The Indispensability of Cultural Heredity

Gevorg Bashinjaghyan - 150

The Eternal Stars of the Armenian Art:
Ara Sargsyan, Hovsep Pushman, Sargis Muradyan, Paruhi Tepelikyan

Diaspora: Sargis Tosunyan (Egypt), Dionne Haroutunian (Switzerland)

A Valuable Publication about the Armenian National Attire

"Moughni" Publishers

Michael Goorjian: Yerevan is My Favorite City

In The Memory of Khoren Palyan
The main exhibition of the Armenian Year in France was entitled “Holy Armenia”. Such a wonderful name for our national self-esteem… And not only the name, but the whole chain of events, the high-ranking participating officials, and after all the selection of the best presented values is definitely wonderful. The Armenian Year in France is really a celebration for us, and firstly - a cultural celebration. But let’s turn away from the sounds of festivity for a moment, and see whether the Armenian culture and cultural heritage have a deserving place in the actual life of our country, or it is a luxurious showcase where we love to lead especially foreigners. Is it normal to have a maximum of 30-40,000 visitors per year in our largest museums? Can a school or university graduate be considered a person familiar with the Armenian culture? And finally, can the culture be developed, when it is on the last line of the country budget list?

The first prerequisite for developing national culture is the preservation of its continuance and legacy. Although we have a cruel history, we have managed to preserve our cultural heredity, which resulted in our cultural uniqueness. Thanks to that we can proudly present the Armenian national culture to the world. But today, when we are independent, it seems that our common vigilance has weakened. The desire of looking new and modern has turned into a painful tendency of (if not rejecting, then) neglecting the past. We are all guilty of this.

Our French friends have named Armenia a holy land firstly because of our history and culture. Their organized large-scale events are not only of a cognitive value, but also financially profitable for their country. Our enemy Turkey, unwillingly not being able to disregard the same values and circumstances, has reconstructed the Aghtamar’s Church. They both are realistic; whereas we are still in the emotional field in respect of our culture, instead of possessing it and gaining real benefits. The times of illusions were gone long ago, and it is time to take reasonable actions.

E. Matevosyan

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Gevorg Bashinjaghyan was a brilliant man, a shining star in the whole Caucasus. He spent his life as a real cultural worker. Armenians, Georgians and Russians highly appreciated him. Bashinjaghyan’s name was not only a symbol in the fine art, but also a separate degree of morality, generosity and nobleness. Certainly, in 1910s this name was being gradually exposed to the bourgeois taste of Tbilisi: through a painting, public made judgments about a homeowner or a picture owner’s social status. However, it was not the artist’s fault; as it was not Aivazovski’s reflecting emptiness and a mad and senseless rash into the materialistic kingdom. That’s why “we” is so important. Otherwise, even my grandfather knew this phrase: “A star rose in the Armenian poetry sky of the early 20th century – Vahan Teryan’s star”. But did the starlight reach to us? Are we the possessors of that culture, or…? Whoever wants to oppose me, let theater, in Sayat Nova, and his aspiration and endeavors to serve the Armenian culture - with the level of today’s art workers. They consider themselves “progressive”, because they repeat (if don’t tie together) the works performed 10 years ago by Jerman Nisch and others.

In this regard Bashinjaghyan was modest and really a "retrograde". In 1899, in Paris, for a short period he spontaneously approached the “door” of impressionism, but did not enter, as did Eghishe Tadevosyan. In 1910, when like a Russian academic-realist Bashinjaghyan painted Sevan or Ararat, postimpressionists, symbolists, fauvists (Matisse’s group) and cubists had already emerged in Paris. Bashinjaghyan did not cross the border set by his teachers. However, this fact does not even slightly diminish Gevorg Bashinjaghyan’s role and purpose in the Armenian art, as well as in the cultural progress of Tbilisi and Caucasus. Stepanos Nersisyan was 76, when he visited Bashinjaghyan’s exhibition in Tbilisi in 1883. “There is a divine sparkle”, he stated. Compared to Nersisyan, Bashinjaghyan was a considerable figure: without his landscapes, a substantial period in the Armenian fine art would have remained empty.

Bashinjaghyan’s best paintings have not lost their brilliance up to now. They demonstrate the author’s subconscious aspiration for the real beauty, and his striving to go even further. Bashinjaghyan is a bright example of modesty, diligence, morality and intelligence. Stepan Zoryan has a wonderful description of the artist in his notes: “When he walked along the main (formerly Golovinski, nowadays - Rustaveli) avenue in Tbilisi, he was distinguished by his gentle behavior and a slightly dreamful gaze, so that everybody could think of him nothing else than that he was an artist. His profession had put its stamp upon himself: high sensitivity, sharp eye and artistic manners…” Perhaps these all were natural endowments, and had nothing to do with the profession; however, he was equally intelligent, delicate and nice in other relationships. Once you had a chance of conversation with him, you would fill with respect and sympathy towards him.”

I hope the reader is aware of Tumanyan’s poem dedicated to Bashinjaghyan, and also of the comments of Grigor Artsruni, Petros Adamyan, Shirvanzade, Avetik Isahakyan, and Georgian and Russian artists living in Tbilisi.

Gevorg Bashinjaghyan painted those Caucasian roads, on which the civilization was slowly and persistently marching over traditionalism. His spirit was also traditional, and he admired the Armenian and Caucasian virgin nature with its intact beauty, which “the hand of engineers had not destroyed yet, as it did in Switzerland…” He compared the roads of Caucasian mountains with “a strong and powerful highlander, whose gaze is both
**Exhibitions at the National Gallery of Armenia**

Organizing exhibitions is one of the most important segments of activities of the National Gallery of Armenia.

The following is the list of 2007 exhibitions, realized so far:

- February, 2007 – the German famous artist Max Ernst’s works
- March, 2007 – Enovk Nazaryan’s (1868-1928) and Eghishe Tadevosyan’s graphical works.
- April 18, 2007 – The Armenian-Japanese joint exhibition “Ararat-Fuji”; followed by another one dedicated to Sargis Muradyan’s 80th Anniversary

During this year several jubilee exhibitions are planned: Gevorg Bashinjaghyan – 150, Garzu – 100, Zareh Mutafyan – 100. There will be opened the sculptor Hakob Gyurgenyan’s new showroom.

The following exhibitions will be organized:

- An exhibition-contest dedicated to the 15th Anniversary of the Armenian Army and the Liberation of Shushi
- Tigran Polad’s, Boris Eghiazaryan’s (Ukrain) exhibitions
- Armenian and Belarusian artists’ graphical works
- Engravings of the Japanese Utagawa school
- Russian art of 19th - early 20th centuries, etc…

**The Eternal Star of the Armenian Sculpture**

The world of art has personalities who shine out both in their lifetime and afterlife.

Ara Sargsyan left his unique glare in the constellation of the Armenian sculpture. The artist was born in the Armenian village Magri, near Constantinople. His short life (04/07/1902-05/13/1969) was worth several lives, and many volumes are needed to cover all his works. This short article is dedicated to the 105th anniversary of the multi-talented artist’s birth.

