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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**THE SYNTHESIS OF WESTERN EUROPEAN AND
NATIONAL TRADITIONS IN THE WORKS OF
CONTEMPORARY AZERBAIJANI ARTISTS**

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GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH WORK

Relevance of the research and the degree of development.

The relevance of the topic is explained by the fact that the subject of the synthesis of Western European and national traditions in the work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists has not yet been the focus of a monographic scientific study within Azerbaijani art scholarship. More specifically, the topic is highly relevant as it explores the synthesis of tradition and modernity in Azerbaijani visual art. It investigates how the fusion of national artistic styles with the influence of Western European artistic trends has been formed, and how this synthesis has influenced the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists.

Azerbaijani art has historically developed under the influence of various cultures. In particular, during the 19th and 20th centuries, the influence of Western European academicism and modernist movements on Azerbaijani artists increased. This influence, combined with national traditions, gave rise to new forms of expression distinguished by their uniqueness.

In the modern era, globalization and technological advancement have led this synthesis to enter a new stage. The relevance of the topic can be justified by several important aspects: although contemporary Azerbaijani artists make use of Western European artistic trends, they reflect values based on national traditions in their creative work; in the works of our artists, classical Eastern miniature traditions are synthesized with Western European modernism and postmodernism, and are presented in a new artistic language; this synthesis contributes to the recognition of Azerbaijani artists on the international stage and facilitates the integration of our national visual art into the global art scene; today, many Azerbaijani artists, inspired by Western art, are creating original forms of artistic expression.

The harmonious combination of national and Western tendencies in this process represents a highly relevant and engaging area of research from the perspective of art studies. At the same time, this research allows for a systematic exploration of the mutual

influence of Western European and national traditions observed in the work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists.

The attitude toward various aspects of the topic reflected in both specialized and generalizing art literature is explained. An episodic approach to the problem has appeared in the dissertations and articles of Azerbaijani art scholars. Among them are: Gulrana Alikhan Mirza, “The Creative Process and Individual Style of the Artist in Azerbaijani Easel Painting during the Last 30 Years of the 20th Century”(Baku, 2004) ¹; Elchin Firdovsi Aliyev, “The Problem of Perception of Visual Form in Art” (Baku, 2004) ²; Mehriban Bahadur Tahirova, “Problems and Trends in Contemporary Azerbaijani Painting (1980–2000)”(Baku, 2005) ³; Rasim Mammad Nazirov, “The Role of Improvisation in Eastern Miniature Painting” (Baku, 2005) ⁴; Tahir Rauf Bayramov, “The Problem of Artistic Tradition in Azerbaijani Fine Art” (Baku, 2007) ⁵; Ulkar Nemat Hajiyeva, “Styles and Directions in the Works of Nakhchivan Artists” (Baku, 2011); Nargiz Safa Hajiyeva, “Archetypes and Mythological Images in the Works of Javad Mirjavadov” (Baku, 2012)⁶; Nigar Rufat Alasgarova, “The Problem of Interpreting Foreign Themes in the Works of Azerbaijani Artists”(Baku, 2012)⁷; Aysel Elkhan Zohrabova, “Axiological

¹ Mirzə, G.Ə. XX əsrin son 30 ilində Azərbaycan dəzgah rəngkarlığında rəssamın yaradıcılıq prosesi və fərdi üslubu: / sənətsüənəslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2004.

² Əliyev, E.F. İncəsənətdə vizual formanın qavranılması problemi: / sənətsüənəslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2004.

³ Тагирова, М.Б. Проблемы и тенденции современной Азербайджанской живописи (1980-2000): / диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора философии по искусствоведению. / - Баку, 2005.

⁴Назирова, Р.М. Роль импровизации в миниатюрной живописи востока: / диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора философии по искусствоведению. / - Баку, 2005.

⁵ Bayramov, T.R. Azərbaycan təsviri sənətində bədii ənənə problemi: / sənətsüənəslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2007.

⁶ Hacıyeva, N.S. Cavad Mircavadovun yaradıcılığında arxetiplər və mifoloji surətlər: / sənətsüənəslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoferatı. / - Bakı, 2012.

⁷ Алескерова, Н.Р. Проблема интерпретации зарубежной тематики в творчестве азербайджанских художников: / диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора философии по искусствоведению. / Баку, 2012.

Aspects of Contemporary Azerbaijani Visual Art” (Baku, 2013)⁸; Ramil Elkhan Aliyev, “The development of Azerbaijani Graphics during the Independence Period” (Baku, 2013)⁹; Farman Yagub Gasimov, “The Creative Work of People's Artist Natig Aliyev in the Context of Contemporary Azerbaijani Sculpture” (Baku, 2014); Galib Ahmad Gasimov, “Tradition and Modernity in the Creative Work of Sculptor Fazil Najafov” (Baku, 2015)¹⁰; Emin Akif Alakbarov, “The Creative Work of Sculptor Fuad Salayev” (Baku, 2016)¹¹; Hokuma Aslan Safarli-Agasoy, “Easel Sculpture in Azerbaijan during the Independence Period” (Baku, 2016); Zakiya Aqif Nuriyeva, “The development of the Landscape Genre in Azerbaijani Painting during the Independence Period” (Baku, 2016)¹²; Natavan Apdin Muradova, “Azerbaijani Art in the Context of Tradition and Modernity during the Independence Period” (Baku, 2018)¹³; Nurana Mirali Selimli, “The Problems of Reality and Irreality in the Works of Arif Huseynov” (Baku, 2018)¹⁴; Ayan Arif Azizova-Mammadova, “The Synthesis of Artistic Means of Expression in the Creative Practice of Arif Azizov” (Baku, 2018) and others. These dissertations examine the role of national traditions and innovation in the creative output of individual artists, analyzing how these elements are represented in their work. In these dissertations, the authors have examined national traditions and innovations in the work of individual artists and expressed opinions about their role and significance in the artists’ creativity.

