



Old and New by Natalia Andreeva, one of the "Painting in the Shade" artists. NATALIA ANDREEVA

‘Absorb nature at its best’

Painting outside is a passion for Natalia Andreeva

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Council on Culture & Arts

Nestled in the trunk of her car, impressionist painter Natalia Andreeva recorded the vast Alaskan wilderness that surrounded her. She captured the mountainside in vibrant shades and hues of blue and green, her swooping brushstrokes outlining the topography.



Natalia Andreeva

The remoteness of the location meant bears and other wildlife were stalking nearby, so Andreeva took safety precautions with that particular plein air — outdoor painting — adventure. “I thought it would be better for me to

If you go

What: Painting in the Shade 2nd Annual Plein Air Event

When: 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Thursday, May 19-Saturday, May 21

Where: 7th Avenue and Main Street, Havana

Cost: Artist registration fee \$35

Contact: For more information, call 850-755-2999 or visit havanamainstreet.com. For more on Natalia Andreeva and her studio workshops, please visit andreeva.com.

not wander too far because I was alone,” says Andreeva, who has had several close encounters during her many years of painting in nature from South Africa to the Smokey Mountains.

“Once I went with a couple of artists in canoes to paint, and after a while I saw a water moccasin by my boat. I’d

never encountered anything like that in the studio.”

‘Painting in the Shade’ in Havana

Last year, Andreeva participated in Havana Main Street’s “Painting in the Shade” event and won first place for her

painting of the downtown’s historic museum. Her second image of a 100-year-old red barn is the cover image for this year’s second annual plein air event which will take place from Thursday, May 19, to Saturday, May 21.

Artists are invited to paint throughout the community and showcase their work in a “Wet Room Gallery” at the Havana Springs Annex. Guests may purchase an artist’s “dry” work at any time, but the new, “wet” work will only be available at the closing night gala event.

Andreeva is most looking forward to the “quick draw” event on Saturday that invites anyone to complete a painting in two hours.

“It’s a challenge, but I encourage

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everyone to try it out,” says Andreeva, who advises newcomers to start with a smaller canvas. “My only warning is that plein air is really addictive. Once you start doing it, you do it again and again. Sometimes you meet people you would never know any other way and you can absorb nature at its best.”

Painting around the world

Andreeva has treasured every double rainbow, early morning sunrise, and animal—deer, butterflies, foxes, spotted wasps and bobcats—she’s painted over the years.

While Tallahassee has been her home since 2004, Andreeva first became an artist in Novosibirsk, Siberia. She studied the classical art canon in Moscow, Russia, and honed her skills in depicting nature, still life, portraits and figures with a blend of expressionism and impressionism.

She holds Signature Membership Status in the American Impressionist Society and believes nature has been her greatest teacher.

For five years, Andreeva has run a local studio in Tallahassee. She hosts bi-weekly life drawing and paint along days as well as workshops and seminars with internationally recognized visiting artists.

“I have workshops with other plein air artists that I’ve met in my journey, and if someone would like to take those workshops, they’re always welcome,” says Andreeva. “We have live drawing sessions twice a week at my studio with a group of artists and we’re always open to new members.”

‘Painting from life’

Much how a musician spends hours on their craft, Andreeva says continual practice with a canvas and brush have been instrumental in strengthening her skills as an artist. She was drawn to impressionism because she enjoys “painting from life.”

The rougher, un-polished look is not an exact rendering of her surroundings, but rather captures her observations in those fleeting moments as a landscape shifts and changes.

Timing is all too important with plein



Natalia Andreeva's image of a 100-year-old red barn is the cover image for this year's second annual plein air event which will take place from May 19 to May 21, in Havana. NATALIA ANDREEVA

air, and Andreeva keeps a close eye on the sun, which notably changes position every seven minutes and can manipulate how light and shadow fall on any given subject or landscape. Sometimes the subjects that first drew her interest in the first place will disappear once she gets started.

“If I want to paint some boat or car they move away, so I basically try to paint a characteristic of that subject that I absorbed in the few first minutes, and even though it will be gone, I kind of have it,” describes Andreeva.

“I also like to paint animals, birds, or even people sometimes, which is another variable and element where you have to very quickly get the idea of their shape and form. Because it’s a visual art you like to have some sort of precision, but you don’t have much time to have it all.”

Challenging conditions

Plein air painting has challenged Andreeva in both her style and preparation for this kind of painting. When working in hot, humid environments, the paint

feels sticky, which can change the texture of work. Bugs buzz around her head, and sometimes in urban environments people will be curious and approach her with questions.

When hiking out to locations, Andreeva packs light, brings water, and wears sunscreen. As she scouted out locations for this year’s Havana plein air event, Andreeva was drawn to the police station’s brightly colored building.

She hopes that more events like these, and the subsequent paintings that are made during “Painting in the Shade,” will not only archive Havana’s history, but draw more people into town.

“I have traveled and painted all around the world and didn’t see [Havana] right under my nose,” says Andreeva of the hidden gem, just 20 minutes from Tallahassee. “I hope people enjoy seeing what I saw and that it gives them some incentive to go out and appreciate what’s around them.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).