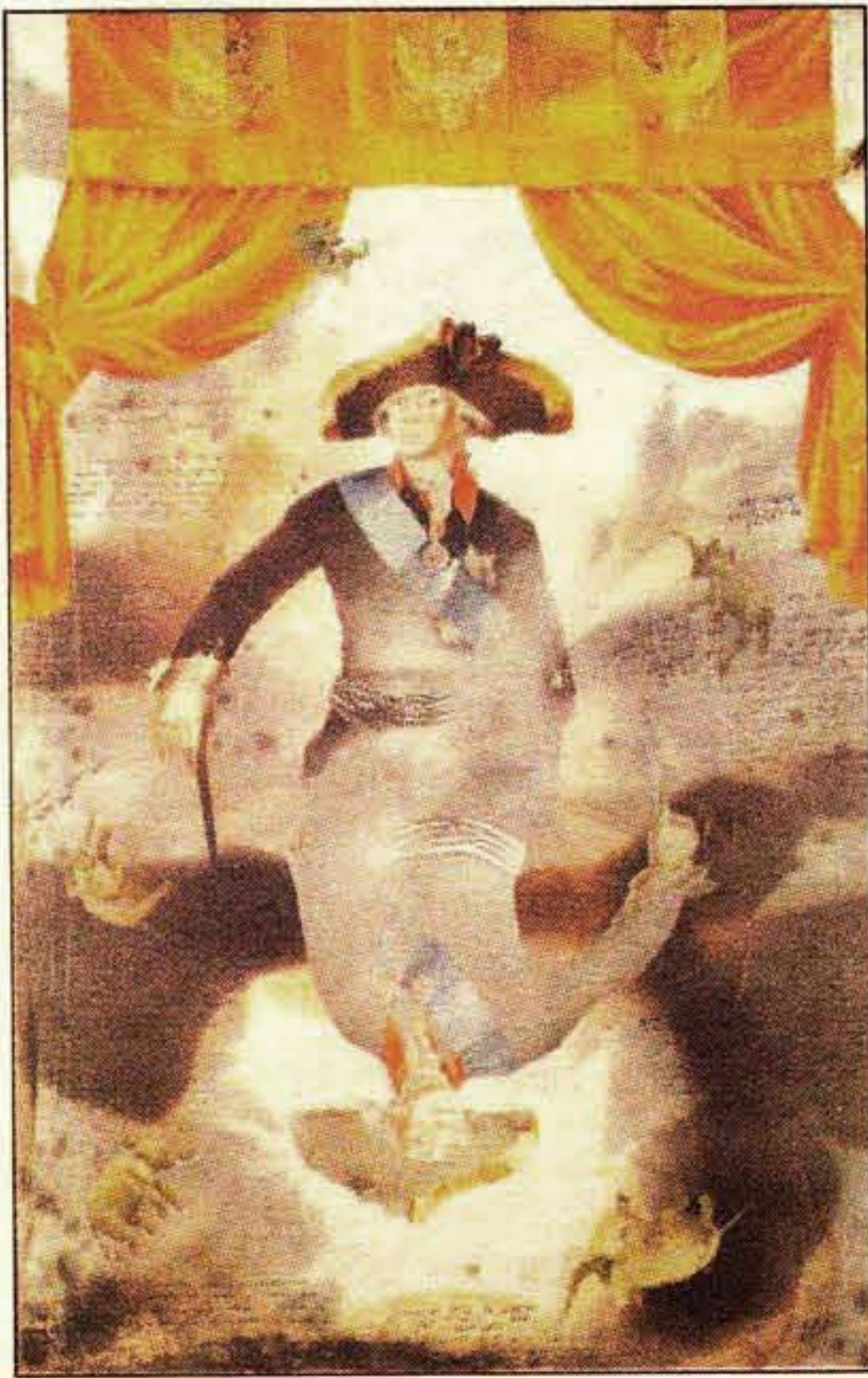


A couple with artistic chemistry

By ROBERT LOERZEL
DIVERSIONS EDITOR

Igor Kozlovsky and Marina Sharapova of Evanston are a married couple, but they're also an unusual artistic duo, working together on the same paintings.

ART



"The Life and Amazing Adventures of Two Small but Eternally Drunk Elephants" by Igor and Marina.

"We are artists, which is an excellent thing," they write in a statement about their latest exhibit. "We are married, also an excellent thing. We work together — not necessarily an excellent thing."

The Russian immigrants originally focused on work in the interior-design field. They became the artistic couple "Igor and Marina" when Sharapova decided one day that she wanted to add one of her delicately rendered human figures to one of Kozlovsky's more abstract, pattern-based paintings.

"I send, 'You know, I think something is missing,'" Sharapova recalls.

Her husband agreed to let her paint on top of his painting, and an artistic partnership was born.

"Marina's work is more realistic," Kozlovsky says. "My work is mostly abstract. When we tried to combine the two, we got very interesting results."

Igor and Marina are now represented by three galleries: Caldwell Snyder/Compton Gallery in New York, NUART Gallery in Santa Fe, N.M., and Thomas Masters Gallery in Chicago, which has an exhibit of their new paintings this month.

Both graduates of Mukhina Academy of Art and Design in St. Petersburg, Russia, they've lived in the United States for eight years.

Before Evanston, they lived in Wilmette. Their daughter, Irina



"Big Infanta" by Igor and Marina.

Kozlovskya, graduated from New Trier High School and the Rhode Island School of Design, and she now works as an associate designer for Martha Stewart in New York.

The two admit that it isn't always easy to collaborate on the same canvas.

"All the time, arguing and fighting," Kozlovsky says, describing them as well-matched combatants. "We have the same education, the same talent, the same energy. Sometimes we need a third person to give us an opinion."

One example of the potential

Igor and Marina

"The Life and Amazing Adventures of Two Small but Eternally Drunk Elephants"

Friday through Nov. 27

Reception: 6-9 p.m. Friday

Thomas Masters Gallery, 245 W. North Ave., Chicago

frustrations: "In the middle of the painting, he puts the most beautiful spot," Sharapova says — leaving her feeling bad about painting over it.

The new exhibit is called "The Life and Amazing Adventures of Two

Small but Eternally Drunk Elephants" — named after one of the paintings. That image depicts Russian Emperor Paul I, who sent an army to invade India, only to have the soldiers die in a desert on the way there.

"He was a little bit crazy — maybe not a little bit," Sharapova says.

Like many of Igor and Marina's paintings, this one features a figure by Sharapova that almost looks like it has been cut out of a canvas by one of the Old Masters.

"We like to play with Renaissance images, to put them in a different background," she says.