The year 2006 has been declared “Armenia Year” in France and in Russia. 2005 having been “Russia Year” in Armenia. To be frank, it was not different from previous years. If the giant Russia organized its year in Armenia in this way, then it is difficult to say how we are going to prepare, although the opening of the year in the Kremlin this January was very pompous.

Armenia is also exploring the French program. Time will show the way our cul-tural missions will be accomplished both in the South and in the West. Yes, the expression “Armenia Year” is just a cultural mission, since in no country now can we present ourselves with alternate achievements. Our assets is the old and the new culture. Never mind that the Armenian Republic budget shows culture as the last line.

The problem however lies deeper. We shouldn’t regard culture in a narrow sense, as an industry, but in a wider context, as a way of life. E.g., if while debating an important bill, the National assembly is attended by 6 – 7 of its members, or if from year to year our citizen becomes aware that he is actually deprived of his constitutional right to elect, then this is the proof of an absence of political culture. To say nothing of the current situation in urban construction or the preservation of nature, where wide-spread misrepresentations and abuses also result to a considerable degree from the deficiency of culture.

We, Armenians, love our Motherland. However, it does not seem to be enough for possessing a country and a state. It is neces-sary to change, we need strong will to conquer our egocentrism, the capacity to see, to appreciate and to love the common behind the individual, to have the elevated and the dutiful feeling of being a citizen. When this deep aspiration appears accompanied by favorable conditions outside, a proper education and cultured upbringing will certainly produce good results.

It is our wish that the “Armenia Year” be successful in France, Russia, and other places, but it is our dream that for real blossoming the “Armenian Year” should come to Armenia. Come and stay.
The Armenian Month in Bazel

On October 26 – 27, 2005, in the city of Bazel in Switzerland a festival took place titled “Culturescapes 2005 – Armenia”. After Georgia (2003) and Ukraine (2004), Swiss city entertained the Armenian artists. This event had been called to life by the efforts of Yurian Koiman, manager of “Culturescapes” who visited Armenia three times in 2005, to establish this organization. To assist the festival, he also invited great Britain and US in the hope to obtain support from Armenian entities. In different parts of Bazel and environs different events took place for about a month (concerts, encounters, discussions, motion pictures), which were widely covered by the Swiss press. About two score articles were published introducing the German-speaking Swiss to the Armenian history, culture, art, and social life.

Discussion


Other undertakings included: literary soirees, encounters with two alien writers having written Armenian-related books, Andrey Bitor (Russia), author of the book “Armenia’s Lessons”, and Edgar Hilzenrat (Germany), author of the book “The Author of the Last Thought”. In the course of the event named “Wild Armenia, a Journey towards Artemis” Ralf Dutlin from Heidelberg Germany, read poems by Ospel Mandavdiyan dedicated to Armenia, his prose pieces and letters, all in German translation, at another soiree actor Diter Enberg (Germany) read poems by Thomas Buchholz was named “A Crane”, as inspired by the popular Armenian song. A great discovery for the listeners (including those in Armenia) was a young virtuoso pianist Shushanik Hovakimyan (Yerevan – Los Angeles), who performed two concerts (Serjko Prokoveros, Komitas, Arno Babajanyan, Tigran Mansuryan, Martin Liparian, Ashot Zohrabyan). On different days the Bazel and Zurich audiences attended performances by the Gevorg Dabaghyan duet troup (Komitas, Sayat-Nova, Medieval songs), as well as the “Sanctus” vocal quartet of Yerevan led by Radik Melikyan, performing Komitas, Mansuryan and Davit Halajan, there were also concerts in Geneva. Incidentally, Gevorg Dabaghyan delivered two concert-lectures “Armenia and Duduk” as well as a report in the Central Museum of Bem. In Bazel Dabaghyan received a proposition from a Swiss movie company to record a soundtrack for a motion picture in 2007. In connection with the Armenia month the “Pre-Art Quartet” of Zurich performed pieces of young Armenian composers Seda Babayian, Aram Hovhanesyan and Arthur Akshelyan in the presence of the authors.

Specimens of the Armenian modern art and video art were displayed at an exhibition titled “Memory and Autonomy” and arranged by Eva Khachatsian, curator of the Yerevan Parajanov Museum. The films were demonstrated at a nation-wide idea. Throughout the month, the Bazel City Movie Theater showed eight films by Sergey Parajanov on three different days. Displayed in the theater hall were posters of five films by Parajanov dispatched from the Yerevan Parajanov Museum. The films were demonstrated to capacity audiences, particularly the film “The Color of Pomegranate”. Also shown was the documentary by the Munc-basied director Rom Holoway titled “Requiem” on Parajanov, as well as “Ararat” by Atom Epyogan.

Our Closest Neighbours

In Bazel the second most frequently spoken language is Turkish. One of the city areas is called Little Istanbul. That environment was clearly not too welcoming for Armenian culture. Once a Turk entered the anteroom of the Armenian art exhibition and started shouting and tearing down articles on Armenian culture. He shouted that he had no genocide ever occurred, and he had written a book on the subject. On another occasion at the time of an Armenia-related discussion, the Turks organized a small meeting, which lasted only fifteen minutes because of lack of serious attitude on the part of the organizers. However, the real Turkish image was shown to the Swiss in full view when following the Turkey - Switzerland football match the Turkish footballers gave a brutal beating to their contestants, one of whom was rushed to hospital for internal injuries.

Local Armenians

It is interesting to see, what were the relations, both past and present, of that city with the Armenians, the city located near the point bordering on France, Germany and Switzerland. Bazel’s evangelical preachers visited the Armenian-populated areas in mid-19th century to teach Christianity to those “pagan” Armenians. There taught Abraham Arminian, a notable representative of the Armenian Evangelical movement, who had translated the Gospels into different Turkic languages. From time to time the Eastern Armenians came, to study at Bazel University, medical thesi were sustained here by Minas Minasyan, 1895 and Hike Melkonyants, 1905. Even today Bazel has very few Armenian residents. A few women from Yerevan, married or unmarried with the locals, nearly all go in for eurythmics, or have established eurythmics in the homeland. However, for the homeland Armenians it was a great joy, meeting the young designer Sona Hovsepyan, a notable former resident of Yerevan, who tried hard in every way to help the visitors from homeland, surrounding them with warmth and care.

Artsakh Bakhchianyan, Bazel - Yerevan
ARCHEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
IN ARMENIA IN 2005

ARAM KALANTARYAN,
Director, Institute of Archeology and Ethnography,
National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia

The study of the world civilization continues in a regular way, with each nation paying its tribute. We can be proud that the Armenian people also have made a tribute to the world civilization, which has been highly valued in the world of science.

For the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Science, Republic of Armenia, doing research in the spiritual and material culture of the Armenian people, the past year was rich in archeological excavations in the areas of Ararat, Armavir, Aragats, Gegharkunik, Siunik, Tavush. The excavations discovered multiple exclusive materials in Paleolite – Neolithic – Bronze periods, Urartian culture, architecture, cultic structures of Hel lenistic period, the art of building, Medieval culture.

A substantial part of excavations was done in cooperation with scientific centers overseas. State provided assistance was used only for excavations in the former Armenian capital cities, viz.: Artashat, Aramavir, Dvin, which through financial deficiency had sunk into neglect for long years. For over 15 years the capital cities have seen no excavations, monuments were absolutely falling to pieces. With the help of the country’s Prime Minister this year finally the opportunity came about to restart that activity.

Joint excavations with French and British archeologists in the area of the village Hovk of Tavush marz, where the study of discovered caves and the artifacts found on the surrounding areas showed traces of a stone age culture in highaltitude zones of Armenia.

