March/April 2013 issue (#24)

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Pierre Terjanian & Lee Abrahamian

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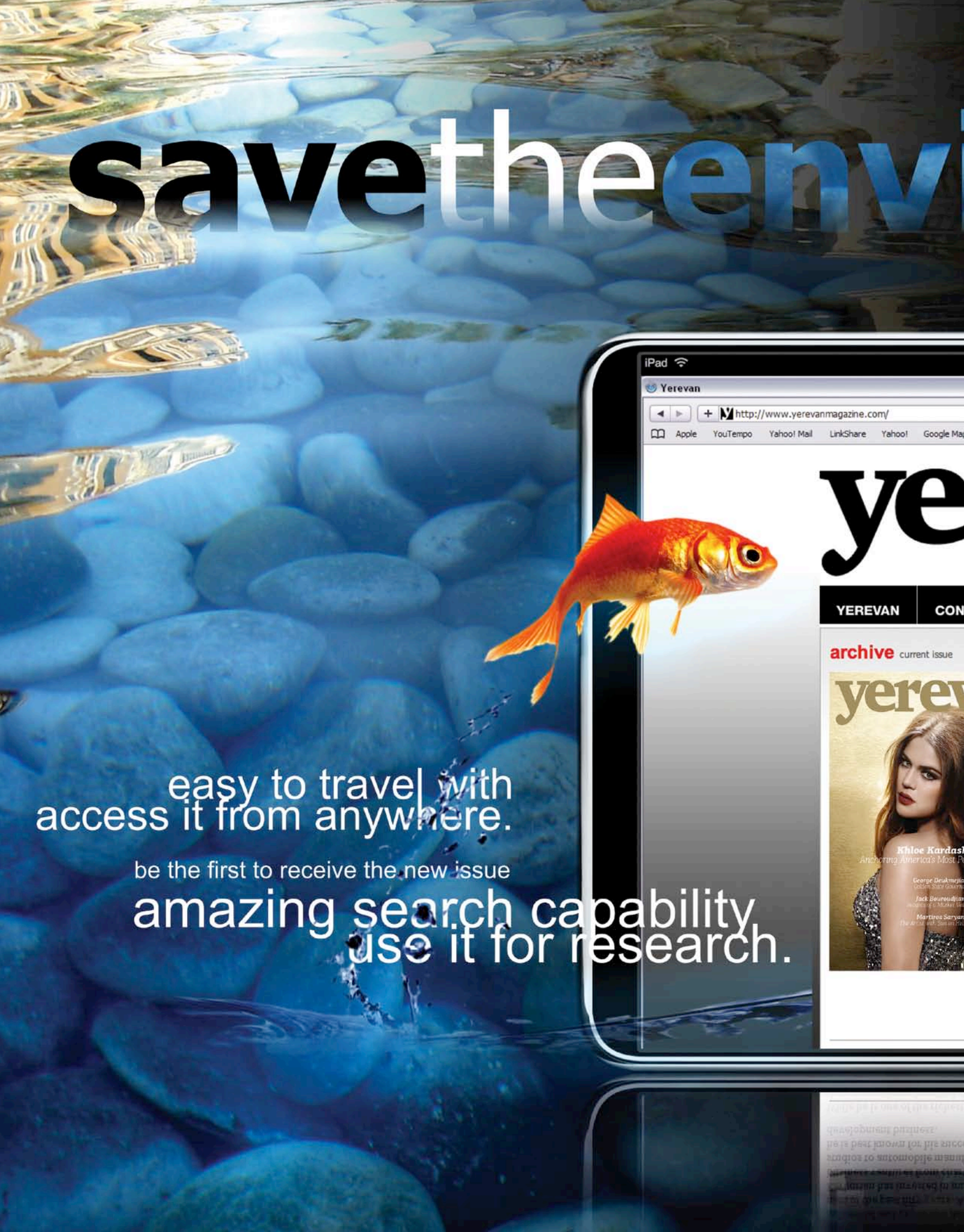
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***Yerevan*gram**

Travel

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Historical remnants from the city on the sea – how Armenian merchants came to dominate the textile trade of Amsterdam.

Cover Story

page 40 & 46



Pierre Terjanian succeeded in combining his expertise in law, management and history with the attraction to arms in his new position at the world-renowned Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Read the exclusive interview with the Director of Communications of Metropolitan Opera – the front-woman for a city within a city of 1,600 employees who are staging 200 performances every season.

Top List

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Core Symbols
Consider this top-ten list of Armenian symbols to art a conversation starter.



Reportage

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Art Live in L.A.
Stimulate your senses and take a walk with *Yerevan Magazine*, as we take you through a visual voyage of some of the vibrant art galleries in Los Angeles.

Panel Discussion

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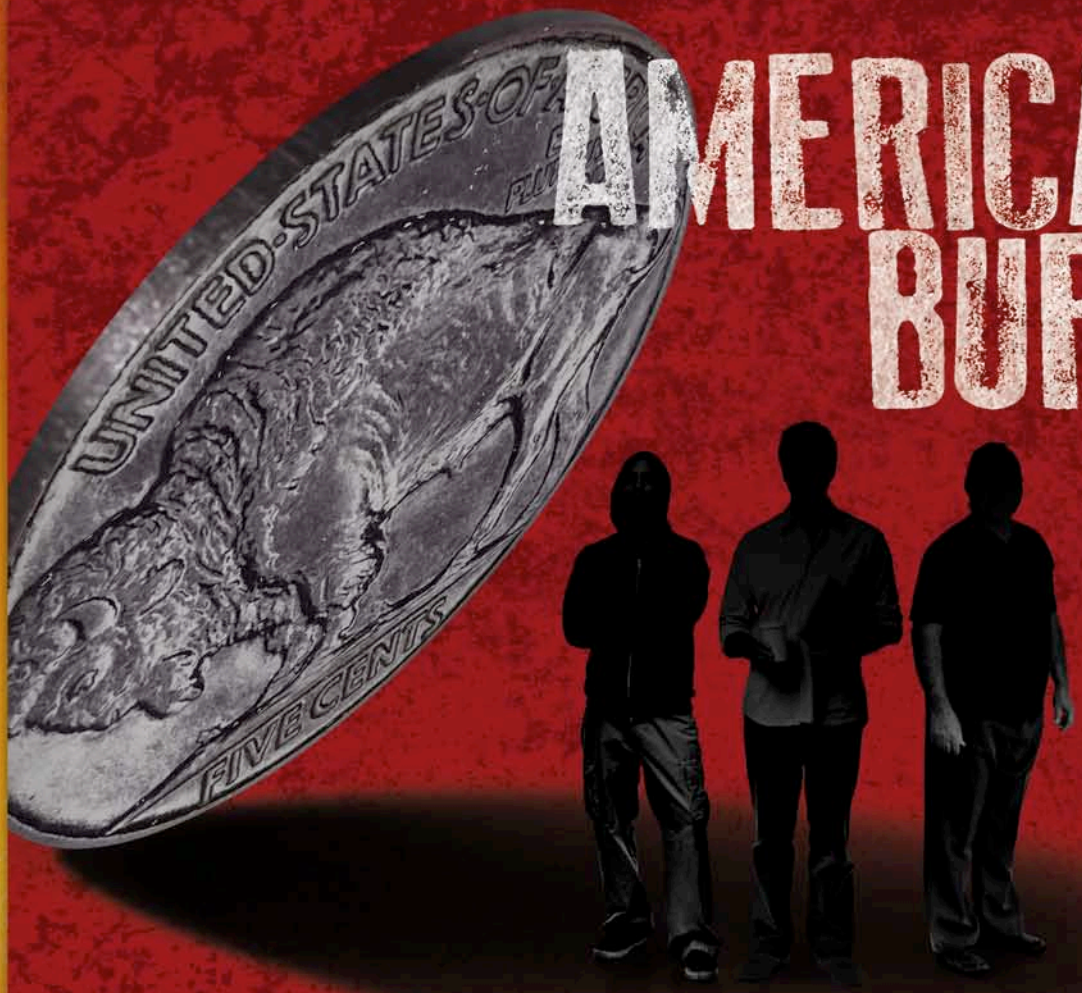
Pursuing Justice through Art
Atom Egoyan, Eric Nazarian, Arsinée Khanjian and Chris Bohjalian discuss the past, present and future of Genocide-related works of art and their impact on the Armenian cause.

AMERICAN BUFFALO



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Exclusive



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Capturing History in the Making

Photojournalist Scout Tufankjian has documented President Barack Obama since 2007 and even has a book to prove it.

Sports



page 84

Painting the Pitch

Baseball broadcaster Matt Vasgersian shares a host of stories on MLB Network and FOX as a play-by-play announcer.

Expert

page 70

Never Underestimate a Woman

Lara Setrakian serves on the front lines, live from the Middle East.



Names

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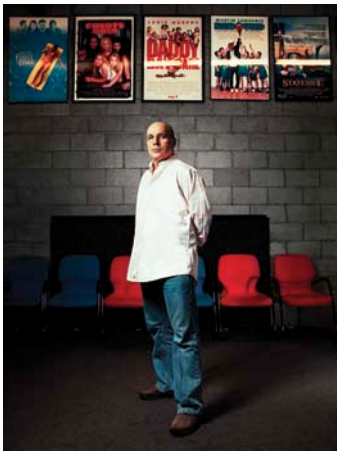
Destined to Write

Award-winning playwright Leslie Ayvazian tells *Yerevan Magazine* about the struggles and rewards of being a playwright in today's world of theater.



Cinema



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Coaching from the Sidelines

Acting coach Andrew Magarian has spent 25 years developing the skills of many of today's hottest young actors.

Music



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A Cello for His Daughter

Fathers are lifelong instruments of inspiration to their daughters. Peter Aznavoorian took it to another level by making a cello for his daughter.

Event

page 98



Revisit the premiere of "The Mikado" and the Armenian Jewelers Association's 15th anniversary celebration.

Fashion

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Rue de Mode

Cop. Copine is bringing a little bit of Paris to America with their distinct designs and chic approach to ready-to-wear.