With his professional education and productive artistic life, Ara Sargsyan proved that people were born as talents, instead of becoming them. After his primary education at the Department of Sculpture of the Constantinople Fine Arts College, he entered into the Masters’ School of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Receiving his professional education in the heart of Europe, Ara arrived in Yerevan in 1925, where he initiated public and educational activities.

In 1932, by his and other dedicated people’s efforts there was established the Union of Fine Artists of Armenia, with Ara Sargsyan - as the first president. After a lot of hard work, in 1945 there was established the Yerevan State Institute of Fine Arts (now Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts) with Ara Sargsyan - as the first rector and head of the Department of Sculpture.

The establishment of professional sculpture in Armenia is associated with the name of Ara Sargsyan. He was predestined to educate several generations of Armenian sculptors and create the Sargsyan
Ara Sargsyan was one of those few artists of the 20th century, who became renowned in their lifetime. Many of his works are considered to be classics of the Soviet Armenian sculpture.

As an appreciation of his artistic merit, Ara continuously received government awards for his separate works, as well as for professional activities.

The renowned artist posthumously received the State Prize of Armenia. In 1973 Ara Sargsyan’s House-Museum was opened as a branch of the National Gallery of Armenia.

Besides the NGA and his House-Museum, the works of the great master are also exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery. In addition to his sculptural work, Ara Sargayan designed many stages and performances, especially in G. Sundukyan National Academic and H. Paronyan Musical Comedy Theaters.

Although there are a lot of publications devoted to the prominent artist, A. Solokhyun’s research entitled “Life-Feat” in Russian (Yerevan, 2004) was an endeavor to newly represent his social-political activities that were not disclosed before. According to the author’s investigations, the artist was secretly a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation within the Soviet Union, and supporter of the operation “Nemesia” by the group “Armenian Avengers”. It appears that before coming to Armenia, he participated in terrorizing the Turk evildoers, who had committed the Genocide.

Before disclosing and publicizing these facts, the hospitalized artist’s will to anatomize his body (which would later reveal his violent death) seemed quite strange… Ara Sargsyan really played a significant role in many aspects of his life… As the descendents of our prominent predecessors, we must revere heroic aspirations.

The sculptor Sargis Tosunyan was born in Alexandria, in 1953. He received his primary education at the local Poghosyan National College, where his teacher of art was the famous Egyptian-Armenian artist Hambar Hambardzumyan. He also graduated from the Mellkonyan College of Cyprus, where he was the talented artist Hrant Keshishyan’s student. Then he studied at the Sculpture Department of the Alexandria Fine Art University, where his teachers were the professors Apt El Raziz and Kaper Hikaz. For many years Sargis Tosunyan taught drawing classes at the Poghosyan National College.

Tosunyan has been a member of the Artists’ Union of Egypt since 1984. He has had eight individual exhibitions in Egypt, and participated in many group exhibitions not only in Egypt, but also in Cyprus, Italy, Sudan, Romania, and other places.

Tigran Iron” Armenian Cultural Association, the Association of Artists and Intelligentsia of Alexandria.

Hereby we present a few comments about the artist from the Diaspora press.

A. Anivkhanyan

“Bronze is a “classical” substance for him, and he perfectly masters the skills of its transformation, while aluminum serves mostly for experimental purposes. As to clay, Tosunyan uses it to express “rapid” feelings and ideas, which are not considered for further processing. Thus, the clay works have an imaginative and “draft” nature.”

Hrant Keshishyan, “Arev”

“He is not an innovative or experimental artist, but has a profound respect for centuries-old sculptural heritage. He decisively stands on the pedestal of classicism. In his works it is “the beautiful” that prevails, and not “the ugly” (as is many works of contemporary artists, who make a viewer suffer by only presenting “the ugly”).”

Hrant Keshishyan, “Arev”

“His works are dynamic; there is dynamism that reflects their restrained emotions, smoothly and partly balanced with the gravity of the sculptures’ material. There is a sense of profoundness in Tosunyan’s similar sculptures. There exists a soft collision between their lively yearnings and restrictions of life; a wall-barrier symbolized by flat lines, limiting the hero’s sight and constraining his romantic and heroic aspirations.”

A. Takosyan, “Apya”
VAHAN TEKEYAN
CONTEST - 2007

The Tekeyan Cultural Center founded in Beirut in 1947 (after the name of the Armenian poet, orator, public figure Vahan Tekeyan (1878-1945)) has been realizing numerous cultural events in the Diaspora and Armenia. Since 1991, the Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Center in Yerevan has been organizing annual contests in different spheres of culture and science.

On January 23, 2007 the “Vahan Tekeyan” prize was awarded in 11 nominations. 43 works (31 landscapes and 12 sculptures) were presented in the contest of Fine Art, and about 50 works in the Artistic Photography. In each of the 11 nominations the winners received prizes – honorarium and certificates. They were selected by field experts: Hravard Hakobyan – Fine Art, Albert Yavuryan - Artistic Photography.

All 12 sculptures of the exhibition were extremely admirable, among those were Yura Samvelyan’s “Model”, Tigran Arzumanayan’s “Vladimir Miryan”, Lilit Khanaghyan’s “Awakening” and “Europe’s Abduction”, Lilit Karaganyan’s “Erkraghats”, Gagik Ghazaryan’s “Viktoria”, Tarek Hakobyan’s “Paris Herumi”, Gevorg Gevorgyan’s “The Spirit of the Freedom Fighter” and Ara Akeyan’s “Parajano”. Arto Chamkachyan’s “Walking Man” and Samvel Ghazaryan’s “Musicians” sculptures won the contest. It was the only nomination with two winners, by the decision of Ruben Mirzakhanyan - the President of the Central Board of the Tekeyan Cultural Center of Armenia.

With modern ideology, Arto Chamkachyan’s world presents various and serious themes to his audience. Working perfectly with plaster, stone, wood and bronze, the sculptor creates wonderful works.

In this figure the artist has avoided the realistic image of a human being, making a viewer to fantasize and contemplate. The character is temperate, generalized with the symbol of a walking man by the author’s original solution.

The next prize winner was the sculptor Samvel Ghazaryan with his three-figure bronze sculpture group named “Musicians”.

Since his youth the multiple prize-winner S. Ghazaryan has been featuring the musical theme. He made a three-figure composition “Musicians” in 1970-80, and a similar marble sculpture “Violoncellist” in 1984.

The sculpture group “Musicians” made in 2006 has mutually shaped volumes and contours, which make a harmonious melody in conjunction with frozen movements. The three figures are emotional and filled with philosophical profoundness. There is a tender harmony within these goddess-characters, but when observed carefully, they are both identical and different. The women musicians are like Greek-Roman or renaissance goddesses, incarnated in our times.

Interestingly, the faces of the figures have not been shaped in detail, but their inner life, feelings and thoughts are evident. The sculptor has particularly emphasized their appearance, body poses and finger tensions; it seems that the classical music really flows from this three-figure composition.