Also to be noted are results of research materials from excavations of an early agricultural compound of the Neolithic period 7 – 6 millennia B.C. in Aratashen and Aknashen villages on the Ararat plain. Analyses at different European laboratories have established the origins of stone instruments, radiocarbon dating determined the time of the lower strata of the site at early 6th c. B.C. Excavations of those monuments are well placed, for on the mentioned area of the Armenian plateau archeological research of such an early dating are being conducted for the first time. Meanwhile in Western Armenia a few score of similar monuments have been excavated with excellent results. It seemed that in the southern part of this highland the existence of this culture is due to the proximity to the Interfluve, however, the current excavations reveal that the Ararat plane was one of the most important origins of that developed culture.

Of the overseas excavations the most important monument is the residential area in Nerkin Godezdzor, Sisian, dated at 5 – 4 cc. B.C, with an unexpected discovery of the Mesopotamic-type colored crockery. In excellent condition, great masses and variety of crockery shows that 6 – 7 thousand years ago Armenia was the scene of socioeconomic upheavals and developments. The most surprising results of the last year’s Sisian unique excavations are as follows:

Exclusive materials have been yielded by the excavations of the capital Armavir. One of the most significant discoveries is the temple structure opened in the summit of the citadel.

In the capital Artashat on the shore of the Arax river basement walls of colossal monumental structures of the Hellenistic Armenia are being discovered which, according to the fragments of sculpture-ornamented capitols and pillars and a fragment of mosaic floor, may have belonged to an important cultic structures of the city.

With the assistance from individual sponsors the Institute’s archeologists also worked in Artsakh, particularly in Shushi.

The rich archeological material yielded by the excavations is currently being subjected to laboratory treatment, with different analyses, the results and data to be published.
When the Song is Prayer, the Prayer a Song  

DANIEL ERAJISHT

"Arménian Church, the birth place of my soul," wrote Vahan Tekejan. The Church is also a cradle of spiritual poetry and song art: Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak Partev, sharakans by Movses Khorenatsi, Ekmalian, "Divine Service" by Ekmalian and other sacred songs.

The origins of the West European Classical music have also been found in the Church. As far back as in the 4th century, Saint Ambrose, a bishop in Milan, founded the so-called Ambrosian Chant which so enraptured Saint Augustine and influenced the Gregorian Choral developed in Rome giving rise to multiple types of music. Established in 16th century was Lutheran choral music which later became the origin of the art by Johann Sebastian Bach: choirs, prayers, Christ-inspired passions, etc.

Originally the purpose of psalms, chorals and sharakans was "to carry word to God from the depth of heart. The basis of church singing is prayer, word, while a pleasant tune, according to the Church Fathers, must have carried saint word so that it should penetrate into the depth of soul. However, Saint Augustine cautioned not to go after beautiful tunes, lest one should turn aside from the basic objective of the words and prayer. (Музыкальная эстетика западноевропейского средневековья и Ренессанса, Москва, 1966, стр. 37).

Later the melodies of spiritual music experienced an explosive development. In the 11th century Europe polyphony started to outgrow its primitive state, and the musical component acquired independent significance and attraction. In the West European aesthetics the first ever mention of the beauty of music. Established in 16th century was Lutheran choral music which later became the origin of the art by Johann Sebastian Bach: choirs, prayers, Christ-inspired passions, etc.

Quite naturally, Komitas was concerned about the erstwhile dissolute situation with the church music. On May 10, 1910, he wrote to Catolicos Mathevos Iznirian: "The Armenian church music has been on the decline within the last 19th c. and particularly in this 20th century. The hymn has lost its clear and elevated manner and childish simplicity, its innocent faithful character giving way to disorderly, impure, whining and plaintive chanting. The church songs (sharakan) of our ancestors, warm like the sun, clean like air and sweet like water, have been sidelined or displaced into the background." (Ամենայն պատկերները, բեմնված, 1970թ., էջ 418). Komitas shared the same concern with the violinist Margarit Babayan in his letter dated August 7, 1913: "...the monastery music has become mean, course, yelping, roguish, ignorant." Մխիթար Մաշտոց, «Ամենայն պատկերները» 19-րդ դարի էջ 20-րդ դարի թարգմանաբար, բեմնված, 1970թ., էջ 423).

In the same way Albert Schweitzer was concerned about Bach. "The effect of music by Bach is stipulated not through performance, but rather through the spirit of performance. Only one who has submerged into the world of Bach's feelings, who loves and thinks, who has become along with him a simple and modest person, only that one can convey to others the prayer of Father Vrtanes is soaring over the nasal sounds of the instrument. The disk is summarized by Mashtots' Repentance. "Ro not abandon me, the hope of my childhood, my God." Unwittingly one remembers the words by the poet: In a blue country you melt, smoke dissolving far away, alone. Of whom do you remend? You remind of me. This is the way the incense-smelling song ascends to heaven. We have been brought up in the traditions of the Apostolic Church; we are spiritually close to the Ejmiadzin singing. And if we compare the Armenian spiritual singing with the language, it can then be stated that the Ejmiadzin singing is like our classical language, while the singing of Constantinople, Jerusalem, the Mechitarists, Iranian and Indian Armenians can be likened to dialects, having their own fragrance and stress.

The waves of life assault the battered philharmonic performances. Indeed, despite all their high professional standards like uniform sound distribution, organic merging, etc. They sing and pray with love, sincerity and artless fervor, which is probably enough for the prayer to reach its objective, since, as Jesus said, "...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Мат. 18, 20)

According to Richard Strauss, a brilliant melody is felt even by whistling. One could hardly remain indifferent to St. Mesrop's repentance chant with these words: "The waves of life assault me like enemies. O' Good Caption, be my support!" Or Nerses Shnorhali: "The origin of life is Mother of God coming from Paradise, which has to be sung bel canto. The prayer of Father Vrtanes is soaring over the nasal sounds of the instrument. The continuous sounding symbolizes eternity. It is clearly beyond the human ability to sustain this expiring singing sound, like that produced by organ. And the man, yearning to get absolved from guilt, as noted by Blez Pascal, this "intelligent herd", the beat of his troubled heart being imprinted upon the eternal substance, is soaring and merging with the eternal.

In this regard to be noted are the remarks by the pianist Alexey Liubimov on the occasion of recording Bach's "St. John Passion" made by the conductor Karl Richter. Mentioning the high professional standard, dramatic integrity and other high qualities, he also noted superfluous theatrical quality, rather than submission.

The occasion for this extensive introduction was an audio CD produced by the Mechitarian Union of Venice (directed and published by Minas Luryan). The disc contains spiritual songs for the Lent period performed by Father Vrtanes Uluzohan and the "Akn" choir conducted by Aram Kerobyan. With regard to the abovementioned criteria, the following is to be stated.

The song by Father Vrtanes is a prayer, the prayer is a song. He has a perfect command of his God-given voice. His performing art meets the most stringent requirements, his voice is coming from the depth of heart, it is peaceful and humble.

With regard to the choir, that is a religious community, that prays rather than sings. The choir seemingly does not set high professional standards like uniform sound distribution, organic merging, etc. They sing and pray with love, sincerity and artless fervor, which is probably enough for the prayer to reach its objective, since, as Jesus said, "...where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Мат. 18, 20)

In this connection Schweitzer noted that when in his letter dated August 7, 1913: "...the monastery music has become mean, course, yelping, roguish, ignorant." Մխիթար Մաշտոց, «Ամենայն պատկերները» 19-րդ դարի էջ 20-րդ դարի թարգմանաբար, բեմնված, 1970թ., էջ 423)
In the years WWI the Armenian nation was subjected to the first ever planned genocide which is the greatest crime against humanity. Besides the irretrievable human losses there were huge cultural losses, genocide writers often make use of the expression ‘cultural massacre’, since having annihilated the Armenians living in Western Armenia, the Turks in 1915 and on started to eradicate all traces of the rich Armenian civilization. The Genocide resulted in huge losses of the Armenian manuscripts.

