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ABSTRACT

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Science

**AZERBAIJAN-RUSSIA FINE ART RELATIONS
(IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORICAL
DEVELOPMENT OF STYLE AND WORLDVIEW)**

Specialty: 6215.01 – Fine art

Field of science: Art criticism

Applicant: **Khazar Atif Zeynalov**

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The dissertation was prepared at the “Fine, Decorative and Applied Arts and Heraldry” department of the Institute of Architecture and Art of ANAS.

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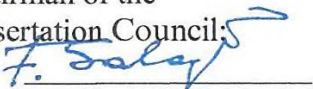
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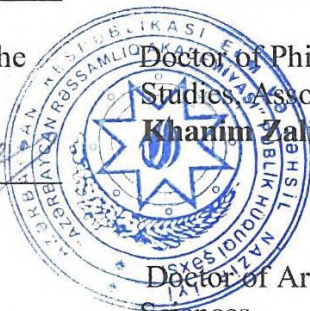


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GENERAL CHARACTERISTIC OF THE WORK

Relevance and Extent of Exploration of the Topic. The investigation of Azerbaijani-Russian visual art relations stands as a cornerstone within the broader field of art history, being a key area of scholarly inquiry. In the span of more than three decades since regaining its independence, Azerbaijan has transformed into an integral and fully recognized member of the international community. As a result, it has forged and continues to nurture multifaceted political, economic, and cultural alliances with virtually all countries, including its neighboring Russia. These cooperative frameworks have extended into the realm of academia and scholarly collaboration, facilitating mutual exchange and understanding.

From a more expansive perspective, the historical evolution of Azerbaijani-Russian artistic interactions offers a profound lens through which one can trace the development of Azerbaijani art, its stylistic shifts, and the various historical periods it has traversed, all beginning from the 18th century. Even as early as the 17th century, Russian artists began to visit the Caucasus region, including Azerbaijan, where they depicted urban landscapes, architectural landmarks, and scenes of the local populace's daily life with meticulous realism. Over time, this exchange blossomed and evolved into a rapidly expanding and dynamic artistic dialogue.

At the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, Azerbaijani realist art began to develop on the foundation of progressive Russian culture. This context reveals that the subject matter addressed in the research is closely intertwined with the general developmental characteristics of Azerbaijani art. From the early 20th century, the emerging tradition of realism was significantly influenced by both European and Russian art movements. The art that had once flourished under the "Qajar style" framework transitioned into the path of national realism in the early 20th century. Almost all Azerbaijani artists active in the early years of the century drew upon this artistic tradition. Starting from the 1920s, this tradition encountered new socio-political conditions, which, when combined with professional artistic education,

accelerated its development. As evident, Azerbaijani-Russian visual art relations, at the level of doctoral research, diverge significantly from the broader subject of Azerbaijan's cultural ties with other countries and peoples, such as Italy, the Czech Republic, Uzbekistan, Georgia, China, India, Poland, Bulgaria, and Dagestan. The connections between Russia and Azerbaijani visual art played a pivotal role in shaping the historical, artistic, and stylistic features that defined the formation of Azerbaijani art.

Azerbaijani-Russian fine art relations are one of the interesting and topical topics studied by modern art critics. This topic has always been relevant, as it is directly related to the history and principles of artistic development of Azerbaijani fine art.

The formation of Azerbaijani realistic art has accelerated since the 20th of the XX century. This is due to the creation of professional painting education. The opening of The Art School in Baku in 1920 became a major cultural event. In the late 1920s and 1930s, talented artists such as G. Khaligov, I. Akhundov, A. Hajiyeve, K. Kazimzadeh, S. Sharifzadeh, A. Rzaguliyev, S. Salamzadeh, T. Tagiyev, R. Topchubashova, H. Hagverdiyev were grew up. They were professionally educated artists. Soon the names of S. Bahlulzadeh, M. Abdullayev, A. Mammadov, A. Jafarov, M. Rahmanzadeh, B. Mirzazadeh, O. Sadiqzadeh, E. Shahtakhtinskaya, T. Salahov, E. Rzaguliyev, N. Abdurrahmanov, N. Gasimov, L. Feyzullayev, V. Samadova, B. Aliyev, R. Babayev and many others were added to list.

Due to the lack of local personnel in the 20s and 30s, the School of Art was mainly staffed by artists and sculptors invited from Russia or living in Baku - Y. Samorodov, I. Ryzhenko, P. Sabsay and others. In 1923-25, Stepan Erzyan's work at the School of Art in Baku had a certain impact on the development of local personnel in sculpture. Soon, local teachers also began to work here. However, young people who learned the basics of painting in that school went to Moscow, Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and other cities to master the specialty more deeply. In general, art education played a special role in the development of Azerbaijani-Russian artistic relations in the 20th century. We mentioned the names of some of the famous Azerbaijani

artists above. Many of them studied at the prestigious art schools of Russia - the former USSR - at the I.Y. Repin Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in Leningrad, the V.I. Surikov Academy of Arts, and the S.G. Stroganov Academy of Arts and Industry. Only a small number of well-known Azerbaijani artists, for example, T. Narimanbeyov in Vilnius, V. Narimanbeyov and A. Mammadov in Tbilisi, received higher art education. In fact, those higher schools were also formed on the basis of Russian art education.

Azerbaijani-Russian Fine Art relations with a great history have a multi-layered character. In the general form, the following directions can be identified:

- Arrival of Russian artists to Azerbaijan and painting works on local themes;

- The role of Russian art in the development of realistic art in Azerbaijan;

- Professional education of Azerbaijani artists in Russia;

- Russian theme in the works of Azerbaijani artists;

- Azerbaijani fine art in the research of Russian researchers;

- Joint (collective) work of Russian and Azerbaijani researchers.

Of course, the topic can be presented in a broader perspective. However, we note the main issues here. They cover the current scientific problem quite broadly.

The priority area of Azerbaijani-Russian fine arts relations is art studies and artistic criticism. The role of scientific research and artistic criticism in the study of fine arts is great. Therefore, they are included in the dissertation.

The Russian system of Social Sciences had a significant influence on the formation of art criticism, as in the Azerbaijani art of realistic painting. In the 20-30s of the XX century, when the Azerbaijani art studies were not yet fully formed, Russian artists and researchers studied national culture, folk art, and consistently made artistic articles in the Republican Periodical Press. They assessed the level of development of Azerbaijani artists, art education in the Republic and analyzed the problems of development of Fine Art. At that time, due to the small number of art critics, art criticism was

mainly dealt with by artists, including Russian artists working in Azerbaijan.

A large number of newspaper, magazine articles, and other materials on different areas of Azerbaijani-Russian fine art relations have been published. Those articles, mainly highlighting the work of this or that artist, are considered a certain source for the current study. In this regard, the books and individual articles of Azerbaijani scholars A.Gaziyev, A.V.Salamzadeh, L.S.Bretanitski, ¹ K.Karimov, ² M. Najafov, R. Afandiyev, ³ N.Habibov ⁴ and other authors can be cited as examples. A number of monographs by K.Karimov, R.Efendiyev and others partially cover Azerbaijani-Russian art relations. K.Karimov's PhD dissertation is dedicated to the problems of the Azerbaijani theme in the work of Russian artists and plays the role of a historical source for the current study. That dissertation discusses the work of Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan in the 19th century and created paintings on this theme. The study discusses the works of G.Gagarin, V.Vereshchagin and other Russian artists.

The same can be said about the articles of M. Najafov, J. Novruzova, N. Habibov and others. Some of the articles they published in Moscow magazines about Azerbaijani artists can be an example of this. However, in most cases, these articles do not directly concern the study of Azerbaijani-Russian fine arts relations in the field of art, but simply enrich these relations with separate facts.

The work of many Azerbaijani artists has been studied by Russian researchers and has been reflected in books and albums, periodicals, and electronic resources. Among them, we can mention

¹ Бретаницкий Л.С. Архитектура средневекового Азербайджана в специальных работах советских ученых / Л.С. Бретаницкий. - Известия АН Азербайджанской ССР, Баку: - 1950, № 10, с. 65 – 82.

² Керимов К.Дж. Азербайджан в произведениях русских художников. Искусство Азербайджана / К.Дж. Керимов. - VI-том. Баку: издательство АН Азербайджанской ССР – 1959.

³ Əfəndi R.S. Azərbaycan incəsənəti / R.S.Əfəndi. - Bakı: - Şərq-Qərb, - 2007. - 285 s.

⁴ Həbibov N.D. Professor M.S.Qağanın Azərbaycan ilə yaradıcılıq əlaqələri / (Yerusəlim incəsənətin gözü ilə). / N.D.Həbibov. - Bakı: - Azərnəşr, - 2000. - s. 36-38.

the works of İ.Grabar, M.Kagan, N.Voronov⁵, S.Osmolovski⁶, L.Akimova⁷, E.Popova⁸, A.Dextyar⁹, Y.Dyoqot¹⁰ and others.

Azerbaijani-Russian relations in the field of art criticism are reflected in some of A.A. Salamzadeh's research¹¹. These studies also focus on the analysis of individual examples of fine art. We can say similar things about some of the studies of G.Mirza¹², T.Bayramov, F.Mir-Baghierzadeh¹³ and other Azerbaijani researchers.

The dissertation examines the Azerbaijani-Russian fine arts relations in the context of style and worldview. Therefore, in the analysis of the artist's work, attention is paid not only to artistic modernity, but also to style and historical-social reality. It is obvious that when evaluating a work, the public order and the requirements of the era should be taken into account. The dissertation also examines the work of Azerbaijani and Russian artists who worked in different periods in a historical-artistic context. At the same time, the analysis of the work of Y. Keylikhis, M. Vlasov, I. Ryzhenko, N. Safronov, as well as T. Salahov, N. Aliyev, A. Huseynov, J. Mufidzadeh and other artists and sculptors attracts attention.

⁵ Воронов Н.В. Советская монументальная скульптура (1960 - 1980) / Н.В.Воронов. - Москва: - Искусство, – 1984. - 222 с.

⁶ Осмоловский Ю.Э. Таир Салахов / Ю.Э.Осмоловский. - Москва: - Советский художник, – 1972. - 63 с.

⁷ Акимова Л.И. Надир Абдурахманов. / Л.И.Акимова. - Москва: - Советский художник, – 1973. - 110 с.

⁸ Попова Э. Михаил Абдуллаев / Э. Попова. - Москва: - Советский художник, 1973. - 9 с. текста.

⁹ Дехтярь А.А. Тогрул Нариманбеков. Живопись: мастера Советского изобразительного искусства / А.А.Дехтярь. - Москва: - «Советский художник», 1984. - 30 с.

¹⁰ <http://os.colta.ru/art/names/details/7467/>

¹¹ Саламзаде Э.А. Искусствознание Азербайджана. XX век / Э.А.Саламзаде. - Баку: - Элм, 2001. - 351 с.

¹² Мирза Г. Художник и время: Таир Салахов. İncəsənət və Mədəniyyət problemləri, № 2 (56) / Г. Мирза. - Bakı: - Təknur, 2016. S. 92-101.

¹³ Мир-Багирова Ф.А. Творчество народного художника Азербайджана Тогрула Нариманбекова. Автореф. дисс... канд. искусствоведения / Ф.А.Мир-Багирова. - Баку: - Нурлан, 2000. - 25 с.

Object and Subject of the Research. The object of the research consists of Azerbaijani and Russian art, as well as scientific-theoretical materials of an art criticism nature. The subject of the research includes works by Azerbaijani and Russian artists. In addition, various publications related to visual arts are also considered as part of the research object.

Purpose and Objectives of the Research. The dissertation analyzes the connections between Azerbaijani and Russian visual art in the context of the historical development of style and worldview. The aim of the research is to conduct a consistent review of the history of mutual relations, to study the nature of these connections, to analyze the ideological and artistic foundations of these interactions through artworks, and to examine the features of artistic style development in the context of both historical and contemporary relations.

The creative work of Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan in the 18th and 19th centuries is a valuable source for studying the early stage of mutual relations. In the research, these works are examined in the context of history and modernity, which determines the new perspective and value attributed to these works. Later, in the early 20th century, a new era began in the history of mutual relations with the development of the national realist school. In the 1920s and 1930s, a large number of invited artists and educators worked in Azerbaijan, including M.A. Vlasov, I.Q. Rijkenko, Y.I. Keylixis, P.V. Sabsay, V.M. Zummer, N.M. Miklashevskaya, and others. Studying their works and evaluating them from the perspective of modernity is one of the main objectives of the dissertation.