⁸ Зоҳрабова, А.Э. Аксиологические аспекты современного изобразительного искусства Азербайджана: / диссертации на соискание ученой степени доктора философии по искусствоведению. / - Баку, 2013.

⁹ Əliyev, R.E. Müstəqillik dövründə Azərbaycan qrafikasının inkişafı: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2013.

¹⁰ Qasimov, Q.Ə. Heykəltəraş Fazil Nəcəfovun yaradıcılığında ənənə və müasirik: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2015.

¹¹ Ələkbərov, E.A. Heykəltəraş Fuad Salayevin yaradıcılığı: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, -2016.

¹² Nuriyeva, Z.A. Müstəqillik dövründə Azərbaycan boyakarlığında mənzərə janrının inkişafı: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2016. – 129 s.

¹³ Muradova, N.A. Müstəqillik dövrü Azərbaycan incəsənəti ənənə və müasirlik kontekstində: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2018. – 150 s.

¹⁴ Səlimli, N.M. Arif Hüseynovun yaradıcılığında reallıq və irrealıq problemi: / sənətsünaslıq üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. / - Bakı, 2018. - 139 s.

Telman İbrahimov's "Avant-Garde. Perspectives and Problems" ("Gənclik", Journal, No. 9–10, Baku, 1990)¹⁵, "Peykər" Artists Group ("Ədəbiyyat və İncəsənət", Newspaper, July 13, 1990)¹⁶, "Communicativeness in the Visual Culture of Azerbaijan" (Conference materials: "Architecture and Art of the Near and Middle East", Baku, 1989)¹⁷, as well as numerous monographs and articles in the genre of "creative portrait" by art critic Ziyadkhan Aliyev dedicated to the work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists (Arif Hüseynov¹⁸, Zakir Hüseynov¹⁹, Gennadi Brijatyuk²⁰, Rafael Abasov²¹, Gorush Nuraddinoghlu²², etc.) also reflect the creative processes taking place in our modern fine arts.

Nevertheless, the dissertation demonstrates that many art-related issues and trends arising from the topic require a comprehensive study. Therefore, the dissertation is aimed at achieving generalized conclusions and propositions, taking into account the systematic research of the problem.

The object and subject of research. The object of the research consists of the works of contemporary Azerbaijani artists, as well as articles published about their creative work in books, catalogues, journals, and newspapers, including written materials preserved in museums and personal archives.

The subject of the research includes the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists, the characteristics of content, form, genre, and themes in their works, and their distinctive stylistic features

¹⁵ İbrahimov, T.İ. *Avanqard. Perspektivlər və problemlər* // Bakı: Gənclik, 1990. №9-10.

¹⁶ İbrahimov, T.İ. *Peykər rəssamlar qrupu* // Ədəbiyyat və İncəsənət. 1990, 13 iyul.

¹⁷ Ибрагимов, Т.И. *Коммуникативность в изобразительной культуре Азербайджана* // Материалы Конференции «Архитектура и искусство Ближнего и Среднего Востока», - Баку, - 1989.

¹⁸ Əliyev, Z.A. *Arif Hüseynov / Z.Əliyev*. Bakı: Şərq-Qərb, - 2014. – 344 s.

¹⁹ Əliyev, Z.A. *Zakir Hüseynov. Tənha döyüşçü / Z.Əliyev*. – Bakı: Letterpress, - 2011. - 208 s.

²⁰ Əliyev, Z.A. *Gennadi Brijatyuk və onun mənəvi dəyərlər dünyası / Z.Əliyev*. – Bakı: Tuna, - 2019. - 180 s.

²¹ Əliyev, Z.A. *Rafael Abasov. Rəngkarlıq / Z.Əliyev*. - Bakı: [n.y.], - 2017. – 224 s.

²² Əliyev, Z.A. *Görüş Nurəddinoghlu. Plastikanın poetik çalarları / Z.Əliyev*. Bakı: ELM, - 2013. – 144 s.

— indicators of adherence to national traditions and inclinations toward European tendencies.

The purpose and objectives of the research. The main purpose of the research is to trace and interpret the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists in chronological order, while also identifying the uniqueness of stylistic features that serve to reveal the deep meaning, expressive content, and artistic-aesthetic value embodied in their works.

In the research, this tendency will be examined through the creative work of specific artists and individual works, generalized, and presented in the form of conclusions.