At the start of the war the largest collection of Armenian manuscripts was held at the library of the Ejmiadzin Patriarchy. In February 1915, in view of the possible war, some precious objects retained in Ejmiadzin, along with 4660 manuscripts were moved to Moscow, to be stored in the vaults of the Armenian Church. In the same year, when Western Armenia became the theater of military operations, the Turkish authorities, improving the opportunity, displaced and massacred the local Armenian population. Armenian Catholics Gevorg V issued a special order to Hovhannes Vardapet Hiusyan, Superior of the Lake Van Island Monastery, to send 1500 manuscripts from the monastery of Lin, Kluts, Akhtamar, Van, et al. Hiusyan fulfilled it only in part. He and his faithful retinue succeeded in transferring about 1450 manuscripts to Ejmiadzin. However, the losses were enormous. Suffice it to note that over a thousand manuscripts had been kept at the monastery of Lin. However, Vaspurakan Region is close to Eastern Armenia and so, part of the manuscripts here were saved thanks to the front line soldiers. E.g. in Cesaria about 700 manuscripts perished. E.g. in Cesaria about 700 manuscripts perished.

The huge losses of manuscripts during and after WWI are described by Prof. Suren Kolanjian in “Ejmiadzin” journal. However, the losses were enormous. Suffice it to note that over a thousand manuscripts had been kept at the monastery of Lin. However, Vaspurakan Region is close to Eastern Armenia and so, part of the manuscripts here were saved thanks to the front line soldiers. E.g. in Cesaria about 700 manuscripts perished.

Every artistic museum is open before a visitor with its permanent displays, presenting the artistic pieces with specially arranged data (author, title, country, school, period, year, technique). In certain cases the exhibit carries explanations with assigned data characterized in three languages in a guide-book of 1992.

Analysis of the Credence design and style, reading of the symbols and cryptograms yielded the following data: the object was created in France, in early 16th century, during the reign of Francis I (1515 – 1547), was ornamented mainly using the sense of beauty, and Esse Homo visions, figures of prophets, apostles and ordinary people, carried a corporate brand. As an artistic object, it is unique, since it integrates the most important attributes of French architecture, sculpture and applied arts of the transition from Gothics to Renaissance (substantiation by H. Harutyunyan).

A correct reading of literary, historic, mythological, artistic pieces, created on the basis of bibliical plots and understanding of imagery enable the wrongly assigned titles to be properly updated. Thus, a canvas by the well-known Italian Venice-school artist Tintoretto (1518 – 1599), had been registered as ‘Apollo and Marsius’ prior to 1801. According to the Antique mythology, Apollo took part in musical competitions twice: with Marsius, a Frigian faun and Pan, god of fields and forests. In this picture, the author reproduced the scene described in Ovidius’ ‘Transfiguration’ (II, 155 – 170), struggle against Pan, as witnessed by the depicted characters. The current title of the picture is Astrakhan Armenian Church under the title ‘Deposition from the Cross’. According to Christian image painting, the scene includes Christ, Godmother, Mary Magdalene, John, Nikodemos, Joseph. Our canvas shows the deceased Christ and the angels. The current title of the picture is “The Angels Taking Christ Away” (analysis by V. Badalyan).

Research yielded curious evidence with regard to the canvass “A Tribute to Amur” by Carle van Loo (1705 – 1765) exhibited in the French section of the museum. The authenticity of the piece is confirmed by its origin and the legend on making a copy of the picture on the reverse side by F. Tahuntsin in St. Petersburg in 1848. In the catalogue of the artist’s works (Paris, 1777) one of his missing pictures “Offering to Apollo, a gift to Amur” was reproduced from the exact engraving in Yerevan and is accompanied by the following circumstances. In 1760 the picture belonged to a Paris resident de Julianne, whose collection went public in 1767, while the mentioned picture was bought by L. A. Golitsin for Katherine II.

The Hermitage archives of 1774 and 1859 confirm the presence
of the picture in Winter palace, while a collection of 1935 notes that in 1958 it was transferred to Eritai under the title A Tribute to Amur. It was transferred to our museum under the same title. Thus, what we deal with here is the same picture.

That was the story of a picture by Carle van Loo which had once vanished from view in its homeland, had been kept in St. Petersburg for about two and a half centuries, then for 74 years its life continued in Yerevan. Moreover, the fact that the picture was retained by a well-known collector in 1760 enables us to date the canvas to those produced by the author before 1760. (analyzed by V. Mkrtchian).

Similar clarifications are quite numerous, they occur in scientific catalogues of the gallery on specific collections.

There are cases in museum operation when the origins of certain pieces are unknown. Most catalogues note those as "origin unknown."

Next story is related to origin and clarifications by the author, an enigmatic story of a double-sided picture retained in the repositories of the gallery. Origin unknown, the front side carries a legend “Jacob Shapiro 1923” (canvas, oil paint, 58 x 76cm) (in Russian), the backside drawing was retained by a well-known collector in 1760 enables us to date the canvas to those produced by the author before 1760. (analyzed by V. Mkrtchian).

In 1925 the artist settled in Paris, took part in exhibitions, arranged personal exhibitions Bonapart (1936) and Elysee (1946), at galleries and Beaux-Art magazine (1936). They wrote about him: “Jacob Shapiro is an artist, who acutely feels the nature, is very sensitive to objects, perceiving them as his inner life. In his art, objects and feelings are deeply interconnected. Shapiro paints what touches him, and in the first place it is the sacramental language of color. His pictures are penetrated with the inner life, and what is pictured gives a feeling of a restrained masculine appeal."

In 1960, Shapiro published a book titled "La Ruche" (the Beehive), narrating about a communal life of artists in workshops called Beehive in 1920s, and about his encounters with Kh. Sutin, O. Tsadkin, M. Shagal, M. Kisling. In the chapter on Shagal, the author noted: "...In those years I was in close relations with many Moscow theaters, artistic and theatrical individuals. Shagal’s creations played an important role in my expressionistic formation. I remember, in one of the theatrical places there was a canvas occupying an entire wall and representing the leadership. Shagal identified me Granovsky, the head of the house, with his hands raised and holding a small individual who was Shagal himself. Those in La Ruche, did they really carry one another on their shoulders? Or in their hearts? I don’t know, but that strange and idealized poet in fact supported us a great deal.

Of Jacob Shapiro’s works we know only two: a still life picture belonging to the gallery and a pencil portrait of R. Drampian. We have also inquired on his standing in French and Russian media. This however is not sufficient to form a complete idea and to come to a definitive conclusion with regard to assigning the backside drawing to this origin.

On the other hand, the piece is so saturated with the spirit of Shagal that a question arises, how powerful was Shagal’s influence upon Shapiro, that he would paint a large canvas, only to cut it into pieces and to use one fragment for the still life. What is this, a manifestation of ‘Shagalism’, or a previous version of Shagals theatrical composition that he had rejected?

The answer is still uncertain, although the considerations are interesting by themselves, by the simple reason that directly or indirectly are related to Shagal, as well as elucidate the functioning of the little known painter Jacob Shapiro within the context and the environment of the great Russian artists in the 1920s.

The situation with the work here described shows that the staff of the gallery have serious discussions of similar cases and take comprehensive decisions, this picture now has been subjected to thorough rehabilitation and is going to be displayed in one of the showrooms.

In general, this story pursues an important objective: to focus the attention of the gallery visitors upon the invisible part of museum. It is very relevant to the following lines by Shagal: “Perhaps, his (Shagals’) hair that has never seen a comb, his narrow face, roving, moving eyes, immersed into creative passion, with their small pupils, like grains of rice...” The 1920s photos of M. Shagal corroborate the version described here.
MARTIN MIKAELYAN

Perpetuum Mobile

I saw the pictures by Grigor Gurzadian for the first time in the 70s. "Why should this gifted scientist want to have his own painted landscapes around?", I used to ask myself. This exhibition however, has proved this disorder to be quite serious.

The desire for painting had infected him decades ago, when he observed canvases by Harutian Kalenz in the home of Artem Alikhanyan.

Now his landscapes and still life pictures remind of the Armenian painting specimens of the 1960s, which "radiated light", as was said about scores of images on different occasions.

Gurzadian seems to have created joint sketches with Levon Kojoyan, while in the company of Hovhannes Zardaryan he tried to enliven in his workshop what he had picked up in nature.

