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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DIVERSITY OF THEMES AND IMAGES IN AZERBAIJANI FINE ARTS DURING THE PERIOD OF INDEPENDENCE

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

Relevance and the degree of scientific development of the work. The correspondence between theme and artistic image has been and remains one of the important theoretical problems of art history. These two concepts that characterize the work are considered important visual indicators of fine art. The content and essence of fine art, its artistic and aesthetic ability are expressed through theme and artistic image. The theme determines the ideological and artistic direction of the work, its content, purpose and plot. An artistic image expresses a set of elements that make up the composition, giving them a visual appearance. The artistic image completes the composition of the work through the language of depiction and embodies its imagery.

The artistic image in modern Azerbaijani fine arts develops at the level of tradition and modernity. The artistic image in Azerbaijani fine arts is based on personality, national content and character, symbols, folklore motifs, nature paintings and other main components.

Azerbaijani fine arts attract attention with its multifaceted, colorful development peculiarities in the period of independence. New forms and styles appeared in painting and graphics in the period of independence. As a result of the restoration of independence, fundamental changes took place and new artistic and aesthetic values were formed in fine arts, including painting. In its turn, this led to the emergence of new criteria, themes and stylistic features.

The same can be said about sculpture. Monumental art became relatively smaller in size, but the number of individual works increased during the period of independence. The artistic work-environment correspondence has developed in monumental art and the relationship between image and landscape has been intensified. New themes developed, interest in national folklore increased and new hero characters were created in monumental and easel sculpture. The role of decorative compositions in the urban environment (cultural landscape) increased and this type of artwork became more actively involved in the formation of the aesthetic content of modern urban design.

Several progressive innovations took place in fine arts even in the 70s and 80s of the last century. These changes, which were characteristic of the work of the representatives of the 60s generation, were significantly different from the classical idea-artistic characteristics of painting. A different way of thinking, bringing the human factor to the fore in art, and most importantly, salient manifestation of national character, color and decorativeness were the idea-aesthetic sources of modern views on art. Togrul Narimanbeyov, Elbey Rzaguliyev, Rasim Babayev, Ashraf Murad, Kamal Ahmad, Jahid Jamal, Farhad Khalilov and others' works laid the foundation of a new way of thinking in fine arts in that period, which can be considered one of the cornerstones of the artistic and aesthetic values of the period of independence. Although these artists had different artistic styles, they played an important role in formation of the themes and stylistic peculiarities of the painting of the period of independence. In addition, the mature period of creativity of many of them (Togrul Narimanbeyov, Elbey Rzaguliyev, Rasim Babayev and others) coincides with the early period of independence.

It is known that the fine art of the period of independence is represented by the creative work of three generations, which are the representatives of the old, middle and new generations. The older generation preferred the classic style traditionally. The modern middle generation, which was young at the time, was more inclined towards an existential mood. The difficulties of that period – the 90s of the last century created conditions for the formation of existential views. Finally, the modern generation of young artists prefers to create works in the spirit of the ideology of statehood and Azerbaijanism.

Many memorable works were created by artists, and a new generation of artists was formed in the early years of independence (in the 90s of the last century) and in the 2000s. The views of artists representing different generations and working in different styles reflect clearly the wide and multifaceted nature of modern art. Many artists' work was addressed in the research work, and their works were included in the analysis. So, the general development

tendencies of the theme and artistic style during the period of independence were determined.

Tahir Salahov, Togrul Narimanbeyov, Ogtay Sadigzadeh, Rasim Babayev, Javad Mirjavadov, Kamal Ahmad, Gennady Briyatyuk, as well as Chingiz Farzaliyev, Sakit Mammadov, Ashraf Heybatov, Altay Sadigzadeh, Anvar Asgerov, Gurban Malikov, Vugar Ali, Reza Avshar, Ashraf Gafarov and others' works are considered in the research work. By studying the creative features of artists and sculptors, the development dynamics of fine arts in the modern era, the variety of themes and styles that manifests here have been traced, a comprehensive analysis of them at the level of art history has been given, the development vectors and main creative problems of modern fine arts have been brought to attention in the research.

The artistic, aesthetic and educational importance is very important in modern fine art. Themes representing the ideas of independence and statehood are widespread in contemporary painting. Most artists, especially young people turn enthusiastically to the theme of the Karabakh victory war, which is a part of it.

The problem of image and theme in fine arts has been studied by various researchers. This topic, which has a theoretical nature, has attracted the attention of different researchers at different times. Once, this problem was widely studied at the aesthetic level in Soviet Art history. The problem of artistic image in art has found its comprehensive analysis in V.Razumny¹, A.Zis², Y.Savostyanov³ and others' works. It is important to emphasize that the problem of artistic image and theme has been studied more deeply and systematically in literary studies. This also applies to Azerbaijani literary studies. Theoretical problems in Azerbaijani Art History were studied by S.Dadashov, N.Habibov, A.Salamzadeh, R.Abdullayeva, T.Ibrahimov, T.Bayramov, G.Mirza and others.

¹ Разумный, В.А. Проблема типического в эстетике // Москва: Госполитиздат. – 1955. – 193 с.

² Методологические проблемы художественной критики / отв. ред. А.Я.Зись. Москва: Искусство. – 1987. – 334 с.

³ Савостьянов Е.И. Эстетическая природа советского изобразительного искусства. Москва: Изобразительное искусство. – 1983. – 302 с.

