

in BRIEF →

Satoko Takeda, 83

On December 28, 2000, Satoko Takeda passed away at a local care center from natural causes. She was 83. Mrs. Takeda was born on August 5, 1917 and was raised and educated in Yamaguchi, Japan. In 1937 she married her husband, George, and together they moved to the Portland area. They were both interned in Minidoka Resettlement Camp in Idaho during World War II and did not return to Portland until 1945. Mrs. Takeda was widowed when her husband died in 1992.

While in Portland, Mrs. Takeda was a laundry worker for over 50 years with New China Laundry, and she and her husband managed a downtown hotel for many years. She was a member of the Oregon Buddhist Temple and the Buddhist Women's Association. She is survived by three sons, Ernest, Alvin and Raymond; three brothers, Atsushi, Chikara, and Masami Fujita; a sister Yukie Ito; three grandchildren; and one great grandchild. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Carol, in 1986.

Grants awarded

Commissioner Erik Sten last month announced that nine projects were awarded funding through the City's Community Initiatives Small Grant Program. The grants provide funds for a variety of projects and educational venues for area organizations.

The Russian/English Learning Center was awarded a grant totaling \$12,000. The money will be used to conduct English classes for Russian-speaking immigrants.

For information, contact the Bureau of Housing & Community Development at (503) 823-2375.

Artist combines mischief and wonder

By David Johnson
The Asian Reporter

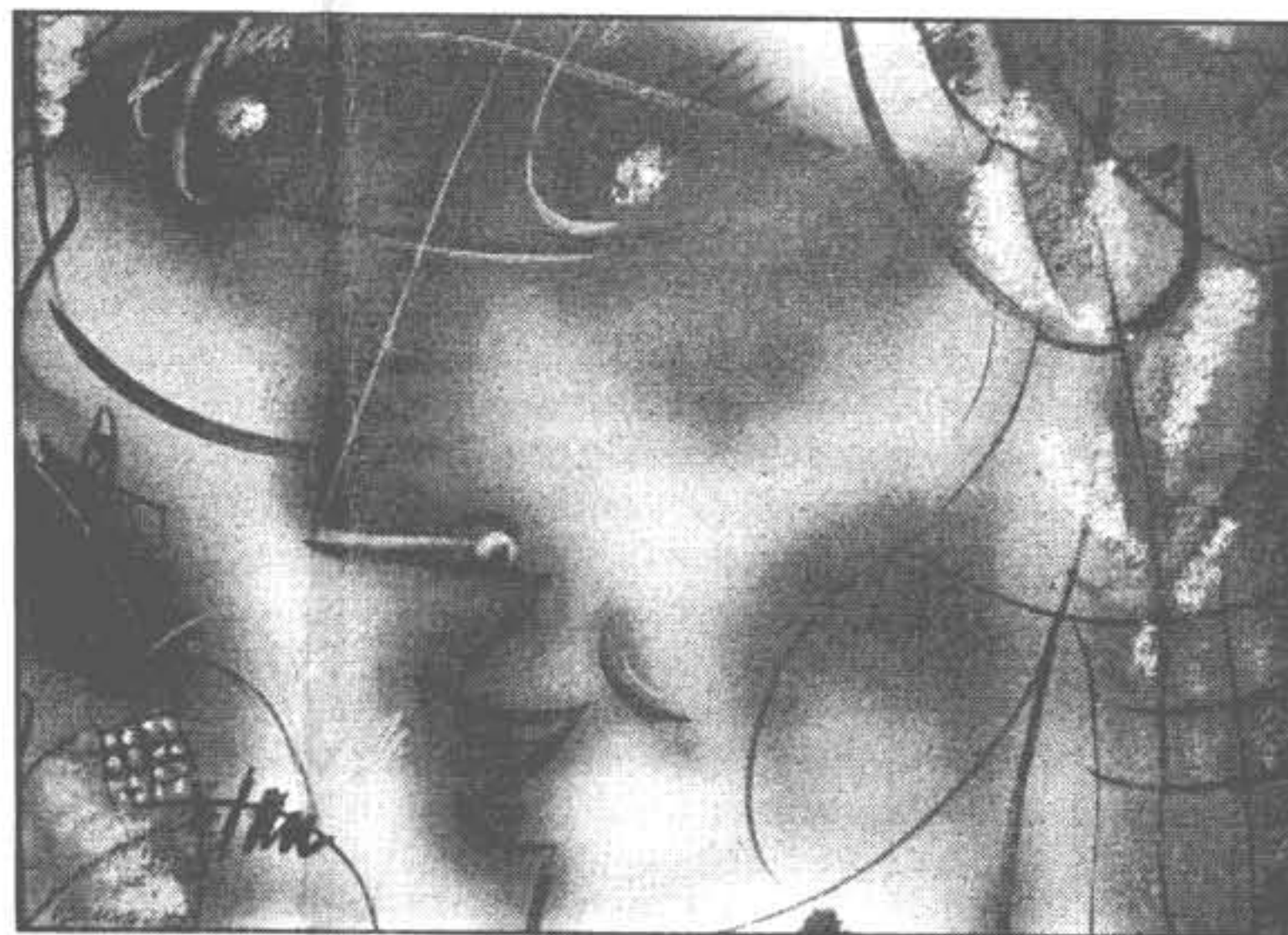
If you let the Russian Avant-Garde show that ended Jan. 7 at the Portland Art Museum slip past, take heart. There is another exhibit of four of the "artistic descendants" in "New Century Russian Avant-Garde" running through the end of January at the Russian Gallery in downtown Portland.