Kalenz, of course. "It is impossible to copy Kalenz, as noted by Gurzadian, an imitation, perhaps, could be more successful, just try to hit the keys of the piano so as to remind a great pianist.

Grigor Gurzadian depicts mountains, rocks turned-up skywards, gorges, fields, flowers wrapped in extraterrestrial mystery.

Landscape, still life, portrait, occupy a great place in the Armenian fine arts of the 1960s. At that time the Armenian painters being somewhat naive, (very few were aware how sealed was our society) were satisfied with those genres and very limited available information. There is no one who could apprehend Gurzadian or contemporary English painters with ideas by painting landscapes. In the meantime, the progressive painters create images allegedly rich in thoughts, that may perhaps have a certain superficial appeal, but those canvases lack humane qualities, like those of the mentioned Englishmen or even the amateur artist Gurzadian.

Hadn't Gurzadian written his wonderful books, hadn't he authored his works in astrophysics, the fact of "Orion-2" would be enough for us to take pride in the person of this genuine scientist, with vision and poetry. "Orion-2" is the first ever orbital observatory, it is a revolution in astronomy.

- Are you Jorge Luis Borges?, - they asked the great writer who had already lost his sight.

- Yes, sometimes, answered Bohres.

Gurzadian is always himself, when writing on Democritus, Narekatsi or a cub poet, when leaving his basic work, taking up the easel.

Here is the legend he wrote on a book presented to his junior friend Vahan Kochchar: "To my beloved Vahan whom I discovered on the first year of the third millennium.

I have finished two essays, one is titled "The Andromeda Paradox", the other one "The Mysteries of Saturn". Andromeda is a galaxy, while Saturn is a giant planet. Following those two, I came over to Paravon.

Within a couple of months he gave two exhibitions and produced a hefty book of pictures. I also visited his workshop, what I saw there was like a separate exhibition.

Pictures by Paravon... Three traditional domains: portrait, landscape, still life, each of them can become a subject of discussion. We shall leave that domain to art critics. What I want to do here is to highlight the fourth, the issue of female body.

The issue of female body, as incorporated in the Hellenistic sculpture, has a history of 25 centuries, and about 20 centuries in the frescos (Pompe, Rome).

The Armenian art has no tradition in this field, hardly about a hundred years. My personal quest is in the appeal, poetry and lyrics in the female body. Like science fiction, like a nostalgic dream. Rodin is my ideal.

But then, the advent of Paravon brought poetry into female body. In our art it is a new phenomenon, quite new, which has not been there in the past. The naked body in large brush strokes, from head to toe in large generalizations, the poetry of the female body. Like science fiction, like a nostalgic dream. Rodin is my ideal.

The female body back view by Paravon is quite different. Instruments of expression are nearly nonexistent, a great mastery and skill is needed here. It is this mastery that I saw...
in the canvases by Paravon, including the feeling, rather than seeing, in the extreme uniformity of color, the tenderness and poetry of the body.

In the domain of the female body Paravon has become a phenomenon in the history of art.

Paravon continues his search, he is in full control of his resources.

Of course, I knew what pastel was, what I ignored were the surprises that it could carry. The strokes of his brush are easily observed, there is nothing superfluous, everything is as it should be: the body, light, color, shade, and the whole intricate variety of strokes in pastel.

This pastel array by Paravon has to find its permanent place in the Museum.

In my office in Garni you can hear the sounds of symphony music everywhere, day and night. The walls are covered in pictures, while below there are rows and rows of classical books. The volume by Paravon, filled with pictures, has found its place in that range.

November 30, 2005, Garni

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ARMENIA

During the years of E. Isabekian’s leadership the gallery experienced a new uplift stipulated by concepts of museum staff skill enhancement and the intention to develop the existing collections in light of modern research, to present them better, to enlarge in a targeted way, and to improve storage facilities.

Eugenia Khachatryan who had been working as fund keeper for quite a few decades, was replaced by Alis Bakrjan who had inherited her experience, dedication and the museum-type longevity. Young painters are gathered around Vardkes Bagdasaryan, head of the restoration workshop, disciple of L. Durnovo, the only restorer painter having the highest qualification in Armenia. He teaches them, transfers his complex professional secrets, they also attend enhancement courses in the museums of Leningrad and Moscow as well as at the I. Grabar Restauration Institute acquiring skills and proficiency, receiving the relevant instruction, to occupy the responsible jobs of restoring and depositing the museum objects.

It was at that time that a documentary copy was executed of the fresco at Kobair Monastery (12–13th cc.) This work was approved by the scientific board of the gallery and placed on permanent display. The works of the Feodosiya expedition are nearing completion on copying the central apsidies of the Crimean Holy Cross (1338) and the Feodosiya Saint Stepanos (15th c.) churches.

The State Hermitage Museum and the Russian Museum provide skill enhancement courses for ciceroni and heads of affiliated branches. The Hermitage in particular, annually receives staff members of the Museum’s European art research units who communicate with renowned Russian artists and do important work with regard to determining the schools and authorship of different pieces in their local collections.

Meanwhile, publication is accomplished of albums and catalogues “Hakob Hovnatanian and His Predecessors”, “Sargis Khachatryan”, “Eghishe Tadevosyan”, “Vano Khachabekian”, “Sedrak Rashmajian”, “Sedrak Arakelian”, “Edgar Shahin”, et al. Donations to the museum collections are going on. This process seems to find new breath, remind...
ing the inspiration of the 1920s and 1930s with regard to our newly established relations with the Diaspora.

Entering the European Art Section is “The Portrait of Gaizago Shalamon” by the Hungarian painter Ignaz Roshkovich donated by the Armenian community of Hungary, brought to Hungary by their Armenian ancestors in 1672. (Shalano Gaiazago was a Hungarian freedom fighter of the 19th century, known as an author and a playwright). The portrait is on a permanent display.

The artist Raphael Kheranian (Paris) donated “Portrait of a Man” by the English master Markus Herardsi and “The Portrait of a Boy” ascribed to Francisco Goya. “The Anointment of David” by Antonio Molinari, late 17th – early 18th c., was donated by the new Sebastian Armenian Union of USA. A canvas with an Old Testament plot and a marble sculpture by G. Blaajiotti. Sculptor Khoren Ter-Harutiun donated “A Nudie” by Ogisig Rodin”, while the French Armenian Albert Ashchian donated three pictures by Ripolesi, a contemporary Spanish painter.

By virtue of the 1970s donations the Russian collection was enriched. Thus, the archive in Zagorsk donated some well-known Russian painters of the 20th c. Le-Dantew Baxti, Rosanova, the black-and-white art pieces by Konashevich. The Union-wide Artistic Production association released 9 pieces by the well-known sculptor Sara Lebedeva, as well as V. Rojdestvensky, V. Stojarsky, A. Savitscas and other pieces of fine art.

Among the donated pieces there are many works by Armenian authors. Collectionist Aghasi Darbinyan (Paris) donated a piece by the great etcher Tigran Polad, while the painter R. Jeranian (Paris) donated 14 pieces of the latter, Jansen sent his 30 etchings and black-and-whites, Garzu – 118 lithographs, Vardush Muradian, Archil Gorky’s sister, donated “A Sitting Woman” – black-and-white art.

In 1975 the “Aurora” Publishers published “The State Gallery of Armenia” by N. Mazmanian - a large album (in English and French).

Convened in the 1980s were jubilee exhibitions and catalogue publications by Hakob Giurjian, Sedrak Rashmajian, Sedrak Arakelyan, Hakob Kojoyan, Gevorg Yakulov.

Large exhibitions were exported to many cities of the Former Soviet Union, fetching recognition to the masters of Armenian art. Exhibited in Tbilisi was Geovrg Bashinjagyan, in Kaunas Sedrak Arakelyan, in Makhachkala – Armenian painting and applied art, In Lviv – the Armenian embroidery, weaving and silver working, while the artists of Kiev had an opportunity to see the Russian painting of the 19 – 20 cc. represented in the Armenian Gallery.