It should be noted that art theory has been studied much less in Azerbaijani Art Studies compared to art history. There are still serious gaps in this area. Theoretical problems are more widely studied in the monographs, such as A.Salamzadeh's "Azerbaijani Art History. The 20th century"⁴, R.Abdullayeva's "Problem of artistic style in information culture"⁵, T.Bayramov's "Typology of art and dialogue of cultures in the context of the problem of tradition".⁶ Besides this, this problem is represented to a certain extent in R.Mammadova⁷, N.Mehdi⁸, S.Sadigova⁹, T.Ibrahimov¹⁰, S.Mirbagirzade¹¹, G.Mirza¹² and others' scientific works.

Research object and subject. The object of the research is the Azerbaijani fine arts of the period of independence, the variety of images and themes here. The subject of the research is different artists' creativity, some works.

Research aims and objectives. The aim of the research is to investigate new themes and stylistic features in Azerbaijani painting during the period of independence. The following objectives have been determined to achieve this aim:

- Review of the general development dynamics of Azerbaijani fine arts during the period of independence;
- Revealing the axiological changes that occurred in the idea-artistic content of art during this period;

⁴ Саламзаде, Э.А. Искусствознание Азербайджана: XX век. Баку: ЭЛМ. – 2001. – 352 с.

⁵ Абдуллаева Р.Г. Проблема художественного стиля в информационной культуре. Баку: ЭЛМ. – 2003. – 256 с.

⁶ Байрамов, Т.Р. Типология искусства и диалог культур в контексте проблемы традиции. Баку: ЭЛМ. – 2010. – 232 с.

⁷ Məmmədova, R.A. Ulu öndər Heydər Əliyev və türk mədəniyyətinin birliyi // - Bakı: Müqayisəli sənətsünaslıq – 2023. - s. 22-26

⁸ Mehdi, Niyazi. / Niyazi Mehdi. - Bakı: Qanun. – 2007. - 343 s.

⁹ Sadıqova, S. Y. XIV-XVII əsr Azərbaycan miniatüründə hərbi geyim və silah // - Bakı: Qobustan, – 1988. № 3, – s. 18-21

¹⁰ İbrahimov T.İ. Təsviri incəsənətin nəzəriyyəsi. Dərslik / T.İ.İbrahimov. - Bakı: - 2016. – 126 s.

¹¹ Mir-Bağırzadə, S.A. Etika və estetika. Dərslik. / S.A.Mirbağırzadə. – Bakı: Füyuzat, – 2022. – 160 s.

¹² Oqtay Sadıqzadə. Sərvət. // tərt. ed. G.Mirzə. – Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, – 2013. – 104 s.

- Studying the development and directions of the theme problem in fine arts in modern times;
- Evaluating the influence of the artist's style and worldview in determining the theme and plot;
- Determining the form and style characteristics of an artistic image;
- Analysis of personality and natural phenomenon in the artistic image;
- Representing the role and importance of the theme in the reflection of the artistic image;
- Observing the development trends of the artistic style, representing and justifying its historical and cultural sources;
- Analyzing and comparing the works of artists representing different generations (old, middle and young).

In order to solve the abovementioned objectives, the main problem (theme and style) of the research work has been considered at the level of history and modernity, and the national abstract art and symbolic-decorative style, which manifested in the Azerbaijani painting during the period of independence, have been compared with each other. Of course, this comparison was made on the example of the works of different artists.

Research methods. Historical and comparative methods of art history were used in the research. The artistic processes that took place in the 7-80s of the last century had a direct influence on the formation of the fine arts of the period of independence. In this regard, the method of historical comparison is of great importance for the solution of the scientific problem. The comparative method of art history is important for the study of image and theme contrast. The comparative method of art history compares the artist's work, artistic style and themes, reveals their differences and similarities, thereby determining the characteristics of the development dynamics of fine arts.

The main defended points:

- The interrelationships of the problem of image and theme in modern Azerbaijani fine arts were reviewed in the dissertation;
- The personality, nature and thematic characteristics of the

artistic image have been determined;

- The modern development trends of the portrait genre in Azerbaijani fine arts have been determined;

- The visual information language of myth-folklore thinking and its artistic code are represented in fine arts;

- The historical and artistic aspects of the myth-folklore thinking were investigated; the characteristics of its visual embodiment were studied through the analysis of the artist's creativity;

- The multi-level nature of the image in the Azerbaijani fine arts of the period of independence was investigated;

- The theme of patriotism in modern fine arts has been analyzed at the level of personality and image.

Scientific novelty of the research. For the first time, the relationship between the image and theme in modern Azerbaijani fine arts has been systematically studied in the research. For the first time, three categories of image – personality, nature and landscape categories are singled out, and their characteristic features manifested in the artist's work were substantiated. For the first time, the works of some artists were used to substantiate theoretical points. For the first time, the manifestation of different categories of image (nature and landscape) in one work is evaluated, generalized as synthesis of image, and individual image types are clarified. Also, some works are analyzed for the first time.

Theoretical and practical significance of research. The results of the research work can be used as teaching aids in higher education institutions specializing in culture and art. At the same time, researchers studying the theoretical problems of modern Azerbaijani fine arts can use the research work.

Approbation and use. The applicant has published ten articles on the topic of the dissertation, one of which was published abroad. The applicant has also presented papers on the topic of dissertation at nine scientific conferences, three of which were held abroad.

Name of the institution where the dissertation work was performed: The dissertation was performed at the department of “Art History” of the Baku Choreography Academy.