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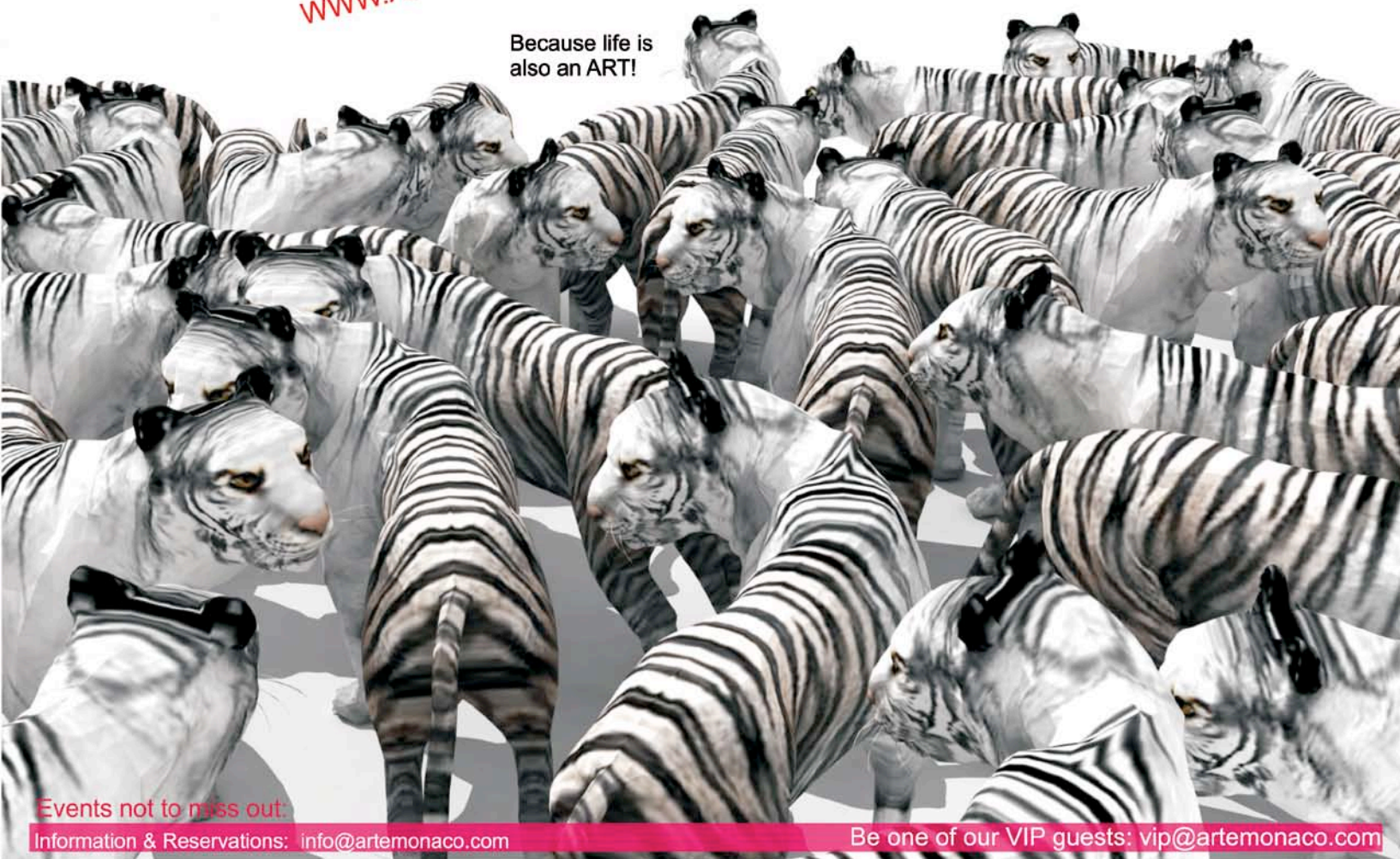
Artist: Jeong, young-hoon



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Lifestyle

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Biking to the Top

Grigor Gevorgyan has been mountain biking for almost six decades and does not plan on stopping any time soon.

Excursion

page 104

To Europe Through a Window

The great Russian Tsar Peter I befriended wealthy merchants Peter Abro and his brothers, trying to convince them to divert the oriental goods trade routes through Russia.



Design

page 108

Semantic Hallucinations

Designer Venera Kazarova is invariably theatrical, enigmatic and captivating.



Science & Technology



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It *IS* Rocket Science

Karl Kachigan worked as a janitor to put himself through school, then he worked on missiles to put them through the atmosphere.

Art Heritage

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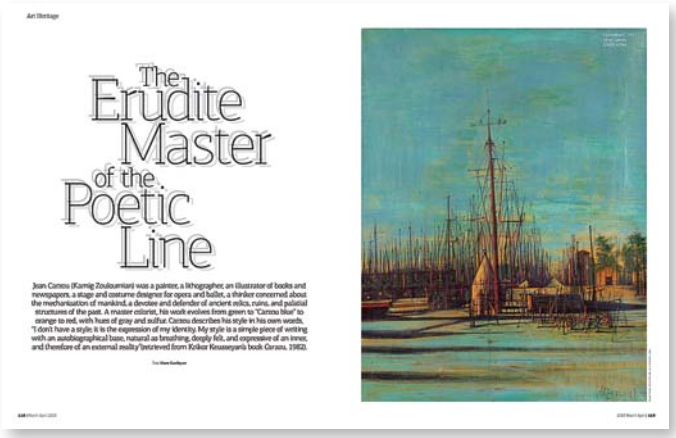

Track Karnig Zouloumian's journey through painting as the artist Jean Carzou.

Journey

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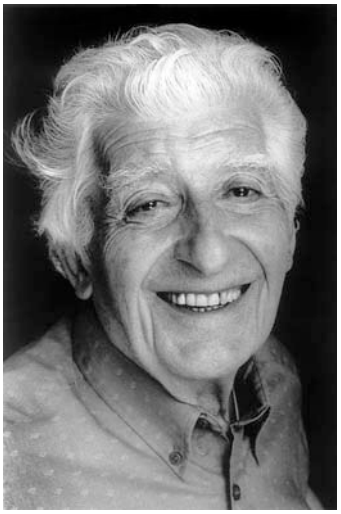
Shushi through the Mirror of Arts

The 2012 Shushi Art Project unified artists with a common desire to populate and reinvigorate the streets and hills around the ancient capital of Artsakh, Shushi with their modern works.



Legacy



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Synthesizing Emotions

Edvard Mirzoyan's legacy lives through his innovative and emotionally charged music and through all that he has done for the culture of his country and Armenian people. Read the personal accounts of people whose lives he touched.

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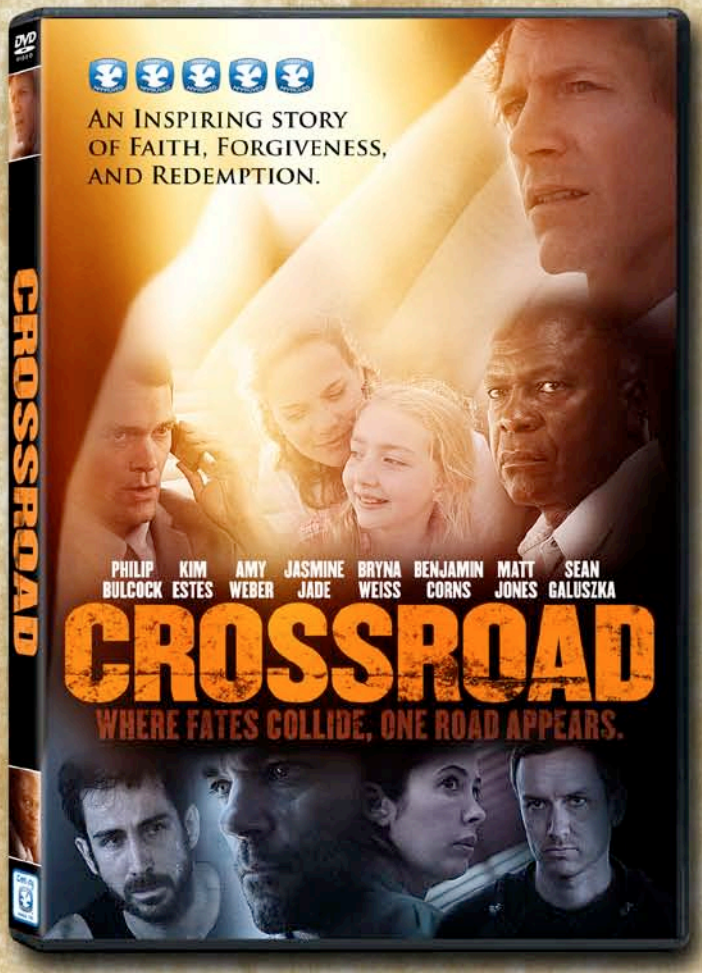

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Executive Producers David Dginguerian, Danny Simonzad & Amy Weber

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VIOLENCE AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS	



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Executive Editor
LIANNA ZAKHARIAN

Managing Editor
MANOUK AKOPYAN

Art Director
GEGHAM VARDANYAN

Senior Editor
AZZIE MEKHITARIAN

Copy Editor
CAROL VAN KIRK

Contributing Writers
NANE AVAGYAN
FLORENCE AVAKIAN
LILIT BARSEGYAN
ANI GARIBYAN
NARE GARIBYAN
ANUSH HOVSEPYAN
VIOLET KANIAN
ARMEN KARAOGHLANIAN
MERY KHATCHATRIAN
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ANI NAZARETYAN
ARA TAHMASSIAN
RUZANNA TANTUSHYAN
RUTH THOMASIAN

Translations
ALEXEY MIRONOV

Photo Editors
ARMEN POGHOSYAN
TIGRAN TOVMASYAN

Russian Edition

Editor-in-Chief
EDUARD AYANYAN

Art Director
ARSEN KIRAKOSYAN

Deputy Editor
ANAHIT HOVHANNISYAN

Production Editor
ARMEN YOLYAN

Contributing Editors
RUBEN GYULMISARYAN
ARTAVAZD YEGHIAZARYAN
NUNE MELKOUMIAN
TATYANA MARTIROSYAN

Fact Checking
SONA PARSADANYAN

Copy Editor
MARIANNA NIKOGHOSYAN

Director of Photography
MARIANNA ISKANDARYAN

Photo Editors
HAYK MELKONYAN
MARYAM LORETZYAN

Photo Coordinators
ARMEN HAYRAPETYAN
ARMINE GESIYAN

Design
NONNA ISAJANYAN
ANI KARAMANUKYAN

Page Layout
ARMEN YOLYAN
ARTAK SARGSYAN

Yerevan Charity Fund

Chief Operating Officer
RENEE MERISTE

Director of Advertising
SUZY HOGTANYAN

Public Relations
KRISTINA GUKASYAN

Marketing Consultant
JUNE MILLER RICHARDS

135 S. Jackson Street, Suite 202,
Glendale, CA 91205 USA
Tel: +1 (818) 507-7057
Fax: +1 (818) 507-9015
email: info@yerevanmagazine.com