The main objectives of the research can be defined as follows:

- To carefully trace, in chronological order, the works of contemporary Azerbaijani artists, including those preserved in local and foreign museums, as well as in personal archives;
- To substantiate the tendencies of returning to national traditions in the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists;
- To identify the influence of Western artistic trends in the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists;
- To justify the synthesis of national traditions and Western tendencies in contemporary Azerbaijani visual art;
- To determine the ways in which contemporary Azerbaijani masters of visual art enrich our fine arts with distinctive artistic and aesthetic values;
- To substantiate that contemporary Azerbaijani artists continue national traditions in an innovative manner.

Research methods. The methodology of the research is justified by the necessity of selecting the topic and studying it within the context of contemporary Azerbaijani visual art. Its basis lies in identifying the main aspects of styles and artistic tendencies reflected in the rich artistic heritage of contemporary Azerbaijani artists and in analyzing the presented works individually. In analyzing the issues considered in the dissertation, universal and national values, as well as the scientific and theoretical findings of art studies, have been utilized. The systematic historical-comparative method makes it possible to

connect the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists with the problems of the development of Azerbaijani visual art. The comparative analysis method helps to compare the creative work of artists working in the fields of painting, graphics, and sculpture, to reveal the main aspects of works created in different subjects using various artistic and technical means of expression. At the same time, this method creates an opportunity to identify the characteristics of figurative and stylistic solutions in works included for comparison within the artistic-stylistic framework of art studies, involving both contemporary Azerbaijani artists and world-renowned Western artists. The iconological, iconographic, and semantic analysis of the works included in the study helps to determine the artistic and aesthetic aspects of their figurative solutions.

The main provisions of the defense:

- At the end of the Soviet era, with the beginning of the “Perestroika” movement in political and cultural life, the abolition of censorship and the collapse of communist ideology led to the “entry” of European artistic trends into Azerbaijani visual art, where they were synthesized with local artistic traditions within the framework of national artistic thinking;
- The creative freedom prevailing in art encouraged the application of new forms of expression, providing artists with the opportunity to master subjects and methods of depiction that had been “prohibited” in the recent past;
- In the 1990s, artists who felt liberated attempted to break out of the framework of “Soviet art”: some artists turned to national traditions, while others turned to Western art, beginning to seek new themes and new forms of artistic expression in their work;
- Azerbaijani artists experimented with various Western artistic movements (Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism, Abstractionism, Surrealism, etc.), trying to apply new methods and styles of expression in their creative work;

- In the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists, alongside realist traditions, significant importance is attached to decorative color perception, national themes, metaphorical ideas, and references to national and historical values;
- Since the 2000s, in Azerbaijani visual art and in the creative work of individual artists, the idea of a “return” to national visual traditions has prevailed, expressed through an appeal to miniature traditions and carpet ornamentation. More precisely, the tendency to revive the artistic traditions of the middle ages has intensified. Artists strive to adapt conventionality, color brilliance, and decorativeness derived from classical traditions to modern content and forms;
- Since the 2000s, new Western tendencies and artistic methods (performance, installation, etc.) have begun to be applied in the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists, and as a result, the works created by artists lose their pronounced national characteristics and become an integral part of contemporary world art.

Scientific novelty of the research. The scientific novelty of the research lies in presenting an approach to the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists that differs from all previous perspectives, and overall, this distinctive scientific approach is reflected in the following provisions:

- For the first time in Azerbaijani art studies, the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists has been presented as a comprehensive monographic research object, thoroughly studied in the context of national traditions and Western tendencies;
- Various visual art works by contemporary Azerbaijani masters, which have not been previously published in periodicals or books, have been examined and analyzed systematically;
- For the first time, the works of contemporary Azerbaijani artists have been analyzed in chronological order in a systematic manner;

- The dissertation consistently traces the participation of contemporary Azerbaijani artists in local and international exhibition halls, and provides an artistic analysis of the works they exhibited.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research. The research can serve as a highly valuable educational resource for students of specialized secondary and higher educational institutions with a focus on painting, as well as for students working in the fields of visual art such as painting, graphics, and sculpture who aspire to specialize in art studies.

The presented dissertation is also a valuable resource for specialists working in this field as an independent scientific research dedicated to the creative work of contemporary Azerbaijani artists.

Approval and application. The dissertation was carried out at the Department of “History of Art” of the Azerbaijan Academy of Fine Arts and was discussed at the department meeting. The main content of the research, its scientific significance, and the results obtained have been presented at scientific-theoretical conferences of various levels and have also been reflected in numerous published scientific articles by the author.

Name of the organization where the dissertation work is carried out: Azerbaijan Academy of Fine Arts.

The total volume of the dissertation in characters, with the individual volume of each structural section indicated. The dissertation consists of an Introduction – 11697; Chapter I – 71830; 1.1. – 45168; 1.2. – 26662; Chapter II – 123192; 2.1. – 49538; 2.2.- 73654; Conclusion – 6384 and the total volume of the dissertation is 213103 characters. Illustrations covering the content of the research are presented in the form of an album as an appendix to the dissertation.

CONTENT AND MAIN PROVISIONS OF THE WORK

The Introduction of the dissertation provides information on the relevance and the degree of development of the topic, the purpose and objectives, the object and subject of the research, its methodological foundations, the main provisions submitted for defense, as well as the scientific novelty, theoretical and practical significance, approval and application, structure, and volume of the work.