The next contest was “The Best Fine Artist”. About thirty fine art paintings of almost all genres — landscape, portrait, still life and daily life — were presented by Varden Tovmasyan, Stepan Grigoryan, Hartutyun Hakobyan, Aramayis Mkhitarayan, Vilik Zakaryan, Hrachya Hakobyan, Lusik Aguletsi, Hayk Gharagyozyan and others. The “Vahan Tekeyan” prize for “The Best Fine Artist” - 2007 was awarded to Sargis Hamalbashyan for his work “Dance”. The work was primarily distinguished by its characters, coloring, and the national spirit of our country, reflecting the biography of the Armenian nation. The conditional forms and new figurative images are the artist’s special handwriting. As we know, dance is the reverberation of music that becomes a melodic and rhythmical body movement, revealing people’s temperament, national spirit, feelings and thoughts about the world.

The artist told about the great influence of the old traditions, expressed in his work. The past is like his teacher, which has been interpreted newly, integrated with his modern mindset.

The image characters create a common harmony. They are the repercussion of the artist’s broad outlook and imagination.

Among many and multi-genre photographs, Samvel Sevada won the contest with his “Khoren Abrahamyan”, “Tigran Mansuryan” and “Hrant Matevosyan” works (the artist’s individual exhibition took place at the cinema "Moscow", in December, 2006). The most important aspect of the photographic art is its documentary significance, reflected in S. Sevada’s works.

In other nominations of “Vahan Tekeyan” Contest, prizes were awarded to Silva Kaputikyan (posthumously), Vardan Petrosyan, Ohan Duryan, Ervand Ghazanchyan, Robert Sahakyan and others.

Y. Yerzanyan’s symphonic orchestra made this wonderful event and the prize distribution ceremony even more beautiful.

Harina Eghiazaryan
NGA Researcher
Khoren Palyan was one of the devoted children of the Armenian Church and culture. He was and remains an example of sacred and national-patriotic singing, which sprang from the “depth of heart”, from the essence of Biblical words and profound knowledge of motets.

Khoren was endowed with an “Armenian throat”. With the same charisma but an unmixed style he used to sing in golden Classical Armenian, folk songs in dialects of the country. His activities were extremely powerful. The new songs reflected Armenia’s heroic past, as well as Armenian atrocities, national-patriotic songs full of the Holy Spirit so popularly known Doctor Arkhangelski, who was in love with Armenia. The latter had prepared a surprise. Since the concert season was over, Professor Arkhangelski had managed to have the Conservatory’s Organ Classroom opened. He had invited the great artist Rockwell Kent and his wife, who were staying in Moscow, to listen to the Armenian sacred music. As a tradition, Khoren Palyan gave an introductory speech, revealing the sacramental meaning of the songs to be performed. Then Luisine’s voice mixed with the organ sound absolutely fascinated the guests. The next day newspapers published the following words by Rockwell Kent: “I became acquainted with another Armenian miracle -- the sacred music...”

So, our beloved Khoren Palyan was one of the disseminators and promoters of that miracle.

David Eniglsh
Honoring Composer
Adam Khudoyan in Yerevan

NEW YORK, NY - Recently, a memorial concert was presented in Yerevan, Armenia, to mark the 85th anniversary of composer Adam Khudoyan's birth (1921-2007). Mr. Khudoyan was a member of the "Mighty Five" among Armenian composers, which included Edvard Mirzoyan, Alexandre Arutiunyan, Arno Babadjanyan, and Lazar Saryan.

The memorial event took place at the Khachaturian House Museum and featured many of Khudoyan's chamber music compositions. Several speakers outlined the composer's musical and personal traits.

Among the performers were violinist Edward Tatoyan and cellist Aram Tablyan of the Kamman Quartet, cellist Levon Arabelyan, soprano Anna Hambaryan, and master pianist Sahak Arzruni.

The program, which created much enthusiasm among Yerevan's musical connoisseurs and was carried by Armenian State Television, was organized by Armenia's Ministry of Culture, the Khachaturian House Museum, and Mr. Arzruni.

In addition to his performance on the piano, Mr. Arzruni spoke about Khudoyan's life and music.

His impromptu remarks are transcribed below, in translation.

Sahak Arzruni

In an unusual coincidence — actually, I would say, in a strange coincidence — when I paid a courtesy call a few days ago on Kseniya Khudoyan, the wife of today's honoree, during the course of our visit she showed me a program dating from 1974.

"This particular concert had taken place in Boston, with the Boston Pops, under the baton of the late Arthur Fiedler. I remember the event vividly. I had taken part in it, performing Khachaturian's Piano Concerto. The occasion was the symphony's annual Armenian Night.

And what was so significant about that concert? Well, on the same program, there was also Khudoyan's 'Symphonic Images.'

To tell you the truth, I don't remember a thing about the Khudoyan work. In 1974, I hadn't been to Armenia, nor had I heard the name of Khudoyan. Yet on that day, unbeknownst to me, a spiritual nexus was created between Khudoyan and myself.

Earlier today when I stopped by here [at the Khachaturian Museum] to make sure that everything was in good shape, the director Armine Gregoryan asked me if I recalled my first visit to the museum in 1984. She told me that one of the staff members recalled the occasion and that Khudoyan was my guide. (Apparently, at that time, Khudoyan was in charge of taking care of foreign artists.) Well, I don't remember that incident either.

However, what I remember very clearly — very vividly — is the trip I made to Yerevan in the fall of 1993, during which time I stayed at the Khudoyan home as their guest. In those days, Armenia was in dire shape — there was no running water, no electricity; people were unhappy, they were broken in spirit.

Edward Mirzoyan, the composer, suggested that rather than staying at the Armenia Hotel, I should live with the Khudoyans, so as not to feel lonely, to be in a homelike surrounding, encircled by people with good intentions.

We had a wonderful time over that entire week. Khudoyan himself was a happy-go-lucky fellow, gregarious and giving, to the extent that he and his wife made their bedroom available to me so my stay there would be more comfortable and pleasant.

In an unusual coincidence — actually, I would say, in a strange coincidence — I was given a trip to the Khachaturian Museum preconcert. I was invited as the representative of the Armenian Ministry of Culture, the Khachaturian House Museum, and Mr. Arzruni. I was to talk about Khudoyan.

At some point it was the designated time. I entered the house museum, and Mr. Adik (Adam's diminutive name) suggested that rather than staying in the museum and giving, to the extent that he was going to scrub my back. I stood there, completely naked, not knowing whether to be shocked or embarrassed, and without even waiting for my consent, Adik (Adam's diminutive name) took the pitcher and the wash cloth from my hand and commenced with the scrub-down.

Now that's hospitality.

In the world of music, Khudoyan and his four colleagues — his musical soulmates, Mirzoyan, Arutiunyan, Babadjanyan, and Saryan — were reminiscent of the Russian "Mighty Five." Similar to the Russians' quintet, the Armenian "Mighty Five" established the Armenian musical school.

I can remember vividly the process of preparing for that event in November 1974 in Boston. The event was known as the "Boston Armenian Night." I was invited to attend as a guest. I remember being overjoyed and grateful.

Anyway, I had forgotten, now remains indelible in my memory.

I had asked Medea Abramyan, the queen of Armenian cellists, why Khudoyan gave such significance to the cello and wrote so much for it. She related the following story: 'In the 50s, when Khudoyan visited Leninakan (now Gyumri) to attend a cello concert, suddenly a mouse appeared on the stage, ran and sat right in front of the cello. There the mouse settled down and listened to the sound of the cello as if in a trance. When the piece was over, the mouse got up, ran off, and disappeared. And in that moment, Khudoyan concluded that a common mouse could be transfixed by the sound of the cello, then surely human beings, too, would find cello's timbre mesmerizing. That was the genius of his love affair with the cello.'