The research scope of the dissertation, indicating the volume of the structural sections of the dissertation separately: Dissertation consists of introduction, three chapters, six paragraphs, fifteen points, conclusion, list of references and appendix. Including: the introduction – 11.672, 1.1. – 28.635, 1.2. – 31.871, 2.1. – 52.008, 2.2. – 31.197, 3.1. – 49.171, 3.2. – 37.802, conclusion – 6.144. The total length of the research work consists of 248.500 characters. The appendix includes 188 figures.

THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter I of the dissertation **“Formation of new images, themes and ideas in fine arts on the eve of independence”** consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph is entitled **“Early artistic and aesthetic sources of national thought in fine arts in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century”**. It is stated in the first point **“The formation of different views and styles in fine arts before independence”** that the Azerbaijani fine arts during the period of independence is rich in various artistic trends, creative researches and artistic styles. The process of consolidation and re-formation of innovative trends and different views on art was going on in Azerbaijan fine arts even in the 70s and 80s of the last century. These changes, which are mainly works of the “generation of the 60s”, prepared the initial basis for ideas of independence and new views on art that would appear much later in artistic creativity. Artists – Tahir Salahov, Toghrul Narimanbekov, Elbey Rzaguliyev, Rasim Babayev, Elmira Shahtakhtinskaya, Nadir Zeynalov, Baba Aliyev, Farhad Khalilov, as well as Jahid Jamal, Kamal Ahmad, Mirjavad Javadov, Ashraf Muradov, etc. working in that period and trying to follow their own path in art, began to represent new ideas in their work in a more comprehensive perspective. This process became more intensive from the end of the 80s, and it became the leading idea-artistic basis of the cultural environment.

At the same time, People’s Artist Tahir Salahov’s work is particularly noteworthy. Tahir Salahov is undoubtedly a great artist and a skilled portraitist. A large part of his work belongs to the genre

of portrait. He painted a large number of portraits of the most diverse people. *“He is interested in personality with great qualities in terms of the nature of talent, he paints portraits of prominent people – Garayev, Amirov, Sabir, Shostakovich, Rostropovich, Rauschenberg, Dali and Güssen, depicts the image of interesting and elegant women, people he loves”*.¹³

Tahir Salahov painted perfect examples of Baku and Absheron type landscapes during the Soviet period and the years of independence.¹⁴ *“The great master of the brush carried out with a serious will the task of expressing the invisible or less visible aspects of life with dark colors in art with difficult themes that were perhaps unimaginable for the art of painting even in the years of Soviet rule”*.¹⁵

It is clear to everyone that People’s Artist Farhad Khalilov’s work played a big role in the development of modern Azerbaijani fine arts. In our opinion, the embodiment of the consistent development dynamics of postmodernism is important here. In other words, in general, Farhad Khalilov revives the development of postmodernism literally in Azerbaijani art in the example of an individual, and creates a compact model of this development, transitions in time and space by making a quick transition from one stage to another in his work.

The second point is entitled “The role of the portrait genre in the formation of national thinking”. It is stated here that the portrait genre plays a special role in the development of national thinking in fine arts. It is through the portrait that the character, inner world and emotional state of the image can be fully reflected.

The portrait genre has played an important role in the development of artistic image throughout all historical periods. This genre began to develop in the Azerbaijani fine arts in the late 19th

¹³Алиева С.Г. Критика и анализ творчества Таира Салахова в советском и русском искусствоведении. Сənubi Qafqaz tədqiqatları: Mövcud vəziyyət, problemlər və perspektivlər./ AMEA Qafqazşünaslıq İnstitutu. 23 oktyabr 2024.

¹⁴ Tahir Salahov. Sərvət // tərt. ed. T.Əfəndiyev, G.Qacar. – Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, – 2013. – s. 43-44.

¹⁵ Tahir Salahov-90. Yaradıcılığının əsas mərhələləri (kollektiv nəşr). Bakı, 2019. – s. 5.

century and the early 20th century, when more realistic fine arts were being formed. As you can see, the formation of the portrait genre is historically associated with the development of realist fine arts. The portrait genre developed especially in the 1950s-1960s and acquired new content and modern artistic forms in Azerbaijani fine arts during the independence period.

The second paragraph of the first chapter is entitled **“Abstract thinking in early independence: postmodern discourse and theme diversity”**. New art searches at the abovementioned stage are studied on the example of the creativity of the 60s generation. The first point **“Different artistic searches in the field of abstract art”** deals with one of the characteristic features of the 60s generation –the emergence of “dissident” artists and their struggle for self-affirmation in society for a long time. Kamal Ahmad, Javad Mirjavadov, Ashraf Murad, sculptor Fazil Najafov, and even Rasim Babayev, who gained more popularity than others, were on the list of dissidents.

Kamal Ahmad was one of the unique artists who enriched the Azerbaijani art with his black and red palette. His work raised national symbolism to a new creative level and presented national art to the world on a completely new level. But he had to fight for it for many years. *“He wrote in his biography: “I have been working to hold a solo exhibition for five years. I have repeatedly appealed to the Union of Azerbaijani Artists, the Ministry of Culture of Azerbaijan and the Central Committee. But to no avail...” His solo exhibition would be held only in 1987, and the artist would already die in 1992”*.¹⁶

Javad Mirjavadov was one of the artists who enriched the national symbolism with his expressive art. His work brought a richness, abundance of colors, saturation with magical and symbolic images to the late 20th century Azerbaijani fine arts.