The first chapter of the research, titled “**The Synthesis of Western European and National Traditions in Azerbaijani Visual Art in the Late 20th Century,**” begins with the subsection devoted to the topic “**The Tendency of ‘Returning’ to National Traditions in the Visual Art of the 1980s.**” The 1980s were characterized in the field of visual art by the emergence of many young artists whose works reflected the synthesis of Western European and national traditions, alongside the creative activity of well-known masters of painting and sculpture. Most of these artists, like the representatives of the older generation, received their education at prestigious higher art institutions within the USSR, while some studied at art-oriented schools in Baku. During this period, with the beginning of the “Perestroika” movement in political and cultural life, the abolition of censorship and the collapse of communist ideology led to the “introduction” of Western European artistic trends into Azerbaijani visual art and their synthesis with local artistic traditions within the framework of national artistic thinking.

Painting. Although the desire to bring modernity to the ancient national artistic traditions was sufficiently evident in the works of creators working in other fields of Azerbaijani visual art during the 1980s, this tendency is most clearly observed in various thematic paintings.

One of the artists who continued to remain true to his creative credo in the 1980s, as in previous years, was Mircavad Mircavadov. His close acquaintance with the Gobustan rock carvings, followed by his deep understanding of medieval miniature traditions, as well as his profound study of mythology, folklore, and folk art traditions, played a major role in shaping him as a modern artist loyal to national

traditions. These characteristics can be observed in Mircevad Mircevadov's paintings created in the 1980s, such as "Dance" (1980), "Woman" (1986), and "Oriental Beauty" (1986) from the series "Improvisations on Eastern Miniatures."

Another prominent artist who expressed miniature traditions and national themes in a completely different manner was Rasim Babayev. The overall visual impression created by the synthesis of primitivism with the artistic and aesthetic principles of the ancient miniature style in his works — such as "Dream" (1983), "Imaginative Giant" (1989), and others — opened a new page in Azerbaijani painting of the 1980s.

Among the prominent masters of painting and graphics who turned to national traditions in the 1980s — such as medieval miniature painting, carpet weaving, patchwork, decorative embroidery, and the artistic style of the Qajar era — we can mention Siruz Mirzazade, Qayyur Yunus, Fakhraddin Mammadvaliyev, Elchin Aslanov, Nadir Abdurrahmanov, Mikayil Abdullayev, Rasim Babayev, Mirjavad Mirjavadov, and others.

In the works of these artists, along with realist traditions of depiction, significant emphasis is placed on decorative color perception, national themes, metaphorical expression of ideas, and references to national and historical values.

Among the artists active in this direction during the period, the name of Qayyur Yunus deserves special emphasis. His works — such as "Love" (1987) and "On the Threshold of the 21st Century" (1989) — display characteristic features of miniature painting and the "Qajar style", bringing his creative approach closer to that of his medieval predecessors.

Another artist deeply familiar with the artistic and technical possibilities of our national traditions is Fakhraddin Mammadvaliyev. One of the main distinctive features of his creative work is the innovative and imaginative approach with which he turned to our miniature painting tradition in his works, such as "Battle. Nadir Shah's Campaign to India"(1985) and "The Conquest of the Great Wall of China by the Turks" (1989–1991).

Graphics. The development of Azerbaijani graphic art in the 1980s was distinguished by diversity in type, subject matter, and

genre. During this period, several prominent graphic artists were active, whose works clearly reflected the tendency of a “return” to national traditions. In this context, we can mention Elchin Aslanov, Adalat Bayramov, Sanan Gurbanov, Sara Manafova, Elmira Shahtahtinskaya, Arif Huseynov, Arif Aleskerov, Jamil Mufidzade, Altay Hajiyeu, Adil Rustamov, and others.

As a leading ideologist, best remembered for his works in the avant-garde style and as a tireless researcher of various forms of Azerbaijani traditional art — including the Tabriz miniature school and its prominent representative Sultan Muhammad — Elchin Aslanov vividly demonstrates the return to national traditions through the manifestation of the miniature style in his works such as “In the Manner of a Miniature,” “Neo-Miniature No. 2,” “Neo-Miniature No. 3,” and others.

The modern visual language of the miniature style can also be observed in the works of the prominent artist of the period, Sanan Gurbanov. Through his interesting and distinctive graphic works, such as “Eastern Motif” (1989) and others, the artist modernized the artistic language of ancient miniature traditions and presented it in a completely new form.

Among the artists consistently working in the miniature style within Azerbaijani graphic art during the 1980s, Sara Manafova stands out in particular. Her works, such as “White Tale. Love” (1982) and “Green Tale. Kindness” (1982), are distinguished by their intriguing miniature-like compositional solutions.

Elmira Shahtahtinskaya, a representative of the older generation of Azerbaijani graphic art, is the author of quite distinctive poster examples in terms of miniature style, form, shape, and content, such as “Sultan Muhammad” (1980s) and “Shah Ismail Khatai” (1986).