If that Boston concert in 1974 created a spiritual nexus between Khudoyan and me, then today that connection has been transformed into something much more. The connection that I couldn’t remember then, is memorable today. That which I thought I had forgotten, now remains indelible in my memory.

"Blessed be Khudoyan’s living memory.'

Khudoyan's oeuvre contains works of diverse genre, with a particular emphasis on works for the cello. I remember asking Medea Abramyan, the queen of Armenian cellists, why Khudoyan gave such significance to the cello and wrote so much for it. She related the following story: 'In the 50s, when Khudoyan visited Leninakan (now Gyumri) to attend a cello concert, suddenly a mouse appeared on the stage, ran and sat right in front of the cello. There the mouse settled down and listened to the sound of the cello as if in a trance. When the piece was over, the mouse got up, ran off, and disappeared. And in that moment, Khudoyan concluded that a common mouse could be transfixed by the sound of the cello, then surely human beings, too, would find cello's timbre mesmerizing. That was the genius of his love affair with the cello.'

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"Blessed be Khudoyan’s living memory.’

Khudoyan’s recorded music is available on www.amazon.com
French art at the National Gallery of Armenia

The Western European collection is represented by the Italian, Dutch, Flemish, and French schools, and by works of Spanish, English, Swiss, and American masters. Although it is inferior to the Armenian and Russian collections in respect of quantity and comprehensiveness, nevertheless the presence of works by Guercino, Druet, Claesz, van Goyen, Tintoretto, and Rousseau, as well as the artistic value of works by less known authors determine the importance of the Western European collection.

In contrast with other Western European artistic schools, French art is represented more comprehensively and embraces the longest period of time, from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. The works of the famous masters of the eighteenth century Jean-Honore Fragonard, Francois Druet, Carle Vanloo, and Jean-Baptiste Greuze form the most organic part of the French collection. Imbued with hedonistic spirit, characteristic expressive compositions of the rococo style. The subject-matter borrowed from Torquato Tasso’s poem “Jerusalem Delivered” was widespread at that time, both in music and painting; sufficient to mention the works by Lully and F. Bouchet. The way of treating the images, the decorative nature of the landscape and the rich colouring with silvery–green–rose tones, smooth lines, and vivid contours determine the high artistic quality of the work. And though Fragonard’s authorship is argued, this canvas occupies its deserved place among the masterpieces of the collection.

Like in the “Woman’s Head” by Greuze, the lovely and sweet appearance of the models, the delicate, light colouring, the smooth texture sometimes erase the distinction between rococo and salon art, which greatly influenced the painter. The “Portrait of Princess Menshikova with Her Daughter” by Elizabeth Vigee-Lebrun, popular in Europe and Russia, is a sample of salon painting combining also features of Sentimentalism and Classicism.

The exposition of the Museum comprehensively reflects the evolution of French landscape painting. It begins with a painting of the seventeenth century by N.Poussin’s student G.Duguet. The latter developed the stylistic traditions of Classicism, paying great attention to the problems of illumination, which endowed his landscapes with dramatic and tense character. The interest in effects of illumination is a characteristic feature of G.Vernet’s work; the famous sea scape painter of the eighteenth century depicted shipwrecks, moonlit nights, and dawns, freshening the genre with distinctive tokens of the reality. The collection includes also a series of works by Vernet’s younger contemporary Hubert Rober who depicted the nature and monuments of his beloved Italy. The painter enlivened the majestic classical ruins by figures of people engaged in their everyday duties, which imbued his compositions with vividity. The development of realistic traditions in French art is connected with the landscapes of the Barbizon school. The “Landscape” by the head of the school Theodore Rousseau is characterized by monumentality, clear romantic intonations and stylistic features peculiar to the early period of the painter’s work. N.Diaz de la Pena’s painting, too, is romantic; this master who painted mysterious landscapes, in the course of time, under Rousseau’s influence, changed his artistic style, making it more realistic. Realistic tendencies continued developing in the work of the most brilliant representative of that trend G. Courbet. Though “Portrait of a Girl” kept in the collection of the Museum is one of his early works, and is imbued with romantic spirit generally not alien to the painter. The presence in the Gallery’s collection of works by A. Monticelli and E. Boudin, the predecessors of Impressionism, as well, as unique compositions by L. Anquetin, M. Brianchon and later painters such as B.Buffet, make it possible to have an idea of some aspects of French painting of modern times.

Irina Baghdamyan

Adolph Harnack, Walk

Eugene Boudin, Harbour

Maurice Brianchon, At the circus

Gustave Courbe, The portrait of maiden

Theodor Roust, Landscape

Irene Brianchon, At the circus
A historical review of the works of every artist reemphasizes the actualization of common issues and rediscovery of the national identity in the Armenian art.

On April 20, at the National Gallery of Armenia there was an exhibition on the occasion of Sargis Muradyan's 80th anniversary. It summarized the artist's semi-centennial creative path from the Khrushchev period until the independence of Armenia.

The existing interest for Sargis Muradyan's art is not simply a tribute to the soviet-Armenian art, but an invitation to newly estimate the artist's heritage. Many of Sargis Muradyan's famous canvases became documentaries of the Armenian reality. The reflected historical time feeling balances the artist's ideals and the reality, his original dreams and the command of time. S. Muradyan belongs to the generation of artists, who lived in the post-Stalin period of hopeful reforms and contradictions. Under the totalitarian regime he found the ways of national rediscovery, consolidation, actualization and a new attitude towards the past. In this regard, under the context of soviet reforms, 1950-60s became a turning point in the Armenian culture. In 1956, at the 10-day event dedicated to the Armenian art in Moscow, among other exhibited works there were two canvases that received professional comments: Hovhannes Zardaryan's "Spring" and Sargis Muradyan's "Komitas". These were the first calls of the national spirit awakening during the post-Stalin period. The image of Komitas symbolizing the Genocide was a real discovery for the wide soviet audience. The massive public interest for this canvas could be conditioned by the anti-Stalin atmosphere formed at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Even though in 1950s no one spoke publicly about the Genocide and Stalin repressions, however, people realized that a crime against one nation was a crime against the whole mankind. Thus, S. Muradyan became one of the great masters of thematic approach in the Armenian fine art of the second half of the 20th century. Within the Armenian thematic framework, the artist's interest was shifted from past to present, from village and labor environment and nature towards urban setting. Perhaps S. Muradyan was one of the first who saw the national-patriotic theme not only in traditionalism – historical past (Avarayr, Sardarapat, WWII) or in ethnography, but in the manifestation of modern urban culture. Here, by expanding the borders of the genre, the artist assigned historical sense to the image of a modern city and characters of people. In his works of late 1960s – 1970, newly interpreting the realistic method, S. Muradyan chose allegorical ways of expression. Within the framework of the Soviet fine art progress, this was a practice of overcoming the orthodox social realism and manifestation of "intimate realism".