The second point is entitled **“Decorativeness in abstract thinking. National and transnational art visions”**. The main object

¹⁶ Kamal Əhməd. Sərvət (mətnin müəllifi Dilarə Vahabova). Bakı, “Şərq-Qərb”, 2013.- s. 8

of analysis is the features of decorativeness in abstract thinking here. It is stated that People's Artist Siruz Mirzazadeh's style attracts attention with decorativeness and rich decorative motifs. The artist denies light and shadow in most of his paintings and decorates the composition with small decorative motifs, patchworks and petals. His paintings are reminiscent of the famous Austrian symbolist artist Gustav Klimt's paintings due to their structure and color arrangement.

The lamp in Siruz Mirzazadeh's "In the light of a lamp" is actually symbolic. A traditional chirag – lamp is depicted in the center of the composition. All other details are arranged around it. Women in red clothes are depicted in the work. They sit on both side of the lamp and talk. Of course, the artist could depict these women without the lamp. However, depicting the lamp in the composition and placing it in its center gives a symbolic meaning to this traditional household item. This aspect is also reflected in the title of the work. Dark color is dominant coloristically in the work. The women in red are depicted on a mostly green, partly gray neutral background. The lamp on a dark background is more noticeable and strengthens the symbolic nature of the composition.

Modern art in Azerbaijani fine arts became more widespread in the 90s. At that time, the existential mood that was rooted in the society under the influence of well-known processes helped the spread of Western-style abstract tendencies in fine arts. Removing the "iron curtain" that once reigned in the Soviet society and the sudden acquaintance with the avant-garde of the modern world created conditions for the manifestation of the Western-oriented modern mood in art. Siruz Mirzazadeh, Teymur Daimi, Yusif Mirza, Vugar Ali, Anvar Asgarov and other artists created avant-garde abstract works in the spirit of Western art in that period. Most of them switched gradually (in the 2000s) to forms with national content and color. But some of them remained loyal to the tradition formed in the 90s and continued to create avant-garde type works peculiar to Western art. One of them was Honored Artist Anvar Asgarov.

The Chapter II of the dissertation – **“Searches for form and style in fine arts: forms of artistic manifestation of real and unreal imaginations”** includes two paragraphs. The first paragraph **“The artistic image in the context of historical-heroic and cultural-literary personality”** consists of three points. The theme of heroism comes to the fore in the first point **“Images of historical heroes and rulers”**. The applicant emphasizes that there are close ties of hereditary between classical and modern art in historical-heroic genre. The historical-heroic theme, founded by Azim Azimzade, Gazanfar Khaligov, Taghi Taghiyev, Kazim Kazimzadeh, Sattar Bahlulzadeh, Mikayil Abdullayev, Sadig Sharifzadeh and others in 1930s-60s, were continued and developed during the period of independence by Najafgulu Ismayilov, Altay Hajiyeve, Rza Avsharov, Ajdar Gafarov, Faig Abdullayev.

People’s Artist Altay Hajiyeve played a major role in the historical-heroic theme. Altay Hajiyeve was the first artist who created a series of portraits of Azerbaijani rulers. Meanwhile, the images of Tomris, Eldegiz Atabey, Uzun Hasan, Sara Khatun, Fatali Khan and others particularly attract attention.

The second point is entitled **“Images of literary personalities: tradition and modernity”**. The problem of artistic image is considered in the context of literary figure here. In this regard, the artistic image of the great poet Nizami Ganjavi attracts more attention.

The theme of Nizami has not lost its relevance and popularity in the period of independence. Interest in this theme has not decreased, on the contrary, it has increased even more in the last 30 years since independence. The old and middle, as well as the young generation of Azerbaijani artists turn enthusiastically to the theme of Nizami. As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, declared 2021 as the year of Nizami, the interest in this theme has increased even more.

The theme of Nizami has been in the center of attention since the first years of independence. Talented brush masters Ogtay Sadigzadeh, Elchin Aslanov, Ismayil Mammadov, Elshan Hajizadeh, Fakhraddin Ali, Sayyad Bayramov and others created the artistic

image of Nizami during the years of independence.¹⁷ As before, the basis of the poet's iconography, in other words, the fixed image is the portrait of Nizami created by Gazanfar Khalikov in 1940 and the winner of the Nizami image competition. When creating the image of Nizami, artists as a rule referred to that iconography in the Soviet period and in the years of independence.

The portrait of Khurshidbanu Natavan occupies a special place among the artistic images. People's Artist Altay Hajiyevev created several portraits of Natavan in a lyrical style back in the 90s of the last century. The image of the Khan's daughter has been depicted more conventionally and symbolically than realistically in these portraits. It should be stated that Altay Hajiyevev was the creator of a series of images of women who occupied an important place in the history of Azerbaijan and played an important role in fateful events. Natavan had a special place among them. Also, unlike other female characters, the artist applied to the image of Natavan several times. He tried to depict the characteristics of a noble Azerbaijani woman in the image of Natavan. Altay Hajiyevev depicted Natavan in a romantic style, close-up in one of his works.

The third point is called **“Different types of images in Tahir Salahov's work”**. The problem of artistic image and theme found a new form of interpretation in People's Artist Tahir Salahov's work. The artist created unique examples of artistic images in portrait and other genres. The images created by the artist are of a national and transnational nature.

The images of foreign cultural figures form a whole series in Tahir Salahov's work. He painted portraits of famous figures from different countries. These portraits introduced new, different touches to the phenomenon of the artistic image in Azerbaijani fine arts.