Yerevan Productions (Armenia)

Editorial Director
EDUARD AYANYAN

YEREVAN PRODUCTIONS

Babayan 2,
Yerevan 0037 Republic of Armenia
Tel: +374 (10) 20 26 89
Fax: +374 (10) 20 22 89
Advertising: +374 (10) 20 26 89
Distribution: +374 (10) 20 23 89
email: info@e-productions.am

Ethnopress Russia

Project Director
VIKTORIA DOBROVOLSKAYA

Director of Advertising
ANNA NARYSHKINA

Corporate Client Relations
TATYANA GORYACHEVA

Director of Internal Affairs
NATALYA KROOZHKOVA

Brand Manager
VALERIYA GARBAR

Executive Editor
ANNA RULEVSKAYA

Distribution and Circulation
ARTYOM CHIZHOV

5 Romanov Street,
Moscow, 125009 Russia
Phone: +7 (495) 926 38 66,
email: info@ethnopress.ru,
info@e-magazine.am

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On the Cover
PIERRE TERJANIAN AND LEE ABRAHAMIAN

Photographer
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Contributing photographers: ARMEN POGHOSYAN, TIGRAN TOVMASYAN, ARNOS MARTIROSYAN, HAYK MELKONYAN, SUREN MANVELYAN, MARIAM LORETSYAN, HAYK HAMBARTSUM, BOB YOUNG, BRIAN VU, HEIDI GUTMAN, LISA MARIE MAZZUCCO, KITTY TERWOLBECK, PHOTO ROBSON, JAN WILLEMSEN, CLAUDIO AR, JAN WILLEMSEN, GUSTAVO VERÍSSIMO, MOYAN BRENN, IRA BORDO, KATYA BELKINA, AREG BALAYAN

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Correction to the January/February 2013 issue:
Armineh Ohanian was the author of "The Apple Tree Blossoms in the Fall"

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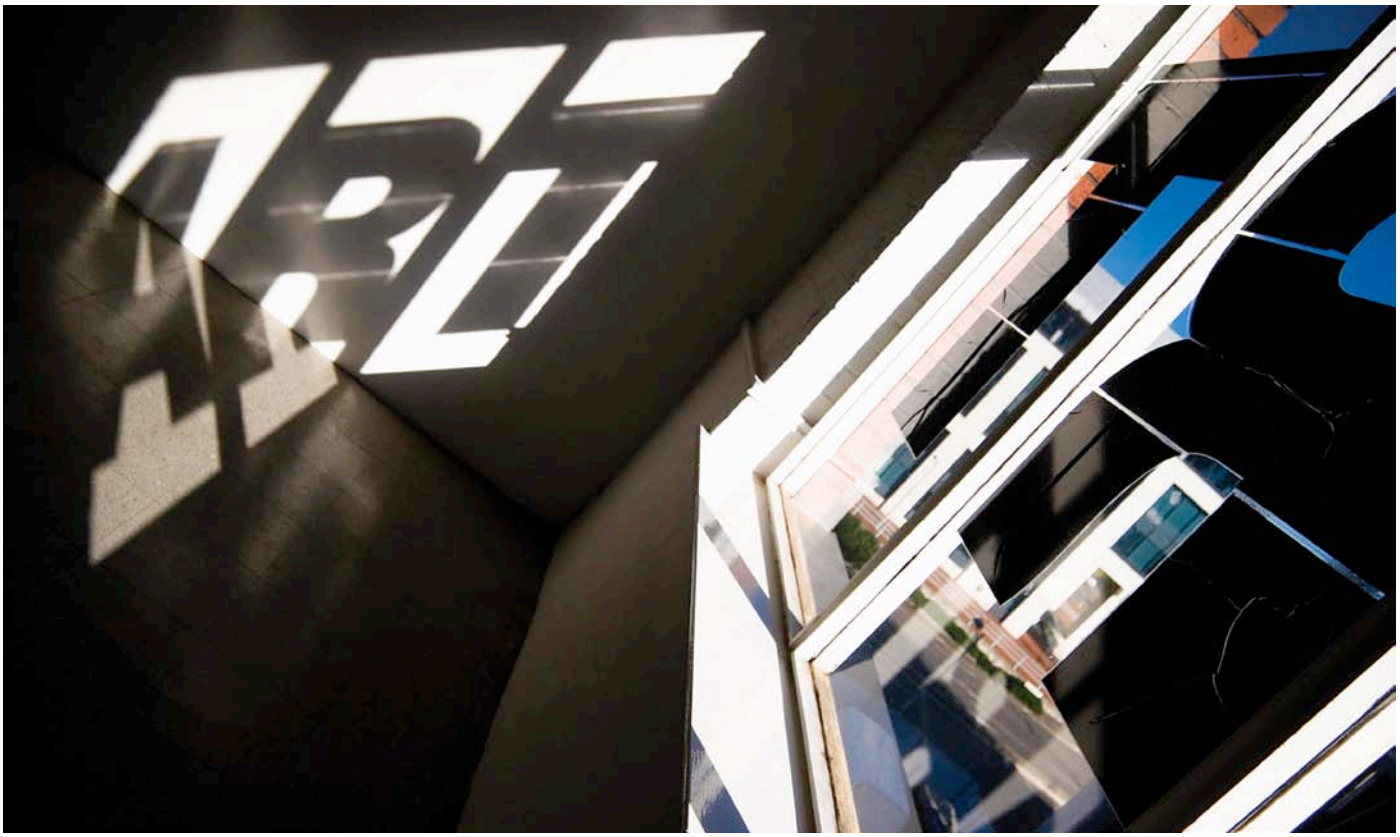
Imagine an empty room, not too large or small – high ceilings, white walls, wall-to-wall glass windows, wood flooring. It could be any room, any retail place... not so exciting. Now define this empty space as The Art Gallery. It immediately evokes meaning, a promise of color, emotion or beauty. Imagination and creativity comes into play, and the mind starts filling the space with images and shapes. Mentally, you populate it with friends, visitors and artists, critics and press who breathe life into the blank space. That is how, metaphorically speaking, the *Yerevan Magazine* team started working on the Arts issue – from a blank canvas on a journey that led us to many dedicated supporters of arts around the world.

Most of us are aware that once again economic times are tough, and quite often the arts are pushed back on the priority list of governments. Fortunately, when artists create, they usually don't start their work by checking the Dow Jones Index, and when composers write their music, they hardly compare their notes with the resolutions of political committees. They create because we humans have an intrinsic necessity to create; it brings us an ultimate sense of fulfillment. Fortunately, there are also people whose mission is to support the arts and artists.

Museums, curators, experts, gallery owners, PR persons are doing their part in presenting, publicizing and propagating art. Now imagine hundreds of empty lots, abandoned buildings, closed factories, retail spaces given to anyone who wants to display art, perform music, or stage a play. Utopia, one might say. But this is not a fantasy. We visited such enclaves and observed a major urban trend – various relatively cheap and cost-effective cultural programs were performing magic which neither excessive funding nor major lengthy construction projects were able to achieve. In such little oases in the midst of industrial cityscapes, we saw many forms of artistic expression: innovative, provocative, conventional and always stimulating.

And so art flows into the streets, wanders around the grassy foothills of the ancient town of Shushi once again, filling it with laughter and music, puts daily bread on the table of street artists of Yerevan's Vernissage market, and altogether shapes who we are, or who we want to become. Humans can't function in an arid universe of linear practicality, lacking aesthetics, visual and spiritual stimuli. Ask anyone – a four-year old child, a caveman or a sophisticated socialite whether they could live without art. We know what they'll reply.



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Dear Editor,
What a motivating cover story for the January/February issue. I read Dr. James Bagian's article five times because I enjoyed it so much. It was well-written, had vivid pictures of relevance, and a great man to be showcased. Reading his story had me feeling different types of emotions, which is what great writing is all about. I thought it was interesting that he had a medical background and decided to be an astronaut. I mean, he is right, every little boy dreams of being an astronaut but as they get older, they realize it's only a fantasy and no one really can be one. It surely was his calling as it came back to haunt him as he was older. Yerevan Magazine *is truly a great publication. I admire all the work that is put into printing a quality reading source for Armenians, to learn about each other and feel proud. Who would have known that his father was a fighter pilot in World War II? Fascinating! It is because of your magazine that people like myself are educated with information that is hard to find elsewhere. I also think your editors do a great job at targeting different readers for the cover stories. Switching it up is refreshing.*

Andranik Yavroumian
San Diego, California

I want to give a shout out to the magazine and let you guys know how much Armenians on the East Coast appreciate the effort of spreading the Armenian word. From what I know, there really isn't an outlet for us from all different backgrounds to relate to one type of publication. The magazine isn't geared to only Western or Eastern Armenians and I love that. I come from a second generation of Armenian Americans who moved to New York from Lebanon. I do not speak the language but feel a strong connection with my culture. Growing up, my grandmother would cook Armenian foods like sarma *and* mante *that I now have my wife, who is not Armenian, practice. Her skill level isn't at my grandmother's, but I have high hopes. I tried to take a couple of Armenian language lessons at a local church but wasn't successful. I know when I have children, I want to send them to Armenian school so at least they can teach me. Thank you for a great magazine,* Yerevan.

Jason Barseghian
Boston, Massachusetts



I only subscribed to the magazine three months ago and am already obsessed! My family immigrated from Iran to Sweden before settling in California similar to Gayane Khechoomian's travel story. While I was reading, I put myself in her shoes as she told the story about the windy roads and subways that I would take as well. I can also relate to reading Pippi Longstocking as I would read all her books and watch her cartoons. I also enjoyed the article being written by someone who has lived in Sweden. My eyes nearly welled up with tears as I read about a sermon in Armenian being given in the middle of the city. What a powerful moment that must have been for Gayane and her grandfather. In a city that is devoted to their own culture and social norms, for an Armenian from Sweden to hear and see such a collaborative event take place is prideful indeed.