S. Muradyan rationalized the reality with philosophichal and poetic generalization. Along with the artist's perception of the world, the alteration of his way of expression is demonstrated not only in historical canvases, but also in his fascinating landscapes. The exhibited series of the artist's wonderful landscapes show how his Saryan-Zardaryan optimistic-pantheistic perceptions (60s) are replaced with tension and conditional-symbolic emotions (70-80s).

In many of S. Muradyan's works, the method of realism, deviating from expressive decorativism (considered as a national style) cannot only be regarded as a manifestation of social realism. That would mean not to observe the possibility of coexistence of national and soviet trends in the Armenian art during the totalitarian age, which promoted the phenomenon of soft nationalism in Armenia.
The artist was born in Alexandria (Egypt), in 1925, in an Armenian family escaped from the Genocide. Afterwards they moved to Bucharest (Romania), and repatriated to Armenia in 1946. Her life is similar to the destiny of thousands of Armenians, spread all over the world. To comprehend and discover the inner content of Tepelikyan's still-lives, the essence of portraits, and love for the Fatherland expressed in her landscapes, it is necessary to study the hard and heroic fate of her family, which is the source of the artist’s non-casual principles, her human standards and system of values, where honesty, patriotism and beauty prevail. Tepelikyan is a multi-genre artist, but in the variety of her art there are many commonalities: her absolute dedication, unusual hard-working capacity and observations of the surrounding world, making her unique artistic handwriting over the years. Tepelikyan’s portraits - Bartugh Vardanyan, Benik Petrosyan, Ohan Duryan and her mother’s portrait are a separate subject. Paruhi Tepelikyan is also a member of the Artists Union of Romania. Her works have been displayed in different exhibitions of the world, and constitute many collections.
INTRODUCTION

Traditional Armenian costumes and their geographical origins are two collateral subjects in the Armenian history. Working on this project began a long time ago. I am thrilled that it has come together after so many years of hard work and that it has been published under the patronage of the Swiss-Armenian Union.

Located in Asia Minor, the historical Armenia is now divided between Turkey, Azerbaijan and Iran. For the Armenian people, over the centuries, the geographical situation of their country has varied. Blessed by natural and geographical riches that fostered economic growth and prosperity, it is also situated at the crossroad of the East and the West, a strategically important zone that has consistently suffered war, population displacements and massacres. The people and nation of Armenia officially converted to Christianity in 301 and thus became the first Christian state in history. During the 5th century, the Armenian Church segregated from the Byzantine Church. To this day, it remains independent and self-governed.

The ancient Armenia was a vast territory that was first called "Hayastan", literally "the Land of the Armenians".

The evolution of costumes is a component of the history of nations. To grasp people's daily life, one cannot just study its political, religious and military characteristics. It is also necessary to examine all its facets including its dress code, costumes or work-clothes, since any change in attire, over time, indicates a cultural evolution, which may also have an impact on surrounding countries.

The Mekhitarian Father, Ghougase Indjisjian was both the first Armenian archaeologist and the first scholar to have studied the history of Armenian costumes, referring to testimonies from kings and princes, in addition to various other sources of information, such as sculptures, paintings and documents. As in many countries, Armenian costumes reveal great influences. At the crossroads between the East and the West, Armenia has, beyond doubt, been more sought after, invaded and devastated more than any other country. This in turn has, since ancient times, led to important changes, let alone costumes.
The nature has been generous towards her, but Armine Hayrapetyan realized it after having lived four decades of her life. The girl that was born as a poet, singer, song writer, embroidereress, surprisingly chose the profession of mathematician, after graduating from school. She studied at the Pedagogical Institute after Kh. Abovyan, gave classes at one of the Yerevan colleges, and then at the same institute. She liked singing, but only for herself. She might have continued that way, if there were no difficulties in her life and the challenges of the first year of our independence.

In those days, the only warm place in Yerevan was the “Aram Khachatryan” Concert Hall, which by the efforts of the maestro Loris Tjeknavorian was turned into a small oasis, where people could enjoy not only warmth, but also classical music. And one day Armine Hayrapetyan’s sensitive soul was in twinge: what did she do herself? What did she have to give to her own people? The blood of her Vaspurakani grandmothers awoke, and she started her needlework, making laces and embroideries, which could sing, dance and declaim. They were made with a great taste, tender color harmony and profound philosophy.

The works were quite unique, and after seven years were exhibited at the “Aram Khachatryan” Concert Hall under the title “Qele Lao” – singing embroideries. Why “Qele Lao”? The work was made with the golden maps of Armenia and Artsakh, by the style of the Aynatap needlework school. There are seven Urha-style flower posies emerging from it. The flower heads raise and form the first seven notes of the song “Qele Lao”. These unique embroidery-maps command the viewer: “Don’t leave the land that your ancestors fought and poured their blood for. Build your happiness in this land, under the vision of Masis, and not on foreign soil. Possessing the embroidering skills of Van, Aynatap, Marash, Urha, Svaz and other places, and the history of the Armenian colors and patterns, Armine “sings” in her works with her own voice (her colors, design, perception and taste), at that preserving the very spirit and essence of the Armenian embroidery with the wonderful seal of her own personality. The words are not just good enough to describe the beauty and admiration radiated from this work, which was only accomplished after two years of sleepless nights, efforts, love, persistence, inner suffering and tension. To our question of revealing the secret of her work for two years, she gave the only response that we could expect – love. Yes, love is the only reason of existence, continuation of life, the sacred testament.

It is a known fact: no cross-stone repast another. In her work entitled “Cross-stone” performed by crochet needle, there is such splendor, soft and unique taste and color variation that it seems to be a divine miracle descending directly from heaven to Van, or making the author herself into a cross-stone. Among many and various flowers, “Shamrock” is distinguished as a brilliant work, like Paruyr Sevak’s work of the same name. Again, poetry has become music here, and Armine Hayrapetyan has made it everlasting by her crochet. The “Tree of Life” symbolizes the sense of eternity for a newly-married couple, family and nation.

“Knunk” is the symbol of the Armenian immigrants, always grieving, striving for freedom and longing for their homeland. This work is dedicated to the summit of the Armenian mentality and chanting – Komitas. If one wants to introduce the Armenian culture and intellect to a world citizen, Komitas’ music is quite sufficient. Van is a dream and pain, secret hope and expectation for every Armenian. It is a source of even more grief and anguish for the people of Van. One day Armenians will possess their historical land again, and the embroidery “Key of Happiness” will open the locked doors of Van. The ownership and undeniable truth will prevail, and the doors of happiness will open to us.

The work “86400” is a butterfly made of as many elements. This is the number of seconds for one day, and the embroidereress has reflected upon whether a person has so many happy seconds in his life. If yes, then he lives for one full day. This work makes one think about his life seriously.

Armine Hayrapetyan’s key of success is her love and endless and unlimited devotion to the mankind, nature and the world.

The majority of her works are from the themes of different songs.

Recently, by Armine’s new ideas there were embroidered mountain images – unique works, again from the themes of poetry and different songs.

Life is too short and full of temptations. Those who are kind, brave, honest, sincere, caring for others and for everything are immortal with these God’s endowments.

