

# **Grandmaster of Avant-Garde**

## **The Chess Art of Galina Satonina**

Compiled and edited by  
Vladimir Kudryavtsev,  
Doctor of Arts

**Grandmaster of Avant-Garde**  
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Compiled and edited by Vladimir Kudryavtsev, Doctor of Arts

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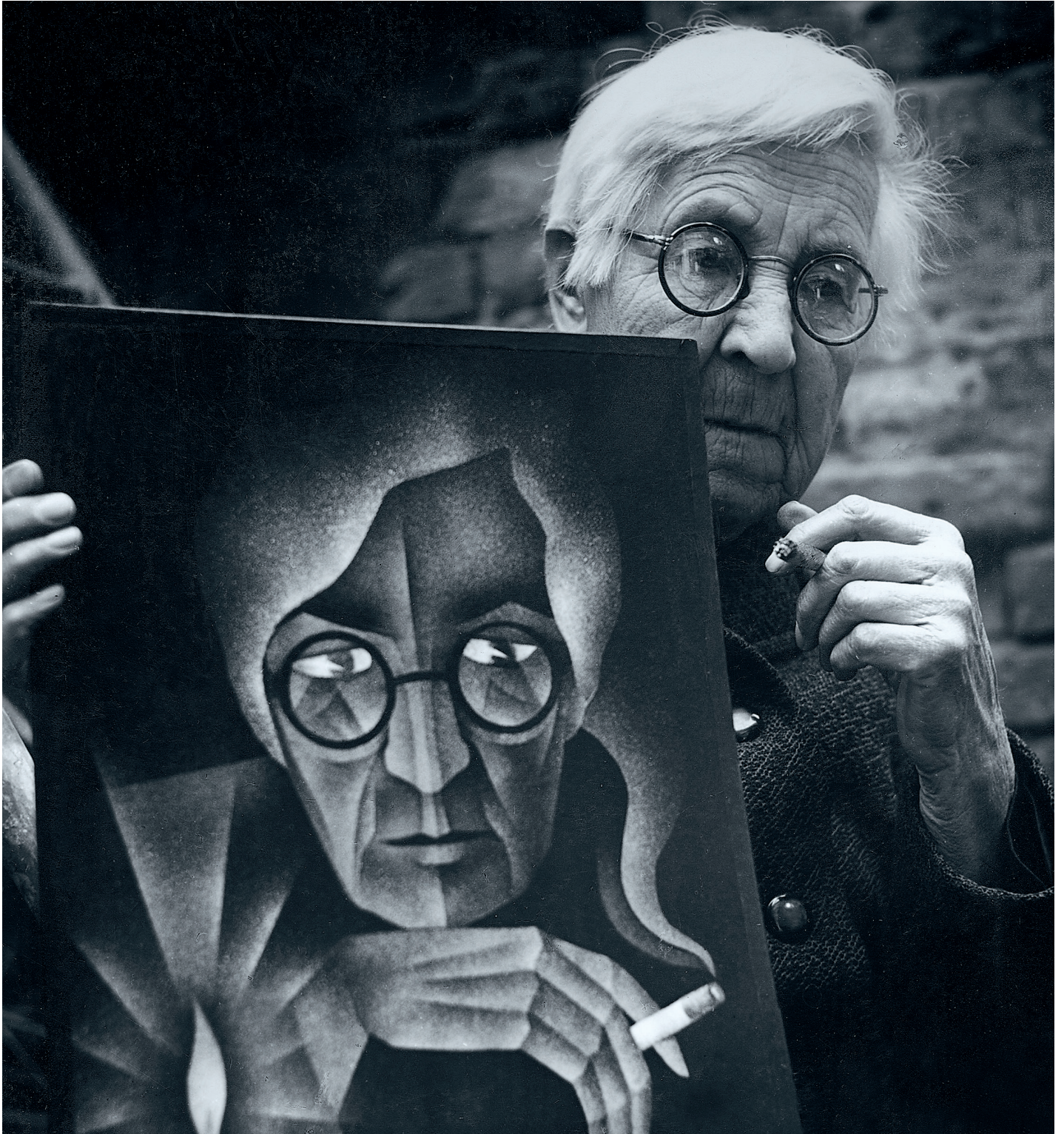
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The album features the work of the great Soviet chess artist Galina Ivanovna Satonina (1905–2000).

