

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Florea: gentle but animated artist

■ Exhibit opens Sunday at OAC

By JOHN B. CHAMPION
Press staff writer

OWATONNA — The colors leap out in stark contrast to the gentle but animated demeanor of painter Ioan Florea.

Florea's roots are in Transylvania, Romania. He was raised under the rule of strong man Nicolai Ceaucescu in the medieval city of Medias. Situated in the foot hills of the Carpathian Mountains, Medias is surrounded by 700-year-old trees which Florea finds to be very influential in his work. "The old oaks inspire me," he said with a bit of nostalgia. Fiercely nationalistic, he says that despite the other more famous resident of his region, Vlad the Impaler, his heritage is clearly German and Hungarian as befits a former part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The communist life was not very easy for the budding artist. He spent his baccalaureate years at The Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

During that time, he said, there was limited availability of pigments for paints so he began to make his own. This raised the quality and standards of the paints he was able to use to better express himself. As a graduate of the University of South Dakota with a Masters of Fine Arts, he furthered his knowledge of the technology of paint while studying there.

All those elements he seeks in the "perfect" paint are put to the test in his works. Like any other artist, Florea starts with a blank canvas. No easel for him, however, as he likes to work either on the wall or the floor. Then he waits for what he calls, "a little accident" — a splash or more of color.

After that, Florea begins to pile more and more paint on and then deliberately begins to neutralize the bright colors he started with, adding blues and titanium white to ease the base colors into a kind of "gray."

Finally, he walks away and contemplates his next move. The process continues when he returns to the canvas with a different perspective. Suddenly his passion is palpable again as new, bright colors are added to the painting in new ways. He is

as likely to use a piece of lumber, a palette knife or some other device to apply paint to the surface as he is to use a brush.

This time he moves into the painting and begins to layer the colors in a pattern looking for the right expression of his senses. He "scratches" and pushes and pulls the colors around the gray base highlighting the shapes he wants and using his tools, gives depth to the work.

He might work on such a piece a week or longer, depending on his idea flow.

When does he know a piece is finished?

"I wait to see how much it weighs and when it's too heavy to lift, it's done," he said.

According to his biography, it's a little more complicated than that. It reads, "I overlap layers of paint to retain the memory of time; alternating back and forth, revealing the underlayers of the subconscious through transparency scratching. I am using biomorphic imagery to create a transition from material to spiritual worlds."

"I have always searched for a point somewhere between oil



Press photo by Jon...
Artist Ioan Florea takes a break from setting up his exhibit with, from left, OAC director Silvan Durban, Florea's wife, Jane, and his graduate school colleague and OAC artist, Mike Grenier.

and acrylic that would allow me to create this stratification without worrying about cracking, drying too fast or too slow, yellowing or poor pigment consistency," he said. "I have found that soybean alkyd resin meets all my expectations."

The exhibit opens Sunday at the Owatonna Arts Center, 435 Garden View Lane. Hours are Tuesday through Sunday from 1-5 p.m.

2004 Photo Calendar Contests

Rules: The theme can be anything. The photo may be black and white or color. Photos must be at least 8"x10" no larger than 11"x14" cannot accept slides. Limit of two photos per person, please. Photos may be reproduced for the Tri-M Calendar as color, duo-tone, or black and white.

Owatanna People's Press Thursday , September 4, 2003

Florea : gentle but animated artist –by John B. Champion press staff writer

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The communist life was not very easy for the budding artist. He spent his baccalaureate years at The Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. During that time, he said, there was a limited availability of pigments for paints so he began to make his own. This raised the quality and standards of the paints he was able to use to better express himself. As a graduate of the University of South Dakota with a Masters of Fine Arts, he furthered his knowledge of the technology of paint while studying there.

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The process continues when he returns to the canvas with a different perspective. Suddenly, his passion is palpable again as new, bright colors are added to the painting in new ways. He is as likely to use a piece of lumber, a palette knife or some other device to apply paint as he is to use a brush.

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“I have always searched for a paint somewhere in between oil and acrylic that would allow me to create this stratification without worrying about cracking, drying to fast or too slow, yellowing or poor pigment consistency,” he said. “I have found that soybean alkyd resin meets all my expectations.

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