With her embroidering, Armine Hayrapetyan weaves her own world, which is also ours – Armenians’…
The British-Armenian Photographer Edmond Ter-Hakobyan Was Awarded with the “World Press Photo” Prize

Last September, at the “Breg” University showroom there was the exhibition of the prize-winners of the “World Press Photo” 2006 annual photographic contest. For the first time, this year the traditional prize of “Breg” was awarded to the well-known British-Armenian photographer Edmond Ter-Hakobyan. He had photographed a wounded worker in the London subway, after the explosion on July 7, 2005. With this photograph he received the third prize in the nomination “Hot News” at the “World Press Photo – 2006” contest, while at “Breg” he was the annual contest winner.

According to the report of the “Marmara” newspaper in Istanbul, in those July days of 2005, ten British and international periodicals had this photo by Edmond Ter-Hakobyan printed on their front pages. The “Breg” award made an opportunity for Edmond Ter-Hakobyan to present his other twelve works separately. Those were about the terrorist actions in London on July 7, 2005.

The “World Press Photo” exhibitions at “Breg” have been going on since 1996, and by the initiative the city mayor of those years Yaroslav Goran, the “Breg” award was made possible. This year the award was given by the current mayor Pavel Pam. It was Edmond Ter-Hakobyan’s eighth international prize, while this year, during the annual contest of the British press, he had already been acknowledged as the Best Photographer of the Year. In March, 2006 he also received the special prize of British photographers-editors, in the nomination of The News Photographer of the Year. There were presented 83044 photos by 4448 professional photographers from 122 countries at the “World Press Photo” contest.

Potential readers are insolvent; or advertisers prefer TV commercials (more affordable with a wider audience). These facts promote indifference amongst potential sponsors.

TV and the Internet have also played their part in diminishing the role of the periodical press. However, those are not major issues, since many incomparably advanced countries with similar number of population as Armenia publish a lot of and a variety of periodicals.

What to do; or more sharply “to be or not to be”? After all the press is its readers, and loses the sense without them. Does a reader really have his “old and kind” book today? Unfortunately, the problem is deeper and more profound. Today, speaking about the crisis of the periodical press we aim at drawing attention to a broader problem, the solution of which must be found at schools and institutions of higher education, attitudes of the Armenian intellectuals and legislative and executive authorities. Finally, having a literate generation and society is not merely a “dream” or a “good wish”, but a prerequisite of progress.

In 2002, when the first issue of the “Armenian Art” was published, there were only a few Armenian periodicals in the press – the “Yarakish” (Rating) and “Hayatsq Yerevanits” (A Sight from Yerevan) color-formatted magazines, which did not last long.

The magazines published in consecutive years were quite successful, but are not published any more. Among them were “Ughekits” (Companion) for the young audience, “Gitelik” (Knowledge) for teachers, “Hayeli Hayastani” (The Mirror of Armenia) intended to present Armenia to the Diaspora, and “Eva” (Eve) for women. There have also been other and shorter “endeavors”.

Of course, each periodical has separate reasons for closing, but there are a number of common indicators for crisis:

- a dramatic decrease in the number of readers,
- a very small number of advertisements (advertisers’ “inaccessibility”),
- sponsors’ lack of enthusiasm

Each of the above mentioned points has its reasons. For example, the majority of...
Hovsep Pushman

Hovsep Pushman (Pushmanyan) was born on May 9, 1877, in Diarbekir. In 1888-1894 he studied and graduated from the Constantinople Fine Art College, receiving the first prize at the graduation exhibition. To escape from the Hamidian massacres, the artist’s family relocated to the U.S.A. In 1910, to continue his studies, Pushman came to France and entered the “Julian” Fine Art Academy.

Starting from 1911, Pushman systematically participated in exhibitions, receiving numerous prizes and gaining acknowledgement in the artistic and art-loving communities. Quite often, shortly after the exhibitions, Pushman’s works were sold out. Many of his works are now in the museums of Paris, New York, other cities and personal collections.

The “Sheik’s Daughter” canvas was bought by the Metropolitan Museum. In 1929, in one of the U.S. exhibitions of 250 American artists, Pushman’s “When Evening Comes” painting received the first prize. He was a multi-genre artist, and his main topic was the East. He was a great master of colors.

Pushman appeared in the Armenian art as an “inherent Eastern”, who could introduce the East with all its beauty and tender colors to the art-loving community.

Pushman’s art was highly appraised by the art critics of his time. After seeing his works in one of the exhibitions in Paris, some of them commented: “Few artists have reached this level since Rafael”, and “Art prevails in every piece of Pushman’s canvases.”

The reality has always dominated in Pushman’s artistic mentality and his applied creative means. In the world of art he preferred independence and freedom, due to which he refused the offered position at the U.S. National Academy (in 1942).


While being a U.S. citizen and participating in many exhibitions in different U.S. cities, he considered his art as Armenian. In 1926 he was actively contributing to the creation of “Arni” Armenian Artists’ Association in Paris, where he was unanimously elected as a president.

In 1925, at one of the Parisian clubs there was an ARS event under the chairmanship of the famous Armenian writer Shervanzade.

In 1926, Pushman performed several multi-gifted artist died in 1966 in New York. I had a fortune to visit the artist’s workshop and see his canvases. It was in 1974, when I met his two sons in New York.

They invited me into their father’s workshop located on the 5th floor of the “Carnegie Hall”. I was happy to visit and see the wonders made by the great artist. Afterwards, they asked me to inform the appropriate Armenian organizations about their desire of transferring those wonders to Armenia. I did inform the appropriate organizations about this request, but unfortunately, because of their carelessness, the destiny of Pushman’s canvases remains unknown after his sons’ death.

Alexander Sadoyan

Alexander Sadoyan is a brilliant young Armenian colorist and a tour guide in the land of palette sensations, intelligent beauty and rebellious artistic compositions, which would transcode you to an enchanting plane of fantasy, dreams and unrestrained visions of perfect balance between the complex meaning of colors and daring freedom un-conceptual sacred expressions. A great visionary at many levels.

Sadoyan comes from the land of the great Kingdoms of Urartu and Cilicia. He was born in 1954 in Yerevan, Armenia. In 1975, he graduated from the Terlemezian College of Fine Arts and joined the Artist’s Union of the Republic of Armenia and the International Association of Arts of the United Nations/ UNESCO. Currently, he resides in Los Angeles, California, USA.

Sadoyan has his own colors’ universe. And it is so wonderful to explore his universe, for colors do not exclusively breathe with and from paint, brushes and tubes, but also with and from within. The man is a philosopher. A gentle and a humble philosopher with an unsurpassed artistic talent. And this is what I like most about Alexander Sadoyan. His humility, his wise and simple philosophy and the brightness of his human-divine art. While talking with Alexander Sadoyan about colors, he threw here and there some very deep thoughts and contemplation about themes not very much in vogue nowadays. Sadoyan squeezed words like “divination”, “Metaphysics”, “God”, “wisdom”, “Soul”, “spirit”, “Inner Self”, those are very heavy concepts from a modern contempo Californian cubist artist. Ironically enough, and originally Cubism was everything but metaphysical and liturgical. And here we are today before the perfect cubist artist living and working in California who built up the very essence of his cubist art upon metaphysics and spirituality. This Alexander Sadoyan makes you think and wonder.

