

Sanjar Jabbarov



Bifurcation, 2012, oil on canvas, 160x110 cm. Courtesy of Alif gallery.

The art of young artists of Uzbekistan who started their career in art in the 2010s evolved on the grounds of rejecting the formerly accepted general direction toward exploring ethno-cultural subject-matter. Having played

its essential role, this imagery and stylistic subject-matter began to constrain the development of the new generation, and many young artists started drifting in the opposite direction. They became interested in

European modernism with its ever relevant experience – both as an opportunity for plastic experiments, and as a mindset for freedom of expression; the other tack was Contemporary Art that was getting strong in Uzbekistan, successfully representing the country on the international art scene.

Sanjar Jabbarov has become a prominent figure among these young artists; in 2008 he graduated from the Behzad National Institute of Arts and Design, the Industrial Design Department, in Tashkent. Dedicated himself to design he did not, and right away started trying his skill in installations, employing his ability to work with materials and organize space. Of great benefit to him were lectures on contemporary art he attended, and participation in the “*Media-Laboratory*” international educational project in 2008-2009. The experimental nature of video-art appealed immediately to the young artist. In his first video, “*2X2*” (2009), Jabbarov started exploring the world around through its seemingly ordinary manifestations of daily life, yet his fascination with books by Jalaliddin Rumi made him gravitate toward existential questions of life and death. The piece is focused on everyone’s life experience: birth, childhood, adulthood, death. One screen of a two-channel video shows the whole life cycle of a boy – from childhood to old age; on the other one can see a gravedigger doing his job non-stop throughout the show. Life turning into death that gets replaced by earthly life again is the concept behind the piece.

A video art piece called “*Musaffir*” (2010) tells about the artist himself and of many young people expecting the world to give them what it can not, and setting off to distant lands. The journey turns into a challenging quest for identity. The piece is based on a performance of the artist wandering at daytime with a candle through the streets of a strange European metropolis. The video conveys a kind of electric charge, indifference, and a sense of energy flows in a modern urban environment. The character goes through the state of continuous changes in himself and the world, in a stream of new experience in a rapidly changing time: this is his new reality. Recently, Jabbarov started painting original pictures, this time employing traditional means (canvas, oil) to continue searching for ways to make an emotional personal statement.

He started looking in a domain quite remote from the replicated Oriental aesthetics. Canvases large in size and darkish in colouration depict strange characters surrounded by a mysterious solitude. In his paintings “*Sisters*”, “*Birthday*”, “*The Aborigine*”, and “*Ballerinas*” grotesque poses and exaggerated movements expose the young artist’s desire to break aesthetic standards of the Mainstream. His “*Mother and Child*” and “*Cello*” show lonely, disproportionate figures seen through a grey haze; their hardly discernable silhouettes appear engaged in a kind of a concealed dialogue with space. Not a storyline, but emotions emanated by the space aura, the mysterious depopulation and a tense silence captivate the viewer. Echoes of Expressionism can be read in a powerfully and energetically cut figure of a girl in “*The Body in Red*”. Her urgent motion is expressive and dramatic, just as it is contrasting and disproportionate next to a small white dog on a leash. Pictorial haze and running paints that kind of conceal the monumental figures on deserted backdrops in many of his paintings have gradually led Jabbarov to abstraction, such as that in pearly-silver coloured paintings “*Mirage*” and “*Rain*”. In his “*Goldfish*” the author gets mildly ironic referring to the universally known symbols. With symbols he managed to turn an ordinary action into a metaphorical one. By and large, in his inquiry the young artist shows a different degree of understanding the conventionality of form and colouration akin to the plastic foundations of modernism. Interestingly, his strange characters in the paintings that cannot be related to any one country or to tell a story are magnetic in their ambivalence. Magnetic are the haze and diffident paints that seem to hide the shapes on empty backgrounds. The artist leans toward plastic hyperbole, exaggerating movements and shapes for the sake of expressivity, yet he also expresses what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari wrote about: “*The world has lost its core... The world has turned into chaos*”. The young artist is unlikely to have read contemporary philosophers, but he intuitively realized and captured that in the postmodernist perspective the world appears without any integrity whatsoever, and that all the orderly information society notwithstanding, chaos permeates all levels of existence, and in the situation the artist’s mind turns out to be no more than the product of conceptualizing the chaos.