

HOTELIER MALDIVES



Profiles

EXCLUSIVE: Elena Parashko, Resident Artist at Anantara Kihavah

By Sama Nasheed - April 1, 2018

Russian artist, Elena Parashko, has always been a creative individual, drawing and painting ever since she was old enough hold a pencil and a brush. Becoming an artist was not an option growing up so Elena trained to be a school teacher. She then attained her Masters of Adult Education so she could teach literacy and communication to adults at college.



Eventually she decided to pursue her love of art and began teaching painting classes locally in Sydney, Australia, as well as internationally in resorts. She began writing articles for art and home décor magazines in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. She gave up her day job and became a professional artist, focusing on painting, teaching painting and writing about art. The experiences she had within the journey was what led her to write and publish a book, **"Survival Guide for Artists: How to thrive in the Creative Arts"**.

At the moment, Elena is doing an artist's residency at Anantara Kihavah Maldives. She began her residency on 20th December 2007 and is due to conclude it on 7th March 2018.

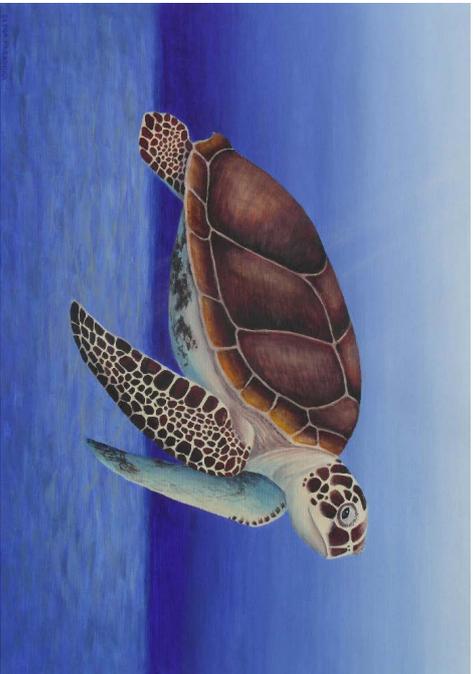
An exhibition of her paintings, inspired by the natural beauty of the Maldives, is up for sale in the gallery and can also be viewed on her website www.elenaparashko.com. Additionally, she teaches children and adults how to paint in the gallery. **"It's lovely for a guest to create their own painting on canvas as a souvenir of their visit. I guide people in how to complete a painting of their choice so they don't need to have any previous painting experience. It's also a very good wet weather activity."**

Elena did not comprehend how valuable knowing the Russian language would be in the Maldives. Though she was born and raised in Australia, her parents were Russian, so she grew up learning the language, but lately has not had many opportunities to use it, until now. During her residency at Anantara Kihavah, there has been a very high percentage of Russian guests.



It became the perfect opportunity for Elena to revive her Russian language skills and teach art classes in Russian. This element makes the art class experience comfortable and personal for Russian guests who are not confident with speaking the English language.

The theme Elena commonly explores in her artwork is the uplifting power of nature. She particularly enjoys painting seascapes, so the Maldives is the perfect source of inspiration for this subject matter and colour schemes. " I first came to the Maldives 28 years ago for my honeymoon and we stayed at Biyadhoo Island Resort. **It was the first time I ever saw such magnificent turquoise colour in the water. I have since visited many tropical islands and have done artist residencies in places like Fiji, Tahiti, Bora Bora, Norfolk Island and Hamilton Island on the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, but nothing compares to the pristine natural environment of the Maldives and the friendliness and hospitality of the Maldivian people.** It's great to be back after all these years. The urban landscape of Malé has changed so much but the islands still have the same breathtaking beauty. "



Every morning Elena spends an hour painting in front of the restaurant so that guests can observe the painting process while they have breakfast. Her favourite painting, done at Anantara so far, is of a turtle that she painted in one of those sessions. "It is my favourite because animals have a special way of connecting with people and I experienced this with so much interest and positive comments from guests as they watched the turtle image slowly take shape."

Elena is currently working on an extensive and challenging painting project for the resort; a 20 square metre floor to ceiling mural of space and planets on the internal wall of their observatory. Elena is very enthusiastic about the unexpected project and never imagined the probability of painting the cosmos while in the Maldives, assuming she would be immersed in painting beaches, sunsets and marine lives.

Once she concludes her artist's residency at Anantara Kihavah, she plans to return to Australia and create more paintings for her next exhibition and residency in May, which will be at Hamilton Island on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia. Elena hopes to return to Anantara Kihavah towards the end of 2018 for another residency. What keeps her excited and stimulated is the unpredictability that pursuing art has brought into her life. **"I love the unexpected adventures of my career in art."** The future holds much promise for Elena as she will continue to explore new artistic opportunities and enjoy wherever that journey leads her.