When a painting begins to entertain you and enchant your feelings, giving you the impression, the fantasy and the feelings that “she” is half linen and half human, then take the painting in your arms, embrace “her” and comfort “her”, for she is opening up to you and “she” is whispering something... something very secret... and just for your eyes only. She just freed herself from lines and became a part of your feelings and existence; a sort of jinnee! And that is the magic and incomprehensible divine language of art. Some of Sadoyan’s paintings make me feel that way.

Sadoyan’s paintings are full of life and warmth. Some are dressed up with a robe of wild gardens; others are timid, sweet and human. They appeal to my eyes, to my intellect and a lot... a lot... to my inner self... and to my madness.
The Swiss-Armenian artist Dionne Haroutunian was born and raised in Switzerland before coming to Seattle, WA. In her personal artistic journey she attempts to express her “Armenianism” through her art. Dionne feels compelled to create art that evokes powerful feelings from her past, her family’s suffering from the Armenian genocide, to remind people of their own memories and experiences. She has learned that in order to move forward, people must first know who they are and where they come from.

Haroutunian has had many individual and group exhibitions at the museums, showrooms and art centers of Seattle, Geneva (Switzerland), China, Mexico, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Berkley, Oregon, Tacoma as well as in other cities of the Washington State. After completing her studies at the University of Washington, Dionne bought an old building in Ballard, a former Norwegian fishing village north of Seattle. She then installed a large press and started her own printmaking studio in Seattle. She then installed a large press and started her own printmaking studio in Seattle. In 1999, she opened the Sev Shoon Arts Center. The following is the artist’s statement:

“I have spent much of my creative energy in the past few years developing an increasingly direct approach in my art. That led me to work in painting and sculpture, both of which I really enjoyed and will continue to explore.

Growing up in the Armenian Diaspora, I became fascinated with issues of loss, survival, and integration, and how those affect one’s psyche and life. The intention behind my work is always to reach beyond the tragedy of one particular people, and bear witness to the senseless violence, hatred, and bloodshed, which punctuate our history – past and present.

I want my work to be bold, universal, and uncompromising. Around me, I see a world spinning out of control with increasing speed, in what seems to be a downward spiral. It is easy to feel powerless. The power I have, is to stay engaged and commit wholeheartedly to creating work. My artwork is a direct response to wars and genocides taking place worldwide. Whether we think about it or not, the fact that wars are raging somewhere in the world, impacts those of us who are not directly affected in our everyday lives.

Dionne’s source of inspiration remains her trip to Armenia and Turkey in 1996, when she saw Ani and our lost country, which is totally destroyed and abandoned nowadays. Haroutunian experienced the horrifying feelings of human suffering and loss, as if she herself was a witness of the Genocide. Months later, by applying this experience, she created her “Witness Series” and “Stone Series” works, which truly and profoundly express our vulnerability and our quest for survival – expressed in the symbols of hope ad eternity.

“In addition to being a beautiful country of rich and ancient history, Armenia is also the country where my father was born in the year of the Genocide by the Turks (1915). Oscillating between fascination and horror, I am struck time and again by the unavoidable fact that we all share in the responsibility of our history – past and present, that includes me. By simply being alive on this planet, I partake in the shaping of our world. As the work developed, I understood that my power as a human being resides in standing witness: first, seeing, then, reporting.”

Haroutunian has created a living museum of fine art in progress, using art as a stimulant for historical reflection, for political correction. Her work has been shown in Seattle, Geneva, China, Canada, France, Mexico, and worldwide. Whether we think about it or not, the fact that wars are raging somewhere in the world, impacts those of us who are not directly affected in our everyday lives.

The activity of “Moughni” is closely related with the name of the blessed memory Archbishop Mesrop Ashjian, but the founding organization is the “Gevorg A. Momjian” Charity Fund. To find out more about the establishment and activities of “Moughni”, we take an interview from its director Ruzanna Petroyan. In 1995, the “Gevorg A. Momjian” Charity Fund established a publishing center and issued the “Hayreniki Dzayn” (The Voice of the Fatherland) weekly for 19 months. The financial support was provided from the Diaspora, mostly by the sponsorship of the international communist movement and the philanthropist Varujan Salatyan, who is a key figure both in Armenia and Diaspora.

In early 90s, the publishing center of the “Momjian” fund was shut down as a part of the ARF (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) press, and all the equipment was confiscated by the KGB. Strangely enough, the publishing center sponsored by the communist Varujan Salatyan was under seizure. By supernal efforts, we managed to return the already “outdated” equipment back.

Afterwards, we upgraded the publishing center and started working.

The President of the “Gevorg A. Momjian” Charity

Fund Romen Kazoyan and Archbishop Mesrop Ashjian had been friends for many years. The Father was especially in need of a colleague-friend who knew local customs, rules and mentality, so R. Kazoyan was very helpful.

He introduced the foundation office with its professional staff, rooms, computers and other equipment to Archbishop Ashjian, and suggested publishing a book. The archbishop saw everything, and they published the first book. Subsequently, he decided to cooperate only with us, asking to establish firm and stable connections with the publishing house, and rename it into “Moughni”, which was his aspiration.

Since the first day, the coordinating director of the publishing house has been Ruzanna Petroyan, who started her career at the Cultural Connections Committee with the Diaspora. She had a long career path: the Publications Department of the “Knowledge” Company, press, work of an editor and publisher. This is the reality. Both legally and practically the founder of the publishing house is the “Gevorg A. Momjian” Charity Fund, and the Father’s contribution was in renaming it into “Moughni”.

We worked with Mesrop Ashjian for about three years, and published numerous books. He still had many projects that remained half-realized. We still continue one of the Father’s projects - "The Armenian Church
Meet Michael Goorjian. As a multi-talented young star with a career that keeps going and going like the Energizer Bunny, Michael would seem like the guy who would be nothing more than just a pretty face. But that is not the case. This 35-year-old actor was viewing Armenia with a true filmmaker’s eye as he was constantly joking and commenting on future film locations within Armenia, and how he would return to Armenia and produce a film with myself. The Naregatsi Art Institute in Yerevan screened the actor’s recent film titled “Illusion.” The following is an interview I conducted with Michael Goorjian that same day at my place.

-So, Michael Goorjian... barev.
- Barev!
- You knew this word before or just learnt here?
-Here... I think the only thing I knew in Armenian before is ‘imbiches e?’ (How are you?).
- Was it your father who taught you that word?
-No, I think more my relatives. My father and his brother were raised by my grandfather to be more Armenian. Michael’s Armenian roots. The whole family was very much with identity, who you are, ethnic background is absolutely important, especially when you look at actors like Robert de Niro, who we all know is very much an Italian New Yorker, that’s who he is. So, you definitely, I think it plays a lot into it.
- Then can we talk about certain ethnic features in your acting?
- Yeah! I think acting is tied in so much with identity, who you are, and it is just from the sense of presentation of who you are trying to be. Most actors are trying to sell themselves in a way, why would I cast this person instead of this person. So in our respect, everybody, but especially actors are very much trying to figure out what their identity is and who they are. I believe that ethnic background is absolutely important, especially when you look at actors like Robert de Niro, who we all know is very much an Italian New Yorker, that’s who he is. So, you definitely, I think it plays a lot into it.
definitely. I came here with my
friend Eric, and I was here for the
reasons that I had been
interested in Yerevan for a long
time. I really felt that I had to come
to Armenia because it was so
much fun and exciting.