Talin Guzmelian
Los Angeles, California

How exciting to see a fellow East Coaster – Skye Stevens – in Yerevan Magazine. *I first checked him out online and on YouTube where I got hooked on his music. I am a really big fan of his style and ambition to break the industry as a young pop artist. I know the magazine compared him to Justin Bieber but I personally think he is in a category of his own. Usually the music section tends to aim for a little bit of an older reader so it was refreshing to see a younger, more mainstream artist being highlighted. The Armenian community in New York is big but far more spread out than in Los Angeles, so I think featuring individuals from this side of the country will help gain more readers for the magazine like myself. I would love to see younger people being featured in the future.*

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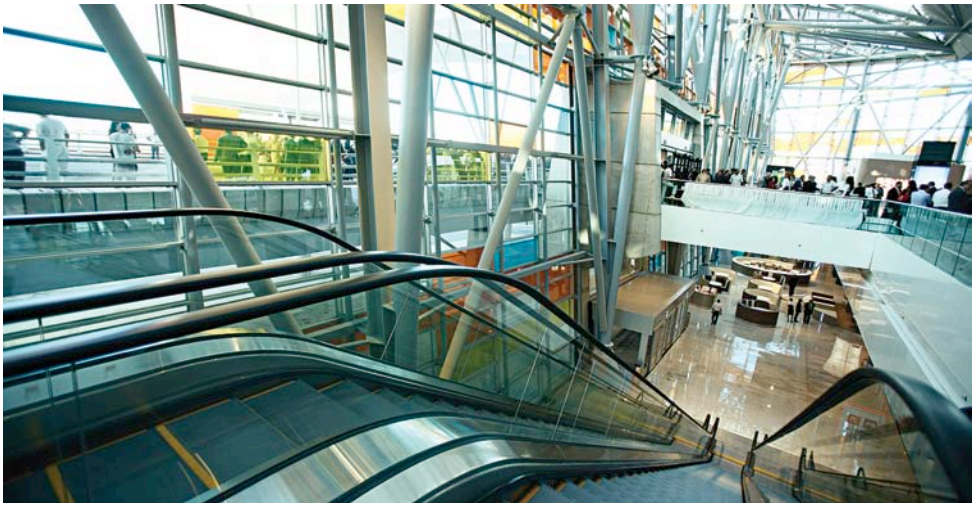
Zvartnots Named Best Airport

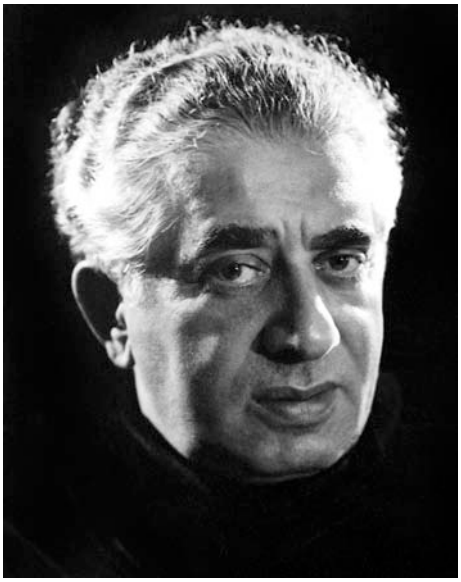
Zvartnots Airport of Yerevan has been declared the best airport of The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) during the second annual Emerging Airports Conference and Exhibition held in Dubai. Polling results for more than 20 various nominations were announced on Jan. 30. Among them were World's Best Airport, Best Airport in the Middle East, Best Airport of Europe, and others. In the category of Best Airport of CIS, Russia and Baltic States, besides Zvartnots four other airports of CIS countries were also nominated – Domodedovo and Sheremetevo Airports of Moscow, Pulkovo Airport of St. Petersburg, Manas Airport of Bishkek. Voting lasted for more than a month. Zvartnots Airport has been operating since 1961.





Buses for Armenia

India's Ashok Leyland Company will manufacture medium and small buses in Armenia in accordance with an agreement between the RA Ministry of Transport and Communication and the Indian company. The leaseholder will manufacture buses, investing Armenian drams equivalent to $7 million over the course of seven years. The annual fee for lease of the property where the buses will be produced is one million drams each year, which will be administered by the state budget. The equipment and spare parts for the manufacturing plant will be imported by the Indian company, and the buses will be assembled in Armenia. Construction of the plant begins in the first quarter of this year. Up to 200 buses are planned for manufacture in the first year of operation. The buses manufactured in Armenia will be much cheaper than those being imported into the country.



Khachaturian's Anniversary

The year 2013 has been proclaimed as the "Year of Aram Khachaturian in Los Angeles." Cultural events dedicated to the 110th anniversary of the great composer will take place in various venues. The program will officially be launched in March with a gala-concert. The Philharmonic and Chamber Orchestras of Los Angeles, in collaboration with the Dilijan Chamber Quartet, will participate in the event. Aram Khachaturian's "Concert for Violin" will be performed in the renowned Hollywood Bowl. A documentary dedicated to Aram Khachaturian's life and career will be screened for the general audiences and the mass media. The classics of the 20th century music, Aram Khachaturian, is perhaps the most renowned Armenian composer. His music largely influenced his generation of Soviet Armenian composers.



Jazz Stars' Alley

Yerevan has acquired its own Jazz Star's Alley. The city mayor and minister of culture opened two stars on the Walk of Stars of Armenian Jazz, one for Artemi Ayvazyan, the other for Konstantin Orbelian. Ayvazyan was a jazz composer and conductor, who founded the State Pop Orchestra of Armenia in 1938 and headed it until 1956. Orbelian was a composer, conductor and the artistic director of the State Estrada Orchestra of Armenia. The opening ceremony was attended by the officials and public.

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The EU Armenia Friendship Group

In Brussels, the European Parliament-Armenia Friendship Group was launched on January 10, 2013, in the presence of delegates from the Armenian National Assembly, led by Speaker of the Armenian National Assembly, Hovik Abrahamyan. In her remarks, Friendship Group President Dr. Eleni Theocharous said that this step will bring the European Union and Armenia closer and will widely open the doors of European Union to Armenia. She also mentioned that Armenians suffered Genocide conducted by Turkey in the past and liberated their land from Azeri occupation with the independence of Artsakh. Dr. Theocharous concluded her speech stating that the European Union will benefit from introduction to Armenian culture, music, art, and poetry. Currently, Armenia is involved in the ongoing process of finalizing the EU–Armenia Association Agreement, and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement, as well as the visa-free regime with the European Union. Members of European Parliament took the initiative and decision to establish the EU-Armenia Friendship Group with the aim of promoting and enhancing economic, commercial, cultural and political relations between the two parties. "Armenia is an integral part of Europe and it is the duty of the Group to advance good relations in terms of mutual respect and cooperation," stated Dr. Eleni Theocharous.

Kashkashian Wins Grammy

Violist Kim Kashkashian won the award for the recording *Kurtág & Ligeti: Music for Viola* at the 55th Annual Grammy Awards. Kashkashian is one of the most accomplished artists of her generation.

She has appeared as a soloist with the major orchestras of New York, Berlin, London, Munich and Tokyo. Her June 2000 recording of concertos by Bartók, Eötvös and Kurtág won the 2001 Cannes Classical Award for a premiere recording by a soloist with an orchestra. "Hayren and Monodia," released in 2003 and 2004 respectively, focus on Kashkashian's work with the Armenian composer Tigran Mansurian.

Kashkashian's extensive teaching activities have included professorships at the University of Indiana in Bloomington and at conservatories in Freiburg and Berlin, Germany.

Born in Detroit, Kashkashian graduated from the Peabody Conservatory of Music where she studied with Walter Trampler and Karen Tuttle. *The New York Times* has praised her "rich, mellow timbre and impressive artistry."





Interactive Fairy Tale in Apple Store

Ghazaros Aghayan's *Anahit* is the first Armenian interactive fairy tale that was recently launched in the Apple Store at a price of $3.99.

"Anahit's fictional character first impressed me as a child. The tale carries an educational message," computer programmer Vahram Gevorgyan says. It took father and son Gevorgyans five months to bring the initiative into realization. Though it was initially designed for iPad, it will soon be available for the Android operating system as well, and the project will be further enriched with new elements.



Director of the Armenian Communities Department for Gulbenkian Foundation

Dr. Razmik Panossian has been selected as the new Director of the Armenian Communities Department in Lisbon. Panossian holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he also taught. He has published widely on Armenian-related issues, including a critically acclaimed book on Armenian national identity. He has extensive experience in senior management, including the administration of multi-million dollar programs as well as the allocation and distribution of international development grants. For many years he served as the Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning at a Canadian governmental organization based in Montreal. He has worked for the United Nations Development Program. "This is one of the most important positions in the Armenian Diaspora. I am looking forward to continuing the work of my predecessors and further strengthening and expanding the activities of the Foundation in a focused and systematic manner within Armenian communities around the world," Panossian said. The Gulbenkian Foundation is one of the top ten Foundations in Europe and one of the largest in the world with assets of €3 billion and annual expenditures of around €100 million. It operates in four areas defined in its statutes: Arts, Education, Science and Social Welfare. It was founded by Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian, an Armenian businessman and art collector who became a British citizen, conducted much of his work in Britain and France, and finally settled in Portugal. The Foundation was established in Portugal in 1956. Its headquarters are in Lisbon and consist of the administration, which deals with grant-giving throughout the world. The mission of the Armenian Communities Department is: "to create a viable future for the Armenian people in which their culture and language are preserved and valued."



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Summer School 2013

The Diaspora Summer School program organized by the RA Ministry of Diaspora will have an improved methodology, more topics and a higher number of participants from more countries around the world in 2013. The participants will be selected in late May, and the courses will start from July 8 and end on Aug. 2. The program was launched in 2011 for young leaders and journalists with the goals to support the preservation and development of the Armenian identity in Armenian communities of the Diaspora, raise the level of Armenian language proficiency, as well as help Armenian communities become self-organized, establish a field of mutual recognition and connect them to the homeland.
In 2012, the RA Ministry of Diaspora and Yerevan State University established the Diaspora Summer School with accelerated Armenian language instruction (in Eastern and Western Armenian languages and in groups corresponding to the level of language proficiency), training for choirmasters and dance group leaders and instructors, training for school principals, educators and teachers, preparation of young Diaspora Armenian leaders and training for young Diaspora Armenian journalists. Participating in the program were 131 Diaspora Armenians from 20 countries. This year the Diaspora Summer School program will be held in five locations.