Sculpture. Although a considerable number of well-known sculptors were active in Azerbaijani sculpture in the 1980s, relatively few reflected a synthesis of tradition and modernity in their works. In this regard, the works of Omar Eldarov, Tokay Mammadov, Mirali Mirgasimov, Akif Asgarov, Ibrahim Zeynalov, Fuad Salayev, Teymur Rustamov, Ahmad Badalov, Zakir Ahmadov, Agahuseyn Huseynov, Nariman Mammadov, and others stand out particularly.

Among the sculptors mentioned above, a pronounced tendency toward modernity is combined with a strong adherence to national traditions. Works such as “Seedling Planters” (1980) by Akif Asgarov, “Portrait of Jafar Jabbarli” (1987) by Mirali Mirgasimov, “Rain” (1985) by Zakir Ahmadov, “Two Figures” (1985) by Teymur Rustamov, “Typesetter Saleh” (1986) by Agahuseyn Huseynov, “The Poetess” (1987) by Zakir Mehdiyev, and “Karabakhli Mammad” (1987) and “Shah Ismail Khatai” (1988) by Fuad Salayev belong precisely to this category.

The examples of easel sculpture in Azerbaijan during the 1980s that reflect national traditions are rich in explorations of artistic expression. This is confirmed by the variety of works created during that period. For instance, in Mirali Mirgasimov’s easel sculptures such as “Portrait of a Girl” (1983) and “Portrait of Jafar Jabbarli” (1987), the ability to convey different nuances of form and shape in plastic composition is strongly evident.

Similarly, in sculptural works imbued with a national spirit—such as “Victory” (1984) and “Rain” (1985) by Zakir Ahmadov, “Two Figures” (1985) by Teymur Rustamov, “Typesetter Saleh” (1986) by Agahuseyn Huseynov, and “The Poetess” (1987) by Zakir Mehdiyev—one can clearly observe the artistic and aesthetic values, formal conciseness, and generalized expression characteristic of easel sculpture.

The **second paragraph of the first chapter** is devoted to the study of the topic “**Western Artistic Traditions in Azerbaijani Fine Arts of the 1980s.**”

Starting from the mid-1980s, Azerbaijani fine arts began to reflect the spread of artistic traditions characteristic of Western European and American art. Azerbaijani artists experimented with various Western artistic tendencies, striving to incorporate new methods of expression and stylistic approaches into their creative practice.

Painting. Among the Azerbaijani painters of the 1980s whose works predominantly reflected Western European artistic traditions, it is necessary to highlight the names of Rasim Babayev, Mircavad Mircavadov, Gorkhmaz Afandiyev, Gennadi Brijatyuk, Ogtay

Sadikhzade, Chingiz Farzaliyev, Vagif Ucatay, Farhad Khalilov, Mayis Agabayov, Ferman Gulamov, Eldar Gurbanov, and others.

Among the artists who incorporated Western artistic tendencies into their works during the 1980s, the creative activity of Honored Artist of the Republic, Gennadi Briyatyuk, deserves special attention. In his painting “Houses with Red Roofs”, the influence of Cubism is strongly evident.

In the 1980s, Ogtay Sadikhzade created various types of portraits distinguished by their compositional structure, color solutions, and character interpretation. Examining his works “Fidan khanum Gasimova” (1982) and “Habibulla Shahtaxtinsky” (1985), one can immediately notice the influence of Western European Renaissance painting traditions in their artistic and technical execution.

Among the works reflecting European realism, particular mention should be made of Chingiz Farzaliyev’s “Old Clock” (1987) and Vagif Ucatay’s “In the Light of Nizami” (1987).

One of the artists who preserved the enchanting spirit of Azerbaijan’s rich national traditions within modern painting is Ferman Gulamov. Many of his works were created under the influence of Western artistic traditions. In this context, it is worth highlighting his paintings “Energy” (1987) and “Good Morning” (1989).

Among the painters who worked in a style national in color yet Western in manner, particularly in the primitivist tradition, the name of Eldar Gurbanov should be emphasized. His creative style is associated with French primitivism, while its thematic content is deeply linked to national traditions and their characteristic features. His painting “The Poet and the Muse” (1989) is notable for its distinctive color palette and stylistic approach.

Sculpture. Just as in painting, in the 1980s it is also possible to observe traces of Western artistic traditions in the field of Azerbaijani sculpture. However, it should be particularly noted that compared to painting, very few sculptors of the 1980s incorporated Western artistic tendencies into their creative work. Among them, the artistic activity of Gorush Babayev, Sahib Guliyev, Teyyub Yusifov, and Elmira Huseynova should be mentioned.

In Gorush Babayev's plastic explorations, his ability to evoke deep emotional experiences in the viewer through form-and-shape improvisations is clearly visible even to the naked eye. This is evident both in his monumental works and in his examples of easel sculpture. In this regard, his pieces such as "David Siqueiros" (1980) and "Diego Rivera" (1980) are particularly noteworthy.

Sahib Guliyev, who distinguished himself from his contemporaries through the use of a wide variety of materials and the ability to reveal the plastic expressiveness of his works with unique technical means, created during the 1980s a series of compositions that are also rich in thematic content. In works such as "Awakening" (1980) and "Portrait of a Girl" (1980), the addition of unconventional elements to materials like marble, stone, and bronze endowed the overall plastic form with a unique character.