In May 1986 the position of the gallery director was abandoned by Edward Isabekyan, which terminated his uniring 19-year of service in the domain of culture. Since July 1986, the post of director was occupied by Alexandr Ter-Gabrielian, who having previously worked for long years as chief of art section at the Ministry of Culture was well aware of the gallery activities.

During the Soviet years the Picture Gallery was engaged within the All-Union cultural system, securing our participation in the country-wide conferences and skill-enhancement courses for museum staff. In capital cities and big cities of different republics, like Moscow, Lviv, Alma-Ata, Vladimir, Vilnius, et al., sessions were convened with invitations extended to representatives of the museum as collective members of the Soviet Branch of the International Board of Museums. The link between museums and exhibitions continued. Hermitage presented to the Armenian public the exhibitions “The 18th-century West-European Etching” and “The West-European Broad-view Landscapes of the 19th Century”. In connection with the days of the Russian culture in Armenia there was an exhibition “The Soviet Russian Landscape” from the State Russian Museum of Leningrad. The response exhibition was convened in Moscow on the occasion of the Decade of the Armenian Culture. Exhibitions of the Gallery’s collections were organized in Sochi, Alma-Ata, and Izmail.

(To be continued)
Last year the current publication highlighted the art by the talented artist HRACHIA HAKOBIAN (1935 - 1982) (see #2, pp. 24 - 26). Indicated herein are several reproductions of pieces by the artist and a list of his posthumously convened personal exhibitions:

1984 • Painter's House, Yerevan
1984 • Picture Gallery, Odessa
1986 • Picture Gallery, Ejmiadzin
1987 • Picture Gallery, Kirovakan
1988 • Painter's House, Moscow
1989 • Painter's House, Leningrad
1986 • Picture Gallery, Riga
1991 • Alec Manukyan Center, Paris
1995 • National Picture Gallery, Yerevan
2000 • National Picture Gallery, Yerevan
Sargis Hamalbashian is a new transmitter of national painting, its trend that had been established in the 20th century by the Great Saryan and Archil Gorky, who found the worthy continuers in the persons of Kazents, Vruir, Minas, Ashot Hovhannisian, Gayane Khachatryan. Those dissimilar bright personalities were infected with what could be named as the music of fine arts, the magic of color.

Sargis was born in Giumri, in the heart of Shirak, the cradle of numerous gifted artists. ...He had long ago intended to move to Yerevan. In 1988, the terrible December earthquake only speeded up that earlier decision. Yerevan is the focus of the basic potential of our nation, determining the atmosphere and criteria of the national culture. Indeed, great distance generates nostalgic reminiscences, which is a certain stimulus for a sensitive creative temper.

Focusing upon the quiet of his workshop and severed from the world’s turmoil, the capacity to aspire to unknown places, enabled Sargis to embrace the unlimited geographic latitudes and to penetrate the depths of history. Architectural monuments, medieval squares, equestrian statues, decorations of luxurious castles, are compared to the miserable huts of Giumri and courtyards with old structures. In the neighborhood of vulgar grotesque figures there are manful warriors, mailed knights and aristocrats, cows, dogs, fish, or a guardian angel that smoothly sores over the chaotic and luxurious world. East and West with their multi-colored representatives live in peace and quiet, tanks and canon threaten noone, being submitted for permanent storage in the Sargis Hambashian’s museum.

Sargis manages the artistic space in an original way rarely addressing heterogeneous materials. He often makes use of stencils, which is very heavily prepared. What is usually being done with regard to the real objects – pieces of newspapers, entourage, is reduced by him to a technical device, which is completely his own operational product. The method developed after long years, stipulated the emergence of the style that exclusively belongs to him.

No one can foresee, how much time is given to him, at what time, at what age he will achieve his top point, when the potential of artistic inspiration will be depleted. Those speculations keep Sargis in permanent tension. “Each artist, like myself, has doubts. What if the pilgrimage will end halfway? One has to accomplish a lot, to say, to pronounce, to utter to the end. That is conversation with God and Universe. There is always something to say, and you always ask God: give me time to make it, to say it to the end, so long as to become empty and calm. I often think I will work until I confess and run dry. Then I become scared of that thought, since I started to imagine that the time to leave is coming. Therefore I started to wish for the contrary: not to get exhausted, to retain the permanent desire to run. God willing, Sargis Hamalbashian will stay long, long, since he needs an integral world, like all those people who believe in life, nature, Infinity of Universe and the almighty power.”

HENRIK IGITYAN,
Director of Armenia’s Museum of Modern Art
The painter Varos Shahmuradian (1940 – 1977) lived only 37 years. He was destined to be one of the exclusive personalities who by the unwritten laws of nature are obliged to create the lasting artistic treasures within the limited fragments of time allotted to them. He was born in Leninakan, in a well-to-do intellectual family. He was the elder son, since early years noted for sensitive soul and artistic temper. Educated in Yerevan, where his family had been established by that time, in 1967 graduated from the Industrial Artistic Higher School in Moscow.

Having himself experienced the search and discoveries characteristic of the young artists of the 60s and 70s (Brothers Elbekeyan, Varujan Vardanyan, Martin Petrosian, Seiran Khatalamajian) he was aware of his advantages, but humble as a man, tough and consistent as an artist. The results of his incessant work, inquiring mind, artistic taste and expressive methods are shown in his canvases: "Automasks" (1962), "An Encounter" (1963), "A Landscape" (1965).

Since the initial years of his creative life Shahmuradian merged with the domestic roaring and turbulent whirlpool. He was an enthusiastic partaker in the domestic and overseas exhibitions (Yerevan, Moscow, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Argentina, France, USA, etc.). In that period (1967 – 73) he also taught painting at Yerevan specialized Institutes, continuing his research with Armenian miniature painting and the early 20th c. French art. Mats and Picasso having become his idols.

Since the mid 1960s the brush touches of the painter became bold and sure, his line skilful and discrete, the color set subordinated to the interior balance of the composition. "Ancient Blessing" (1965) is in line with the Medieval Armenian miniature painting, whereas "My Predecessors" (1969), "Middle," "Family" (1970) are modern extensions of the the 19th c. Armenian portrait painting in classical noble manner. Gradually enriching his palette, decorative expression and motivation, the painter achieves the extreme spiritual tension, steadily increasing and becoming almost alarming. The images of everyday things and articles acquire symbolic meaning within a composition, becoming the tools for presenting the inner world of the painter.

Windows looking at an alarming blue light against the darkened background of the canvas, the wrinkled silk of curtains, details of the interior design, which were excellent means to resolve plastics within a space: "Nocturnal Vision" (1970), "A Window" (1970), "Still Life in Blue" (1971), "Room #13 (1972), "A Workshop Window" (1974). This array of widows with diverse perspectives makes the onlooker become a partaker to the tumultuous infinity outside. This symbolic, ambiguous and offensive atmosphere is immediately creating the mood of poetic anticipation, a strife for uneasy uncertainty.

Poeticism as formation of artistic mentality is characteristic to the art by Varos, poetry being a rich source of inspiration. Naturally, at this period he creates a graphic album of illustrations to Baudelaire which he intended to publish with the Armenian translation.

In early 1970s Shahmuradian created an entire array of lyrical heroines with emphasized individualities: "A Nude," "In the Mirror," "Expectation," "An Actress," "A Portrait of Veronica." Large compositions by Shahmuradian, stipulated by artistic and philosophical generalizations: "Zangezur," "In the Workshop of an Artist," "A Sonata, Spring Autumn" are impressive for their treatment of details, and for their bold color (turquoise-blue, scarlet-red, orange-gold, silver-brown) selection, often creating transitory conditions between light and shade, and changing the relations of colors thus underscoring the inner topical meaning.

The choicest taste and harmonic proportions are characteristic not only to Shahmuradian as an artist but also as a personality. His personality and art were also merged: a restrained, dignified person, good-hearted and respectable, an attentive listener, soft-spoken, a near-perfect personality.

