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THE EAST SIDER

The East Sider: Rebecca Volynsky

Artist Rebecca Volynsky moved back to Providence and rediscovered an artistic (and culinary) community here

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PHOTO BY MIKE CEVOLI

By **Amanda M. Grosvenor**

When East Side native **Rebecca Volynsky** (<http://www.RVolynsky.com>) moved back to Providence following a half-decade stint in Boston, she found herself “returning to her roots” in more ways than she expected. She moved into a 5th Street apartment just a few blocks away from her parents’ house. An artist as well as a first-generation American, Volynsky’s proximity to her family inspired a new passion for learning the traditional Jewish-Russian baking methods of her ancestors and experimenting with new recipes. She’s also returned to her old artistic stomping grounds and built creative connections throughout Providence.

Volynsky currently works for the City and was the Fund Development Associate at **Providence CityArts for Youth** (<http://www.providencycastlearts.org/>) for two years. She recently helped **New Urban Arts** (<http://www.newurbanarts.org>), an after-school arts program for high school students, plan their annual birthday fundraiser; she was a participant in the program herself during her years at Classical High School and says it gave her “a life of sustainable creative practice.”

“I don’t know who I would be as a person were it not for that space,” she continues. “They gave me ways to express myself. It’s the most welcoming community art space I’ve ever encountered.”

Volynsky makes mixed-media art with paint and collage and finds the creative process therapeutic and meditative: “I never create with a pre-planned idea of what it would look like,” she says. “It’s about the process and which materials I have on hand, and therefore it’s also focused on what I’m feeling and experiencing in that moment; it’s a way of letting go and also experimenting and taking risks.”

Volynsky’s work has been featured at gallery shows in Providence and Boston, and most recently in an exhibition in the lobby of the Providence Lady Project. She is also involved with the Summit Neighborhood Community Garden and the Hope Street Festival and is working on a public art project for this year’s PVDFest. Even with so many pursuits, though, Volynsky finds time for her culinary passions.

“The bagel-making process has allowed me to become closer to my Jewish and Russian identity,” she says. It’s “a humbling process; it takes two days, and the slightest temperature change or wrong timing can ruin an entire batch. But there is a history of Jewish families baking in this community, and baking brings back memories of what I’ve had from other local makers.” Eating and cooking with her family has also helped Volynsky learn more about her family’s journey to the United States by way of the Soviet Union. “I feel like more of their stories unfold when we’re experiencing those traditional national foods together,” she says. “It brings me closer to my heritage.”

If you had one wish to enhance life on the East Side, what would it be?

“Keep Hope Street independent and local. I deeply miss a lot of the ruggedness that Hope Street used to have. I never thought I would come back here, but here I am now, making stuff happen. I care deeply about the local community and want to help small businesses succeed.”



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