The development of Azerbaijani art has evolved in the context of mutual influence with Russian culture. There is a wealth of factual material in this field, which is systematically reflected in the current research. One of the main goals of this study is to analyze this feature, bring Azerbaijani-Russian artistic relations to life in a factual context, and reflect their character. To achieve these objectives, the following tasks have been identified in the research:

- Compare and analyze works created by Russian artists in Azerbaijan during the 17th and 18th centuries;

- Evaluate the historical and artistic aspects of these works in the context of modernity;
- Create an overall picture of mutual relations in the early 20th century;
- Study the factual materials (creative works, pedagogical activities, exhibitions, as well as the development of art criticism and art studies) that formed the basis of these relations in the 1920s and 1930s;
- Assess Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations based on the results obtained;
- Justify the expansion of artistic relations and scientific research activities in the 1960s-1980s;
- Reflect the development of bilateral cultural relations during the period of independence, and define the character and strategy of this development.

Methods of the Research. The dissertation utilizes historical-comparative, formal analysis, and descriptive approaches, which are widely applied in contemporary art studies. These methods, due to their universal applicability, can be used to substantiate the characteristics of the formation of various historical contexts and artistic styles. For the current dissertation, the historical-comparative analysis method is crucial. As the main working method, the issues of the artistic style and historical development of mutual relations are outlined in the plan. If we look at history, we can see that the existing relations have passed through at least four historical periods:

- The era of the Khanates;
- The period of Russian occupation;
- The Soviet period;
- The modern era.

The historical-comparative method is suitable for creating an objective picture of the visual art relations that existed in these periods. This method is particularly effective for studying both the historical context and existing artistic styles in a comparative framework.

The second scientific method chosen is the formal analysis method. This method is widely used in contemporary art studies,

particularly in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) region. In the dissertation, the formal analysis method was used for the comparison and analysis of artworks. In modern times, due to its universal character, the formal analysis method can be applied to the study of various artworks. The main advantages of the formal analysis method in contemporary times include its ability to align the attribution of an artwork with the required criteria, its use in the analysis of works created in different periods, its independence from the composition, content, plot, and ideological characteristics of the artwork, and its applicability in interdisciplinary research. The formal analysis method complements the comparative analysis method without hindering it, enriching it with new possibilities. The formal analysis method is widely used in descriptive art studies and is considered an effective method.

The third method is the descriptive approach, which is based on the visual characteristics of the subject and object. The descriptive method transcends mere depiction; it provides a reliable scientific framework for acquiring and subsequently processing the visual parameters of a work of art, thus serving as a data-coding mechanism. Numerous methodologies, including the comparative method, rely on the materials stored within the descriptive method to structure their analytical processes.

Historically, the descriptive method has been a defining characteristic of Azerbaijani art studies from the 1920s and 1930s to the present day. This approach formed the methodological foundation for joint Azerbaijani-Russian scholarly works. During the early 20th century, the limited study of Azerbaijani art and historical-architectural monuments, coupled with the absence of large-scale, systematic research, facilitated the engagement of Russian scholars in scientific activity grounded in the artistic-historical framework and descriptive principles. Over time, this characteristic (the study of monuments and works of art) evolved, reaching its apex during the 1960s-1980s. In the context of this dissertation, the descriptive approach method functions as an integral component of the formal analysis method.

The synthetic integration of these three methods leads to the emergence of a scientific cognitive methodology in art studies, which justifies the conclusions drawn from the analysis. For example, the historical-artistic analysis of the theme of Azerbaijan in the works of 18th-century Russian artists ensures the justification of ethnographic materials present in their works. Similarly, the analysis of the joint scholarly activities of Azerbaijani and Russian researchers stimulates the overall development of different scientific schools emerging from the same object of study.

Key assertions presented for defense:

- A general overview of the Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations throughout the historical period has been created;
- The works of Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan in the 18th-19th centuries and created art on this subject have been analyzed in the context of modernity;
- The role of Russian artists in the development of realist visual arts in the early 20th century has been examined;
- The works of Russian artists (of Russian descent) who were active in Azerbaijan in the 20th century have been comprehensively studied;
- The role of scientific research and art criticism in the development of visual arts relations has been substantiated;
- The joint scientific-research works of Azerbaijani and Russian scholars dedicated to Azerbaijani art have been illuminated, and their role in the development of visual arts has been emphasized;
- A broad factual landscape of the Azerbaijani theme in Russian visual arts and the Russian theme in Azerbaijani visual arts has been created, with works analyzed and evaluated;
- The Russian theme in the works of Azerbaijani artists has been studied in its historical, artistic, and cultural context;
- The dynamics of the development of Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations during the period of independence have been investigated;
- In contemporary times, Azerbaijani-Russian relations have been considered within a broad socio-cultural context.

Scientific Novelty of the Research. For the first time, the relations between Azerbaijani and Russian visual arts have been studied as an object of research within a broad historical framework in this dissertation. This topic is also considered within the larger context of the general development of Azerbaijani visual arts starting from the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century, the formation of realist Azerbaijani art was somewhat influenced by Russian artistic traditions. This aspect is reflected in the dissertation through the analysis of specific works of art.

The dissertation also provides the first-ever analysis of the works of Russian artists who lived in Azerbaijan. The works of artists such as Y. Samorodov, A. Kuprin, F. Modorov, K. Bogayevski, N. Kupreyanov, Y. Kruglikova, and A. Yakusheva, who worked on Azerbaijani themes, are studied for the first time. Additionally, for the first time, the Russian theme in the works of Azerbaijani artists is examined. The creative works of T. Javadov, N. Ismailov, T. Salahov, T. Narimanbeyov, O. Sadiqzadeh, E. Shahtakhtinskaya, A. Huseynov, and others are analyzed with regard to Russian motifs.

Furthermore, the dissertation explores the field of art criticism and art history within the context of Azerbaijani-Russian visual art relations. The articles of Russian artists who worked in Baku, the essays by Russian art critics on Azerbaijani artists, and the articles written by Azerbaijani art historians in Moscow journals about our national visual arts are all reflected in the dissertation. All of these aspects contribute to the scientific novelty of the dissertation.

Theoretical and Practical Significance of the Research. The dissertation can be used as a source for studying the history of Azerbaijani art and art studies. It explores the stages of the formation of Azerbaijani art, as well as the creativity, artistic methods, and individual works of various artists. Since the work of many of these artists (especially Russian artists who worked in Azerbaijan during the 1920s-40s) has not been studied in depth, the present research can serve as a guide for scholars who wish to investigate their artistic activities.

Appropriateness and Application. In relation to the topic, the candidate has published two monographs and over 60 articles in

Azerbaijani, English, and Russian. They have also presented at international and national scientific conferences. The dissertation can be used as primary and methodological literature in higher educational institutions. Since it comprehensively covers various aspects of Azerbaijani art and art studies, it can be used in teaching disciplines such as fine arts or the history of material culture.

Name of the Organization Where the Dissertation Was Completed. The dissertation was carried out in the “Fine Arts, Decorative and Applied Arts, and Heraldry” department of the Institute of Architecture and Art of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences (ANAS).

The Structure of the Dissertation, with Separate Volume Details. The dissertation consists of an introduction (18,823 conventional marks), four chapters (the first chapter – 74,626 conventional marks; the second chapter – 102,520 conventional marks; the third chapter – 93,410 conventional marks; the fourth chapter – 101,367 conventional marks), a conclusion - (15,850 conventional marks) and a list of used literature (23,347 conventional marks). The total volume of the dissertation work is 429,943 p. p. The appendix includes 200 figures.

CONTENT OF THE WORK AND MAIN TERMS

In the **introduction**, the relevance and degree of development of the topic are reflected, providing information about the research's object and subject, methodology, goals and objectives, scientific novelty, as well as theoretical and practical significance.

The first chapter of the dissertation is titled "The Formation and Development of Historical Tradition". This chapter consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph is titled **"The Topic of Azerbaijan in the Works of Russian Artists in the 18th-19th Centuries"**. It analyzes the works of Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan in the 18th and 19th centuries and painted scenes related to Azerbaijan.

From a historical-political perspective, this period can be divided into two stages. The first stage spans from the second half of the 18th century to the late 1820s. During this phase, although Azerbaijan was subjected to military expansions by Tsarist Russia, the khanates managed to preserve their independence. At that time, certain relationships had already begun to form¹⁴. The interest of Russian artists in Azerbaijan during this period was largely military and topographical in nature. Artists and draftsmen in the Russian army created detailed graphic representations of cities such as Baku, Ganja, Derbent, and others. They worked on schematic, yet quite precise depictions of individual landforms, buildings, bridges, and fortress walls. The main feature of the works created during this period is that their strategic significance outweighed their artistic character. In other words, these works served as a kind of guide for military expansions.

The second stage begins in the late 1820s and lasts until the end of the 19th century, covering approximately a 70-year period. During this stage, Azerbaijan had already been incorporated into Tsarist Russia. This resulted in the formation of a new perspective on art. The characteristic feature of the works created in this period is that the artistic content took precedence over the strategic significance. From this period onward, draft-like topographical representations began to lose their importance and were gradually replaced by civil engineering activities. In visual arts, works painted with oil and watercolor gained prominence.

It is also important to emphasize that even in the first stage, there were works created that stood out for their artistic content and significance. For example, the famous Russian military topographer and artist Gavriilo Sergeyev (1765-1816) created extensive panoramic depictions of Baku, Yerevan, and other cities in the 1790s. *"In 1796, as part of the army of General V. Zubov, who conquered the Derbent, Quba, Baku, Shirvan, Karabakh, and Ganja khanates,*

¹⁴ Абдуллаева Р. Азербайджан в пространстве диалога культур (в кн. Культурология и теория искусства) / Р.Абдуллаева. – Баку: - ЭЛМ. – 2020. – с. 99-100.

he arrived in the Caucasus as an artist-topographer, and painted works of Derbent, Baku, Yerevan, Tbilisi, and other cities using oil painting and engraving techniques" ¹⁵. Of course, these paintings were also useful for military-strategic purposes¹⁶. However, their artistic content is stronger than the drawing-like chamber images. This reflects the fundamental difference between the works of art of the two stages considered in the first paragraph.

The intensive creative journeys of Russian artists to Azerbaijan took place in the mid and second half of the 19th century. During this period, the Caucasian War had concluded, and transportation and communication infrastructure in the South Caucasus region had significantly improved. This created a favorable foundation for the study of the region's economy, agriculture, and cultural life. In the works of artists such as Alexey Bogolyubov (1824-1896), Grigory Gagarin (1810-1893), Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904), and others, the natural landscapes of Azerbaijan, the historical and architectural monuments of Baku, Shusha, and other regions, as well as the national daily life, local customs, and the lifestyle of the local population, were depicted on a national and historical-ethnographic basis.

The paintings dedicated to Azerbaijani life by 18th-19th century Russian artists such as G. Sergeyev, G. Gagarin, V. Vereshchagin, and A. Bogolyubov have not lost their significance to this day ¹⁷.

In accordance with the artistic traditions of the period, a significant number of Sergeyev's landscape works incorporate elements of portraiture and daily life. Grigory Gagarin's paintings, such as "The Noblewoman," "The Shamakhi Dancer," and "The Clergyman," create a vivid representation of the traditional silk garments of Azerbaijan during that era. Vasily Vereshchagin's

¹⁵ İrəvan necə varsa. Keçmişdən bu günə. Bakı, Aspoliqraf, 2022, s. 380.

¹⁶ Саламзаде Э.А. Искусствоведение Азербайджана. XX век / Э.А.Саламзаде. - Баку, Элм, 2000, с. 97-98.

¹⁷ Гершкович Е. Баку в работах Алексея Боголюбова / Е.Гершкович. - <https://baku-media.ru/publications/kultura/iskustvo/baku-v-rabotakh-alekseya-bogolyubova/>

works and studies, including "The Surrender of the Erevan Fortress to the Russians," "The Muharram Procession in Shusha," and "Sheep Shearing," encompass historical and ethnographic themes, thereby providing an accurate portrayal of 19th-century Azerbaijani life and customs.¹⁸ The same can be said about A. Bogolyubov's cityscape works. The artist's pieces, such as *"The Maiden Tower"* and *"Street in Baku, Noon,"* serve as important sources for the depiction of both urban life and the initial appearance of historical and architectural monuments¹⁹.