One of the interesting portraits created by Salahov on foreign themes is undoubtedly the portrait of the famous American artist Robert Rauschenberg. Salahov depicted Rauschenberg standing in the doorway and smiling at the spectators. Rauschenberg is depicted

¹⁷ Əliyeva S.Q. Müstəqillik dövrü Azərbaycan rəssamlarının yaradıcılığında Nizami obrazı // - Bakı: Bakı Xəbəratıfıya Akademiyası, Sənət akademiyası – № 2 (17) 2022. – s. 66-67.

almost full-length, only the lower part of his legs is not “squeezed” into the composition. The depicted American artist leans his left hand on the door and holds a glass in his right hand at the waist. He is wearing a simple blue shirt with large checks and gray and black pants. The sincere smile on Rauschenberg’s face is very realistic and lifelike.¹⁸

The second paragraph of the second chapter is entitled **“Symbols and historical-artistic aspects of myth-folklore memory”**. The correspondence of theme and the image are analyzed at the level of myth-folklore memory in this paragraph. The paragraph consists of two points. The first point is titled **“Decorative style and symbols in folklore”**. It is stated here that symbols are mainly manifested in abstract and decorative forms, reflecting national content in a number of cases. Meanwhile, compositions of sensory-associative and landscape type have a broader symbolic content. These symbols are created through objects, colors, mood, etc

Symbols have been particularly developed in the recent works by People’s artists Arif Aziz and Siruz Mirzazadeh. This is more obvious in thematic landscape-type works. Narrative idea of the environment and nature is formed by covering a small part of the landscape in thematic landscapes that are visually symbolic. The content is conveyed to the audience through the visual geometric shapes, white patterns and strokes he created rather than artistic motifs in Arif Aziz’s landscapes such as “Gobustan”, “The village of Gala”, “Sandstorm” and “Rhythms of Absheron”. This is a form of decorativeness characteristic of Arif Aziz’s work.

Rasim Babayev occupied an exceptional place among the artists whose work is closely related to the thinking of myth and memory in modern Azerbaijani painting. He created works mostly in landscape thematic genres in the early stage of his work. The artist tended to the embodiment of folklore characters and mythical memory later, in the mature period of his work. The artist created his paintings in the style of classical eastern art, without foreground and background, light and shadow, which strengthened their national

¹⁸ Əliyeva S.Q. Tahir Salahov-Robert Rauşenberq: fərqli üslublar, oxşar talelər // - Bakı: Mədəniyyət dünyası. ADMİU - XXXX buraxılış. 2021 – s. 77-79.

nature. *“He lived and thought with his heart, he perceived this world only with his heart, which is the perceiving, analyzing, reacting and creating center. He painted his paintings with his heart. That’s why his works are so violent, joyful, energetic, legendary, bright, colorful, painful and hot. There is the main element – sincerity, confidence, perception of the beauty of the world in these paintings”*.¹⁹

Many artists have addressed the theme of folklore in Azerbaijani fine arts. Mikayil Abdullayev, Rasim Babayev, Arif Huseynov, Siruz Mirzazadeh, Ashraf Heybatov, Vugar Ali, Zakir Huseynov, Gunay Meydizadeh, Ali Shamsi and many others can be mentioned among them.²⁰

People’s artist Arif Huseynov stands out among brush masters who create colorful works on folklore. The artist drew illustrations for folklore examples and poetry books even in the 60s and 70s of the last century, and later has continued and developed this theme in his work. It is no exaggeration to say that folklore motifs occupy an important place in Arif Huseynov’s work.

Arif Huseynov’s descriptive language is simple and concise. The artist’s works have rich touches that reflect the national character deeply. The series “Azerbaijani Tales” created by the artist in 2000 rouse interest. This series includes a large number of drawings. Episodes from Azerbaijani fairy tales are represented in that series.

The national style came to the fore in modern avant-garde art starting from the 2000s. This style manifested in national forms and attributes, meaning and content, and in the colorful, warm shades typical of Azerbaijani painting. Aghali Ibrahimov, Siruz Mirzazade, Gayyur Yunus, Kamal Ahmad, Nazim Mammadov, Altay Sadigzadeh, Rashad Mehdiyev, Rashad Alakbarov, Ilgar Akbarov, Yusif Mirza, Orkhan Huseynov and others, who were representatives of the middle and young generation, created works in this style in

¹⁹ Rasim Babayev. Sərvət (mətnin müəllifi G.Qacar). Bakı, Şərq-Qərb, 2013. - s. 54

²⁰ Aliyeva S.Q. Embodying problems of folklore motifs in contemporary national fine arts // - Bakı: İncəsənət və mədəniyyət problemləri – № 2 (80) – 2022. – s. 16-25.

those years, and many of them continue to create them even now. Zakir Huseynov's artistic views, a worthy representative of the "Yeni Absheron" avant-garde school, were formed in such an environment.

The image of a mystical dervish occupied an important place in Zakir Huseynov's work. The dervishes, which were painted by him, differ from each other in terms of character and appearance. You can see a talented performer, a wise poor man, and a magician among these dervishes. He painted most of these images in the 2000s. *"Zakir Huseynov, whose view of the world was quite different, confronted his admirers with a theme they might not have expected in the mid-2000s. The "Dervishes" series created by him in 2005-2007 became a new page in his quite colorful creativity. So, first of all, the images painted in these works differed from the previous ones in terms of their meaning and content".*²¹

The second point – **"Bird-girl (Woman) duality in fine art. Symbolic content of mythical and real (bird) animal images"** deals with images of bird with symbolic content. It is stated that the image of birds is widespread in Azerbaijani painting. Many Azerbaijani artists have turned to mythological memory and folklore motifs in deep layers of meaning and to the image of bird, which is associated with household signs in a relatively simple sense. It is possible to see mythical-legendary or realistic-everyday bird images in the works by Sattar Bahlulzadeh, Toghrul Narimanbekov, Rasim Babayev, Arif Huseynov, Khalida Safarova, Sara Manafova, Kamal Ahmed, Javad Mirijavadov, Siruz Mirzazadeh, Zakir Huseynov, Vugar Ali and many others.

