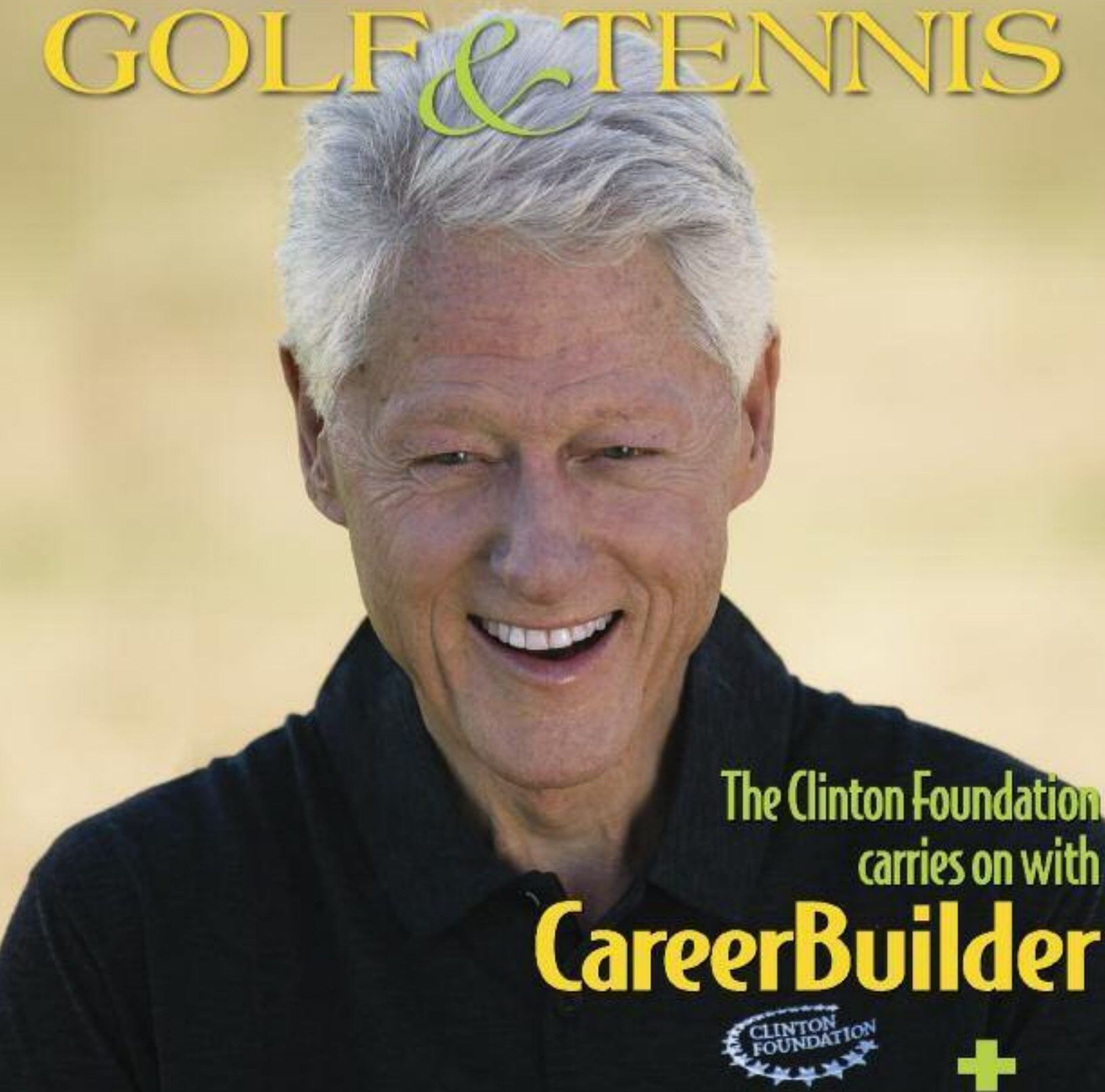


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ELENA BULATOVA

By Matt McKay



If you've ever wondered what to do with old golf clubs, visit this gallery

When the golfers, snowbirds and sun seekers of all variety hit the Coachella Valley each winter, it's a possibility, nay, a probability, that the art lovers within will seek a commemoration of their stay.

They'll have at hand several retail venues offering the usual—amazing photography highlighting the valley's top golf holes, a framed watercolor of Arnold Palmer at La Quinta Country Club, an oversized coffee-table book highlighting mid-century modern architecture.

The informed and discerning visitor, however, should head instead to the Elena Bulatova Fine Art Gallery in downtown Palm Springs. Co-owned with Israel-born artist Efi Mashiah and set to celebrate its second anniversary, Bulatova's gallery doesn't have any of the aforementioned golf mementos. What it does have is whimsical-yet-significant pieces of art, some of which, in fact, are comprised completely of assembled golf-club heads and other golf-club components.

The gallery, located at 232 N. Palm Canyon Drive, is open daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and just one of the venues where Bulatova's work can be seen in Palm Springs. The Elena Bulatova Studio & Gallery is at 2652 S. Cherokee Way and is open Tuesday to Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment other days.

Her works are also on display at The Five Hundred at 500 S. Palm Canyon Drive and the Three Sixty North Grill & Bar at 360 N. Palm Canyon Drive. In December, Bulatova and Mashiah are also scheduled to open a new gallery in the prestigious Gallery Row within The Shops at Crystals (theshopsatcrystals.com) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Bulatova was born in Russia and trained in Russian art schools for seven years. In those days, however, her first love was music and it was in the musical realm where she exerted most of her creative energies. She played violin and piano while in school, and played violin in the chamber orchestra at Moscow State University while studying there.

OVVA GALLERY



Today, her California gallery draws customers from the valley and around the world. She says that 50 percent of the gallery's artwork is sold and shipped to customers in other states as well as Europe, Mexico and Australia. Yet even as her artwork is disseminated worldwide and as she expands her empire into Nevada, Bulatova says Palm Springs has become home.

Bulatova began painting full time after moving to the United States five years ago and says her adopted country is a great place to live and to create. She started with abstract paintings and has recently moved into sculpture, employing an array of creative media. A majority of the gallery's showcase pieces are made from all manner of recycled materials, including the club components. There are also works created from recycled Harley-Davidson parts, courtesy of Mr. Santo, a contributing artist from Thailand.

"I think it is great to take something that doesn't have any more use and create new purpose and life," Bulatova says.

Presently, she is expanding her Sweet Life series of pieces, which features various exploitations of one of the world's favorite sugary treats—the ones on a stick with the tempting chocolate center—using wood, fiberglass, resin and industrial paint. The gallery also

currently features Mashiah's "Screw Art" collection, which is just that—pieces created with different-colored flathead screws.

"I have very big plans for the galleries and myself as an artist," says Bulatova, who will present shows in Miami in December. "I am looking to grow in my career and create something different. I am fortunate to have a great response to my work from art collectors. This inspires me to create more, stay prolific, move forward and grow faster."

The downtown Palm Springs gallery typically stays open late on Thursday nights to coincide with the city's Villagefest, and contributing artists are often onsite to discuss their works. There's a strong chance the discriminating visitor/collector will find the perfect piece to remind them of their special time in the desert and to express their love of golf and their love of progressive, contemporary art.

The gallery's online home is elenabulatova.com and art lovers can connect with the gallery by calling 760.600.0417 or via Facebook and Instagram by searching for Elena Bulatova Fine Art.