Particularly fruitful was the artist's life of the latter period, when he never let go his palette. In 1976 he created "A Butterfly," a large-scale festive canvas, where a colored butterfly was in vain striving to freedom. Harmonically combined with it was a noble image, moving forward to encounter the light and beauty. Then follows "Crucifixion," and again "Albatros," this time very expressive, in restrained colors.

Wasn't it a feeling of impending tragedy that he touched upon in those images? They say that gifted individuals can be apprehensive of their approaching decease. So that if Baudelaire had compared a poet to a heaven-bound bird, then Varos did so with his tragic demise. Incidentally, this poem has been translated by Henrik Bakhchyanian, an outstanding connoisseur of French literature.

Thus the poet, you tore under tempest and blizzard Irresistive to arrows, defiant to fate, But for walking the ground in railing and whistle The span of your wings is exceedingly great.

The picture's background is pale blue showing a large beautiful wounded bird drenched in blood and doomed to destruction by repetitive falls. This expressive work painted in large bold touches produces a smashing impression, symbolizing the painter's heartfelt cry.

Varos Shahmuradian would have been 65 today, and regrettably, he will not be around to celebrate his anniversary, however, his legacy will atone for his un-lived years.
This page continues from the previous page discussing the art of Hakob Hacobyan. The text describes how his work reflects the phenomena of the artistic vision secured him the place at the side of the greatest Armenian artists. And the fact that Hacobyan's art reified the phenomena of the 20th century, like "dehumanization", indicate an artist that is perpetually in motion, proceeding in parallel with his time.

The still lives by Hakobyan related to the late 60s and early 70s differ fundamentally from those of the early period. The difference first and foremost is a new method of interpreting the objects by Hakobyan, which is reflected in the new vision by the artist. In the painting plane we see no more photographic effect, which was evident in the early period. In earlier works one can see occasional instantaneous "stolen freeze frames". We can classify the early period as "photographic", whereby Hakobyan was featuring as an operator, trying to find a convenient vantage point, to show an already prepared still life, however in the later period he became a director, constructing the composition, with regard to his own system of signs. The table, an almost inseparable part of Hakobyan's still life pictures, has become a theatre of operations, wherein his dramatic exercises take place. The objects interest the artist no more as such, and, retaining their external model, they lose their functionality to human properties. By this reason the Armenian still lives are constructed upon an internal semantic system, dictating the artistic resolutions. Environment becomes neutral, retaining a decorative background.

As noted by the painter, in his early period he tried to create a void around the object, and, proceeding from the partial to the general, he obtained an entire structure, which, like a sculpture in the interior, was placed in the center of the canvas. Hakobyan's idea was to depict the situation. In his still lives of the Soviet period Hakobyan is trying to depict motion. The painter is attracted by ordinary objects, however, in this case they become metaphoric. In the later period, only everyday objects remain from the old times, however everyday life as such, or the descriptions of everyday life, do not attract the painter any more.

"Chickens and eggs. Still life" (1969), "Fish in the Basket" (1976), "Apron and Eggs" (1972), "Fish and gloves" (1973), "Still Life with Fish" (1982). Those pictures show objects which are esthetically neutral. We can say that the primary objective of the painter is not esthetical. In the piece "Chickens and Eggs. Still life", we start to see the metaphoric interpretation of reality, that reaches its pinnacle in still life using it as a creative instrument. A bird on a dish, dead, is becoming a symbolic expression of the past, the egg expresses the future. Life and death, the ethereal and the mineral, this counterdistinction is a feature of Hakobyan's painting. The egg symbolizes the beginning. Indeed, surrounded by mineral or dead nature, it remains capable of reproduction, carrying life in itself.

In motion, proceeding in parallel with his time. The “humanized” instruments emerged in the 70-s. Hakobyan himself explained the removal of man from his art by that in Armenia he found man no more in his models which had been devised abroad. However, man does not disappear from Hakobyan's pictures, but rather he changes his face. In other words, man disappears as an exterior model. That change resulted from the change in Hakobyan's ideas. As noted by Gutin, each new idea is like a new organ that we acquire. Our ideas are like observation points wherefrom we can scan the whole world. We perceive objects using the ideas that we have about them, however, in the natural process of thinking we are not aware of that, like the eye that does not see itself in the process of vision. It can be assumed that Hakobyan just did not see, did not perceive his previous models, because his ideas about man had changed.

Hakobyan's new man is hidden behind the instrumental model and is merged with it. "Creative Instruments" (1976), "Instruments" (1977), "Instruments and Eggs. Aggression" (1980), "Scared Instruments. Still Life" (1979), "Instruments on the Table" (1980). Those works comprise an integral illustration. We see aggressive and scared instruments involved into fighting, game and conversation. Those mise en scenes by Hakobyan can be regarded as still life with some difficulty. Paradoxically, his dead nature lives. However, it is this
From Dvin to Los Angeles

Edward Vardanyan

This is not a story about Dvin, however, before coming to the essence of the matter, I want to make a short reference to history, to the 30s of the 4th century, when in the heart of the Ararat Valley in the shadow of Minor and Greater Ararat foundation was laid of Dvin, the capital city of Armenia. This large medieval city has completely vanished from the face of the earth. However, for long years, the citadel of the city has been archeologically excavated showing the ruins of the Catolicos’ Village. He thinks in colors. The structure and composition of his pictures receive images and expressions due to the use of colors.

The thematic orientation of the artist is a woman and a flower. He thus celebrates life, beauty, motherhood and goodness.

“Askhi,” this is the title of the picture, representing a beauty matching her name. But is she indeed just the Goddess of love, water and fertility, or simply a real, full-blooded, ideal beauty, a woman, a charmingly attractive and enticing female?

In the words by St. Narek: Your eyes will spread like morning sea, and filled with laughter is the mouth of two petals dripping the juice of roses.

The artist well familiar with the eclectic art using his original thinking was able to subdue many criteria adhering to human thought and modeled formulas. That opened the potential for him to fashion new approaches to the existing values, viz.: sensuality, diverse formations of physical contact. That means mundane freethinking, that since the renaissance and even earlier had entered all branches of art. That is the subject of the primacy of love, emphasized by erotic and sensual variations.

The same idea is shown in “Expectation,” a woman on the canvas, seeming to be a visual illustration to the words by Kuchak:

Your breast is white. It is a shining temple, your tits are like a dazzling fire, I will go out to cry and chime, and come again to be flooded by this light.

And another picture, as a continuation of the theme “In Paradise.” “Lilt.” In Paradise, indeed. The matter is that the “expectation” of the previous image was materialized in an encounter and physical engagement. That is not a scene reflecting the mythic story of a frustrated love between Adam and Lil, but rather a real, material love that has taken place, amongst the dreams and feelings, and expectations of fertility.

Edward the painter is also concerned with other subjects. “December Devastation.” A scene of grief with no characters, demanding no words. The sadness of humanity demands no comment.

The painter’s brush was substituted by a weapon. He was defending his country. He won, he made it free, and he was wounded. In 1992 we heard of him no more. And suddenly of late I ran across him in Los Angeles. He grew older, but his eyes were were missing. Missing his birthplace Artsakh, his kinfolks, comrades, Dvin, the soil and water, the tree and flower of Motherland. Living away from native land however, he can dispel his homesickness in his own way. He paints. There is no free space on the walls of his small workshop. It is unimportant, whether they sell or not (my impression was that he is not quite willing to cede a picture to any money-giver). Cut off from everyday noise, the painter focused his mind on a dream world of his own creation.

What is the dream world of the artist? Village. He thinks in colors. The structure and composition of his pictures receive images and expressions due to the use of colors.

In “Paradise,” Lil is depicted as a woman of light and color, beaming with professional aptitude and power. As shown by his pictures, exuding warmth, flooding with light and color, beaming with professional aptitude and power.

Canvas by Gagik Vardanyan is tender poetry written in color. Those nos-talgic letters have a melodic undertone, whereby formal expression and a hot and cold contrastive color shrinks displays dramaticism, like that of “Mona Lisa.” Seen here is a novella dualism emphasizing the concept of “AS IS” at a given moment.