Scout Tufankjian Among Finalists

Photojournalist Scout Tufankjian is one of the 43 finalists in the 2013 World Photography Awards. Sony announced the shortlist of finalists in both professional and open categories in February. From over 120,000 submissions, this list of 43 images has been curated from submissions spanning 170 countries. Professional category winners will be announced at a gala ceremony in London on April 25. The World Photography Organization is dedicated to finding the best international contemporary photography from across the world. The photographers' work will be exhibited at Somerset House, London, from April 26 to May 12.

Winner of Armenian Genocide Memorial Competition

Art Center College of Design and the Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial Committee jointly announced the winning design concept for a new memorial whose planned dedication in 2015 will coincide with the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. The concept by Art Center Environmental Design student Catherine Menard was developed in 2012 as part of the college's social impact design program, Design Matters. The proposed site for the public artwork is Memorial Park in the city of Pasadena. Menard's concept was one of 17 submissions the committee received and one of three finalists chosen by an independent panel of judges in December. The central feature of Menard's minimalist design – a carved-stone basin of water straddled by a tripod arrangement of three columns leaning into one another – is a single drop of water that falls from the highest point every three seconds, each "teardrop" representing one life lost. Over the course of one year, 1.5 million tears will fall into the pool, the estimated number of victims of the Armenian Genocide. Menard, 26, is a seventh-term environmental design major at Art Center and expects to graduate this year. Of French Cajun heritage, she was born in Lafayette, Louisiana and moved with her family to Los Angeles at age four.





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Katherine Sarafian's *Brave* Wins Golden Globe

Producer Katherine Sarafian took home a Golden Globe award when her film *Brave* won "Best Animated Feature Film." *Brave*, which was a critical and box office success last summer, was produced by Pixar Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures. *Brave* competed for the Golden Globe alongside *Frankenweenie*, *Hotel Transylvania*, *Rise of the Guardians* and *Wreck-It Ralph*. Sarafian took the stage with her director, Mark Andrews, who accepted the award and said, "Being brave is about being true to yourself and allowing your loved ones that same freedom."





Trees Throughout Armenia

The Armenia Tree Project planted another 412,482 trees in 2012, bringing the total number of trees planted and rejuvenated to more than 4,225,000 since 1994. This organization, founded by the philanthropist Carolyn Mugar, is one of the only organizations dedicated to planting trees in every region of the country including Artsakh. The flagship Community Tree Planting Program planted 70,383 fruit and decorative trees in 2012, while the SEEDS program planted another 342,099 reforestation seedlings in Northern Armenia. ATP launched the program known as SEEDS, or Social, Economic, and Environmental Development for Sustainability, in 2011. It has allowed ATP to build capacity in its reforestation programs while improving results through a greater emphasis on community development and investing in social capital in planting areas. ATP's mission is to assist the Armenian people in using trees to improve their standard of living and protect the environment, guided by the desire to promote self-sufficiency, aid those with the fewest resources first and conserve the indigenous ecosystem. ATP's three major programs are tree planting, environmental education and sustainable development initiatives.

Saroyan Prize Winners

New York playwright Kelly Stuart won the Armenian Dramatic Arts Alliance's 3rd Biennial William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting for her play, "Belonging to the Sky." The $10,000 grand prize was announced and presented at ADAA's memorable awards event at the Pasadena Playhouse. "Belonging to the Sky" is a lyrical duet of monologues by Sabiha Gökçen (Ataturk's adopted daughter) and assassinated journalist Hrant Dink, and their tragic historical connection. Stuart teaches playwriting at Columbia University and has traveled nine times to Turkey and speaks Turkish. The other finalists were two-time Saroyan Prize finalist Sevan Kaloustian's "Greene's Doon," a dramatic look at four generations of a New Jersey Armenian family; and Adriana Sevahn Nichols' "Night Over Erzinga," inspired by her Armenian grandparents' survival of the Genocide in 1915. All three finalists were present at the event and read excerpts of their powerful plays. The prize was awarded by Hank Saroyan, the nephew of William Saroyan and Emmy-winning director of Saroyan's "The Parsley Garden." Author David Kherdian received ADAA's 2012 Armenian Star Award for his outstanding writing career as a poet, novelist and memoirist. ADAA's mission is to project the Armenian voice on the world stage through the arts of theater and film. ADAA's William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting for plays on Armenian themes is made possible by a grant from the William Saroyan Foundation, with additional funding from the Gagosian Galleries.



Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan

Arturo Sarukhan, who until recently served as Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S., has been elected to the Board of Directors of Americas Society. "Ambassador Sarukhan is an outstanding professional and one of the most respected experts on U.S.-Mexico relations. We are pleased and excited to welcome him to Americas Society's Board of Directors, which will benefit from his extensive experience and insight," said Americas Society and Council of the Americas President and CEO Susan Segal.

Established by David Rockefeller in 1965, Americas Society's mission is to foster an understanding of the contemporary political, social and economic issues confronting Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. Arturo Sarukhan served as a career diplomat in the Mexican Foreign Service for 20 years.

He held numerous positions in Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2010, Ambassador Sarukhan was included in the List of Global Leaders of *Monocle* magazine, and, for five years in a row, has been in the list of 300 Most Influential Mexican Leaders by *Líderes Mexicanos* magazine.



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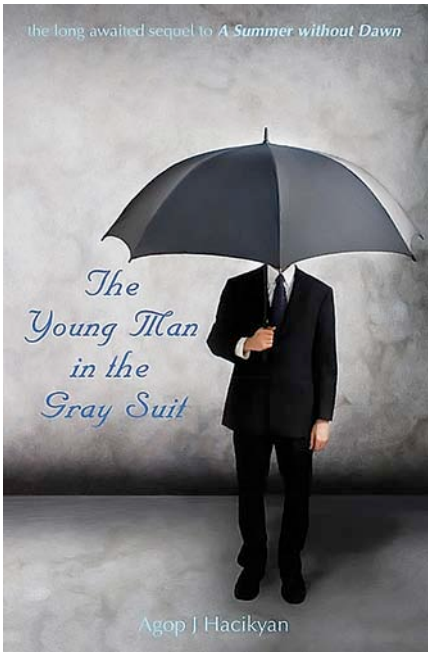
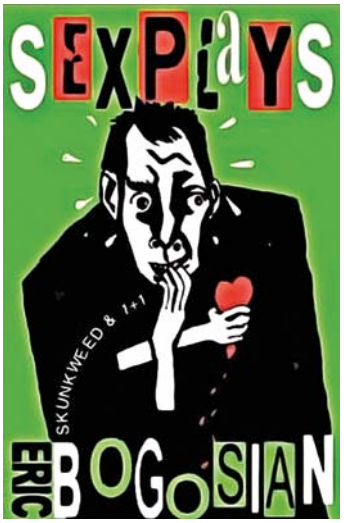


Agop J. Hacikyan

The Young Man in the Gray Suit

Interlink Pub Group, 2012

The long-awaited sequel to Hacikyan's international bestseller *A Summer without Dawn* is set in the mid-1950s, four decades after the Armenian Genocide. Nour Kardam, an affluent young Turkish lawyer, gets news of his father's sudden death and soon uncovers secrets from his family's past. His father's involvement in the Genocide, a corrupt tobacco empire, and an Armenian mother he does not remember. Caught in the entanglements of family, history, and politics, Kardam travels to New York, where his attempts to find his mother and protect his father's legacy lead him to rethink love, loyalty, and wrongdoing. In this evocative sequel, Hacikyan imagines the rebuilding of lives in the Armenian Diaspora and the possibility of reconciliation in the face of communal trauma. Agop J. Hacikyan is a Canadian university professor and writer who resides in Quebec. He is the author of literary and linguistic works, including novels, essays, and translations. His bestselling novel, the historical saga, *A Summer without Dawn*, received international acclaim and was translated to several languages.

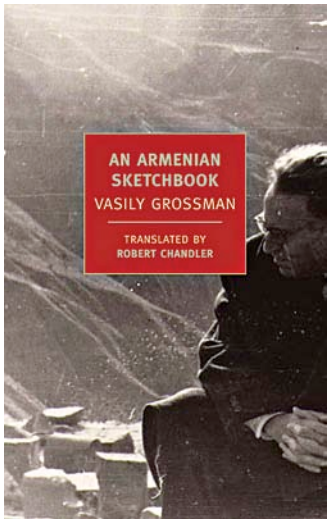


Eric Bogosian

Sex Plays

Theatre Communications Group, 2013

One of America's most provocative artists offers his two newest plays in *Sex Plays*. The first, *Skunkweed*, details the culture clash between a Los Angeles screenwriter and a working-class girl and her rural Florida clan in a hotel room, and *1+1* explores desire, greed, and responsibility to others through the lives of an aspiring actress, assistant restaurant manager, and a photographer. In *1+1*, Bogosian recently stated, "Bri, Phil, and Carl are based on people I've found intensely interesting my whole life: a good-looking hustler, an ambitious pretty girl, and a 'good guy' who always seems to finish last. The story is a parable. All my plays are. My plays are not expositions of a specific time and place. Rather, I try to find a way to set them so that the audience can immerse itself in a situation. I don't have answers. I have questions."

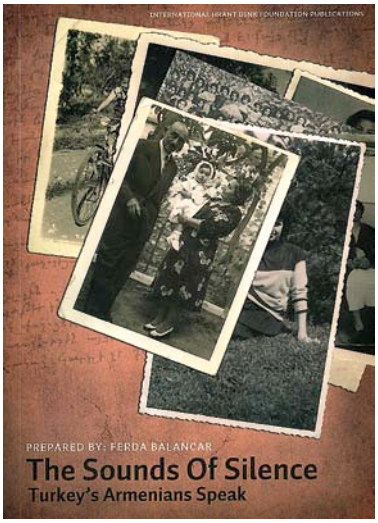


Vasily Grossman

An Armenian Sketchbook

Translated by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler, and Yury Bit-Yunan
An NYRB Classics Original, 2013

Few writers had to confront as many of the last century's mass tragedies as Vasily Grossman, who wrote with terrifying clarity about the Shoah, the Battle of Stalingrad, and the Terror Famine in Ukraine. *An Armenian Sketchbook*, however, shows us a different Grossman, notable for his tenderness, warmth, and sense of fun. It is by far the most personal and intimate of his works, endowed with an air of absolute spontaneity, as though he is simply chatting to the reader about his impressions of Armenia – its mountains, its ancient churches, its people – while also examining his own thoughts. A wonderfully human account of travel to a faraway place, *An Armenian Sketchbook* also has the vivid appeal of a self-portrait.