By the 1830s, the territories of Northern Azerbaijan had been incorporated into the Russian Empire. The region's diverse landscapes and the hospitality of its people attracted prominent Russian intellectuals, artists, and travelers. During this period and beyond, numerous Russian artists visited Azerbaijan, producing paintings and engravings that depicted the daily life, historical architectural monuments, and natural landscapes of the region. The works they created vividly captured the vibrant colors of Azerbaijan's nature and everyday life, as well as the national character and cultural context of local customs. In the works of artists such as Gavril Sergeyev, Karl Gippius, Grigory Gagarin, Alexey Bogolyubov, and others, various regions of Azerbaijan, its cities, the Caspian Sea, and more were depicted in a realist style. These paintings, while valuable artistic works, are also of significant importance as reliable visual historical sources.

As previously mentioned, one of the notable Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan in the mid-19th century was the famous battle painter Vasily Vereshchagin. He traveled extensively throughout Azerbaijan, visiting cities such as Baku, Yerevan, Shusha, and others.

¹⁸ Zeynalov X. Şuşa şəhəri XIX əsr rus rəssamı V.V.Vereşşaginin yaradıcılığında / "Şuşa şəhəri: Azərbaycan mədəniyyəti Qafqaza və dünyaya" beynəlxalq elmi konfransının materialları / X. Zeynalov. - Bakı: - Aspoliqraf, - 2023 - s. 43.

¹⁹ Баку 1961 года в картинах А.П.Боголюбова // <https://azerhistory.com/?p=8547>

The works he created on Azerbaijani themes are distinguished by their rich color palette and thematic diversity.²⁰

Vereshchagin's artworks on the theme of Shusha are particularly noteworthy. Primarily executed in graphic drawing and engraving techniques, these works are distinguished by the clarity of their line work, the richness of their visual perceptual possibilities, and their informative, didactic character. Notably, among the artist's depictions of Azerbaijani subjects, those dedicated to Shusha are the most numerous.

The thematic content of Vereshchagin's works on Shusha can be categorized into three genres: landscape, genre scenes, and portraiture. However, in terms of thematic complexity, the artist's representations of Shusha are far more diverse. These paintings encompass depictions of everyday life, national identity, interior scenes, attire, historical and architectural landmarks, religious rituals, and more.

Among the historical and architectural landmarks of Shusha, the Upper Gohar Agha Mosque particularly captured the artist's attention, leading him to create a representation of the mosque. The painting meticulously illustrates the mosque's rich architectural design, highlighting its national stylistic elements. The work was completed in 1865. It is significant to note that during this period, the Upper Gohar Agha Mosque had a different architectural appearance. The mosque's twin minarets were positioned at the corners of the front façade, and the high, arched portal between them connected to the domed prayer hall in the background. However, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during restoration efforts, the structure of the mosque underwent substantial alterations: the central portal was dismantled, and the dome was replaced with a roof. Therefore, Vereshchagin's painting plays a crucial role in the visual reconstruction of the mosque's historical architectural appearance.

²⁰ Шилов Ф. Василий Верещагин: Карабахские этюды / Ф. Шилов.
<https://baku-media.ru/publications/traditsii/istoriya/vasiliy-vereshchagin-karabakhskie-etyudy/>

The artist's portrait works are also of considerable interest. *"The rich national character is more fully embodied in his portraits." In the portrait "The Wealthy Shusha Young Falconer", a young Azerbaijani nobleman is depicted. He is dressed in an expensive Circassian costume, with a long, intricately crafted dagger at his waist, and wearing a wide, long hat typical of the affluent Shusha inhabitants. The young man holds a falcon in his hand, a bird used in hunting, which indicates the leisure activities of the wealthy class"*²¹.

The second paragraph of the first chapter is titled "National Consciousness and Transnational Content in the Early 20th Century." This section explores the development of national realist visual art within the historical context of the era.

The early 20th century was characterized by the emergence and evolution of Azerbaijani national-democratic and enlightenment ideologies. These movements were most prominently reflected in literature, literary criticism, and journalism. The progressive intellectual currents began to infiltrate the artistic domain, influencing the development of realist theatre and visual arts. The evolution of the caricature genre fostered stronger links between journalism and graphic arts. At the outset of the century, caricatures published first in *"Molla Nasreddin"* and later in other satirical journals played a pivotal role in catalyzing the formation of national democratic and realist tendencies in visual art. During this period, the influential activities of Azim Azimzadeh led to the advancement of the genre painting in visual art, which then acquired an enlightened-democratic ideological content. The genre scenes, landscapes, and portraits produced in a realist style by Bahruz Kangarli, Alibey Huseynzadeh, Abbas Huseyn, Qeysar Kashiyeva, Najaf Rasim, and others became foundational in the development of Azerbaijani visual art at the beginning of the 20th century.

²¹ Zeynalov X. Rus rəssamlarının yaradıcılığında Azərbaycan mövzusu (XVIII əsrdən-XX əsrin 30-cu illərinədək) // III Uluslararası Balkanlar, Anadolu, Kafkasya və Türkiyə coğrafiyası sanat, mədəniyyət, tarix və folklor konqresi / X.Zeynalov. - Aydın- Türkiyə, 2023 s. 495.

As early as the beginning of the century, during the formation of realist visual art, Azerbaijani artists created certain works on Russian themes. Some of the works by Azim Azimzadeh, Bahrüz Kangarli, Qeysar Kshiyeva, and others are related to Russian culture and daily life. This, in fact, should not be surprising, as the formation of realist art was closely linked to the progressive traditions of Russian culture. Interestingly, among the works created by Azerbaijani artists in the early 20th century that reflected Russian culture and daily life, portraits of Russian writers were more widespread.

In general, artistic representations of Russian writers and poets were created throughout all periods of 20th-century Azerbaijani art. The first examples in this regard are associated with the emergence of the realist portrait genre. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, Azim Azimzadeh had created portraits of prominent figures such as M. Fuzuli, I. Nasimi, Abul-lah, M.S. Ordubadi, and others. These works contributed to increasing interest in the portrayal of writers and poets in art. The renowned intellectual and Azerbaijan's first female artist, Qeysar Kashiyeva (1893–1972), was one of the pioneers in creating portraits of Russian writers. The two graphic works she produced, portraits of N.V. Gogol and I.A. Goncharov, were among the first pieces to focus on this theme, created long before the April Revolution of 1920. *“Between 1907 and 1915, she created numerous drawings, portraits, and landscapes in watercolor, black ink, pencil, and charcoal, including “Portrait of I.A. Goncharov” (1909), “Azerbaijani Intellectual” (1912), “Shore of the Lake” (1914), and “The Pottery Woman” (1915)”*²².

The portrait of N.V. Gogol (1909) has an instructional character. The artist executed this portrait in pencil. At that time, Qeysar Kashiyeva was only 16 years old and had just completed her studies at the painting studio under the Caucasian Society for the Promotion of the Arts in her native city of Tbilisi (1907-1908). In this studio, young artists primarily worked from life, creating drawings

²² <https://www.adalet.az/az/posts/detail/eri-eserleri-heyati-mehv-edilen-azerbaycanli-serqin-ik-ressam-qadini-qeyser-kasiyeva-1717748716>

of plaster casts, sculptures, and various figures. It is important to note that during his studies, Bahruz Kangarli also produced several academic works using pencil, such as "*Head of an Antique Sculpture*" and others. Some of Qeysar Kashiyeva's graphic works from that period have survived to the present day, with N.V. Gogol's portrait, created without plaster casting, being one of them. The young artist, while working from a plaster cast, skillfully captured the facial features of the writer. Alongside the external likeness, she was also able to successfully convey the character of the subject.

The same can be stated regarding the portrait of I.A. Goncharov (1915), executed in sanguine. Despite her youth, during this period, Qeysar Kashiyeva had already begun to establish recognition within the cultural and artistic community. Alongside prominent figures such as Azim Azimzadeh, Bahruz Kangarli, Abbas Huseyn, and Najaf Rasim, her works also garnered significant attention from national intellectuals and cultural elites.

In the early 20th century, Russian themes were also reflected in the landscape genre. Depictions of Russian villages and Russian Orthodox churches in Azerbaijan provide substantial evidence for this trend. Among these works, Bahruz Kangarli's (1892-1922) landscape "*Russian Church in Nakhchivan*" stands out as particularly significant. This watercolor painting, created in 1920, captures the Russian Orthodox church in Nakhchivan. The stylistic approach and compositional structure of this work closely resemble many other architectural and historical representations that Kangarli produced throughout his career. It is well-documented that Kangarli also worked en plein air, creating studies of the local tombs, mosques, and other architectural landmarks of Nakhchivan. The Russian church, as a significant cultural and architectural feature of the region, similarly attracted the artist's attention.

In the artwork, the church building is depicted from a relatively close distance. The structure comprises a circular domed church and an elevated bell tower. The artist, in his characteristic realist style, faithfully represents all the principal architectural elements of the church—such as the vaulted arches, the entrance door, the dome shapes, and the crosses. The composition is straightforward, with a

dominant use of lighter color tones. In the foreground, sparse grasslands are evident. Against the backdrop of white clouds in the sky, the domes of the prayer hall and the bell tower, rendered in soft green hues, appear more monumental and visually striking.

The distinguished artist Azim Azimzadeh (1880-1943) is celebrated as one of the founding figures of the realist artistic movement in Azerbaijani art history. His watercolor compositions, including thematic genre scenes, landscapes, and caricature works, exert a significant impact. This was more clearly manifested in the publication of the magazine "Molla Nasreddin". *"The emergence of strong national democratic ideas in Azerbaijani literature and journalism had a significant impact on the development of Azerbaijani graphic art, and directly on satirical graphics. The contributions of Oskar Shmerling, Iosif Rotter, Benedikt Telengator (Benó) and especially Azim Azimzadeh were great in the formation and further development of caricature, which was formed as a result of the ideological and artistic influence of the magazine "Molla Nasreddin"."*²³. The satirical portraits he produced, along with various "types," not only capture realistic likenesses but also convey a distinctive satirical tone. In Azimzadeh's series such as *"Old Baku Types"* and *"100 Types"*, one encounters highly compelling, multifaceted, and revelatory character studies that explore the socio-cultural fabric of the time.

It is noteworthy that among the "characters" in Azim Azimzadeh's *"Old Baku Types"* series, not only mullahs, clerics, vagrants, merchants, and mourning singers are depicted, but also certain Russian "types" from the period living in the city, who became targets of satire. In the early 20th century, many of the "government officials" and "court officers" in Baku, such as policemen, judicial employees, and postal workers, were ethnically Russian. These figures were notorious for their condescending attitudes toward the local population, their oppressive behavior, and their inability to break free from bureaucratic practices. The artist

²³ Hacızadə B. Azərbaycanca karikaturanın inkişafı / B.Hacızadə. - Bakı: - Səda. – 2008. – s. 30.

carefully selected and isolated these characters, delving into their inner worlds and portraying them with biting satire. These superficial bureaucrats were subjected to a sharp, ironic mockery in Azimzadeh's works. The sardonic humor directed at the reactionary Russian officials was just as powerful as the ridicule aimed at mullahs, shepherds, and intellectuals.

One particularly striking figure in this series is the "dandyish" city policeman (*qorodovoy*), a typical representative of the law enforcement officers in early 20th-century Baku. The local population mockingly referred to them as "girdovoy." The policeman in the artwork is depicted in a khaki-colored coat, a fur hat on his head, a shoulder strap, and a *shashka* (a type of sword) at his waist. He wears blue "service trousers" with red piping and black knee-high boots. His yellow hair and drooping yellow mustache lend him a comical appearance. His face carries a vacant expression, with flushed cheeks and nose, while his vague, expressionless smile indicates that he is, as usual, intoxicated.

The second chapter of the dissertation is titled **"The Development Dynamics of Realist Art in Azerbaijan during the 1920s-1940s"**. The chapter consists of three paragraphs. The first sub-chapter, **"The Role of Russian Painters in the Development of Visual Arts and Art Education"**, focuses on the contributions of Russian artists to the development of national visual arts and art education, with an emphasis on the Russian themes in the works of individual artists.