Elmira Huseynova's work "The Kiss" (1982) stands out for its successful and intriguing compositional structure. It should be noted that the sculptor created a piece with the same motif in 1978, executed in wood as an artistic representation.

Among the sculptors who preferred broad artistic generalization and a decorative approach in the artistic solutions of their easel sculptures, Teyyub Yusifov occupies a special place. His ability to convincingly and attractively convey multilayered human emotions through plastic expressiveness can be observed in works such as "The Wind" (1987) and "Seated Youth" (1987).

The second chapter of the research is titled **"The Synthesis of Western European and National Traditions in Azerbaijani Visual Art during the Independence Period"** and is examined in two paragraphs. The first paragraph of the second chapter is called **"The Modern Interpretation of National Traditions in Visual Art from the 1990s to 2020"**.

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, a somewhat different — modern creative approach to ancient national traditions has begun to be observed in the works of Azerbaijani visual artists. This modern interpretation was more prominently expressed in the works of artists active in the fields of painting and graphics within visual arts. From this period onward, the continuation of the deeply rooted traditions of

the Tabriz miniature school in modern times has gained broader expression across various generations of Azerbaijani artists — including Elchin Aslanov, Rafis Ismayilov, Arif Huseynov, Nusrat Hajiyev, Siruz Mirzazade, Gayyur Yunus, Rasim Nezirov, Faig Akbarov, Orkhan Huseynov, Sara Manafova, Aytan Shirzadova, Parinisa Asgerova, Jalal Agayev, and others.

Painting. The desire to modernize ancient national artistic traditions in Azerbaijani visual arts during the years 1990–2020 can be observed in the painting works of various themes created by senior, middle-aged, and young generation artists of the era. One of the main factors conditioning this is precisely the continuation of ancient miniature traditions in a new direction in our country since the years of independence. Based on this, the miniature-style works in Azerbaijani painting from 1990 to 2020 can be characterized as a new stage of development.

One of the artists who keep alive ancient miniature traditions in his creative manner is Faig Akbarov, distinguished by his unique artistic style. His works, which are considered a very successful expression of the analytical understanding of our ancient artistic traditions, are regarded as unforgettable pages in the history of modern Azerbaijani painting development. The artist's works such as “Tree” (2002), “Self-Portrait” (2005), “Self-Portrait with the Herald of Doomsday” (2006), “Napoleon” (2010), and others belong to this category.

Among the representatives of the middle generation of contemporary Azerbaijani fine art, Rashad Mehdiyev's works are notable for the influence of medieval Eastern miniature traditions in his paintings. In this regard, his 2005 work titled “Thought” stands out particularly.

Among the miniature-style works of the 2000s, Orkhan Huseynov's pieces are also especially notable. His works “Flying Carpet” and “The City of Shusha” work attention in this context.

Among the artists striving to give classical miniature traditions a modern appearance, the name of Parinisa Asgarova (Pari Miniature) should be especially mentioned. Although she mainly creates miniature works in the field of graphics, her miniature-style paintings

are also numerous. In this respect, her work “Unity” created in the 2000s can be highlighted.

Building a bridge between modernity and tradition, which is a challenge for many artists, has become an inseparable part of the artistic nature of Jalal Agayev. His work titled “The Spirit of the East” (2014) is one of the significant pieces that demonstrate how the artist depicts national traditions in a modern artistic language and explains the deep layers of Eastern culture.

Among contemporary Azerbaijani artists, one of those who presents ancient miniature traditions in a unique formal and stylistic manner is the Honored Artist Vugar Aliyev. The artist’s miniature-style paintings — the quintet titled “Words Like Pearls” (2022), “In Shusha” (2022), and “Forward” (2023) — are notable achievements in this field.

Graphics. Since the 1990s, a modern interpretation of ancient national traditions has also begun to be observed in the works of Azerbaijani artists working in the field of graphics. *“In 1992, the artists’ union called “Peykar” was established (Elchin Aslanov, Sanan Gurbanov, Mazahir Avshar), and the purpose of this union was to study their national artistic heritage, particularly miniature traditions, and to harmonize them with the worldview and forms of the modern era. Several exhibitions organized by the union’s artists, book illustrations, and decorative-applied arts greatly stimulated the development of the field”* ²³.

Among the artists successfully working in easel graphics in the 1990s, the name of Sanan Gurbanov should be especially emphasized. His works, such as the women’s portraits belonging to the “Eastern Women” series (1994-1995), “Eastern Motif” (1997), and others, attract significant attention.

Among the prominent Azerbaijani artists who express miniature traditions and national themes in their own unique style, there are also a considerable number of female artists. In this regard, we can mention Sara Manafova, Naila Sultanova, Vafa Allahyarova, Matanat

²³ Axundzadə L. XX əsr dünya təsviri incəsənəti / L.Axundzadə. - Bakı: Azərneşr, - 2011. - s.66

Aslanova, Aytan Shirzadova, Parinisa Asgarova (Pari Miniature), Leyla Salamova, and others.

When carefully examining Sara Manafova's works (such as "Woman from the Land of Fairy Tales" (2004), "Woman with the Blue Hoopoe" (2007), etc.), one immediately observes her deep mastery of the characteristics typical of the miniature style, especially the compositional structure and rich color solution inherent to medieval Eastern miniatures.

