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THURSDAY

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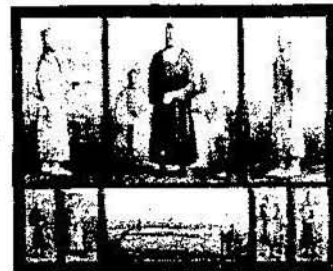
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Staff Photography by Lloyd Francis Jr.

In the Soviet Union, says artist Irena Kononova, "one paints what the ruling class deems beneficial



"Small Polyptych with a Table" by Irena Kononova is part of the Art In Exile show at Nexus Gallery from July 22 to August 15.

By **NELS NELSON**
Daily News Staff Writer

Irena Kononova, a willowy blonde woman from Leningrad who paints quietly powerful canvases coupling overstuffed Slavic-looking women with scrupulously neat still lifes and landscapes, lives and paints in Ardmore, where caring for an 18-month-old child (her husband is SKF chemist Eugene Eisenberg) has somewhat derailed her creative pursuits. She was graduated in May from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

"My work would look strange over there — the ambiguity of it and the strangeness of the mood," declares Kononova, only five years out of the U.S.S.R. and an applicant for citizenship. "There," she says, "in order to succeed, or just survive, one paints what the ruling class deems beneficial for the government — not only in subject matter, but in style." The artist who doesn't conform risks assignment to some totally different occupation.