THE ARCHITECT

basically are exploratory intellectual landscapes, contemporary urban scenes, suburbs and grasslands on the horizon, and from time to time dreamy images of Armenian monuments with unending return to Motherland symbolized by churches. The art by Gagik Vardanyan is a gamut of colors, its natural environment is bright, while the residents are transient and painted in cool colors.

Art by Gagik Vardanyan is tender poetry written in color. Those nos-
talgic letters have a melodic undertone, whereby formal expression and a hot and cold contrastive color shrinks displays dramaticism, like that of “Mona Lisa.”
Opposers in Yerevan today are around a dozen private picture galleries, each one differing from others by its adopted principles. One of the general concerns is the problem of shaping a common taste.

According to Armen Mkrtchyan, director of “Mkrtchyan Picture Gallery”, the art business requires a serious approach, since it deals with spiritual values, whereby the human factor is appreciated. “People have to be educated since early age. Taste has to be developed”. To that effect Aram Mkrtchyan and his wife Alla Aghavelyan often hold meetings with children and students, as well as with the visitors of the museum. Meanwhile, Aram Sargsyan, director of “Arame” picture gallery, welcomes all galleries, adding that founding of each gallery is an event of great significance. Distancing himself from the idea that new galleries cause significance, Aram Sargsyan thinks “with our principles and ethic, we can create a net, both inside and outside. The Council will have its foundation, that would be helpful to the artists with whom it is currently engaged. The operational field will stabilize, there will be no drops in prices, on the contrary, by careful cooperation we shall become represented worldwide by merit, enter the art market, hire the salesmen to sell Armenian art. Art is priceless, but if it enters the market, it has to be appraised.

“Arame” picture gallery was founded in 2003 (Yerevan, Abovyan 13). The founder director is Aram Sargsyan, Ph.D., candidate of philological science. Since its inception the gallery operates following distinctly formulated principles. It presents mainly different trends of realistic art based upon figurative thinking. According to the Director, in the last three years the gallery has consolidated a number of gifted artists like Ruben Abovyan, Emil Gazaz, Taron Muradyan, Sargsi Hamalbashyan, Armen Gevorgyan, Kaits Vankyan, Gervorg Egiazaryan, et al. With three of the mentioned painters: Ruben Abovyan, Emil Gazaz, Gervorg Egiazaryan, “Arame” is working with exclusive rights. The purpose of the gallery is not only to display, but also to promote some authors, it has deployed the publishing activity. It has printed catalogues of several artists and some authors, it has deployed the publishing activity. It has printed catalogues of several artists and some authors.

The Mkrtchyan showroom official seat has convened multiple exhibitions: thematic, personal, Armenian primitivists, symbolist-abstractionists, Russian, European art, portraits, the traditional April 24, as well as displays by Vahram Galstyan, Hovhannes Ter-Tadevosyan, Mkrtich Kamalyan, Khachatur Esayan, Gayane Khachatryan, Ashot Hovannissyan, et al. There were many charitable ac-tions to help children. Each exhibition is presented to the public following long months of careful work, in an academically correct and tasteful display.

Like other gallery directors, Armen Mkrtchyan thinks that the more the galleries, the better for developing art, adding: “Serious painting can be only at a gallery, you cannot sell a serious thing in the street”. In his opinion, art business would profit a lot by grouping the galleries. “I suggest to create the Directors’ Council, as practiced in developed countries. If we go in for serious business, we have to establish a so-called syndicate. That will enable us to get empowered, to create a net, both inside and outside. The Council will have its foundation, that would be helpful to the artists with whom it is currently engaged. The operational field will stabilize, there will be no drops in prices, on the contrary, by careful cooperation we shall become represented worldwide by merit, enter the art market, hire the salesmen to sell Armenian art. Art is priceless, but if it enters the market, it has to be appraised.

“For me, art business is an outstanding phenomenon” says Aram Sargsyan, “with our principles in mind we promote the art that we consider the most expedient, that does not mean we exclude other trends of art, we positively welcome all trends, however, we think that each gallery may have its face, its style, and it is good that Yerevan today is the scene of this process, the profiling of the galleries, when each one is trying to create its team, concentrate around the artists who adhere to a certain tendency and promote the art that seems most indigenous.

As of today, the galleries are very few. A European city of the size of Yerevan would have hundreds. It is by virtue of these galleries that the art market is formed accompanied by an ever increasing public interest.

In the West, every intellectual, self-respecting businessman must have an art collection. In this country that culture has yet to come about. Nonetheless, there are galleries in Yerevan, that are second to none in Europe, and even excel many.

They have discovered the correct operational mechanism. The difficulties of this stage, to my mind, will be overcome, the time of the private exhibitions will have yet to come.

Do we agree with Aram Sargsyan? (To be continued)
Eavesdropping
On One's Own Roots

Following the late medieval ages, the Armenian musical art experienced a downfall, with a further uplift only in the late 19th century. We have had no Baroque period with its tender miniatures and developed polyphony, we remained untouched with the deterministic of classical style, we have not enjoyed the appearance of a contemporary composer like Shubert, who reduced his entire composition to the folk vocalism, while from the whole inventory of romanticism we regretfully assimilate only what is related to parlor and demonstration.

The creative work by Komitas seems to fill in all those gaps. Indeed, his music in many cases has common margins with all the mentioned schools and styles. Moreover, his art opens such horizons that until today have not fully opened in the European music: the impressionism of Debussi, the folklorism of Bartok, the extreme semantics in each sound of Webern’s pieces. It should be said that given the unlimited musical talent, Komitas deliberately sacrificed his own compositional language in favor of the language of country song, thus becoming its preacher and its symbol. It is impossible to say about Komitas: ‘He is feeding on the musical origins of the Nation’. He himself is that origin, he is not feeding, he is the feeder.

The purpose of a performer of music by Komitas is to discover the cultural symbolics and codes accumulated therein, to be very sensitive so as not to violate the intonation of the song, and to finally merge its sound with the sound of the entire Armenian nation singing through Komitas. The pianist Lusine Grigoryan who produced a musical Armenian nation singing through Komitas. As long as the seed stays, this type of tree will not cease to be.

In L. Grigoryan's performance instrumental virtuosity is completely absent, being fundamentally alien to the music by Komitas. Like the medieval Japanese poets, Komitas is a master of miniature. He does not need to be eternalized. While listening to the CD carrying nearly the entire piano legacy of Komitas, one can do comparison: if the whole Armenian music is a tree, Komitas is the seed of this tree. As long as the seed stays, the tree will not cease to be.

Hearing L. Grigoryan play it seems that the pianist puts her ear to the ground, not playing, but rather waiting for the first buds to appear, to cherish them with care. Her playing is touching, like a sweet motherly caress, so close to Komitas’ poetry. When however it is needed to play with force, the pianist does it as reluctantly, without hitting.

It is often stated that Komitas cleansed the Armenian village music from foreign impurities. It would perhaps be right to say that Komitas cleansed, idealized the entire Armenian nation, and isolated from the elixir of his music is what is the most advanced, the most essential. Particularly valuable in L. Grigoryan's performance is that with a miraculous perception she can pick up that Komitasian artery presenting it in an original and sensitive way. She deeply feels the demand and measure of the performing freedom, and does not prevent music from staying as it is: as if she sends it back to its original state, the song. On the other hand, his perfect command of the instrument enables her to play discretely and to simultaneously reconcile different musical articulations, seemingly with no effort.

The city's central square is the starting point of Rossini Street, and the location of two musical schools, one – the Renata Tebaldi, Mario Del Monaco International Vocal Academy, and the other one – the G. Rossini Conservatory. Taking part in the vocal art enhancement courses at the Academy since November 2005 were the young Armenian vocalists Hovannes Gevorgyan (baritone), Veronika Padaryan (soprano), and Gor Markosyan (bass). Parallel to the study, within the context of monthly concert programs they have the occasion to perform professionally.