Ferda Balancar (Editor)

The Sounds of Silence: Turkey's Armenians Speak

International Hrant Dink Foundation Publications, 2012

The mission of the Hrant Dink Foundation is to create a memory repository on the Armenians of Turkey based on various documents shedding light on oral history records, culture and identity. Carried out as an oral history study, this first publication of the Foundation aims to recover the traces of the political and cultural memory of Armenians living in Turkey, to reveal the continuity in a cultural existence, and to find out how individuals with an Armenian identity perceive themselves and others. Researchers under the guidance of Balancar interviewed Armenians living in Istanbul and in various cities of Anatolia. The publication contains stories of 15 individuals from 19 to 70 years of age who tell not only their remembrance of history, but also about their lives today.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March/April

Metropolitan Museum of Art



Great paintings from the Musee d'Orsay will be spotlighted in an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. From Feb. 26 through May 27, Impressionism, Fashion, and Modernity will present a revealing look at the role of fashion in the works of the Impressionists Monet, Manet, Renoir, Degas and their contemporaries from American, German and British museums. Some 80 major paintings, with period costumes, accessories, fashion plates, photographs and popular prints will highlight the vital relationship between fashion and art during the pivotal years from the mid-1860s to the mid-1880s when Paris emerged as the style capital of the world, inspiring the talents of painters of contemporary life. At the same time, visitors can enjoy another exhibition featuring Diego Velázquez's Portrait of Francesco I d'Este, a Masterpiece from the Galleria Estense. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is one of the world's largest encyclopedic art museums with a permanent collection that includes more than two million works of art, spanning 5,000 years of world culture from pre-history to the present day.



Vienna State Opera

Mozart and Verdi operas continue to play a key role at the Vienna State Opera. In the 2012/2013 season, "Don Giovanni," "La Traviata," and "Aida" will be performed on stage through March and April. This year, the Vienna State Opera's repertoire also covers an impressive cross-section of the full spectrum of operatic literature with a who's who of the opera world. Of their massive repertoire of 53 operas, five are premieres, including Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" with Peter Seiffert, Stephen Milling, Nina Stemme. Other highlights include Anna Netrebko in "Eugene Onegin" by Tchaikovsky, "Rigoletto" by Giuseppe Verdi, Rossini's "The Barber of Seville," "La Bohème" by Puccini. Placido Domingo conducts "Roméo and Juliette" and sings "Simon Boccanegra." Elīna Garanča can be seen in three operas, "La Clemenza di Tito," "Werther," and "Carmen." Jonas Kaufmann performs as "Parsifal," and Neil Shicoff appears in "Pique Dame" and "Tosca." Hasmik Papian returns to the Vienna State Opera as Lisa in Tchaikovsky's "Pique Dame." Vienna State Opera has arguably the best opera orchestra in the world, which is comprised of members of the Vienna Philharmonic. This famous stage offers a different program every day, with ballet works and classical concerts as well as opera on approximately 300 days per season.

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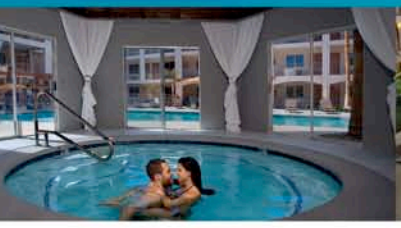


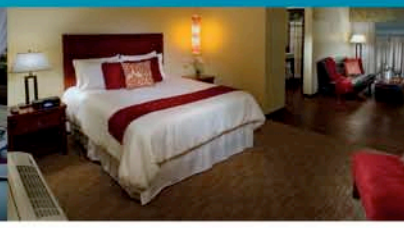

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oil paint — յուղաներկ [you-gha-ner-k]

Յ[yi]

Text **Aram Khachatourian**

Յ [yi] is the twenty-first letter of the Armenian alphabet. Its name is – Հի [yi] and the numerical value is 300.

Յ յ



Suren Manvelyan

The graphic representation of letter յ in the manuscripts of various centuries



862 981

Letter Յ denotes the sound [y], pronounced like the initial sound of "yard" or "yolk." Its phonetics have changed with time. From the 13th century, in the initial position Յ was pronounced as [h] and in the final position it was not pronounced at all, with the exemption of a few words, such as հայ [hye] – Armenian, վայ [vye] – the exclamation "Oh" and բայ [bye] – a verb. In 1922, as a result of a reform in orthography, the initial Յ was replaced by հ [h]. Yet, the reform pertained only to Eastern Armenian, while in Western Armenian the traditional spelling remained unchanged. There are several theories about the origin of the graphic form Յ. According to linguist Ashot Abrahamyan, it was formed by the rotation of the Greek letter omega (ω). From a linguistic point of view, this assumption may seem strange because there is no phonetic relationship between these letters. However, a symbolic correlation between these letters could be assumed.

In the Greek letter consonant Յ – similar to the initial sound of the y in yolk and the smallest in size – iota participated as the second element in falling diphthongs, with both long and short vowels as the first element. Where the first element was long, the iota was lost in pronunciation at an early date and was written in polytonic orthography as iota subscript; in other words as a small ι under the main vowel, for instance Αι ᾳ Ηι ῃ Ωι ῳ. Hence the famous expression from the gospel: "...this will be until heaven and earth have passed away, that not one dot or iota in the Law will be affected."

As the first in a Latin interpretation of the name Jesus (Iesus), the letter I in the Middle Ages was associated with the symbolism of the Son of God – littera minima in forma, sed maxima in sacramento, which means "the letter, the smallest in form but the greatest on the sacred content."

Although the Armenian alphabet letter Յ is not the smallest in size, its symbolism is similar to that in Latin. In the alphabetical acrostic of Mesrop Mashtots, letter Յ corresponds to Յիսուս (Jesus), followed by the letter Ն [n] - Նազովրեցի (Nazarene). Linguist Poghos Poghosyan believes that Mashtots put those two letters next deliberately, that they form the combination of "Jesus of Nazareth." And the sum of the numeric values Յ (300) and Ն (400) is 700. This number – hrismon, is an alphabetic character of Christianity from the time of Constantine thze Great – a monogram composed of the Greek letter X (chi) and P (rho) – the primary letters of Christ's name. Indirect evidence of the fact that Յ was the symbol of Christ comes from some ornamental initials in medieval manuscripts. In some manuscripts Յ is depicted as a peacock – an early Christian symbol of immortality and spiritual rebirth. But one of the most curious examples is in the 1323 Gospel from Gladzor (Syunik). Painter Toros Taronatsi depicted Յ as three fish. As you know, fish is symbol of Christ and the image of three woven fish is the symbol of the Divine Trinity.



Ornamented Initials, Anahit Publishing House, 1992



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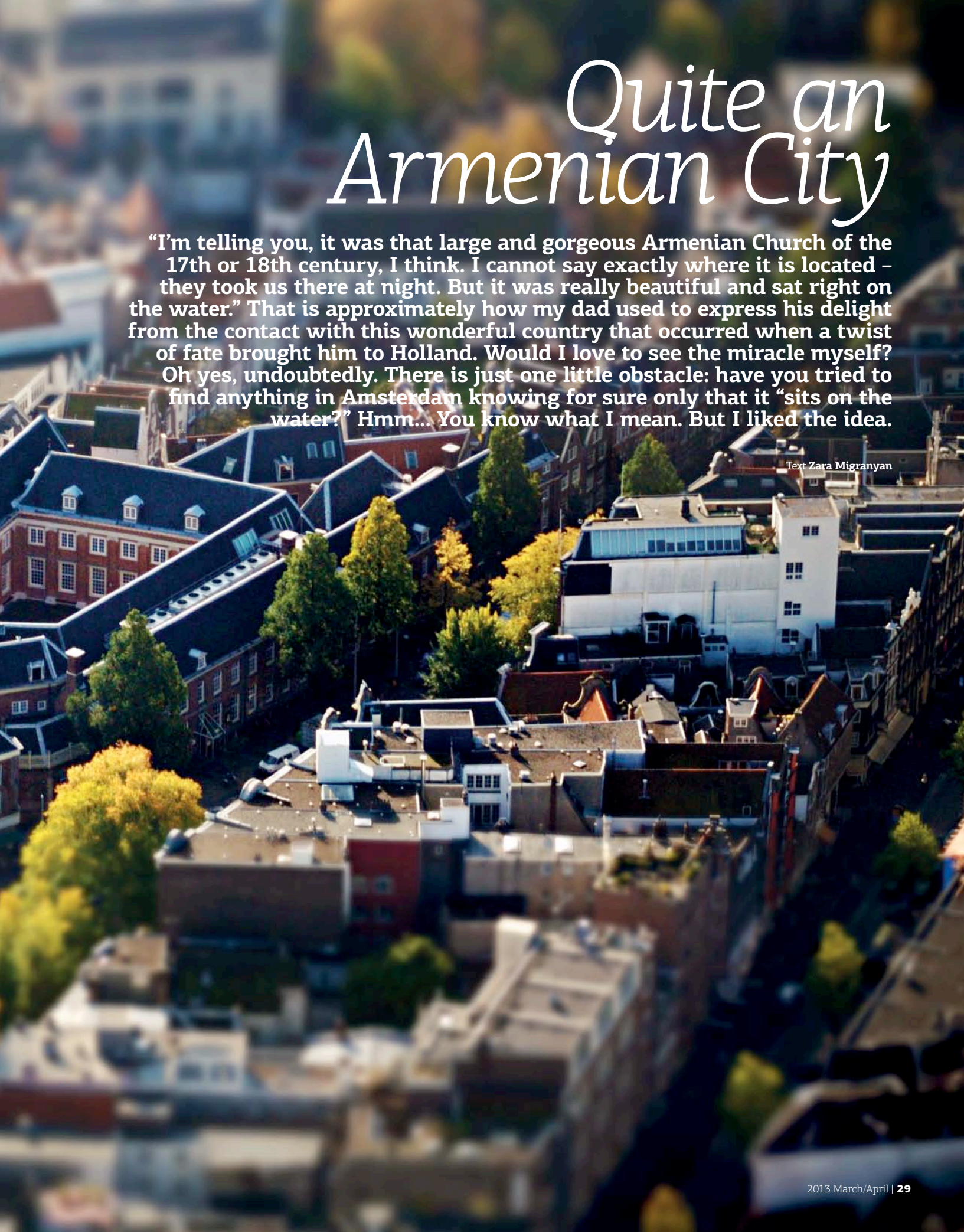
Quite an Armenian City

"I'm telling you, it was that large and gorgeous Armenian Church of the 17th or 18th century, I think. I cannot say exactly where it is located – they took us there at night. But it was really beautiful and sat right on the water." That is approximately how my dad used to express his delight from the contact with this wonderful country that occurred when a twist of fate brought him to Holland. Would I love to see the miracle myself? Oh yes, undoubtedly. There is just one little obstacle: have you tried to find anything in Amsterdam knowing for sure only that it "sits on the water?" Hmm... You know what I mean. But I liked the idea.