In the 1870s, the rapid expansion of oil production in the Baku region created favorable conditions for the arrival of many Russian intellectuals, cultural figures, and artists to the area. While Russian artists had initially come to Azerbaijan in the 1850s and 1860s and often returned to Russia shortly after their visit, by the 1870s and 1880s, the economic and cultural revitalization of Baku led to an increase in the number of intellectuals, cultural figures, and artists who not only visited but also settled in Baku for longer periods, sometimes even for the rest of their lives. By the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Baku hosted a significant number of Russian artists and architects, including Sara and Yevgeni Samorodov, Ivan

Ryzhenko, Mikhail Svirsky, Ivan Edel, Yevgeni Lansere, Yelizaveta Tripolskaya, Mikhail Vlasov, and others. Some of these artists had settled in Baku long before the Bolshevik occupation in the early 20th century, while a much larger number of artists arrived during the period leading up to and following the April Revolution, in the 1920s. Some of these artists stayed in Baku for short periods, while others lived and worked in the city for extended periods or for the remainder of their lives. The creative output of these artists played a significant role in the development of realist visual arts in Azerbaijan.

It should be noted that even before the April Revolution, one of the Russian artists who contributed to the development of local culture in Baku was Yevgeni Samorodov. In the 1910s, he had studied painting at the workshop of the renowned artist Konstantin Yuon in Moscow. Later, after returning to Baku, Samorodov opened his own personal art studio. The studio provided an environment for local young people from Baku to engage in painting. Occasionally, art exhibitions were also held at Samorodov's studio, and the proceeds from the sale of artworks were used to support the needs of young artists.

Another significant artistic institution, the Stone Carving and Crafts Studio, was established as early as 1909 by Yakov Keylixis. With the efforts of Ivan Edel and Mikhail Gerasimov, an art studio also operated in Baku under the Realnaya School. The talented graphic artist Ələkbər Rzaquliyev began his artistic education at this studio in 1918, which marked the beginning of his formal artistic training. Such instances of art educational initiatives can be further expanded.

In the 1920s, Yevgeni Samorodov worked as a set designer and artist at the "Criticism-Propaganda" theater, collaborated with newspapers and magazines, and created caricatures.²⁴ One of his notable works related to Azerbaijan is a caricature he created in the 1920s during the grain requisition period, using black ink on paper. In the caricature, hypocritical individuals—landowners, reactionary

²⁴ Они тоже гостили на земле. Евгений Самородов//<http://nec.m-necropol.ru/samorodov-es.html>

clergy, and most importantly, the superficial bureaucrats who support them—are satirized despite the government's decree. In the background, landowners and clergymen are depicted hiding behind sacks of grain, seemingly “positioned” in a way that suggests their dishonesty. In the foreground, a bureaucrat is shown standing as though defending them, with his hand extended in a “stop!” gesture, as if saying: “Let’s see! What do these poor souls have to do with wheat?!”

The People's Artist of Azerbaijan, Yakov Keilikhis (1872-1950), was one of the artists who contributed significantly to artistic education and the development of art. His contributions to the development and teaching of monumental plastic arts in our republic are noteworthy.

Keilikhis's arrival in Baku coincided with the year 1908. This period was characterized by the strong development of Azerbaijani national culture on an enlightened-democratic basis. In the same year, the first national opera, *Leyli and Majnun*, was presented to the public. In such a context, there was a favorable environment for Keilikhis to make his mark in Baku's cultural life.

Keilikhis's sculptural activity was of a professional nature. He initially received his education in sculpture in Odessa, and later continued his training in St. Petersburg and abroad, particularly in Florence, where he refined his artistic skills.

Keilikhis's early works, created before the revolution, bore a distinct Azerbaijani character. He created a bas-relief of the prominent Azerbaijani intellectual Sh. Mahmudbeyov and worked on several national-themed figures, including *Hambal*²⁵ and others. These works, primarily focused on easel art, were among the first creations by a professionally trained sculptor in Azerbaijan.

Of course, Keilikhis's most significant monumental work is the statue of our immortal poet M.A.Sabir, erected in Baku in 1922. This statue was the first monumental sculpture in the Eastern world and embodied the leading role of Azerbaijani artistic culture. In the image

²⁵ «Амбал», Маркс, Сабир и другие: бакинский период скульптора Я.Кейлихиса // <https://azerhistory.com/?p=36221>

of Sabir, alongside the external resemblance, the poet's poetic thoughts and inner world are also reflected. The overall appearance of the monument, especially the closed arch on the pedestal, the stalactite (muqarnas), and the elements of lattice art, all demonstrate its rich national content. *"The two-figure relief "The Drillers," which has survived to this day, attracts attention with its expressive emotionality and dynamism in portraying the characters"* ²⁶.

Among the invited sculptors, Erzya (1876-1956) made notable contributions. Erzya worked in Baku during the years 1923-25, where he taught at the Art School and, alongside P.V. Sabsay and Y.I. Keylixis (who was employed at the Industrial Institute), actively participated in the establishment of the Sculpture Department at the school.

During those years, the first Azerbaijani female sculptor to study at the Sculpture Department of the Art School was Mammadova Zivar Najafgulu (1902-1980). She apprenticed in the studios of Erzya and Sabsay, learning the professional characteristics of plastic arts from them. In the 1930s and 40s, as a maturing artist, Z. Mammadova created expressive bust portraits of figures such as Azim Azimzadeh, Huseynqulu Sarabski, Mashadi Azizbayov, Soviet Hero Huseyn Aliyev, and others.

While teaching in Baku, Erzya was also engaged in creative work, producing a series of portraits of Baku oil workers (1924). This sculpture group, mounted on the fronton and cornices of the Central House of the Miners' Union in Baku, is considered one of Erzya's major works in Azerbaijan.

P.V. Sabsay arrived in Baku in 1926 and initially worked in relief sculpture. His pedagogical activities in Baku also began during this period.

P.V. Sabsay's first monumental work in Baku was the statue of M.F. Akhundov, erected in 1930. While the monument lacks significant success in terms of external resemblance and the template

²⁶ Zeynalov Kh. Sculptors who worked in Baku in the 20s of the 20th century (Y. I. Keilikhis, S. D. Erzya, Y. R. Tripolskaya, P. V. Sabsay) / *İncəsənət və Mədəniyyət Problemləri*, Vol. 17 № 1. / Kh.Zeynalov. - Bakı: - Çap-Poliqrafiya, 2023. - s. 20.

nature of the pose, it remains noteworthy as the young sculptor's first large-scale work. This statue is the only monumental piece of Sabsay that has survived to the present day. Other monumental works he created, which reflected Soviet ideology, have since been removed.

Several of Sabsay's plastic works are preserved in the R. Mustafayev National Museum of Fine Arts. Notable pieces include "Oil Worker M.P. Kaverochkin" (marble, 1955), "Artist S.Bahlulzadeh" (wood, 1963), "Oil Worker G.Babayev" (wood, 1967), among other portraits. These works stand out for their naturalistic appearance and the expressive quality of the characters.

The second paragraph of the second chapter is titled **"The Theme of Azerbaijan in the Works of Russian Artists"**.

At the beginning of the century, the then young Isaac Brodsky (1883–1939) became known for painting a portrait of the famous philanthropist and oil industrialist Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev (1912). It is noteworthy that this painting was a direct portrait of Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev painted from life. The portrait, which had been neglected for many years and was at risk of being lost, was restored in 1962 by the first professional restorer-artist Farhad Hajiyeu. This portrait later served as the basis for the creation of various artistic representations of Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev.

The talented Russian female artist Anna Ostroumova-Lebedeva (1871–1955) visited Baku in 1916, where she predominantly painted landscapes of the oil fields in watercolor. Her husband was a chemist and engineer who had been invited to work in the oil fields of Baku, which explains Ostroumova-Lebedeva's interest in the oil theme. Her watercolors, "Baku. Oil Platforms" and "Bibi Heybat" (both from 1916), are memorable for their harmonious composition, the proportion and balance of volume and forms, as well as the equal distribution of light and transparency.

The 1920s and 1930s marked a period of growing interest in Azerbaijan among Russian artists. In addition to painters who resided and worked in Azerbaijan on a permanent basis, there were also a number of artists who periodically visited the region on creative assignments and expeditions. Among them were notable names such as A.V. Kuprin, F.A. Modorov, K.F. Bogaevsky, I.P. Sheblykin, Y.S.

Kruglikova, N.N. Kupreyanov, A.I. Yakusheva, and others. These artists, in accordance with the requirements of the time, mainly depicted oil wells, factories and plants. However, their work also includes interesting depictions of nature, cities, historical and architectural monuments related to Azerbaijan, and paintings that realistically reflect Azerbaijani life and lifestyle.

In the early 1930s, the renowned Russian artist and corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Arts, A.V. Kuprin (1880-1960), visited Azerbaijan. During his stay, he explored Icherisheher (the Inner City of Baku), studying the architectural monuments of this ancient area. Kuprin thoroughly analyzed the structural and decorative features of the buildings, focusing on their construction techniques and ornamental elements. His work provided an important artistic and analytical contribution to the understanding of Baku's historical architecture, documenting the intricate details of the city's cultural and architectural heritage from the perspective of a prominent artist²⁷. As a result of these observations, the artist created the landscape titled "*Baku. Khan's Palace*" (1931). This painting, executed in a somewhat schematic style, adheres to the traditions of realism. It depicts a portion of the Khan's palace, a minaret, and ancient structures. During this period, another notable work by A.V. Kuprin in his Baku series is titled "*Bibi Heybat Oil Fields.*" In this painting, the artist skillfully portrays the oil industry structures located along the coastline. Overall, Kuprin's Azerbaijani series stands out for its landscape paintings, which capture both historical architectural monuments and the oil industry. The majority of the artist's works in this series were created using watercolor.

The People's Artist of the Russian Federation and Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Arts, F.A. Modorov (1890-1967), visited Azerbaijan in the 1920s and 1930s, creating several memorable works, mainly using oil paints. Along with depicting factories, oil production, and industrial scenes, Modorov also created paintings that vividly captured the spiritual

²⁷ Баку и нефтепромыслы 1931 г. в работах живописца А.Куприна// <https://azerhistory.com/?p=7702>

essence, national distinctiveness, and character of the Azerbaijani people. One of his notable works from 1929 is the thematic portrait *"Turkish (Azerbaijani) Woman, Chairperson of the Village Soviet."* This portrait stands out for its national character. The composition features a middle-aged Azerbaijani woman, actively engaged in public affairs, with a determined look and confident posture. She is dressed in a light-blue shirt and a traditional headscarf. In the background, the artist has depicted fragmentary images of Azerbaijani women wearing headscarves²⁸.

Another painting by the artist that fully reflects the national content is titled *"Azerbaijan. Carpet Weaving"* (1930). In this work, two Azerbaijani women are depicted sitting at a wooden loom (hana) weaving carpets. Above the loom, multicolored skeins of yarn are hanging, and in the foreground, the vibrant scarf of the young woman sitting at the loom, along with the warm color palette, vividly expresses the national theme.

The renowned Russian landscape artist K.F. Bogayevski (1872-1943) visited Azerbaijan in the 1930s, creating landscape works based on the theme of oil production, mainly in the Bibi Heybat oil fields. The artist depicted the Bibi Heybat oil rigs in a realist style, albeit with a somewhat symbolic approach, which reflects his creative characteristics. Bogayevski approached the theme of oil with great affection and inspiration, sensing the natural lyricism of the oil fields, which might seem monotonous at first glance. He was able to capture and express this quality in his landscapes²⁹.

In the 1930s, most of the Russian artists who came to Baku on creative assignments focused on two main themes: national life and oil production. These two topics formed the basis of the works that Russian artists created about Azerbaijan. Works such as I.P.

²⁸ Зейналов Х. Азербайджанская тема в творчестве Федора Модорова: искусствоведческий анализ / Наследие веков. Электронный научный журнал Института Наследия / Х.Зейналов. - 2020, № 2, с. 106-116.

²⁹ Зейналов Х. О русских художниках, работавших в Баку в начале XX века / Znanstvena misel, № 10, Vol. 1 / Х.Зейналов. -2017, s. - 15 -16.

