

# COS art gallery features painter

Irena Kononova's show set to open on Tuesday.

BY HENRY WINCKEL  
SPECIAL TO THE BEE

The artworks of Russian-born painter Irena Kononova will be on display from Tuesday through March 31 at the College of the Sequoias art gallery.

Kononova was selected from a field of about 50 artists who applied for 10 art shows to be held this year and next at the college.

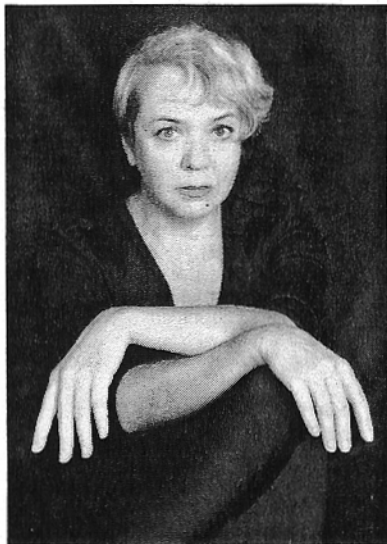
"We were struck by the very solid, consistent quality of her work," said Kevin Bowman, COS gallery coordinator.

"She introduces architectural elements such as windows, door frames and stairways juxtaposed with a deep space going back to a horizon suggestive of a coastline — a surreal, imaginative space that evokes the sense of a real space."

Kononova credits her interest in art to the city where she was born, St. Petersburg, which she describes as stunningly beautiful with great museums.

"I used to hang out in the Hermitage Museum for days, skipping classes, staring at Rembrandt," she recalls.

"As a kid, I didn't care much about the content of these paintings — old people — but was mesmerized by the luminosity and beauty of paint."



Irena Kononova's art exhibit will be on display from Tuesday through March 31 at COS.

Kononova combines oil paint, sand and marble dust on canvas to create her works, resulting in paintings that are very textured.

She typically paints in layers and doesn't use concrete visual references.

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## Art: College gallery aims for diverse group

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"When I conceive a composition, I carry an image of it in my mind for some time, then do some small sketches," she said.

"Usually, I make an underpainting in colors complementary to the final ones. Sometimes I let this first layer show through."

Kononova lives in the Bay Area town of San Carlos. She and her parents arrived in the United States in 1981 as political refugees.

"My dad, an actor and author, was constantly 'invited' to the KGB for prolonged conversations," she said.

"Some of my older artist friends were arrested. We left with a suitcase and \$100 per person."

Kononova earned a master's degree in French and Russian literature at St. Petersburg University in Russia. She also earned a bachelor's degree from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where she received a Cresson Traveling Scholarship and various prizes.

She has exhibited her work in the United States and abroad, notably at Zona gallery in Amsterdam, Netherlands; San Diego Museum of Art; Coultis art museum; Domont Studio Gallery in India-

### IF YOU GO

■ **What:** Reception for artist Irena Kononova.

■ **When:** Reception is 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday; gallery hours are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays.

■ **Where:** College of the Sequoias, 915 S. Mooney Blvd.; the gallery is at the far southeast corner of the campus.

■ **Cost:** Free

■ **Details:** 737-6216

neapolis; and Anne Bradford Gallery in Healdsburg.

Bowman says artists who display their works at the COS shows are a diverse group who use a variety of mediums.

"We try to hit a range of techniques — including painting, prints, drawings, sculpture and ceramics — that will benefit our students as much as possible, because we're a teaching gallery first and foremost," he said.

"We select artists based on how we think our students will benefit intellectually and aesthetically. We want to challenge their notion of what art is."