A pupil of Nicolai Fechin, Konstantin Chebotaryov and Alexandra Platunova, leading members of the Kazan Avant-Garde school, she found her own innovative way in art, her own original technique. A multiple-time Kazan and Tatarstan ladies chess champion, she saw life as a game of chess, and her paintings speak the language of Caissa.

1. Galina Ivanovna Satonina. Photo. 1980s.  
From Satonina's archive.



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## A Legendary Chess Artist and Player, by Vladimir Kudryavtsev

Galina Ivanovna Satonina (1905–2000) dedicated her long and eventful life to fine art, chess and poetry. She was constantly surrounded by loyal, kindred spirits and talented colleagues. An exceptional person who played chess passionately and professionally, she glorified this great form of art with her paintings and drawings. Later, she would state in her autobiography that she discovered the world of visual arts through chess and remained loyal to chess for her entire life. While poetry, like a breath of fresh air, gave wings to her artistic creations. She wrote (here and later in this book, the original poetry rhymed),

*The board is square, the pieces on it  
Are standing ceremoniously in rows.  
And you can't imagine how many tempests  
These soulless pieces are hiding...*

Satonina was born on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1905 in Kazan. At the age of 7, she was sent to a girls grammar school; its founder and head teacher, V. I. Ryakhina, sought out alumni of Kazan, St. Petersburg and Moscow universities as teachers. The talented pedagogues cultivated a high cultural level among the pupils of this pre-revolutionary school. The Ryakhina School, one of four similar schools in Kazan at the time, distinguished its pupils by their gray uniform. Satonina remained loyal to that color for her entire life, combining its silvery shades and rich tones in her artist's clothes and carefully chosen accessories.

Ryakhina's private school was located in the house of merchant L. V. Kekin, who built it based on a design by architect G. B. Rush from his own bricks, the best in the Kazan region. The project, upon the whim of the customer, was created in a mixed style, organically blending eclectics and modernism with elements of Gothic and Mauritanian architecture. The restored mansion, still hiding the mysterious secrets of its owner, became a unique landmark in Kazan and still attracts the attention of contemporaries.

Galina Satonina studied hard, taking a particular interest in physics and mathematics. Despite poverty (the family had ten children), her older brother Konstantin rented a piano and regularly brought paint home for the family. Everyone dabbled in painting, but only Galina remained loyal to the art. She often watched her brothers play chess and started to play herself. She was also

Vladimir Gennadyevich Kudryavtsev is a Doctor of Arts, member of the Russian Artists Union, and Distinguished Art Worker of the Russian Federation. He graduated from the I. E. Repin Institute of Art, Sculpture and Architecture (1982). Vladimir wrote the books *M. G. Platunov – Artist and Teacher* (1986), *Mari Graphics* (2001), *Mari Wooden Architecture* (2004), and *Folklore of the Finno-Ugric Peoples of the Volga and Ural Regions in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Graphics* (2010). He published the albums *Artists of the Mari El Republic* (2011), *Visual Art of the Russian Federation. Volga Region* (2013), and *The Young Volga* (2015). A promoter of the Finno-Ugric artist movement and organizer of exhibitions of modern art of Finno-Ugric peoples in Helsinki (Ugriculture 2000), in the German embassy in Moscow (The Colors of Mari El), as well as in Yoshkar-Ola, Izhevsk, Syktyvkar, and Elabuga. He helps to organize regional workshops and plein air meetings.

2. The house of merchant L. V. Kekin, where the 4<sup>th</sup> Girls Grammar School was situated. Kazan. Architect G. B. Rush. Photo. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



3. Kazan Art School (Kazan Art and Technical Institute from 1921). Architect K. L. Myufke. Phototype. Sherer, Nabgolz and Co., 1905.



interested in sports. After graduating from school, Galina, on the advice of her brother Viktor, an architect and graphic artist, enrolled in the Kazan Art and Technical Institute (since 1921, this was the official name of the Kazan Art School, established back in 1895 under the auspices of the Academy of Arts. Today it is known as the Nicolai Fechin Kazan Art College).

At the time, the institute contained painting, sculpture, architectural and drawing faculties. It housed free painting classes on Sundays, a museum and a library. In 1923–1924, the institution was reorganized into the Kazan Architectural and Art Technical School (most often known by the abbreviations ARKHUMAS or KAKHUMAS – signifying Architectural and Art Workshops

48. *Racing to Queen*. 1971.  
Cardboard, oil, splatter. 36x30.



78. *Lasker*. 1977.

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From the collection of the  
M. M. Botvinnik Central Chess  
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