Although the Bird-Woman duality is relatively uncommon in modern Azerbaijani painting, it is possible to find examples of it. In this regard, the most interesting examples were created by the avant-garde artist Kamal Ahmed, whose art was not properly appreciated in his lifetime. The image of a bird is generally characteristic of most of Kamal Ahmed's paintings and carries a symbolic meaning. In addition, the artist developed this image, adding new shades of meaning to it and was able to create the duality of Bird-Women.

²¹ Əliyev, Z.A. Zakir Hüseynov. Tənha döyüşçü / Z.A.Əliyev. – Bakı: Letterpress. - 2011. – s. 108-109.

Reflecting the bird in the image of an ideal woman can be considered one of the main aesthetic findings of the avant-garde-mystical attitude in Kamal Ahmed's work.

There is a magical connection between the hoopoe and human (woman) in some of Siruz Mirzazadeh's works. The artist seems to be trying to connect these two images together and eventually succeeds. Thus, the hoopoe is depicted in the same size as the woman and kissing her "Love with the hoopoe" in a number of paintings. The final transformation stage of this artistic-mythological style is the merging of human (image of Divine Woman) with the bird into one image. We recall inevitably the image of the Bird Girl by Kamal Ahmed here.

The chapter III of the dissertation **"The theme of patriotism and the concept of artistic image in modern fine arts"** consists of two paragraphs. The problem of artistic image is considered in the context of personality and natural phenomena in the first paragraph **"Modern artistic image at the level of personality, environment and nature"**. The paragraph includes four points. The first point "Portrait as a symbol of statehood and national patriotism" emphasize that personality and its artistic form of expression are one of the main themes of fine arts. This topic has been relevant before and has not lost its relevance in the modern era we live in. On the contrary, the problem of embodying personality in fine art has become even more relevant in the modern era.

The image of Heydar Aliyev is the embodiment of classical traditions in modern Azerbaijani fine art. Thus, artists recreate this image on canvas, in the style of academic painting, strictly adhering to the norms of classical art. In this sense, we can evaluate the image of Haydar Aliyev as a reliable source of protection for the principles of classical realism, a generator of exemplary art and true craftsmanship in the art space where modern avant-garde art is spread.

The theme of Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijani fine arts is related to the following topics:

- Historicism;
- Patriotism;

Azerbaijanism;
Statehood.

The image of Heydar Aliyev is distinguished by its unique features. In our opinion, his main descriptive features reflect the following qualities:

Determination;
Majesty;
Wisdom;
Foresight;
Humanism;
Nobility.

This list could be expanded further, but the images of the Great leader created by our artists reflect mainly these aspects. These abovementioned aspects relate to the theme and image.

The ideas of statehood and Azerbaijanism are strong in the portrait of Heydar Aliyev painted by Tahir Salahov. In the work, Heydar Aliyev is depicted standing at his table in his office. His penetrating gaze is fixed on the viewer. The head of state has a determined, slightly concerned expression on his face. A view of Baku is visible through the open window on the right side of the composition.

Talented portrait artist Ogtay Sadigzadeh was one of the creators of the portrait of Heydar Aliyev. The artist painted the portrait of the Great leader in the style of the academic portrait genre, which is characteristic of his work, based on the principles of classical painting.

The image is considered at the level of creative personality in the second point **“Development characteristics of different artistic styles. Images of creative personalities”**. Artistic style is of great importance in the embodiment of the image. It is stated that the following styles developed most in Azerbaijani art during the period of independence:

- realistic style;
- folklore-miniature style;
- styles of avant-garde and abstractionism.

It should be stated that these styles are also divided into different directions. So, two main directions of avant-garde art were formed during the years of independence:

- Classical avant-garde;
- National avant-garde.

National avant-garde art is more interesting in terms of form, style and content. When we say national avant-garde art, we mean the use of characteristic symbols and signs (Gobustan rock paintings, Maiden's Tower, Ateshgah, elements of the mugham trio, pictures of saz, tar, daf (drum), kamancheh, quince, pomegranate, etc., as well as "warm" color) of Azerbaijan in the composition. Of course, these symbols are presented not in the traditional realistic style, but in a slightly modified, special form, which is generally a characteristic feature of avant-garde art.

The portrait of Mstislav Rostropovich, a prominent cellist and two-time laureate of the Russian State Prize, stands out among T.Salahov's portraits of the period of independence. The artistic path extending from G. Garayev to the artistic image of D.Shostakovich, then to M. Rostropovich allows to trace the features of the artist's artistic evolution. The austere style in the portrait of G.Garayev, tending to simplicity of composition and linear structure, reached its climax in the portrait of D.Shostakovich. Compared to the composition of the portrait of G.Garayev, the composition here was not simple, linear, but had a relatively complex perspective structure. However, the absence of excess details, large, monotonous surfaces, cold color splashes made the work one of the most memorable examples of austere style.

Portrait of Rostropovich was also painted by T.Narimanbekov. T.Narimanbekov was the author of two famous portraits of Rostropovich. It is interesting that both portraits were painted in 1991. Let's take a look at these portraits separately. One of them is "M.Rostropovich – world-class musician". The image created by T.Narimanbekov in that portrait has more decorative content. So, he wandered from the artistry peculiar to the image of Rostropovich created by T.Salahov. T.Narimanbekov painted him playing the cello. But, this performance in the portrait by T.Narimanbekov has a

more humane, colorful and decorative effect. The extreme realism of T.Salahov didn't allow placing extraneous, imaginary elements in the composition. On the contrary, T.Narimanbekov's decorativism adapted imaginary details to the overall composition skillfully. Taking advantage of this, the artist grouped interesting imaginary elements around the master playing the cello with enthusiasm. They consist mainly of architectural symbols of some cities.