Text **Zara Migranyan**





Kitty Tervoltbeck

We Have One!

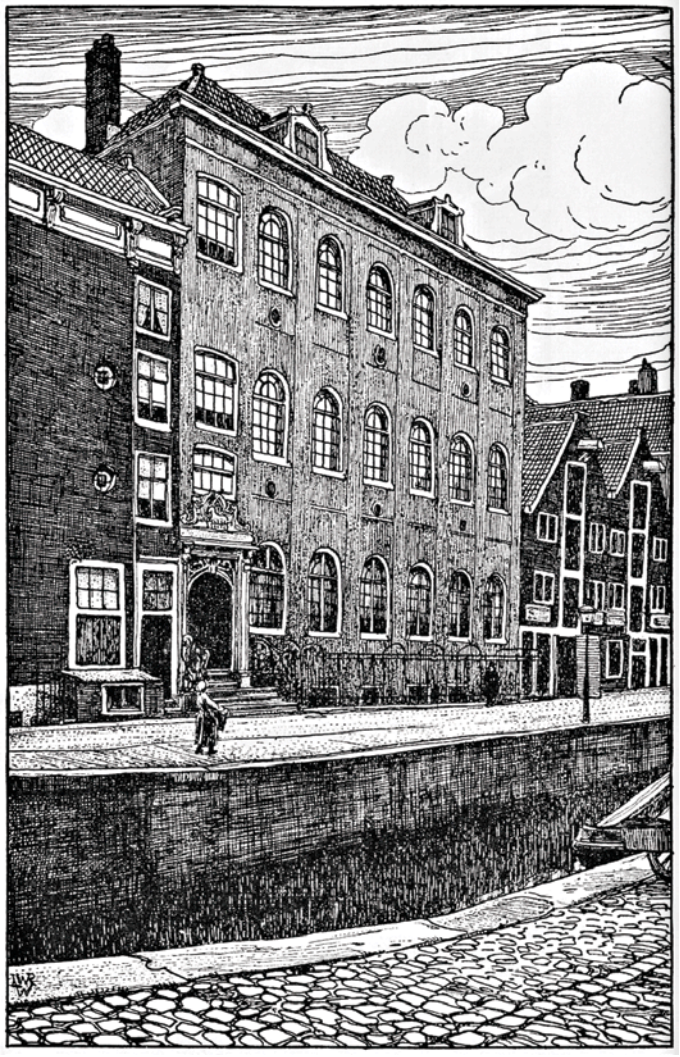
Naturally, the first thing I did in Amsterdam was visit the information desk for tourists to find the exact address. The woman behind the counter was friendly but somewhat distracted. "An Armenian Church in Amsterdam? Do we have one?"

"Yes, you do, absolutely."

The lady began tapping on the keyboard and in just 15 seconds exclaimed "Yes! We have one!" Clutching a Post-it note with the neatly written address – Kroomboomsloot, 22 – I stepped out into the city built on the canals – the fairytale city whose broken roof line captivated my eye at any time of day, whether I was admiring it in the morning sitting in a café with a cup of coffee or at night in a bar sipping cognac. The canals, the boats, the sloping roofs – they never repeat one another. The trams, the cyclists, the pedestrians – everything is flashing and rushing somewhere, looking so picturesque at the same time. Now, however, I had to find the place associated with the presence of Armenians in this city.



Photo Robson



Jan Willemsen

←
The Armenian Church on Kromboomsloot, Ludwig Willem Reymart Venkebah

Long before the British, the Netherlanders were making profits in operations with the East India and West India Companies, trading in slaves, building New Amsterdam, now known as New York City, but still keeping in some places the spirit and character of its first settlers.



Taxi Drivers Know Everything

Striding along the canal and constantly checking the map, I looked at each passersby, following the advice of some old joke on how to find an Armenian in the crowd. I honestly waited five minutes as recommended by the joke, but no one was in a hurry to stand out in absolute confirmation of the famous Dutch restraint. The only remaining hope was to recognize our church as soon as I saw it.

But it turned out to be a bit more complicated. Before reaching the target, I managed to get lost, to come across a funny statue and to discover the remnants of a fortress wall on Rembrandt Square. Help unexpectedly arrived in the form of a flock of cab drivers who lined up their vehicles near a bus stop waiting for fares. "Well, if not you guys, then who knows this city?" I appealed to their professional pride. My note with the address was passed from hand to hand, guttural sounds of an alien tongue grew more and more triumphant – and, finally yes – all clear, it's right around the corner on a parallel street. So I ran.

What I saw was far from what I expected. Yes, Church *Surb Hogi* (Holy Spirit) was located near a canal in a picturesque place – neat bridges on both sides, flowers planted everywhere, rare traffic – silence and grace seemed to spill into the air. There was one awkward detail: the building, decorated with all the signs befitting a church – the Armenian Cross, inscription in Armenian and Dutch that it was built in 1714 with the permission of the Amsterdam City Council, the traditional lamb over the entrance and so on – architecturally was absolutely no different from other houses in the neighborhood. Not only did it not stand separately as a classical Armenian architectural ensemble should, it also touched the wall of the neighboring house and had a roof of the same exact height and shape. On the other hand, I remembered the Cathedral of the Russian Orthodox Church in Manhattan – absolutely the same situation from the outside, and a huge beautiful hall inside. Climbing up the steps, I pulled the impressive door knob, but it did not give – clearly the church was open only for the time of service. So the question kept tormenting me more and more: where did all the Armenians go? ▸



→
The bas-relief on the entrance of the Armenian Church



From 1560-1565, the Armenian merchants finally reached Amsterdam. They sold carpets, spices, silk, gems and bought local goods for export. The history of Armenian-organized settlements in the Netherlands began only in 1660.



Claudio Ar

←
The Armenian Church on Kromboomsloot, AP Conradi, 1786

→
A map of Amsterdam, circa1600



Greatness and Tolerance of the Small

In one of the main halls of the Museum of Amsterdam, most of the wall is occupied by a *World Map of Modern Times*. A bright, though rather small spot on it is Holland with colored threads running to all parts of the world, connecting the country built on the water with other impressive territorial powers. One color indicates trade ties, the other military alliances and the third colonial relations. Independence won in a harsh confrontation with powerful Spain embodying the whole Catholic world and the proud spirit of freedom forged in the storm of the Dutch revolution, multiplied by the tough resolve of the Protestant faith created the alloy that made this remarkable nation. In the 17th and 18th centuries, little Holland financed wars, revolutions and shady political deals. Long before the British, the Netherlanders were making profits in operations with the East India and West India Companies, trading in slaves, building New Amsterdam, now known as New York City, but still keeping in some places the spirit and character of its first settlers. I vividly imagine those huge (they are the tallest people in Europe) blonde guys speaking this uncanny language resembling German with a heavy Russian accent, constructing their windmills in Manhattan under the glances of stunned Indians and contemptuously calling all the English "Janke" (that was how they pronounced "Johnny").

I am standing in front of this map with a growing realization that the spirit of the people is more important than the size of their territory. And I imagine how desperately they had to fight with water for each spot of land just to build a house or have a pasture – just like Armenians had to go to war with stones for their land.

"As early as the 17th century, the inhabitants of Amsterdam demonstrated tolerance in many ways, in particular religious tolerance. In our city, even after Protestantism had become the main religion, it coexisted with Catholic churches, synagogues and even an Armenian Church," states the plate under the next display. Wow! I brutally pulled the sleeve of my boyfriend, a Texan of Scottish origin. I pointed at what the sign said; in reply he opened his eyes wide and for a while was just helplessly moving his mustache, as if implying that he had nothing to do with it. I did my best trying to reassure him, saying that I visited the church yesterday, but now it is absolutely necessary to investigate how my compatriots managed to settle in these lovely surroundings. So this particular mustachioed Texan will have to accept the inevitable: this night Google is going to be my best friend, yet he is not going to escape getting acquainted with the results of the investigation.

"Those from Van could"

In New York, for example, if you are inviting a girl to a restaurant and do not want to pay for her, you can say, "Let's go Dutch!" and she will pay for her ceviche or something more substantial. In this setup the question remains, of course, whether the next date is going to happen, but that is why explorers are given courage. There are many legends still alive in New Amsterdam about the settlers from Old Amsterdam, and one of them is about their pathological thrift bordering on greed. Nothing personal – money to spare needs good care. The modern Dutch, showing visitors graceful palaces, beautiful buildings and unique paintings made by famous masters of the Dutch school, like to pretentiously raise their eyes to the heavens, saying, "Well, you know, back then we were rich..." It sounds especially amusing when someone nearby, who does business with the Netherlands, commented in a hissing whisper, "Trust me, they



← "Old Amsterdam," Barend Cornelis



Jan Willemsen

→ Madelievenstraat Ludwig Willem Reymart Venkebah

are no less rich now." So tell me: how do the Armenians – noisy, hospitable and generous – live in this fairytale city, where everything is calculated and measured, where to waste money is a mortal sin? Asking this question of a family friend, who recently returned from a trip to Western Armenia, I received an unexpected response that caused a burst of laugher, "Those from Van could." Anyway, the Armenians came here a long time ago.

