

Russian culture on display at Memorial Art Gallery

Claudia Vargas • Staff writer • November 17, 2008



Michael Berger, front, and Svetlana Radunsky, both of Henrietta, look at images Sunday in the Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs exhibit during Russian Family Day at the Memorial Art Gallery. (JAY CAPERS staff photographer)



Eliza Almekinder, 2, of Naples peeks at a sculpture of Vladimir Lenin in a companion exhibit to the Tradition in Transition exhibit. (JAY CAPERS staff photographer)

A lengthy list of activities and presentations for Russian Family Day at the Memorial Art Gallery kept children and adults busy Sunday afternoon.

From Russian arts and crafts to language seminars, families had the chance to learn about Russian culture during Family Day at the gallery. The program was hosted in conjunction with the current exhibit: Tradition in Transition: Russian Icons in the Age of the Romanovs.

Gallery community outreach coordinator Debora McDell-Hernandez said Sunday's attendance was one of its highest for the Family Day series, which focuses on various cultures. McDell-Hernandez said a large percentage of the total 1,532 people who attended were of Russian descent.

Debbie Mercado and her 8-year-old son Adam were part of that percentage. Mercado's grandparents were Russian and came to the U.S. at the turn of the 20th century; she said she came to the event because she wants Adam to learn about his heritage. This was the first time the pair attended the Family Day event.

" It's very nice to see this," Mercado said, referring to the celebration of Russian culture. " We always see appreciation of other people's (culture) but not [Russia](#) ... and there's a lot of Russian heritage in Rochester."

McDell-Hernandez said the gallery reached out to people from Rochester's Russian community to help plan the activities so that not all Family Days are " cookie-cutter type of events." Several people from the Protection of the Mother of God Church, a Russian Orthodox church in the city, helped with the planning and also hosted a seminar on the history of the icons and beautification of their church.

" We embrace amateurs and experts ... from very young kids presenting folk dances to a demonstration of icon writing and techniques," said McDell-Hernandez.

Pat Myers of Stanley, Ontario County, made the drive to Rochester to learn more about Russian culture and teach her daughter Anna about her heritage. Anna, 7, was adopted from Russia.

" I'm learning more because of Anna's influence," Myers, 50, said of her knowledge of Russian culture.

She thought the various displays and presentations were well-organized.

" What a wonderful collection of Russian culture, the music, the arts," Myers said.

Some of the presentations patrons said they enjoyed best were the Catskills Puppet Theatre's " Ivan's Three Wishes" musical puppet show; the Eastman Philharmonia's " Peter and the Wolf" rendition; and the various arts and crafts for children.

The Tradition in Transition exhibit will remain at the Memorial Art Gallery through Jan.4.