Sheblykin's *"Facade of the Shirvanshahs' Palace"* (1920s), N.N. Kupreyanov's *"Turkish (Azerbaijani – trans.) Woman"* (1930), and A.I. Yakusheva's *"Baku. Old City"* (1931) are notable for their strong national character and color palette. Artists like Y.S. Kruqlikova and K.F. Bogayevski mostly depicted oil rigs. However, in these works, the industrial landscape of Baku is represented in a unique style. The landscapes of the Bibi Heybat and Surakhani oil fields, with their tarry atmosphere, may initially seem monotonous, but in reality, they carry a certain familiar feel and possess a distinctive national color.

The third paragraph of the second chapter is titled **"Art and Artistic Criticism."** This paragraph analyzes the development of artistic criticism in the republic during the 1920s and 1930s, focusing on the evaluation of the creativity of artists.

Artistic criticism constitutes an essential part of the visual arts relationships. With its cultural and societal content, artistic criticism influences the development of the arts. In this regard, artistic criticism can be metaphorically referred to as the “engine of art.” During the period under consideration, artistic criticism took on an active character, maintaining an objective attitude toward the work of painters and sculptors, and contributing to the development of art in accordance with contemporary requirements.

The 1920s and 1930s in the Republic of Azerbaijan represent a crucial period for the establishment and development of art criticism. During this time, many artists not only created works of art but also engaged actively in the field of art criticism. Among them, Salam Salamzadeh's contributions stand out. Renowned for his works on industrial themes, Salamzadeh was also recognized as an art historian and critic. His co-authored article *"XIX Century Azerbaijani Artists,"* written with V. Chepelev, was published in Moscow in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This publication can be regarded as a significant example of Azerbaijani-Russian art collaboration. The article provides a detailed analysis of the works of Mirza Qadim Irvani, Mir Mohsun Navvab, and other key figures of Azerbaijani art.

In addition, V. Zimmer played a significant role in the development of visual and decorative-applied arts, as well as in the broader evolution of artistic thought in Azerbaijan. In the early

1920s, he served as the head of the Department of Art History at Baku University. Zummer was among the first scholars to undertake a comprehensive study of Azerbaijani art history, particularly focusing on the nation's cultural heritage and historical-architectural monuments. His work laid the foundation for a more systematic understanding of Azerbaijan's artistic and architectural legacy.

Both Zummer's and other researchers' scientific activities were closely coordinated by the Azerbaijan Society for the Study and Exploration of the Caucasus (ATT). Additionally, another significant scientific center, the Azerbaijan Archaeological Commission (AAC), played an important role in the work of scholars and researchers. This organization led the archaeological research conducted in the republic during the 1920s and played a crucial role in the deeper study of ancient and medieval Azerbaijani artistic culture. Both the Azerbaijan Society for the Study and Exploration of the Caucasus and the Archaeological Commission published the "News" journal, where various scholars, mostly Russian researchers of the time, published their articles. The research of V. Zummer and others was featured in these publications.

In 1927, Zummer published his work *"Hluk-Dits on Azerbaijani Art Monuments"* in Tbilisi. This work features an interpretation of the views of prominent German ethnographers and art historians Heinrich Hlūk and Ernst Dits regarding Azerbaijani culture. Zummer also selected and isolated materials pertaining to Azerbaijan from the book *"Islamic Art"* published by the German scholars and published them with a detailed introduction. Thus, V. Zummer established and realized the scientific exchange of ideas in Azerbaijani art studies.

V. Zummer, analyzing the research of H. Hluk and E. Ditsin, points out that he himself is in full agreement with the opinions of the German scholars in most cases. It should be noted that H. Hluk and E. Ditsin traveled to many regions of the Middle East, visited the Nakhchivan area, conducted scientific research there, and took photographs of several historical and architectural monuments. Both scholars emphasize that the foundation of Azerbaijani artistic culture is based on strong Turkish influences. Referring to this idea, Zummer

highlights that he shares the same opinion³⁰. These ideas, which were quite bold for that time, reflect Zummer's objective attitude towards Azerbaijani artistic culture.

An interesting aspect of Zummer's research is his frequent use of the term "Caucasian Azerbaijan" in place of the more commonly used phrase "Soviet Azerbaijan." This terminology was also encountered in certain academic circles during the 1920s. Zummer not only popularized this expression but also incorporated it extensively in both the aforementioned article and his other studies.

In the opening of his article, Zummer underscores the significance of the contributions made by German scholars to the field of Azerbaijani art history, asserting the scholarly value of their work: "*Henrich Hluk and Ernst Ditsin's new collective work, Islamic Art, allocates two tables and several sections of text to the monuments of Caucasian Azerbaijan*"³¹.

Zummer did not merely mention these tables consisting of diagrams and photographs; he also provided extensive explanations for them. The scholar included these diagrams and photographs, such as the photo of the Momine Khatun Mausoleum in Nakhchivan, in his material, thereby affirming their scientific and visual significance. Zummer considered the German scholars' research to be "insignificant," noting that the *Islamic Art* book devoted only a small portion to Azerbaijani visual culture. However, as he hypothesized, this seemingly minor material holds considerable value.

During the 1920s, the development of art criticism in Azerbaijan saw significant contributions from Russian intellectuals active in Baku at the time. Articles by M. Gerasimov, Y. Samorodov, I. Brodski, I. Ryzhenko, A. Tuganov, and others primarily covered events in the cultural life of the period, such as art exhibitions, concerts, theater seasons, and new stage designs.

³⁰ Зуммер В.М. Глюк-Диц о памятниках искусства Азербайджана (с 2 табл. рис.) / Известия Кавказского историко-археологического института, том XV / В.М.Зуммер. - Тифлис: - 1927. - с. 107-118.

³¹ Зуммер В.М. Глюк-Диц о памятниках искусства Азербайджана (с 2 табл. рис.) / Известия Кавказского историко-археологического института, том XV / В.М.Зуммер. - Тифлис: - 1927. - с. 108.

Yevgeny Samorodov, who intermittently contributed art criticism articles to the periodical press, authored an especially notable piece in 1929 titled “*Art Education in Azerbaijan*”, which was published in the journal *Revolution and Culture*. In this article, Samorodov delves into the professional achievements of young artists, placing particular emphasis on the several years of pedagogical activity of the Baku School of Art. Despite the significant challenges it faced, including a lack of sufficient material and technical resources, as well as a shortage of highly qualified pedagogical staff, the school had nevertheless begun to produce highly skilled professionals. Samorodov points out that this is clearly demonstrated through the works showcased at the students' graduation exhibition. While these works were not without their limitations, they unequivocally signified the emergence of new perspectives and opportunities in Azerbaijani art, particularly within the field of painting.

The third chapter of the dissertation is titled “**The Russian Theme in the Creative Works of Azerbaijani Artists in the 1950s-1980s**”. This section examines the historical phase of mutual interactions and focuses on a new stage in this relationship. The chapter is divided into two paragraphs. **The first paragraph** is titled “**Landscape and the Lyrical-Romantic Interpretations of Themes**”.

As is widely recognized, the period spanning from the 1950s to the 1980s represents a particularly rich and transformative phase in the history of Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations, during which an extensive number of paintings and sculptures reflecting the evolving dynamics of mutual interaction were created. Notably, whereas in the 1920s and 1930s, it was predominantly Russian artists who visited Azerbaijan, particularly Baku, on creative assignments, from the 1940s onwards, a noticeable shift occurred, with Azerbaijani artists increasingly traveling to Russia and producing works that explored Russian themes. This shift can be attributed, on the one hand, to the fact that many Azerbaijani artists received their education in Russia, and on the other, to the compelling and engaging nature of Russian themes themselves. Moreover, the deep-rooted

historical and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Russia provided an additional impetus for Azerbaijani artists to explore and interpret Russian subjects. Furthermore, the overall progression of Azerbaijani visual arts during this period inevitably contributed to the expansion of Russian-themed works, with an observable increase in the volume of such pieces. It is also critical to highlight that the prevailing socio-political climate of the time positively influenced the prominence of the Russian theme in Azerbaijani visual art, further amplifying its relevance within the artistic discourse of the period.

"In the 1950s to 1980s, the works of S. Sharifzadeh, I. Ismayilov, K. Kazimzadeh, O. Sadigzadeh, E. Shahtakhtinskaya, B. Aliyev, A. Huseynov, J. Mufidzadeh, and many others included a significant focus on Russian themes. This theme was widely represented in painting, sculpture, and graphics. During this period, considerable work was done in the field of book graphics, and individual Azerbaijani artists created illustrations for works by Russian authors. These illustrations are commendable from the perspective of professional compositional qualities, as they accurately reflect the content and essence of the literary work. In this context, the series of illustrations drawn by O. Sadigzadeh for the novel *Fathers and Sons* by the 19th-century Russian realist writer I. Turgenev are particularly instructive, artistically refined, and impactful³².

The 60s were a period of growth in the field of book graphics for Ogtay Sadigzadeh. "*During these years, Azerbaijani readers became acquainted with the memorable and beautiful images of heroes depicted in Balzac's "Father Gorio", V. Hugo's "Les Misérables", Turgenev's "Fathers and Sons", and M. Gorky's "The Case of the Artamonovs"*"³³.

Honored Artist Ayyub Huseynov (1916-1998), known for his significant contributions to Azerbaijani art, is among those artists who incorporated Russian themes into their works; much like many of his contemporaries, he portrayed stereotypical representations of

³² Qacar G. Oqtay Sadiqzadə. Sərvət / G.Qacar. - Bakı: - Şərq-Qərb. – 2013. s. 11-12.

³³ Qacar G. Oqtay Sadiqzadə. Sərvət / G.Qacar. - Bakı: - Şərq-Qərb. – 2013. s. 21.

Russian people in his paintings, and in this context, his 1963 piece *The Danger Passed* stands out as particularly remarkable. Executed in oil, this expressive, multi-figured work, imbued with an intense emotional atmosphere, is dedicated to marine oil workers, and at its center, a young, muscular Russian man, shirtless, is surrounded by his Azerbaijani oil worker colleagues, all aboard a small boat that is on the verge of capsizing due to the fierce winds at sea. Nevertheless, through the intervention of the oil workers, the helmsman manages to regain control of the rudder, bringing the boat into a stable position, and despite the imminent danger passing, the faces of the workers, including the central figure, radiate with joy and relief, though an underlying emotional tension still persists in the piece, as the waves continue to violently toss the boat, echoing the dynamic struggle for stability. The composition's structure and its expressiveness notably recall the grandeur of the famous 19th-century French painter Théodore Géricault's monumental *The Raft of the Medusa*, creating a powerful visual dialogue between these two works."

"In the landscape genre, Russian themes are also reflected in the works of People's Artist E. Shahtakhtinskaya (1930-1996). Her famous series of trees is closely linked to Russian themes, and one of the most notable pieces in this regard is her 1957 watercolor *Maple*, where the lyrical-romantic mood is particularly strong. The delicate and refined appearance of the maple, which has become a symbol of the Russian forest, enhances the lyrical essence of the work, further emphasizing its emotional depth. In her 1964 watercolor *Teberda*, Shahtakhtinskaya presents the beauty of the Russian forest in a more complete, realistic style, capturing the lush, wooded slopes of the North Caucasus mountains. The multiple shades of green in the composition contribute to the aesthetic and artistic impact of the piece, showcasing its vibrant and rich color palette from an artistic perspective."

"The 1950s to 1980s marked a period in which the development of Azerbaijani-Russian creative relations was notably reflected in the art of theater design. The costume and set design sketches created by theater artists such as I. Seyidova and B. Afqanli for works by

Russian classical composers serve as an example of this collaboration. The theater and set design sketches, as well as costumes created by I. Seyidova over several years for P.I. Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, R.M. Glière's *The Red Poppy*, M.Y. Lermontov's *Masquerade*, and S.S. Prokofiev's *The Wedding at the Cathedral*, are invaluable artistic representations of the embodiment of Russian classics on the Azerbaijani stage. These works not only enrich Azerbaijani art but also contribute to the deepening of the history of Azerbaijani-Russian artistic relations. The same can be said for the sketches provided by B. Afqanli for V. Osnov's and V. Vinnikov's *The Indian Beauty*, as well as for Q. Malikov's sketches for R. Rozhdestvensky's *Requiem* television play.

In general, the Russian theme in the historical and artistic context is embodied in the works of T. Tağıyev, S. Sharifzadeh, I. Ismayilov, O. Sadigzadeh, B. Aliyev, and others."