Parinisa Asgarova, who continues the medieval miniature traditions in a new and original manner, is distinguished from others primarily by her detachment of miniature traditions from the context of book illustration, transforming them into a broader and more independent means of artistic expression. All these artistic merits can be observed in her graphic panels such as "Carpet Weavers" (2001), "Azerbaijan" (2000s), "Whole and Part" (2014), and others.

Sculpture. After Azerbaijan gained independence, the creative work of sculptors from various generations began to stand out due to its diversity in meaning, content, and thematic richness. For this reason, we can argue that the subject matter and artistic expression richness that existed in the field of sculpture during the Soviet period entered a new and very interesting transitional phase during the 1990–2020 period.

Among the prominent sculptors whose creative activity corresponds to the modern period are Arif Gaziyev, Asgar Karimov, Khanlar Ahmadov, Fuad Salayev, Natig Aliyev, Fazil Najafov, Sahib Guliyev, Akif Asgarov, Zakir Ahmadov, and others. These artists attract attention both by addressing new themes and by endowing national motifs—created using various materials—with unique individual artistic and aesthetic qualities.

When carefully following the work of People's Artist Khanlar Ahmadov, one can see how long and honorable his path has been, his strong connection to our national history, and how patriotic he is. In this regard, the prominent sculptor's workshop sculptures such as "Mother" (1993), "Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev" (1994), "General Aliaga Shikhlinski" (2014), and "General Samadaga Mehmandarov" (2014) stand out for their high artistic resolution.

Fuad Salayev, a People's Artist and a distinguished representative of Azerbaijani sculpture, is known in the field of visual arts for his distinctive artistic style. Creating works that are mostly philosophical, thought-provoking, and symbolic in meaning, Fuad Salayev is also the author of sculptures reflecting national traditions, such as "Leader" (1991), "Traveler" (1992), and "Those who seek the core truth"(1997), among others.

One of the prominent sculptors in the field of contemporary Azerbaijani easel sculpture who demonstrates loyalty to national traditions is People's Artist Natig Aliyev. In this regard, we can mention his works "Eve" (1990), "Female Figure" (1991), and "Egyptian Woman" (2008). Even from the titles of these works, the spirit of the East is clearly felt.

Contemporary easel sculpture is also distinguished by its search for artistic expression and form. In this context, Sahib Guliyev's works, such as "Momina Khatun" (2003) and "Attila the Horseman" (2012), stand out in particular.

The easel sculptures created by the young sculptor Vugar Guliyev ("Gobustan Goat" (2007), "Gobustan Ship" (2010), etc.) draw inspiration from national traditions, successfully preserving them while embodying a new and distinctive formal language.

Among the talented representatives of the younger generation in contemporary Azerbaijani sculpture is Nurlan Mammadov, whose creative approach to our national heritage and his ability to infuse his sculptural works ("Strangers" (2008), "Gamigaya" (2012), etc.) with a fresh artistic and plastic expression distinguish him from others.

The **second paragraph** of the dissertation's **second chapter** is entitled **"The Application of Western Artistic Trends in Azerbaijani Fine Arts (1990–2020)."**

The political changes that took place in Azerbaijan during the 1990s naturally did not leave the cultural sphere untouched. One of the defining characteristics of this period in art was, above all, a shift in the attitude toward the problem of tradition and modernity. The influence of various artistic movements that existed worldwide at that time was clearly reflected in the creativity of newly formed art groups in Azerbaijan. In this context, we can mention the names of art

associations such as “Tasdiq,” “Peykar,” “Labyrinth,” “Libra,” and others.

Painting. The last quarter of the 20th century and the early 21st century in Azerbaijani fine arts are marked by the spread of artistic traditions characteristic of Western European and American art. From this period onward, the works of Azerbaijani painters began to reflect traces—enriched with new artistic qualities—of various “isms” that had established themselves in progressive world art, such as Impressionism, Primitivism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Surrealism, and others.

Among the artists who incorporated the influence of Impressionism into their work in contemporary Azerbaijani painting, Isa Mammadov’s pieces—such as “Woman with an Umbrella” (2000) and “Shaki. Kish Village” (2006)—stand out in particular.

Among the painters whose works reveal a synthesis of Western and Eastern artistic traditions, the works of Siruz Mirzazade—including “Summer Day” (2009) and “Gossiping Friends” (2017)—draw special attention for their originality.

One of the Western artistic tendencies observed in the works of contemporary Azerbaijani painters is Surrealism and Magic Realism. These tendencies are particularly evident in works such as Karim Jalal’s “Trace of Time” (1999), Rashad Mehdiyev’s “Woman Holding an Apple” (2010), and Imran Nuraly’s “The Metaphysical Concept of Pomegranates” (2019).

Remarkable examples created under the influence of Western Primitivism include Eldar Gurbanov’s “Park” (2000) and Zakir Huseynov’s “In the Old Mine” (2007). Among abstract works, those by People’s Artist Arif Aziz, such as “Moulin Rouge” (2014), stand out for their distinctive color palette and compositional structure.