The third point is called **“A new look at the image of nature in fine art”**, deals with the image of nature. As is known, one of the interesting forms of embodiment of an artistic image is the image of nature. The image of nature, which has a fairly wide range of forms of expression, has a multi-level idea-artistic content and forms of meaning and expression.

The image of nature is widespread in fine art. Separate elements of the image of nature can be found in medieval Tabriz miniatures in Azerbaijani fine art. The nature scenes served as an artistic motif for a more expressive expression of the plot. Of course, a certain mood was created in association with the theme and plot at this time. For example, the blossoming tree in the background is considered a symbol of youth and beauty and creates a lyrical mood in Soltan Mahammad's miniature “Kitab oxuyan oğlan” (“The boy reading book”).

Various images of nature began to be created in Azerbaijani fine art with the development of the landscape genre in 20th century. The classical image of Azerbaijani nature includes the following characteristic symbols:

- mountains;
- steppes, meadows and forests;
- rivers and river valleys;
- lakes, ponds;
- the sea.

The image of a tree (forest) is one of the most widespread symbols in Azerbaijani fine art. Artists who turned to the landscape genre, such as Sattar Bahlulzadeh, Mahmud Tagiyev, Baba Aliyev, Najafgulu Ismayilov, Kamil Khanlarov, Eyyub Huseynov, Gennady Brijatyuk, Anvar Askerov and others, created valuable examples of

the forest-tree associative symbolism. This tradition is continued by Sahlab Mammadov (in painting), Sakit Mammadov, Siruz Mirzazadeh, Arif Aziz, Ashraf Heybatov, Elshan Hajizadeh, Ali Ismail and others in the modern times. The associative symbolism of forest-tree is presented in different compositional and psychological-emotional levels depending on the artist's worldview and artistic style.

The fourth point **“The theme of Karabakh in fine arts”** reflects one of the main themes of the fine arts of the independence period. This theme began to form in Azerbaijani art even before independence – in 88-89 years of the last century. But its content has changed significantly over the years, this theme has acquired a number of attention-grabbing nuances, new form and content features. It is possible to boldly say that the theme of Karabakh is one of the most changing and relevant themes in Azerbaijan's fine arts during the period of independence. This is also a theme that most artists, and in recent years, young people have addressed with great enthusiasm.

The theme of victory manifests in many paintings by the talented artist Vugar Ali. His painting “Victory”, which was painted in 2020 during the days of great victory, reflects feelings of joy and heroism. A brave, slender and victorious Azerbaijani soldier riding a white horse is painted in the center of the composition. He turned his face to the side, raised his left hand and clenched his strong fist. This gesture is reminiscent of the famous expression “Iron fist”. The background of the composition consists of the colors of the tricolor flag of Azerbaijan. This is not a whole flag, but it reflects the victory of Azerbaijan, the victory befitting the flag of Azerbaijan through visual artistic forms of expression.

The second paragraph of the third chapter is entitled **“Embodiment of themes of cultural environment, national character and patriotism in monumental art”**. The paragraph is divided in two points. The first point is entitled **“Ideas of statehood in sculpture in the context of artistic images”**. It is stated that the artistic image of the Great Leader Heydar Aliyev is of great importance in the development of modern Azerbaijani monumental

art. The personality of Heydar Aliyev raised the image phenomenon to a fundamentally new qualitative level in fine arts. Prominent sculptors – Omar Eldarov, Natig Aliyev, Fuad Salayev, Akif Asgarov and others recreated his image skillfully on stone.

One of the main monuments of Heydar Aliyev is the one that stands in the center of Baku, in the park in front of the palace named after him (2004; architect Igor Voznesensky, sculptors Salavat Shcherbakov, Mikhail Norgin). This monument, a gift to Azerbaijan from the Russian Federation, was made in Smolensk and brought to Baku and installed.

The composition of the monument is simple, characteristic and majestic. Heydar Aliyev is depicted with a characteristic gesture - raising his right hand as if greeting people. The plasticity of monument is distinguished by its smoothness and proportionality. The bronze monument is erected on a granite pedestal. Traditional light and dark brown colors prevail in the color arrangement of the composition.

Academician Zarifa Aliyeva's perfect plastic images were created by Omar Eldarov. The sculpture "Elegy" in Zarifa Park in the 6th microdistrict can be considered one of the excellent artistic achievements of the great sculptor.

The composition "Elegy" made of white marble reflects all the main features of Zarifa Aliyeva's character - her human qualities, nobility, elegance as a woman and delicate movements. The tombstone of Zarifa Aliyeva in the Alley of Honor was also made based on the monument "Elegy".

The bust of Zarifa Aliyeva in the 6th microdistrict reveals the richer features of her human qualities. The monument can be considered a logical continuation of "Elegy". If Zarifa Aliyeva's elegance as a woman is reflected in her body movements (her general plasticity, crossing her legs, etc) in "Elegy", those characteristics are realized through her gaze, slight smile, sincerity and expressive face in the abovementioned bust.