"Honored Artist S. Sharifzadeh (1912-1986) created a graphic work titled *In the Reception of the Azerbaijani Ambassador Ivan Kalita*, which draws significant interest due to its historical theme. In this piece, the ambassador of the Shirvanshahs is depicted standing before the Tsar of Moscow. Historical sources reveal that Ivan Kalita, who was known for his arrogance and for attempting to humiliate others, including foreign diplomats, would order those who came to his reception to kiss his feet. The painting captures precisely this tense moment, where Tsar Ivan Kalita extends his foot and places it atop the other while gesturing with his hand for the Azerbaijani ambassador to kiss it. The seasoned and composed ambassador, however, maintains his poise, carefully assessing the situation, awaiting the outcome of the encounter.

Among the artists who created a comprehensive and artistically rich gallery of works on the Russian theme, perhaps the first and most prominent is People's Artist, Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Arts, and academician Tahir Salahov. Throughout all stages of his career, the artist has maintained a deep connection with Russian

themes and environments, and this characteristic continues to this day³⁴.

"In both the early, developed, and contemporary phases of T. Salahov's creative journey, various works related to Russian themes can be observed. Naturally, a significant portion of the artist's oeuvre falls within the Soviet era. In this regard, the majority of his works from that period (for instance, the portrait of D. Shostakovich) can be regarded as integral components of Soviet art. However, when approaching the issue from the perspective of modernity, it can be confidently asserted that these works are directly tied to Russian themes.

The "harsh style" characteristic of his work served to mature Azerbaijani fine arts in terms of themes, forms and colors. *"The 'harsh style' that emerged in the person of the People's Artist Tahir Salahov means 'harsh realism' in terms of art theory. Since method and style are one of the main manifestations of 'ism' that determines the direction of literary and artistic movements, the 'harsh style' of Tahir Salahov also means 'harsh realism' scientifically"*³⁵.

One of the landscape works created during the early period of Salahov's career is titled *Window. Moscow Morning* (1959). The piece depicts a Moscow courtyard, houses, and other elements visible through a window. Before our eyes, an intriguing example of a cityscape emerges. The sun's rays, falling obliquely in the early morning, illuminate the rooftops of the houses. The crosswise shadows of the chimneys fall onto the whitewashed roofs, creating a curious contrast of colors. Additionally, the landscape is seen specifically through a window. In the foreground, the artist almost entirely frames the composition within the depiction of a window. The brushes placed in the jar and the oil paint tubes on the jar further metaphorically emphasize that this is the artist's own window.

³⁴ Zeynalov X. Tahir Salahovun yaradıcılığında Rusiya mövzusu (Tahir Salahov-90: yaradıcılığının əsas mərhələləri kitabında) / X.Zeynalov. – Bakı: - Elm. – 2019. - s. 55.

³⁵ Həbibbəyli İ. Xalq rəssamı Tahir Salahov: sərt realizmdən romantizmə (Tahir Salahov-90: yaradıcılığının əsas mərhələləri kitabında) // İ.Həbibbəyli. – Bakı: - Elm. – 2019. - s. 5-6.

The Russian theme is prominently represented in the works of People's Artist C. Mufidzadeh. He has participated numerous times in exhibitions in Russia, showcasing a variety of works that reflect his creative output, whether related to this country or to his broader body of work. In this regard, "Northern Ridge" is particularly noteworthy. Here, the life of northerners, especially fishermen, and fishing nets acquire a unique romantic content. *"The artist has also turned the fishing net into an element that will play a dominant role in the compositions of his works "Fisherman's Island" (1979), "After the Evening Hunt" (1979), "Dull Day" (1979), "Silence" (1979), etc"* ³⁶.

In the artist's graphic work "Stillness" (1979), a traditional wooden Russian church is depicted, emblematic of the widespread architectural style in Russia, particularly in the northern regions where wooden structures were predominant. The painting captures, in a realistic manner, the typical appearance of Russian religious edifices and the unique characteristics of wooden architecture. Notably, the church is positioned not at the center of the composition, but slightly to the right; however, it still serves as the dominant visual element in the scene. The overall mood of the artwork is one of serene stillness, with the surrounding landscape depicted in a relatively sparse and restrained manner. The viewer is presented with an image of the distant northern landscape, characterized by its austere, minimally vegetated appearance, which conveys a sense of desolation. The environment suggests that everything is immersed in a profound slumber. A solitary fir tree stands out in the far distance, a rare focal point in an otherwise empty scene. The artist, almost deliberately, has left the background devoid of significant detail, only faintly indicating the presence of a dense taiga forest on the horizon, which appears as an ethereal, almost dreamlike vision. This sparseness in the background serves to emphasize the ancient wooden church in the foreground, allowing the viewer to better appreciate its intricate design. The church's multi-faceted base, elongated,

³⁶ Əliyev Z. Cəmil Müfidzadə. Cizgilərə həpən ömür / Z.Əliyev. – Bakı: Oskar, - 2011. – s. 94.

stretched roof, and small cupola at the top are characteristic of the typical Russian Pomor village architecture. Moreover, while the artist does employ color in the composition, he does so in a restrained manner, staying true to his signature style, which favors subtlety and understatement.

The second paragraph is titled **“The Ideological and Artistic Transformation of the Character in Portraiture”**. In this section, the focus is placed on the broad manifestation and interpretive characteristics of the ideological and artistic features inherent in portrait works across the creations of various artists.

In this domain, Tahir Salahov's artistic achievements once again stand out. The artist has created portraits not only of prominent cultural and public figures but also of ordinary individuals, including his acquaintances, family members, and sometimes even random, yet fascinating, people.

Let us examine some of the portraits that Tahir Salahov created during the 1960s to 1980s, among which the portrait of the USSR State Prize laureate and world-renowned composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1974-76) undoubtedly occupies a central position. This artwork stands as a vivid embodiment of Salahov's characteristic “harsh style”, effectively reflecting the defining traits that have come to symbolize his unique artistic approach ³⁷.

D. Shostakovich's portrait has the compositional and coloristic features used by the artist at that time ³⁸. "During this period, Tahir Salahov created portraits of several prominent figures, including Sabir, P. Pza, and others. Among these, the portrait of Shostakovich stands out, notably for its compositional similarities to that of R. Rza, particularly in the subject's posture, while its color palette is more akin to Sabir's portrait. In R. Rza's depiction, the figure is seated on a chair, gripping its arms with his hands, whereas in Shostakovich's portrait, the composer is shown sitting with one leg crossed over the other on a soft, red-covered chair, his hands resting on its sides.

³⁷ Qacar G. Tahir Salahov. Sərvət / G.Qacar. - Bakı: - Şərq-Qərb. – 2013. s. 47.

³⁸ За рамками: 5 картин Таира Салахова и их истории//<https://baku-media.ru/publications/kultura/iskustvo/za-ramkami-5-kartin-taira-salakhova-i-ikh-istorii/>

Behind R. Rza, the corner of the wall is visible, but behind Shostakovich looms the presence of a grand piano. Both figures direct their gaze toward the left, though Shostakovich's face carries a distinct expression—concerned and slightly fatigued, a reflection of the strain from his intense artistic search. The painting itself is rendered in cool tones, which, in terms of its color scheme, is a defining feature of Salahov's "harsh style". Dominated by hues of green, gray, and black, the palette is reminiscent of that found in Sabir's own portrait, titled "*Sabir in Balakhani*".

"Tahir Salahov, renowned for his mastery in oil painting, also skillfully employs graphic techniques in his work. His portraits, crafted with tools such as pencil, sanguine, and other graphic media, attracted significant attention from cultural and intellectual circles during the 1960s and 1970s. Among these, the portrait of Rasul Hamzatov, the celebrated Dagestani writer and USSR State Prize laureate (1978), stands out as particularly noteworthy. *"The portrait is made with sangina on paper. Here, the great writer and poet of Dagestan, R. Hamzatov, is depicted from a close distance. The portrait consists almost exclusively of the head; in the lower part of the composition, the collar of the poet's shirt with the top button unbuttoned is visible"*³⁹.

This portrait, drawn in sanguine on paper, captures the poet in an intimate, close-up depiction. The composition primarily centers on his face, with only the upper part of his shirt's collar, where the top button is undone, visible at the lower edge.

In this work, Salahov masterfully conveys Hamzatov's character through realistic brushstrokes. Through the writer's image, he successfully reveals the qualities typical of a creative personality: profound thought, inner depth, and a certain dreaminess. The portrait is composed with the face shown in a 1/3 profile, with Hamzatov's eyes directed forward, yet his gaze seems not to focus on any external object. Rather, it reflects a mind lost in thought, immersed in his

³⁹ Zeynalov X. Tahir Salahovun yaradıcılığında Rusiya mövzusu (Tahir Salahov-90: yaradıcılığının əsas mərhələləri kitabında) / X.Zeynalov. – Bakı: - Elm. – 2019. - s. 55.

creative world. The distinctive features of Hamzatov's face-his gaze, slightly untamed silvery hair-are rendered with exceptional precision, giving the portrait a natural and lifelike quality.

Tahir Salahov, in his distinctive style, created a portrait of the Soviet actress Anastasia Vertinskaya, a well-known figure from the films *Red Sails* and *Amfibian- Man*, which were highly familiar and beloved by Soviet society. This portrait, executed in charcoal, forms part of the artist's series of black-and-white graphic portraits. The work was completed in 1987. Much like his portrait of Rasul Hamzatov, Salahov has depicted Vertinskaya's image in a 1/3 profile. However, significant differences exist between the two portraits. While the gaze of Hamzatov in his portrait is directed forward, Vertinskaya's gaze is directed squarely at the viewer, creating a more direct interaction with the audience. Furthermore, the first portrait is painted from left to right, whereas the second is oriented from right to left, altering the overall visual dynamic.

By the time Salahov painted Vertinskaya's portrait, he had nearly completed his own youthful period. Nevertheless, the artist has subtly captured the remnants of youth's passionate energy in her serene, confident expression. The light in her eyes, intensely focused on the viewer, combined with the apparent stillness of her posture, adds a layer of hidden expression and depth to the piece, suggesting an undercurrent of youthful fervor beneath the calm exterior.

Among the many portraits T.Salahov created during the Soviet period, there are not only portrayals of famous figures but also those of ordinary people, including his friends, acquaintances, and close family members. Whether executed in oil or graphic mediums, these portraits reflect the artist's deep focus on capturing the distinct moods of his subjects through their external appearances. With remarkable precision, Salahov applied realist techniques to convey the essence of each individual. One series that particularly stands out is the portraits of young girls. In these works, Salahov avoids the trap of idealizing his subjects. Instead, he embraces the raw, natural beauty of youth, portraying the girls with a remarkable sense of authenticity. Rather than embellishing or romanticizing, he employs realistic brushstrokes to bring out the true character of each subject. Paintings

like *Marina* (1972), *Katya* (1984), *Varya* (1985, oil), and *Ira* (1986, pencil) showcase the distinct physical traits of Russian women, skillfully captured through a balance of naturalism and subtle artistic effect, while remaining firmly rooted in a realist tradition.

Interestingly, in the art of Azerbaijan, which is known for its distinctive and vibrant color palettes and national color schemes, the works of People's Artist Toğrul Narimanbeyov also include pieces that reflect Russia, Russian life, and domestic culture. These works are primarily executed in oil on canvas. Among them are portraits of individuals such as Anna Andreyevna, who served as a nanny to Toğrul Narimanbeyov during his childhood (1962, oil on canvas), his acquaintance Pyotr Matveyevich (1968, oil on canvas), the artist Rastini (1972, autolithograph), director Sergey Gerasimov, and actress Tamara Makarova (1983, oil on canvas), as well as the world-renowned cellist Mstislav Rostropovich, his wife, the famous actress Galina Vishnevskaya in her role as Tosca, and a depiction of the Vasily Blazhenny Church in Moscow (1991, oil on canvas). These works demonstrate not only Narimanbeyov's interest in Russian culture but also his ability to capture the spirit of human experience with both precision and empathy ⁴⁰.