Of these contemporary artists on display — Gennady Arapov, Andrei Blazhnov, Andrei Ten and Irina Orkina — this profile takes a look at Orkina, a graphic and ceramic artist and poet who is on her way to international acclaim.

Born in 1973, Orkina studied ceramics at the Abramtsev Art Academy and graphic arts at the Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University. A winner of national competitions in applied arts in Moscow in 1980 and 1992, she is a member of the Union of Russian Artists and the art group "Others."

Her exhibits include personal shows in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, Russia and Kamakura, Japan, and group exhibits in Russia, the U.S., and Japan.

Currently, she is at work in a studio located in downtown Khabarovsk, Portland's Sister City, located 479 miles north of Vladivostok on the eastern edge of an Asian region beyond Siberia known as Russia's Far East.



"Amazement," mixed media, 2000, by Russian artist Irina Orkina. (Photo/Russian Gallery)

A bustling cultural vortex for actors, writers, and artists reminiscent of San Francisco, Khabarovsk is cheerfully described by locals as "three hills and two holes."

On the edge

Orkina, herself out on the edge of modern art, is a quirky, high-spirited artisan whose paintings are usually abstracts with broad pastel or luminescent strokes and fine gold and silver lines dancing together to create a feeling of both mischief and wonder.

Often there is a cartoonish flavor to the paintings that hints that perhaps it is almost all a big joke. Looking at the animistic im-

agery in paintings often rendered on black paper, one hears a silent drumbeat conjuring the shamanic roots of Eastern Russia.

It is this mysterious, rhythmic expression of joyfulness and darker thoughts that intrigue the viewer. It is the clever visual echoes of robust art by Miro, Kandinsky, and Jackson Pollack that assert her claim to the legacy of these artists. And lastly, it is her succinctly poetic titles that give her art a cerebral buzz.

Worth the trip

One of her pieces is called "They Gave the Angels Old News." Others titles include "Velvet Violet Cause of Secret Sorrows & Wandering Caprice" and

"He lives on the colors of fortune." It is almost worth a visit to her exhibits just to read her titles.

Regrettably, due to the dangers of shipment, none of her ceramic work is on display at her Portland show. But it is as marvelous as her flatwork with curviciously abstract figurines lounging in a Mayan odalisque and nebulous goddesses blending the ancient flavor of an archeological discovery with the panache of contemporary sculpture.

Hopefully, as commerce and culture between the sister cities expands, there will be future exhibits of both sides of Orkina's remarkable artwork.

Meanwhile, when the nearby Amur River isn't frozen stiff and it's safe to venture outside away from a cozy samovar, cups of chai, and notebooks scribbled full of poems, sketches, and philosophical musings, Irina Orkina likes to ski, bike, and hike in the Pacific. She adds that it is also her wish to go to Paris.

If this traditional center of the art world pays attention to this fresh new talent, she should be getting her invitation in French any day now.

The Russian Gallery is located at the Galleria, 921 SW Morrison Street, Suite 107, in downtown Portland. Gallery hours are Mon.-Fri. 10am-7pm, and Sat. 11am-6pm. For more information, call (503) 224-5070.