Under the influence of Western European traditions, particularly the Baroque style, still life occupies a special place in the creative work of Malik Agamalov. Unlike Agamalov, the works of Rena Amrakhova (e.g., “Girl Carrying Fruit” (2007) and “Spring Breeze” (2008)) are notable for their more pronounced antique character.

Among artists whose works reflect the influence of Expressionism, the name of Niyaz Najafov deserves special mention.

His paintings, such as “Dinner” (2007) and “Duck with Apples” (2009), depict sarcastic humor embedded in the everyday life of a multicultural environment.

One of the works that embodies the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural contexts is Irina Eldarova’s “Proposal” (2012) from her series “Girls Prefer Oilmen”. Here, Marilyn Monroe symbolizes the Western hemisphere, while the Azerbaijani oil worker represents the Eastern hemisphere.

Among contemporary Azerbaijani painters, Mirazer Abdullayev’s works, created under the influence of Pointillism and Divisionism, such as “The Victor” (2021) and “Balance” (2022), stand out for their unique color treatment and compositional structure.

Sculpture. One of the major achievements of Azerbaijani sculpture during the years of independence was its liberation from ideological constraints, the introduction of conceptual changes, and, notably, its development within the context of Western artistic tendencies. During this period, Azerbaijani sculptors turned to Western art, seeking new themes and new forms of artistic expression.

Among the contemporary Azerbaijani sculptors whose works reflect the application of Western artistic tendencies, we can mention Fuad Salayev, Natiq Aliyev, Mahmud Rustamov, Nurlan Mammadov, Ahed Mammadov, Rahib Garayev, Ferec Rahmanov, and others.

The easel sculptures of People’s Artist Fuad Salayev, known for their diversity of genres and themes, clearly reveal modernity through plastic improvisations. Among his works reflecting Western European artistic traditions, the most notable are “The End. Entrance to Paradise” (1990) and “The Observer” (2010).

Another prominent figure of modern Azerbaijani sculpture is People’s Artist Natiq Aliyev. His easel sculptures created during this period, which combine national traditions with Western European artistic tendencies, such as “Dance” (1996) and “Balance” (1999), vividly demonstrate the sculptor’s rich creative potential.

The influence of Western artistic tendencies can also be observed in the works of the younger generation of Azerbaijani sculptors. In this regard, we can highlight Nurlan Mammadov’s “Support” (2005) and “Gymnast” (2006), Ahad Mammadov’s

“Grace” (2009) and “Maestro” (2009), Kenan Aliyev’s “Girl Combing Her Hair” (2010) and “Carpet Weaver” (2010), as well as Rahib Garayev’s “Autumn Rain” (2018) and “World Tour” (2024).

In the period between 1990 and 2020, the aim of Azerbaijani sculptors was no longer limited to presenting aesthetic beauty; rather, the primary objective became the expression of profound ideas through generalized and symbolic imagery.

Conclusion: The Main Findings of the Dissertation

- Since the mid-1980s, the “Perestroika” movement led to the de-ideologization of fine arts, which established a sense of creative freedom in the work of artists.
- Artists who turned to national traditions particularly drew inspiration from medieval miniature painting, carpet weaving, patchwork, artistic embroidery, and the stylistic features of the Qajar era.
- Although the aspiration to breathe modernity into ancient national artistic traditions was evident in the works of creators across various fields in the 1980s, this tendency was especially observed in paintings on diverse themes. One of the main reasons for this was the innovative approach to ancient miniature traditions, initiated during those years, which continued more decisively in the following decades.
- Easel sculpture works that embodied national traditions in the 1980s were distinguished particularly by their stylized and decorative qualities.
- By the mid-1980s, Azerbaijani painters experimented with various Western artistic trends (Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Expressionism, Abstractionism, Surrealism, etc.), attempting to apply new expressive means and stylistic approaches in their works.
- In the creativity of contemporary Azerbaijani painters, alongside realistic traditions, there is also a significant emphasis on decorative color perception, national themes, metaphorical ideas, and references to national and historical values.

- Compared to painting, Western artistic tendencies were applied far less frequently in Azerbaijani sculpture during the 1980s.
- Since the 2000s, the tendency to revitalize miniature traditions in the creativity of contemporary Azerbaijani painters has strengthened. Artists have sought to integrate the conventionality, vivid colors, and decorativeness inherent in classical traditions into modern content and forms.
- From 1991, the year of Azerbaijan's state independence, to the present day, the fine arts have undergone a process of modernizing (interpreting) national artistic traditions and incorporating Western artistic concepts and modes of expression into the national artistic context.
- The formation of the artistic worldview of contemporary Azerbaijani painters has been significantly influenced by new art movements that emerged in Western Europe at the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th centuries (Impressionism, Pointillism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism, Abstractionism, Dadaism, Surrealism, etc.), which also marked the beginning of a new creative era in their work.
- Since the 2000s, new Western tendencies and artistic methods (performance art, installation, etc.) have been introduced into the creativity of contemporary Azerbaijani painters, and as a result, the works created by these artists have gradually lost their purely national character, becoming an integral part of contemporary global art.
- The development trajectory of Azerbaijani sculpture between 2000 and 2020 has been distinguished by versatility, stylistic diversity, and richness of artistic individuality.

The author was published the following articles on the subject:

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