As observed, a considerable portion of the renowned artist's works on the Russian theme consists of portraits, which can be categorized into two distinct groups. The first group includes portraits of the artist's acquaintances and loved ones, while the second group features renowned figures from 20th-century Russian culture. Among the portraits in the first group, the "Portrait of Anna Andreyevna" stands out in particular. It is well-known that Toğrul Narimanbeyov's childhood was far from easy. During those challenging years, this kind-hearted woman supported him and sparked his love for art and music. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the early 1960s, Narimanbeyov, having already reached adulthood, created a portrait of this elderly woman, considering it one of his finest masterpieces.

⁴⁰ Мир-Багирзаде Ф.А. Творчество народного художника Азербайджана Тоғрула Нариманбекова / Ф.А.Мир-Багирзаде. – Баку: - Aspoliqraf. – 2014. с. 49.

In the portrait of Pavel Matveyevich, we see a middle-aged man with glasses, holding a cigarette in his left hand while his right hand is tucked into his trouser pocket. His businesslike posture, characteristic facial features, and thoughtful expression reveal a person with an optimistic, hardworking nature, someone who dislikes idleness and has a clear, objective worldview.

People's Artist and Corresponding Member of the USSR Academy of Arts M. Abdullayev created the artistic image of the prominent Russian writer M. Gorky in his work titled "Maxim Gorky in Baku in 1928" (1950). In the composition, Gorky is depicted against the backdrop of a developing Baku. The great Russian writer is admiring the view of the city from its upper part. The city has changed and become more beautiful. It no longer resembles the dirty, smog-filled, oil-slicked city that he had seen in the early 20th century. This transformation is the central idea of the piece. It is known that Gorky had visited Baku in the early 20th century, where the oil fields reminded him of a hellish landscape. However, when he returned to Baku in 1928, he was confronted with an entirely different view. While the ideological demands of the era are evident in the aesthetic foundation of the work, it must also be noted that by that time, Baku had indeed entered a phase of substantial development.

Other Azerbaijani artists, too, have turned to the image of Maxim Gorky, one of whom is the People's Artist and Professor J. Mufidzadeh. The portrayal of writers and poets typically manifests in two forms-either as independent works or as book illustrations. While M. Abdullayev's "*Maxim Gorky in Baku in 1928*" stands as an independent painting, J. Mufidzadeh's representation of Gorky assumes an illustrative role. "*Created in 1968, this work was intended for the book published in honor of the centenary of the great Russian writer's birth. In the same year, J. Mufidzadeh also designed the layout for the miniature book titled "The Storm Bird" published by Azernash, which contained Gorky's stories "The Song of the Hawk," "The Storm Bird," and "The Old Woman Izergil"*"⁴¹. In the

⁴¹ Əliyev Z. Cəmil Müfidzadə. Cizgilərə hopan ömür / Z.Əliyev. – Bakı: Oskar, - 2011. – s. 209-210.

black-and-white graphic style portrait, the great Russian writer's likeness is memorable for its characteristic features. Gorky possessed a distinctly angular, almost "sharp-edged" facial structure. As early as 1939, the renowned Soviet Russian sculptor I.D. Shadr had created a bust of Gorky, presenting his facial features in a highly pronounced, characteristic manner. This trend soon spread throughout Soviet art, and the contours of the writer's artistic image became a defining feature. The Kukryniksy's caricatured portrayal of Gorky also played a significant role in shaping this artistic convention. As an example from Azerbaijani art, it can be noted that S. Bahlulzadeh's depiction of his own likeness (with its exaggerated features, including his crooked fingers) similarly amplifies the character traits of his persona.

Masterfully utilizing this trend, J. Mufidzadeh, in his profile portrait of Gorky, elongates the writer's neck (with the collar of his shirt deliberately omitted, a technique inherited from Shadr), sharpens the angle of his eyebrows, and lowers his mustache significantly, thereby bringing to life the writer's traditionally ingrained image through graphic strokes. The impeccable strokes in this portrait, with their sharp black-and-white contrasts, enhance the silhouette and the facial contours, creating a more effective and dynamic visual impact. The writer's face is rendered in dark lines, harmonizing with the deep strokes in the background. Both the portrait and the illustrations drawn for the writer's works were created using the technique of woodcut engraving (xylography). This marked a first in the history of Azerbaijani book graphics. *"For the first time in Azerbaijani publishing, the artist employed the woodcut engraving technique, offering readers a succinct yet impactful presentation of the essence of the aforementioned stories through three illustrations"* ⁴². The illustrations in question have a bold, dynamic appearance. The sky, which dominates much of the composition, is depicted with dark strokes, while some sections maintain lighter areas. The contrasting white and sharp, fluctuating

⁴² Əliyev Z. Cəmil Müfidzadə. Cizgilərə hopan ömür / Z.Əliyev. – Bakı: Oskar, - 2011. – s. 210.

outlines of various details against the dark backdrop give the illustrations an intense, dramatic tone. In addition, these elements impart deep nuances, emotional resonance, and symbolic significance, enriching the overall meaning and expressive power of the work.

Chapter Four of the Dissertation - "**A New Perspective on Art in the New Era**". This chapter consists of three paragraphs. The first paragraph is titled "**The Azerbaijani-Russian Visual Arts Relations in the Independence Period.**" It analyzes a significant number of works created by various Azerbaijani artists on Russian themes during the years of independence.

The independence period opens a new chapter in the relations between Azerbaijani and Russian visual arts. During this time, a considerable number of intriguing works have been produced.

The portrait genre is more widely represented in T. Salakhov's works during the period of independence. This aspect shows that the artist has been working more productively in the last 20-25 years. And this does not only apply to the portrait genre. In recent times, the artist has created memorable paintings in the landscape (especially urban landscapes) genre and in the field of thematic subjects. Among them, there are not a few works related to Russia in terms of subject matter. There are even more of them compared to the Soviet period. It is interesting that the artist, who has been to almost all countries of the world and has transferred his rich travel impressions onto canvas or paper, has hardly turned to the landscape genre on the subject of Russia during the period of independence. The vast majority of his works related to the Russian theme during this period are portraits. As in the previous periods of the artist's work, these portraits were painted in oil paint or in black and white graphics.

The portrait of the famous lightweight athlete, international level sports master Olga Rukovichnikova, painted in oil (1998), is one of T. Salakhov's significant portraits created on a Russian theme during the independence period. The artistic image of the renowned athlete is depicted with high craftsmanship in the portrait.

The portrait is notable for its interesting composition and color scheme, showcasing T. Salakhov's artistic vision. Instead of depicting

the athlete in the realm of sports, the artist presents her seated in an armchair, conveying a romantic and poetic ambiance. By the time the portrait was created, the athlete was over 40 years old, which might render the portrayal within a sports context somewhat unrealistic. However, as a woman who had achieved significant popularity in society, she could still be perceived as relatively young.

In general, the concept of youth in sports is often associated with vigor and vitality. The artist considered this aspect and depicted the International Sports Master not merely as an athlete but rather as a vibrant and confident woman imbued with poetic sensibility. The subject's left hand rests gracefully on her neck, weaving through her blonde hair, while her right hand is casually placed between her legs. This pose not only conveys a sense of romance but also reflects the character's inclination towards relaxation and ease.

Salahov traditionally represents the head of the subject in a position turned at a 1/3 angle. *"The subject's gaze follows this turn, enhancing the artistic depth of the composition. The woman is adorned in a long-sleeved blouse that evokes a sense of structured attire, featuring multicolored rhombuses, paired with black, vertically striped trousers. The chair she occupies is rendered in a yellow-brown hue, reminiscent of an airplane seat. This choice contributes to a striking harmony within the overall context of the portrait"*⁴³.

M. Rostropovich's portrait reveals elements of symbolism and idyllic representation. The first of these can be observed in the abstract, symmetric, and linear structure of the score backgrounds, while the second is reflected in the dramatic expression of the figure. In this portrait, T. Salahov departs from traditional realism, employing symbolic means to depict both the subject and the background. In comparison to T. Narimanbeyov's portrayal of M. Rostropovich, T. Salahov's work undeniably contains more elements of realism. However, in contrast to the artist's conventional realist

⁴³ Zeynalov X. Tahir Salahovun yaradıcılığında Rusiya mövzusu (Tahir Salahov-90: yaradıcılığının əsas mərhələləri kitabında) / X.Zeynalov. – Bakı: - Elm. – 2019. - s. 66.

style, realism here is somewhat replaced by various conventions, such as the symbolic appearance of the score backgrounds.

The relationship between Azerbaijani and Russian visual arts during the period of independence holds particular significance in the work of People's Artist Togrul Narimanbeyov. Interestingly, like Tahir Salahov, he primarily focused on portrait work during this period of independence. One notable aspect is that the artist often depicts "celebrities" in pairs. Among them are the portraits of director Sergey Gerasimov and actress Tamara Makarova. Although these portraits have different compositions, there is a noticeable connection between them, characterized by ideological and aesthetic unity.

Similar observations can be made about the portraits of Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya. While these two portraits have different compositions, the artist seems to strive to reflect them in a unified manner. He depicts both artists in the creative process, with G. Vishnevskaya represented while performing the Tosca aria. Thus, the artist portrays the actress in a dual form—both in her appearance and by embodying the essence of the character she portrays.

Togrul Narimanbeyov's vibrant palette and tendency towards decorative elements are evident in Vishnevskaya's portrait (in facial features, color treatment, etc.). However, we believe that these characteristics are more distinctly expressed in the portrait of M. Rostropovich. The world-renowned musician M. Rostropovich has been portrayed by many famous artists. Among those who have created portraits of him are T. Salahov and T. Narimanbeyov, whose representations of this talented performer reflect the richness of his inner world through vibrant colors. In this sense, their artistic works are particularly important in portraying the deep personality of the him.

T. Narimanbeyov is the author of two famous portraits of Rostropovich. Interestingly, both portraits were created in 1991. Let's examine them individually. One of the portraits is titled "M. Rostropovich – a World-Class Musician." In this particular portrait, the image created by T. Narimanbeyov has a more decorative quality. Thus, he distances himself from the artistic style characteristic of T.

Salahov's portrayal of Rostropovich. While Narimanbeyov also depicts him playing the cello (as Salahov does), Narimanbeyov's representation has a more humanistic, colorful, and decorative effect.

Salahov's harsh realism does not allow for the inclusion of external or imaginary elements in the composition. In contrast, Narimanbeyov's decorative approach masterfully integrates imaginative details into the overall composition. Taking advantage of this strength, the artist has grouped intriguing imaginary images around the master as he passionately plays the cello.

The second portrait created by the prominent cellist T. Narimanbeyov is particularly intriguing. The work, titled "M. Rostropovich in His Native City of Baku" (1991), is noteworthy for the fact that the author inscribed the title of the piece in his handwriting in French at the bottom right corner. This detail may serve as an indication of Narimanbeyov's artistic style.

The works discussed here are portrait works by T. Nerimanbeyov. However, as mentioned, the artist also has city landscapes on the theme of Russia. In these works, Moscow city is usually depicted, and to be more precise, the center of Moscow, Red Square, the Spasskaya Tower, and the Church of St. Basil the Blessed are featured.

The artist's work titled "The Church of St. Basil the Blessed" (1991) stands out particularly among the works he created on the topic of Russia. This piece is a testament to the great Azerbaijani artist's interest in, respect for, and admiration of Russian culture and spirituality. T. Nerimanbeyov is primarily regarded as an artist who created decorative compositions focused on Azerbaijani folklore. The characters from Azerbaijani fairy tales, national symbols, architectural monuments, the Maiden Tower, and the vibrant national colors are key aspects that characterize the artist's creativity. At first glance, it may seem unbelievable that such an artist could create a work on the theme of Russia. However, upon carefully studying the artist's work, it is easily seen that this is not the case. Azerbaijani themes, national folklore, and symbols undoubtedly form an important part of T. Nerimanbeyov's creative output, but they do not encompass it all. A significant portion of his artistic legacy consists

of, so to speak, motifs outside Azerbaijan, where the theme of Russia also resides. This theme is represented by a considerable number of works. Interestingly, an artist like T. Nerimanbeyov, who possesses a national spirit, is able to view the topic of Russia through the eyes of an Azerbaijani artist, infusing the “foreign” theme with temperament that aligns with our national character, vibrant colors, and brushstrokes. Usually, the works of Azerbaijani artists on the subject of Russia, so to speak, remain in the shadows. This is particularly true for well-known artists. In our opinion, such stereotypes do not validate themselves. On the contrary, promoting our artists' works on the theme of Russia and illuminating them through a modern lens serves both our state's multicultural policy and the strengthening of friendships with a powerful neighboring country, aligning with our national interests.