On February 3, the students of the Academy (Armenians, Serbs, Koreans, Georgians, Japanese) performed their native vocal compositions. Our companions featured both classical and contemporary Armenian composers. Accompaniment was provided by the professional Dutch concertmaster Villem Peink. In the concert section Hovannes Gevorgyan performed the aria of David Bek from the opera of the same name by Armen Tigranyan, and the art song “A Willow Bowed over a Brook” by Daniel Ghazaryan. Veronika Padaryan presented pieces by Arno Babajanyan. Gor Markosyan performed Anahit’s arioso from the opera of the same name by Tigran Chubajian and Mosi’s aria from ‘Anush’ by Armen Tigranyan, continuing the Anush-Musi duets accompanied by Veronika Padaryan.

The audience welcomed the Armenian performers with applause. Eventually, the veteran Maestro Melani highly appreciated the execution by the Armenian performers, underlining at the same time their originality and appeal.
Hakobyan remains faithful even now to this system of world view established in the 70s.

For example, the movement by Dali has a physical character. An impressive still life can be seen in Salvador Dali, and it is named so, “Moving Still Life”. (The Good Smell of My Wheat) is based on a poem by Shahn Ghabarian. The other two songs have lyrics by Iran Jannati Atayi: Baradar Jan (Dear Brother) and Eshghian ashgham bash (Be My Lover O My Love). The fourth song is a crowd cheerful and a personal favorite of mine called Ejafal (Permission) with lyrics by Reza Atayi. Audiences all over the world are always thrilled by this song whenever Dariush sings it at his concerts. Varoujan also arranged several other songs for Dariush based on melodies by other composers.

Varoujan composed only one song for the incredible and beloved Persian singer Farhad called Hafteyé khakestari (Grey Week). He also arranged seven other songs for Dariush including his Tajé tarané (The Crown of the Song) album that were originally composed for Googoosh.

The poet Shahyar Ghanbari and Googoosh. Parviz Atabki as orchestrator for his Tanin National Film Festival for the movie Kandoo. When he moved to Tehran, he was hired by the Iranian Music Festival in Greece and won the Golden Medal for best song. In 1979, when he was arranging the soundtrack for the film Bar faraz aseman (On Top of the Skies), Varoujan had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. After being confined to bed for ten days he passed away on 26 Shahvar (September 17). The next day he was buried by friends of the Eastern Armenian community in Tehran.

Varoujan Hakhbandian was born in 1940 in Kazer, Iran. The same year he was also the father. His mother died in 1942 and he was sent to live with his grandparents. When his grandmother died in 1947 he was sent to the Italian boarding school in Tehran. He graduated from the Tehran Conservatory of Music where he learned to play the piano. His teachers were Ruben Grigorian and Ludwig Bax. After that he went to the United States to specialize in music arrangement for four years. After that he returned to Iran, Varoujan taught music in Armenian schools for two years in Ahvaz. When he moved to Tehran, he was hired by Farsi Atabak as orchestrator for his Tann studio. Then he started composing songs for the Zangooeela television show where new voices were discovered. There he met the poet Shahn Ghabarian and Googoosh. His song Harf (Letter) based on Ghabarian’s poem was chosen as Best Song of the year in 1975. The same year he won the SEFAS Award for Best Film Music at the 5th Iranian National Film Festival for the movie Kandoo. One of Varoujan’s other compositions based on Ghabarian’s work called Eshghyae kooshka man (My Small Village) is lost forever and no copy of it exists anywhere. This song was performed by Zia Atabay in the Athens Music Festival in Greece and won the Golden Medal for best song. In 1979, when he was arranging the soundtrack for the film Bar Faraz aseman (On Top of the Skies), Varoujan had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. After being confined to bed for ten days he passed away on 26 Shahvar (September 17). The next day he was buried by friends of the Eastern Armenian community in Tehran.

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From 1970 to his tragic death in 1979, Varoujan composed twenty seven film soundtracks and was highly ranked among the best film music composers along with Babak Bayat and Eskandar Monsereddizi in the history of film music in Iran.

Babak Bayat said about him: “All that we have in a song is from Varoujan. All the arrangements and the musical themes have their origin and are influenced by the works of Varoujan”.

Hakobyan’s objects never make any unreal movement: piers hold tight, nippers cut, etc. The movement is done in the inside. Being merged with man, the instruments never look to us unreal in their movement, however, man’s existence remains visible and real.
We are looking at the much anticipated edition by the “Van” publishers of Los Angeles and the “Tigran Mets” publishers of Yerevan of “The Silversmiths of Armenia” by Hovsep Tokat. The author is a distinguished collector of silver articles based in Los Angeles, whose long years of research and collected items and data are put into service to the Armenian studies of the relevant periods. Actually, the multiple specimens of silver art exhibited in different museums of the world until now have not merited the appropriate attention. This gap is filled by Hovsep Tokat with his professional approach. The purpose of the book is to submit to the readers and specialists data on certain periods of the Armenian history which, beside Constantinople, Caesaria, Smyrna, Trabzon, Carin and other places, mostly include Van-Vaspurakan, as well as places of Armenian exile of the post-genocide period. This situation has been masterfully interpreted by the specialists supplying the book: Harry Vorberian and Ishkhan Jinbashian. The work is printed in Armenian and English, with interesting selection of illustrations, putting into circulation extensive evidence, including ancient coins, sheaths of swords, book bindings, containers for everyday use, ornaments, things, et al.

Armenian nation, wherein of a particular interest is the subsection “The Cultural Life of Armenians under the Ottoman Rule”, with all the most important intellectuals and artists. Presented in the second section is the chronicle of Van City, with a special emphasis on the most significant specimens of the Van’s jewelers art. The second, fourth and fifth sections of the book are of a particular interest, bearing the names: “Armenian Ornamental Art in silver and gold work”, “Armenian Gold and Silver Working in Van”; To be noted here is an original definition of ornamental art by the author: “Ornamental art shows the real life of the people. That art, from the beginning of human history to this time has embellished the human body, clothes, dwellings, furniture and utensils, instruments, books and manuscripts, places of worship and temples, even tombstones”. Among the exhibits there are some specimens belonging to the author, like a silver gold-coated host box, different crosses, silver wine cups from Van, a chrism cup, cigarette boxes, tumblers, inkpots, pens and different ornaments, rings, handbags, incense cups, handles, etc. In this part of the book an important contribution is the professional explanation of the silversmiths’ technical innovations, thermal treatment and other techniques, gilding. An important undertaking was the compilation of lists of renowned jewelers, their personal details and trademarks.

“The Silversmiths of Armenia” by Hovsep Tokat is a talented work, not only because of artifacts and innovations, but rather by the method of presentation. This is an comprehensive merging of the contemporary and the historical, the professional and the commonly accessible, the Armenian and the International. The history of this book includes a wide-range cooperation between the domestic and overseas specialists. Indeed, while writing the book, the author contacted about fifty foreign and domestic specialists.

D. G. KERTMANIAN, Prof. Dr. of Architecture, V. M. HARUTUUNIAN, member of RA National Academy

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All mentioned publications are culturally oriented, and loaded with essential information.

CONDOLENCE

The Editorial staff of “Armenian Art” offers condolence to Norayr Vardanyan, executive secretary of the journal, on the occasion of death of his beloved mother, SEDA MKHITARYAN, which occurred on December 9th, 2005, at 82 years of age.

The Editorial staff of “Armenian Art” offers condolence to Hasmik Ginoyan, Executive Director of the Journal, on the occasion of death of her beloved mother, SONA GINOYAN which occurred on January 16, 2006, at 68 years of age.

Milanda de Mont
(Australia).

A Personal Exhibition,
the National Picture Gallery,
June 7.
The Editorial Office of “Armenian Art” Magazine is advocating a compilation of an illustrated manual “The Armenian Painters and Sculptors of the Early 21st Century”, to include the expatriate Armenian professional artists.

Please find the relevant forms to be filled in and submitted at our web site www.armenianart.am