

END OF THE CENTURY. A LIBERATED ARTIST
IN GEORGIAN ART

End of the century... so diverse are the art expositions and experiments in the arts, which are highly contrasting in their scope and in the ways they reflect an individual artist's ability to "experience" and portray the world that surrounds us and the inner depths of human psychology! And that is what is going on everywhere in the world... Racial and ideological partitions and roadblocks start coming down in this age of space conquests, dramatic stresses and ardent hopes for a better future for all men on earth. It comes as no surprise that today, by the end of this century, the increasingly great desire to develop fresh techniques for expressing global ideas and problems and man's "subjective" and "universal" world-views that are closely intertwined has been echoed in the art of individual Union republics.

In watching our art exhibitions, we realize that they keep abreast of the drastic changes that go on in this country and are consonant with today's universal human problems which present a rallying point for the arts of various nations and diverse art movements.

A surprising variety of art movements spring from the desire to enrich the "language" of figurative representation that expresses the objective and subjective essence of our existence today.

Our recent art exhibitions demonstrate avant-garde forms along with the art of New Dimension realism: those forms boast monochromatic compositions, or brightly painted and clearly arranged

ged geometric shapes, or the spots that flow and sprawl freely in space.

What is noteworthy is that similar "explosions" of creative energy in art and audacious flights of imagination, which are not confined to the preprogrammed track of realism in its narrow interpretation for the time being, went down in the history of our culture and art in the 1920s, when the Vesnin brothers developed their fantastically imaginative architectural design projects, when V. Mayakovsky wrote his poems rhymed to match his ironclad age, when Deineka's canvasses were a paean to life and Petrov-Vodkin's ones were romantic epics, when the Meyerhold and Tairov theaters and Georgia's Mardjanishvili and Akhmeteli ones showed their innovative directing techniques and experiments in shaping their new theatrical stage sets, in conquering the stage space and producing bright and expressive decorations, and when, lastly, David Kakabadze painted his large-scale Imeretian landscapes and diverse abstract compositions which take their rightful place in the vanguard of the latest art movements. What is important is that specific problems involving the destinies of our nations are organic to the universal human problems that we were faced with early in this century ushering in an age of momentuous technological transformations.

David Kakabadze's creative career was focused on portraying the dynamic of our times. That was how he painted his ornamental compositions with their mobile and changing configuration and color of dots and curves drawn smoothly. His lithograph Industry deals with technology overrunning nature. This huge

pyramide with its arch-shaped aperture crosses Georgia's vast expanses, personifying the new age.

It comes as no surprise that one of the recent expositions held in Moscow to demonstrate French art in the 20th century was called The Age of Discovery. The title is an apt description of art's thrust throughout the 20th century in France and elsewhere. The beginning of the century saw an age of discovery start prevailing in the arts with our artists and architects joining in.

But the Soviet age of discovery in art was violently interrupted by the dogmas of Socialist realism that began to assert themselves with their narrow interpretation of the realism concept in the arts. Now, by the end of this century, the artists begins to liberate himself. We may argue that the "claim" laid by our art in the 1920s maintains its organic continuity in recent decades, especially in recent years which witness drastic political, economic and cultural changes happen in the life of our country. They result in a surprising diversity of creative experiments that keep pace with the times the world over. At Georgian art expositions one may see works that naturally belong in the sections demonstrated at the 20th century French art exposition we mentioned earlier.

The entire course of evolution in Georgia's arts in the 20th century has mirrored general art trends in this century. Soviet period art with its history replete with inner contradictions has clearly identified the thrust of its evolution. It includes its realist world view based on time-tested traditions and interpreted in a variety of ways at individual stages of

its evolution. But that world-view was opposed to purely formal experiments conducted to identify and develop new modes of thinking in the arts and an individual's attitude to the real world around us.

Winds of change began to blow affecting the realist world-views of Soviet artists in the 1950s when a large constellation of young artists started to generate diverse styles bit by bit in a desire to disclose the specific features of art forms and single out the significance of color, in particular. Avant-garde emerged as an official art form by the end of the 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s. What was special about that phenomenon was the fact that the art stigmatized previously was not merely "rehabilitated" but rather generated by the spirit of the times that needed a greater expressiveness. Now more sophisticated and multidimensional, man's consciousness started to progress beyond the straightforward, narrow and concrete art forms of the day.

It should be pointed out that the art lover does not swallow without a murmur anything avant-garde has to offer.

Avant-gardists produce what they design as polysemantic works of art to be interpreted in more than one way. Occasionally their aesthetic value is very dubious and contrasts sharply with that of true art.

Abstract art is fraught with the danger of being an easy art form for those people who are not gifted artists and who resort to "polysemantic" or "unrecognizable" forms in an effort to camouflage the lack of deep thought and professionalism. In situations like that some tough choices must be made with the

aesthetic value of a work appraised thoroughly. Abstract compositions may be purely decorative and pleasing to the eye aesthetically. D. Kakabadze's compositions provide the brilliant evidence of excellent art in Georgia. The artist would emphasize their decor and refrain from attaching titles to them. Those colorful canvasses of his, perfect compositional structures, rhythms - and last but not least - an unusual spaciousness make them top quality art. Mobile compositions (kinetic art) also have some aesthetic value despite the fact that "technology" has made heavy inroads into that field. Mobile compositions painted by way of landscape are a case in point. They prove to be organic additions to a surrounding landscape's dynamic character, for they go one step beyond the static limitations of figurative representation.

It should be pointed out that as evidenced by recent art shows, Georgian artists' abstract compositions refrain from going to the extreme. But they include works with easily recognizable sources that inspired their authors (there are instances where art is imitated).

The fact that artists drew upon some existing works is anything but startling in the history of painting. But in such instances it is crucial to find out whether the source material inspired some new artistic conceptions, or whether a new work proved to be a bad copy of the original.

In summing up the comments on contemporary Soviet art we should refer to the progress Soviet and Georgian art has made in "liberating" the artist and renewing and enriching our art forms. More importantly, those experiments should take us to new summits rather than remain confined to recognizing only the art of avant-garde.