One of the talented representatives of the contemporary era who has addressed the theme of Russia in their creativity is the People's Artist Sakit Mammadov. Like many other Azerbaijani artists, he studied in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) at the Faculty of Painting of the Repin St. Petersburg State Academic Institute of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture (1981-1987), graduating with honors.

Despite all of this, S. Mammadov has also created several works on the subject of Russia, which were deeply influenced by the lasting impressions of his student years. Let's focus on two of these works. The painting *"My Contemporaries"*, created with oil on canvas, belongs to the early phase of the artist's career and is dedicated to his student years. The piece is executed in a realistic, almost academic style. Unlike the later phase of Mammadov's work, it does not feature the freer brushstrokes that became characteristic of his mature style. Instead, the techniques used in this painting are more aligned with realism, bringing it closer to the style of hyperrealism⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Зейналов Х. Художественные связи Азербайджана и Санкт-Петербурга. - Вестник СПбГУ. Искусствоведение. / Х.Зейналов. - 2023, Т. 13. Вып. 3. с. 441.

The second painting we're focusing on is also linked to Saint Petersburg, the city where S. Mammadov pursued his studies. The work is titled "*Leningrad Memories*" (1997). In contrast to the first painting, "*Leningrad Memories*" was created during the later period of Mammadov's career, toward the end of the 1990s. By this time, the artist had reached a level of maturity, moving away from the academic standards he had followed in his student years, and began developing his own distinctive style. This shift is evident in the work's composition, proportions, and use of color.

The scene in the painting depicts people seated around a table, eating and drinking. The table itself is not overly lavish—only wine glasses, fruit, and a few other items are visible. The artist has chosen an elevated perspective, arranging the figures around the table in a way that draws attention to their interaction. In the upper part of the painting, two men and two women are engaged in conversation. Essentially, the artist captures the final moments of the wine gathering: the drinks have taken their toll, disrupting the unity of the group, and people have begun to break off into smaller clusters, lost in conversation. They hardly seem aware of the larger surroundings. The only exception is an elderly man in a black suit in the lower right corner, who raises his glass toward the viewer, as if to offer a toast.

The composition of "*Leningrad Memories*" also bears a resemblance to another of Mammadov's works, "*Memory Photograph*", which reflects life in Istanbul.

The second paragraph is titled "**Tradition in Monumental Art and Artistic Style in the Historical-Cultural Context**". In this section, the cultural connections between our countries are explored through the examples of monumental art monuments.

Starting from the late 1980s, the processes unfolding in the country, economic and financial difficulties, and finally, the artificial escalation of national relations, paved the way for the resurgence of national liberation ideas and the development of the people's sense of self-awareness. In this period of artistic culture—spanning literature, visual arts, and other fields—decades-old prohibitions began to fade, and the rise of national-democratic content could no longer be hindered. In such an environment, a new form of art began to emerge

in Azerbaijan, one that was ideologically and aesthetically tied to national liberation and democratic values.

During the years of independence, powerful and emotionally impactful monumental works were created. Russian experts, who were invited to contribute, played an integral role in the creation of many of these pieces. In some cases, the ideological direction and emotional depth of these works seem to surpass their artistic qualities. A prime example of this can be found in the monumental complexes dedicated to the memory of our martyrs, which have been erected in different regions of the republic. In many regional complexes, where the artistic content is often lacking, the psychological and emotional elements take center stage, becoming the dominant aspect of the monument. The composition's individual elements—such as state symbols, portraits of martyrs, nameplates, the eternal flame, and relic-like objects—tend to evoke emotions that are more psychological and ethical than purely artistic. The aesthetic goal of these compositions, therefore, is realized primarily through their ethical dimension.

Additionally, works of this nature impact the public consciousness through social events. During commemorations, holidays, and important state occasions, these complexes become centers of mass visitation, playing a crucial role in reinforcing ideological unity within society. The social and political service these complexes provide in uniting the public through patriotism is clear. In many cases, their artistic, aesthetic, and ideological qualities are shaped by this very purpose.

In the modern era, the exchange between Azerbaijan and Russia in the field of visual arts, particularly monumental art, is progressing rapidly. The patriotic and statehood tendencies that have emerged in recent years in this field have successfully maintained their meaningful presence in the cultural exchange with Russia.

In many regions of Russia, there are impressive monuments reflecting Azerbaijani art. Among these monuments, the image of the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi stands out, attracting significant attention.

Monumental statues of Nizami Ganjavi have been erected in both Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Both statues were created by Azerbaijani sculptors and presented as gifts to these two major Russian cities.

Each of these monumental works draws attention with its unique composition, intriguing structure, and poetic qualities.

The monumental statue of the great poet in Moscow stands in front of our embassy in Russia. The sculpture has been thoughtfully integrated with the architectural and urban features of the surrounding area. The multi-dimensional nature of the composition is further enriched with interesting artistic details. The monument was unveiled in October 2001, and its creator is Azerbaijan's People's Artist, Natig Aliyev.

The Nizami statue in Saint Petersburg also stands out due to its unique compositional design. Sculptor Gorus Babayev has depicted the immortal poet seated, which presents a new structure for monumental Nizami sculptures. The image is adorned with surrounding details, creating an intriguing and rich composition. In this sense, the work somewhat resembles the composition of the statue of Hussein Javid in Baku. The pedestal of the Nizami statue is also skillfully designed, well-connected both with the surrounding environment and the upper part of the composition from an ideological and aesthetic standpoint.

The Nizami statue in Saint Petersburg was ceremoniously unveiled on June 9, 2002. The event was attended by Russian President Vladimir Putin and the national leader Heydar Aliyev.

A bust of Nizami can also be found in the city of Cheboksary. Although relatively small in size, this monument is memorable due to its interesting and minimalist compositional design. The creator of this work is the academician O. Eldarov (2004).

Baku also offers intriguing examples of cultural connections in monumental art. Among them, we believe the statue of the renowned Russian poet A.S. Pushkin is particularly striking (sculptor Yuri Orexov). It's worth mentioning that the unveiling of this statue coincided with the opening of Nizami's statue in Moscow in October 2001. The simultaneous unveiling of statues honoring the great

Azerbaijani poet in Russia's capital and the great Russian poet in Azerbaijan's capital holds symbolic meaning, reinforcing the deep friendship and cultural ties between our nations, grounded in genuine values.

This bronze statue, which is relatively modest in size, stands in a park on Pushkin Street, named after the poet. The figure's expressive face, commanding gaze, and somewhat refined posture, typical of the aristocratic society of the time, are depicted in a realistic style.

The poetic character of the statue seems to harmonize perfectly with the park's tranquil, lyrical atmosphere. However, since the statue is located within the park and surrounded by large trees at a close distance, it loses much of its visibility from a greater distance, limiting the opportunities for a more open view. The statue was presented as a gift to our city.

The third paragraph is titled "**World War II Monuments in Azerbaijan: A New Perspective on Our Shared Historical Past**". In this section, the current status of these monuments and their artistic and ideological significance are explored in the context of modern times.

Across Azerbaijan's cities, regional centers, and even some villages, numerous monuments have been erected in memory of those who perished in World War II. These monuments are, on average, about 50 years old. Despite their age, they are well-maintained, undergoing restoration and preservation work. In many cases, the monuments commemorating the martyrs of the Karabakh War are linked with these World War II memorials, creating a unified artistic and commemorative complex.

Monuments dedicated to the victims of World War II occupy a pivotal position in the historical and artistic relations between Azerbaijan and Russia. These monuments, which encapsulate the shared heroic struggle of our nations, are increasingly viewed through the lens of contemporary perspectives on bilateral interactions. It is a matter of great pride that these memorials have never faded into obscurity and, as enduring symbols of our illustrious history, continue to hold profound ideological and artistic

significance. In this regard, they play an indispensable role in the cultural dialogue between Azerbaijan and Russia, serving as potent reminders of our collective past.

One such monument is the obelisk situated in the park near Heydar Aliyev Avenue in Sumgayit, erected in 1985, and designed by sculptor Vagif Nizirov. This monument is composed of two distinct segments: a truncated structure, with its edges sharply defined, and an imposing, elongated conical obelisk at its center, crafted from massive stone slabs. At the core of the obelisk, a prominent eight-sided projection is featured, within which is a bas-relief of a five-pointed star bearing the likeness of the Moscow Kremlin. Running along the perimeter of the slab, elongated rectangular panels are inscribed with the numbers 1941-1945, marking the years of the Second World War, thus anchoring the memorial in the historical context of that monumental struggle.

The monument in Lankaran, similar in nature, ranks among the finest not only in Azerbaijan but across the post-Soviet realm, both in terms of its artistic execution and its ideological significance. The composition of the monument is centered around the figure of a warrior, who leans against a massive rock, poised to surge forward, embodying a sense of strength and determination (sculptors Telman and Eldar Zeynalov). The warrior's robust form and dynamic stance clearly reflect his unyielding drive for victory. Remarkably, the monument does not rest on a pedestal; rather, it stands on an expansive platform surrounded by steps, emphasizing its imposing presence and enhancing its symbolic meaning.

In 1970, a new park dedicated to the memory of compatriots who perished during World War II was established in the center of Qazakh, near Nariman Narimanov Street. By 1975, a monument commemorating the war heroes was erected at the heart of the park. The monument is relatively simple in design, consisting of two main components: an obelisk and its surrounding base (designed by the sculptor Adil Musayev). It is faced with white marble tiles and tapers as it rises, taking on a trapezoidal form. The base of the memorial is covered with brown marble slabs, and the combination of white and brown creates a distinctive color effect. In front of the monument, on

a low rectangular platform, a high-relief five-pointed star stands, which also serves as an eternal flame. In 2017, the monument underwent repairs and was restored, with its historical appearance carefully preserved. The year "1941-1945" is inscribed on the main facade of the monument, marking the period of the Second World War.

In 1979, a monument commemorating the Great Patriotic War was unveiled in the city of Barda, notable for its intricate and emotionally compelling composition. The sculpture, created by Azerbaijan's People's Artist Jalal Qaryaghdi, portrays the figure of a sorrowful mother seated in a moment of profound grief. Initially placed in the city's park, the monument stood there for over 30 years before being relocated to the newly established Heroes Park in Barda in 2012. The bronze statue, depicting an elderly mother draped in a shroud, evokes a deep emotional response, symbolizing the tragic loss of her children who perished in the war, their return to their homeland forever denied. With her left hand pressed to her face in a gesture of sorrow, the mother seems lost in sorrowful reflection. Today, the figure is positioned on a low pedestal, facing a backdrop of light gray-brown marble slabs. It is worth noting that this monument stands as one of the most poignant and emotionally evocative representations of the "grieving mother" motif, which can be found in many former Soviet republics.

As a **conclusion**, the main conclusions of the study are summarized, which are expressed in the following points:

- The research comprehensively explores the Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations, with an extensive collection of materials gathered, analyzed, and the results synthesized;

- The development of realist traditions in Azerbaijani visual arts at the beginning of the century was influenced not only by various other factors but also by the impact of advanced Russian culture;

- The activities of Russian painters and sculptors working in Baku at the turn of the century played a significant role in the formation of visual arts and professional artistic education in Azerbaijan;

- In the 1950s and 1960s, and in subsequent years, mutual relations entered a new phase, with Russian (or Russian-themed) influences becoming more prominent in the creative works of Azerbaijani artists;

- During the 1970s and 1980s, Azerbaijani art developed distinct new characteristics, including an increased focus on national themes, heightened use of decorative and monumental elements, a miniature approach to color perception, and a growing interest in folklore and everyday life subjects. These trends were observed and acknowledged by both Azerbaijani and Russian experts;

- In this period, the scope of scholarly and creative collaborations between art historians and critics expanded significantly, giving rise to comprehensive co-authored studies and the refinement of methodologies for investigating Azerbaijani art;

- In the post-independence years, Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations transitioned into a new phase, with Azerbaijani art becoming more integrated into the global community, and a new dynamic emerging in these cultural exchanges;

- Through the in-depth study and comparative analysis of mutual interactions and existing artistic works, the overall character of the 20th-century Azerbaijani-Russian visual arts relations has been thoroughly defined.

The core content of the dissertation is reflected in the author's works listed below:

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