

# Anna Rubin

## *...from russia with love*

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ANNA RUBIN'S LIFE IS TESTAMENT TO OSCAR WILDE'S FAMOUS QUOTE "LIFE IMITATES ART MORE THAN ART IMITATES LIFE". HER PAINTINGS SHOW A DEPTH OF COMPLEXITY AND EMOTION THAT IS VERY MUCH REFLECTIVE OF THIS GIFTED ARTIST'S LIFE. ANNA TELLS ANGELA BUETI ABOUT HER EXTRAORDINARY LEAP INTO THE ART WORLD AS AN ADULT AFTER DREAMING OF BEING A PAINTER AS A CHILD.

An economist one day, a revered painter the next. It's the stuff dreams are made of. The landmark year was 2002. Anna Rubin, the Russian-born Sunshine Coast resident, picked up a paint brush for the first time. Today, the self-taught artist's paintings sell for anywhere up to \$66,000 a piece. She still pinches herself some days to make sure she isn't dreaming. "Blessed" is a term she uses frequently throughout our conversation. After our chat, I would also add talented, head-strong and passionate.

On the day we meet, it's picture perfect – inside and out. The view from within the artist's studio and residence perched high on the Sunshine Beach hillside perfectly frames the cloudless blue sky, crystal clear waters, and scrubby treetops. The art adorning the walls inside is just as breathtaking. I don't know where to look.

The studio is filled with beautiful artefacts and precious family mementos – Anna's emotive paintings, a baby grand piano belonging to her late grandfather, an ancient marble and brass clock, works in progress standing on easels, art books from around the world, and two scarab beetles in readiness for her next project. It's another world in here. And yet, quite unexpectedly, it blends perfectly with the modest beachside abode she shares with her two adorable beagles, Ellie Bellie and Charlie James.

Anna's effervescent personality bubbles over. She immediately engages me in conversation while she hurriedly straps on a pair of gorgeous, cobalt blue, strappy high heels. "I'm sorry, I must put my shoes on. I adore beautiful, extraordinary shoes!" she gushes. This confession is later confirmed when she offers me a sneak peek in what she calls her "fetish room". For fear of being voyeuristic, I reluctantly push open the door to the spare bedroom. Wall-to-wall shoes abound. She's not kidding ... she adores shoes.

The stories from Anna are fast and furious,

jumping from one country and moment in time to the next, revealing her past to be as multi-layered and rich as her paintings. Anna's thick accent has her apologising more than once for her English. She needn't bother. She's very eloquent even though English is her fourth language – German, Russian and French being her 'first' languages. The more she speaks, the more I realise there are many facets to this talented, youthful Muscovite.

Her life story thus far is intriguing, to say the least, and is fraught with moments of great sadness but also buoyed by monumental achievements. It was the death of her father during her childhood that caused her the greatest pain, but it was also the catalyst for a strong, loving, and very influential relationship with her grandfather.

"My father was killed in a car accident when I was seven years old. I was upset at my father," Anna says directly. The hurt is still evident in her eyes many years on. Her grandfather took over the fathering role and lovingly immersed a young Anna in the rich culture of Moscow and surrounds.

"As Russia is so cold most of the year, we would do many things indoors. My grandfather would take me to the art galleries, libraries, piano recitals, concerts. I was surrounded by beautiful things – rugs, books, movies, poetry, music. I was blessed to be born into that family," Anna says with her hand on her heart.

From early on, Anna's intelligence and thirst for knowledge made her intensely curious. "From three or four years of age, I was reading fiction books. I remember at that age being petrified that I would go to bed at night and not wake up, and then I would be buried as everyone surely would think I'm dead. The inescapable possibility of death terrified me. Then I thought there must be a pill for eternal life and that you had to be special to get that pill. It was a terrible phobia."

In a bid to distract Anna from her preoccupation, she was immersed in a constant regime of piano,

ballet and voice lessons. It helped perfectly.

"I would express my love for my family through acts of service – by helping out, through words, giving hugs and giving gifts. I would paint little pictures, frame them myself and give them to my family to show them I loved them." I enquire if those little paintings still exist, but Anna isn't sure. Wouldn't it be fascinating to see them alongside her works of today, I muse.

With so much immersion and interest in a rich art culture as a child, it would seem a foray into the arts as a career would be the logical progression. Not so. It would not be until Anna was in her thirties that her vast artistic talent would be realised – and interestingly, a visit to Australia was the catalyst. But Anna is not one for lamenting the past. "I never have regrets. I always look to the future," she says, smiling with knowing conviction.

Being surrounded by such beauty in her life, her desire to produce beautiful things was strong. Anna's heart was set on studying something in the artistic field. But the decision was made for her. "My grandfather said you can't feed yourself by working in architecture or art. At that time in my life I did what I was told." Business seemed a much more sensible option.

So began her study at the Moscow States University where she acquired a Bachelor of Business Administration and then a further year of study in Dusseldorf, Germany, to complete her MBA.

Anna spent much of her adult life living in various countries, such as Germany, France and Holland, applying her analytical business brain to many and varied occupations.

"After I completed my MBA I worked as an interpreter for two years. I was very close with the lady who owned the business – she was my mentor. Sadly when she died, her husband didn't care about the business and fired everyone." Anna looked for her next opportunity.