



# from the president

## California Watercolor Association



**Our Children Walking** by Nadezha Borovaya. Wrapping paper, pencil drawing, chalk. 21 x 28 cm.

## The Desert of Forbidden Art

It was art night Saturday night in my home and on the agenda was a documentary I rented from Netflix. The title “The Desert of Forbidden Art” about Igor Savitsky and his creation of a museum in Nukus, Uzbekistan. All I can say is WOW! Talk about conviction and perseverance.

Igor Savitsky arrived in Uzbekistan in 1950 to work as an archeological dig illustrator. He moved to Nukus permanently in 1957. He became fascinated with the local history and started collecting huge amounts of traditional art including textiles, jewelry and sculpture. A lot of these items were being destroyed because they did not fit in with the Soviet regime. He also collected two-dimensional art painted by Central Asia artists and eventually Russia avant-garde and post avant-garde painters. He collected over 90,000 traditional works of art as well as paintings, drawings, sketches and etchings.

He was able to convince local political leaders to fund a museum for the traditional art, and then he was able to collect the banished avant-garde art at great personal risk. Large amounts of the avant-garde and post avant-garde art were being collected in Russia and destroyed. Much of this movie reminded me of what happened to large amounts of art before, during and after WWII.

Such foresight by Igor Savitsky saved tens of thousands of artworks from being destroyed forever. Amazing! Many now call the museum “Le Louvre des steppes.”

*Carol Husslein*  
CWA President