Monumental images of the poetess Natavan attract attention. The outstanding sculptor Hayat Abdullayeva created a bronze bust of Natavan back in the early 80s. That bust was placed in Shusha in

1982. Later, when Armenian vandals occupied Shusha, they shot and damaged this bust besides the busts of Uzeyir bey and Bulbul. The shot monuments were brought to Baku, albeit with difficulty. Thankfully, our lands were liberated and now all three busts have been completely restored and placed in their previous locations. Shusha Khan's daughter Natavan's house was also completely restored and returned to its former appearance.

A monument of Natavan was placed in the central park of Waterloo, Belgium in 2016. The author of the monument is sculptor Imran Mehdiyev. The bronze monument was erected on a hexagonal marble pedestal. The monument has an interesting compositional structure. Its idea is based on lyrical-romantic and emotional feelings. Natavan was described above the girdle, sitting as if with cross-legged. She held her head upright, looking thoughtfully, anxiously forward. She is wearing a wide frilly tuman (skirt) and a blouse with lace sleeves. The sculptor, who preferred the forms of national clothing in the artistic structure of the image, described the poetess with the kalaghayi. Natavan was holding a bundle of paper in her left hand and pressed her kalaghayi to her chest with her right hand. There are two frames in the back of the composition; these frames symbolize opened windows. The author attached iron sheets on those frames reminding of flying birds. In a metaphorical sense, they embody Natavan's poetry flying in the sky and spreading in the homeland.

The monument of the great poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi was erected in Sumgait, in the park where the street named after him begins (2007; sculptor Isa Mammadkhanov). The monument is quadrangular, widening slightly downwards, standing on a pedestal covered with brown colored marble. The image of the poet is resolved in a calm, static pose, traditional appearance. There is no feeling of any innovation, trends of sounding with the times in the image. From this point of view, the monument has less artistic and aesthetic significance than monuments of Nizami in Baku and Ganja.

A monument of Dede Gorgud was erected in one of the central parks of Nakhchivan, near the Tabriz Hotel (1999; sculptors Huseyngulu Aliyev, Elman Jafarov). A relatively small seating

monument made of bronze is erected on a light gray marble pedestal with a rough surface. Large pieces of stone are arranged, which surround the composition and give the monument a more magnificent appearance in the lower part of the composition. Dede Gorgud's calm face and clear eyes, holding an ancient national musical instrument - a qomuz in his left-hand show that he is mentally steady, restrained, and rich in his spiritual world.

The second point is entitled **“The dynamics of the multifaceted development of the theme and artistic image”**. It is stated that many Azerbaijani sculptors participated in the development of the theme and artistic image during the period of independence. Omar Eldarov, Natig Aliyev, Salhab Mammadov, Khanlar Ahmadov, Gorush Babayev, Imran Mehdiyev, Ali Ibadullayev and others have made significant contributions to this work. One of such sculptors is People's Artist, Professor Fuad Salayev.

The lyrical mood of the character is embodied more through her outstretched arms during performance than through her facial expression in the monument “Actress” placed in front of the “Uns” Theater. The rough surface of the monument also reflects her clothing.

Besides symbolic-abstract form, Fuad Salayev also turns to traditional realism. So, Fuad Salayev's artistic style develops in traditional realism (with the participation of lyrical content) on the one hand and is symbolic abstract forms on the other hand. From this point of view, his work can be compared with Salhab Mammadov's work, who turns to both forms.

As a result, the following **conclusions** were gained:

- New themes and styles emerged in Azerbaijani fine arts during the period of independence;
- The problem of image plays an important role in the development of fine arts in the artistic and philosophical direction. The multi-faceted interpretation of the artistic image in fine arts has stimulated the enrichment of the artistic-aesthetic content;
- The artistic image develops dynamically with the theme. Correspondence of theme and image is one of the main conditions

for the successful outcome of innovative searches in fine arts and the formation of new art criteria;

- The emergence of these themes and styles is related to the change and renewal of moral values during the period of independence;

- New styles develop mainly in two directions - national abstraction and symbolic-decorative styles;

- The theme of national-patriotism developed considerably during the period of independence;

- The theme of Karabakh acts as one of the main themes of the fine arts of the period of independence;

- In modern times, works created on the theme of Karabakh reflect deeply the optimistic mood and determination to win, which is related to the victory achieved in the 44-day war;

- The search for new themes and styles in Azerbaijani fine arts continues today. This feature is more clearly reflected in the work and outlook of young artists.

According to the content of the dissertation, the following scientific works of the author were published:

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2. Forms of embodiment of national avant-garde art in Zakir Huseynov painting // İncəsənət və mədəniyyət problemləri. – № 3 (77) – Bakı, 2021 - s. 28-38.
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10. Müasir Azərbaycan rəngkarlığında quş obrazı: mifəlik gerçəklikdən müasirliyə doğru və mif-folklor yaddaşının bədii mənalandırma problemi // ADMİU-nun Elmi Əsərləri. № 31. – Bakı, 2022 – s. 130-138.
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12. Azərbaycan təsviri sənətində Novruz bayramı mövzusu (tematik mənaşaranma paradıqları kontekstində) // Türkdilli xalqların Novruz adət-ənənələri (I Beynəlxalq konfrans) Azərbaycan Milli Konservatoriyasının nəzdində Sumqayıt Musiqi Kolleci – Sumqayıt – 2022. – s. 10-15.
13. Постмодернистский портрет в современном азербайджанском изобразительном искусстве // “Müasir informasiya məkanında turizmin dayanıqlı inkişafı və sosial-mədəni innovasiyalar” (ADMİU-nun 100 illiyinə həsr olunmuş respublika elmi-nəzəri konfrans) - Bakı, 2023 – s. 563-567.
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