–And what do you think about
Armenia as a location for
filmmakers?

–I think it’s a special place. It has
the kind of energy and
atmosphere that makes people
want to work hard and create.

–And what about as friend?

–Well, Eric, now could you please
tell me who is Michael Goorjian as
an actor and as a friend?

–As an actor I am not sure, I’ve seen
him in theater, in couple of films,
but I have not seen most of his
films or TV shows. I saw him in
one-act play, it is an obscure play
“The Apollo Of Bellas” by a French
author Jean Giraudoux. It is a
classical play and all the
characters around him are very
classical. I was really impressed by it.

–And what about as friend?

–He is nuts! (Michael is laughing).
No, Mike is a reasonably
wonderful guy, a very good hearted
guy from Los Angeles and I know a lot
of people from the entertainment
industry and I don’t like most of
them (laughing). Mike is not
like most of them, he has broad
interests, and he likes people and
different worlds. He is the way
actors should be, but its just not
the way most of them are.

–Thanks, Eric! Let’s go back to
Michael. You love crazy things,
Michael…

–Yes, sure!

–In life, on the screen and stage…
I like interesting people and
there are not too many of them.
Today we went to the Parajanov museum,
and I have heard before that a lot
of Armenian artists are a kind of
weird. Just wanting to take reality,
and poking it a little bit. That is
something that most artists do it.
There is a difference in the sense
of if you want to replicate life or,
live in American television, let’s
take your family drama and just replay
it. There are very few people that
want to take what reality is and
poke at it and turn it on its side,
even if it is just a little bit. That I
appreciate a lot. And so, if I would
find what to me is weird, that’s the
aspect that I like.

–Why do you think that most
Armenian actors are weird?

–Cause we all are crazy! I did feel a
sort of continuity in the sense of
the artists I met who want to
do something a little bit different…
filmmaker Vaughan Plikkan from
London or the local actor Sergey
Danielle (I attended his one-man-
show. The good example is the
local choir Hover, the moving choir.
They are a great example.
Instead of just being a choir, they do
different kinds of movements. And
that is not too much. Why not just
push things a little bit and see how
they look from slightly different
angles?

–So in your productions you try
to see things from as many different
angles as possible?

–I mean it’s weird as I have worked in
so many different levels, the
theater productions Eric talked
about, or the TV show I did for long
time, “Party for Five.” Lots of people
in America think: wow, that’s a
really good show, it’s different and
artistic. On set, they were telling me
to do things and every time
I would do it differently. To them
that was annoying, because they
were trying to just get it down
and I was saying: why not do it
this way or do that way? I think a
lot of actors follow a routine, which
is not that interesting. Interesting
tings don’t happen when you do
that, you have a lot of bland
performances.

–Well, what do you think would
develop your career more,
television or films?

–I feel that I still have maybe one
or two more years of figuring out
really what it is that I am going to
do. To me a lot of things that I have
done have been importantly
good, they have been in a lot
of ways a kind of tasting waters,
trying this and that. And I am
hoping that I can probably do
more with filmmaking than acting,
as maybe as both, to be a
specific voice. The filmmaker,
Parajonov, said that he made
cinemas in other countries that were
of a different style. I think I have
similar things in terms of that.
I have done lots of things and they
are not necessarily really my voice,
most of them are just not for me.

–And funding?

–It is an independent film. Was it
difficult to have the Hollywood
legend Kirk Douglas in your film?
–It was a kind of weird. When you
think about an independent film
you don’t think about Hollywood
legend. That aspect of it is good.
It wasn’t hard working with him,
it was kind of the opposite. He very
much wanted to do this, for this
it was just as much opportunity as
it was for me, because someone
like Kirk Douglas, at his age, and
also being this icon, nobody is
going to hire him. What he wanted
was nobody is considering him as
someone that could be in the film,
let alone in an independent film.
He was seeing any kind of
scipts...
I know little bit some pieces, I know there are prominent Armenians in the film industry, in the art community, it is always nice to be able to see another Armenian, that’s exciting. Developing what I am doing creatively, identity as two different things, they’re related, but I don’t necessarily want to create art just to support my identity or vice versa. To do a film about Armenia and Armenian history and the genocide, to me I don’t necessarily want to do that. I would prefer to make film that was made with Armenians or just happened to take place in Armenia, but it is no different if it had taken place in Paris or somewhere else. That way I had more freedom.

“What do you like more in this life? I like cold drinks and ice cream a lot. I like specific kind of relaxing. Being a workaholic, I loved to be able to work hard, then just sit in a café or take a trip like this. Those things I appreciate more.

Now lots of young people desire to become filmmakers in Armenia. What would you advise them? Well, I would say two things. One, do not become an egomaniac. Too many filmmakers do it for “I want to be known” and “I want everybody to think I am a genius and films that I do are great.” Of course there is an aspect that everybody wants some part of that, but it’s that’s the main reason you’re doing it, then you shouldn’t do it. I would say to do it as much as possible, meaning get a portable camera and make film after film after film... the more work you can do, the more you can actually do instead of thinking about doing it, the better. Some people go to school, study other filmmakers, learn as much as they can, and then you approach it. I feel that if you really want to get back there and make some films with my buddy Arvici! I am sure that not only his buddy but our filmgoers will wait for that day, when such talented actor and director and bright personality like Michael Goorjian will make his films in the land of his ancestors!

The Illustration of the Altar of Descent

One of the most significant sacred objects of the Mother See of Holy Echmiatsin is the Altar of Descent. It is the symbol of the Armenian priesthood and establishment of the Domain of Faith. According to Agatangeghos, its place was different kind of thing. A little bit here, a little bit here. This feeling that there is a center of town, that this is where the people are... this is enjoyable!

After one and half month the filmgoers of Yerevan saw two films with Michael Goorjian as a part of the “Armenian Panorama” section of the “Golden Apricot” Yerevan International Film Festival. He starred in the American-Armenian movie, “Pomegranate” and his own film, “Illusion” (by the way, both produced by our compatriot Anahid Nazarian in her presence). As I was going to introduce those films before the screenings I sent an email to Michael asking what message he has for the audience in Yerevan. Michael wrote to me: “Just tell them that Yerevan is now my favorite city and I can’t wait to get back there and make some films with my buddy Arvici!” I am sure that not only his buddy but our filmgoers will wait for that day, when such talented actor and director and bright personality like Michael Goorjian will make his films in the land of his ancestors!
Another present from "Sargis Khachents" publishing house to the Armenian art-loving community: Eugene Delacroix, "Erker Arvesti Masin" (Essays about Art) (translation from French and introduction by Henrik Bakhchinyan; preface by Poghos Haytayan), Printinfo, Yerevan, 2006.

The 98-year-old senior of the Armenian architecture, academician Varazdat Harutunyan’s next commemorative book: "Kjanqis Qarughinerum" (At the Crossroads of my Life), Book II, "Dar" pub., Yerevan, 2007

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