Visionary Armenian

When the first Dutch ship entered the Port of Constantinople in 1594, it was still flying the English flag as England had a more favorable trade agreement with Turkey. However, the situation changed quickly and radically when one quite far-seeing Armenian – Ottoman admiral Halil Pasha – took over the command. He immediately figured that doing business directly with the Dutch would be much more profitable and energetically lobbied for a new treaty, which was ratified in 1612. Now the Netherlands got the same trading privileges in Turkish ports as England and France. Gradually almost all trade between the East and Holland became concentrated in the hands of Armenians. There is one letter in the archives of The Hague dated from 1568 that is addressed to the States-General of United Provinces (the Netherlands) and related to some dispute between the Dutch consul in Aleppo and Armenian merchants of the same city. Interestingly, the address is written in letters of the Armenian alphabet, but in Italian language. The friendly and complimentary beginning of the letter is composed in classical Armenian, but the main part is written in some Persian dialect of the Armenian language.

In 1560-1565, the Armenian merchants finally reached Amsterdam. They sold carpets, spices, silk, gems and bought local goods for export. The history of Armenian-organized settlements in the Netherlands began only in 1660. Armenian merchants moved there from Smyrna in quite impressive numbers. Soon they even received the official right to operate in the local stock exchange. According to accounts of contemporaries, Armenians mostly inhabited streets Monnikenstraat, Dykstraat and Keiserstraat and actively traded on the Eastern market.

> While the Armenian Catholic priests needed special permission to stay in the Netherlands, the Armenians who belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church had the right to their own priests. It was in Amsterdam (1666-1668) when Voskan Yerevantsi printed the first Bible in Armenian.

Joris, Elias and the "Persians-Christians"

Naturally, the first Armenian settlers who did not know the Dutch language fell as easy prey to unscrupulous local businessmen. At first, the Armenians did not even try to correct the Dutch, who mistakenly called them Persians-Christians or Christians-Smyrnaites – evidently they did not have time to expand the world outlook of their newly acquired neighbors. Even the church built by the newcomers was dubbed "Persian" by local residents.





Gustavo Verísimo

Armenians in Flanders

The first mention of the Armenian settlers in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg goes back to the beginning of the 11th century. Armenians lived in the Belgian city of Bruges, once a Dutch port, as early as the 12th century. In 1345, as evidenced by historical accounts, the Armenians were permitted to sell carpets in front of the Church of St. Donat. After the collapse of the Kingdom of Cilicia, many Armenian refugees arrived in Bruges, and were supported by Flemish charity organizations. In 1478, Armenians had their own "community hotel" in the city and their own priest conducted services in the Church of Carmelites. However, by the end of the 17th century, most of the Armenians began migrating to Amsterdam. There are "Armenian Chronicles" for the other cities of Flanders: for example, the city of Ghent still honors the memory of St. Macarius, an Armenian miracle worker who died there in the 11th century.



→
Title page of the first printed Bible in Armenian, published in Amsterdam, 1666

However, those Armenians who came to the Netherlands with subsequent migration waves were, according to one Dutch historian, "mostly well-educated people, who in addition to their own language spoke fluent Italian and French." They quickly learned Dutch, easily built business relations with the locals, married Dutch girls and even changed their names to the Dutch style; for example, Serkis Bogos turned into Joris Paulusts and Egii Petros into Elias Peters.

Mutually beneficial cooperation in Eastern India strengthened ties between the Armenian and Dutch merchants, and by 1645 almost all Persian trade was conducted by the Dutch East India Company. By that time, some Armenians of New Julfa in Persia had founded thriving businesses in Amsterdam. They were the successors of the Armenians who fled to Holland three centuries earlier, after the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia.

Armenian Merchant and Napoleon

Armenian businesses in Amsterdam flourished, expanding their influence and opening subsidiaries in other European cities, among them Venice, Livorno, Marseilles and Spain. From the shores of the Baltic Sea, they imported yellow amber which was in huge demand in Smyrna. Until 1765, the supply of Persian silk was almost entirely in the hands of the Armenians. Since at that time the Mediterranean was swarming with pirates, the ships of Armenian merchants



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The Large Market of Ocean and River Fish in Amsterdam, Engraving, 1691

Until 1765, the supply of Persian silk was almost entirely in the hands of the Armenians. Since at that time the Mediterranean was swarming with pirates, the ships of Armenian merchants under the Dutch flag were escorted by Dutch men-of-war.

under the Dutch flag were escorted by Dutch men-of-war. For example, a Consular Report of 1653 stated that the Coopman van Armenien translated as the Armenian Merchant (luckily not the Flying Armenian!), was escorted by the warship Gelderland and had safely reached the shores of Smyrna. There is a copy of the agreement between Dutch sea captain Steen and six Armenian merchants from Amsterdam, stipulating the terms by which the goods of the latter would be delivered to Livorno. The document, dated 1627, contains a long list of signatures with personal seals of the merchants: Sarhat, Zakhar, Ogan, Marcos, Petros and Hovakim.

The finale to this wealthy, respectable and measured life was quite unexpected. The Napoleonic Wars that came as a huge shock for the whole of Europe ended the prosperity of the Armenians in the Netherlands. As a result of the French occupation, Amsterdam was practically depopulated. It seemed nothing but memories, however bright, were going to be left after the Armenians departed. On Aug. 14, 1887 a Dutch author of *De Amsterdammer* magazine mused, "The history of the Armenian community is a golden page in the history of Amsterdam." Perhaps the Armenian Church was left as the only reminder of those glorious days.

While the Armenian Catholic priests needed special permission to stay in the Netherlands, the Armenians who belonged to the Armenian Apostolic Church enjoyed the right to have their own priests. It was in Amsterdam in the years 1666-1668 when Voskan Yerevantsi printed the first Bible in Armenian. And then it was the Amsterdam Armenians who brought the first printing press to Iran.

In 1713, the City Council of Amsterdam allowed the Armenian Diaspora to build their own church – the same one that is "Persian" and sits "right on the water." However, due to a sharp reduction in the congregation, the building was sold in 1828 to the Catholic community for 10,000 florins. Finally in 1987, after several immigration waves from all over the world, including one from the former Soviet Union, the Diaspora became strong enough to buy back the building of the old church.



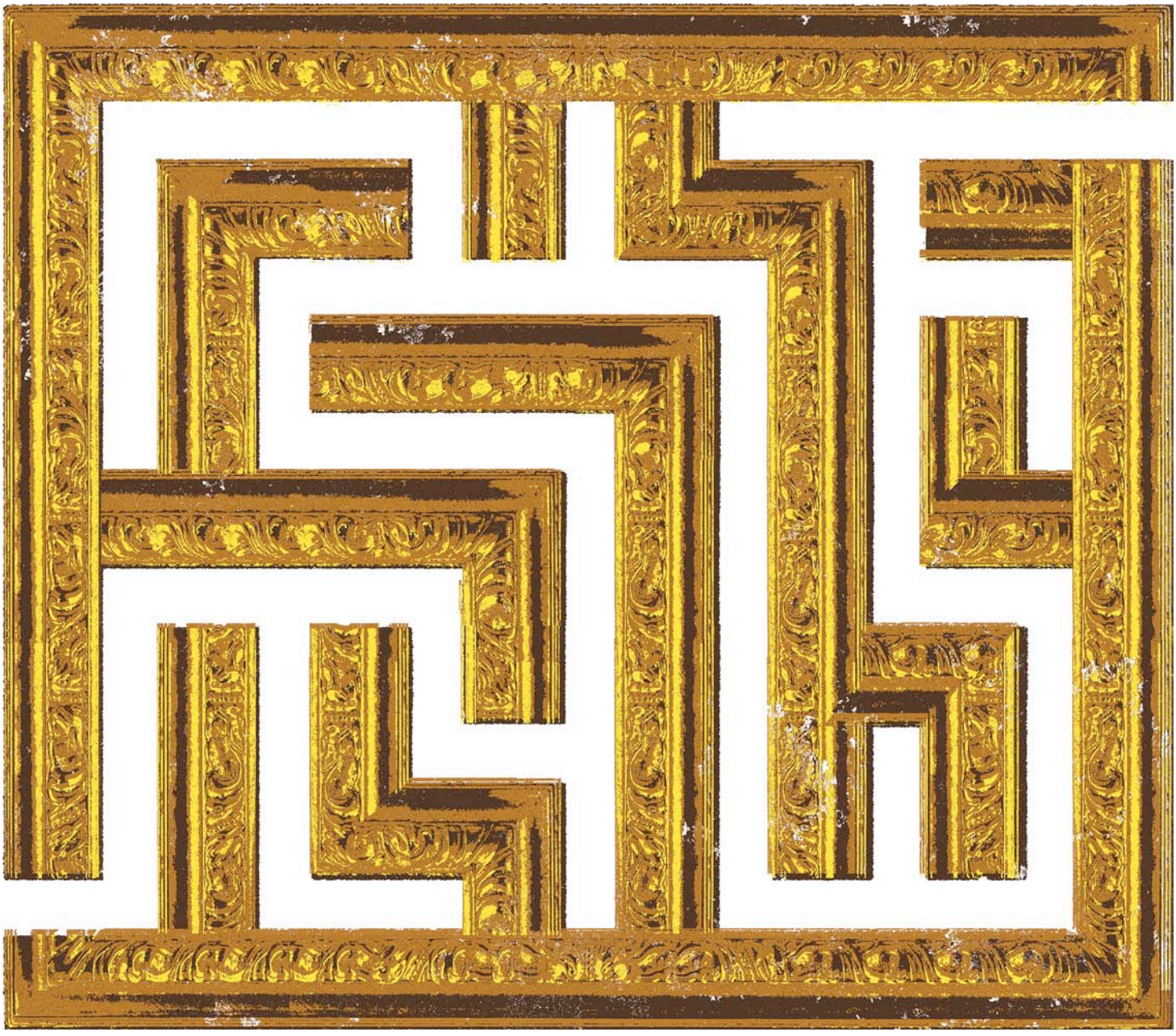
Mirjan Brenn

Not the Last Golden Page

I read and re-read articles and reports on the life of the Armenians in the Netherlands, not even noticing that historical calamities have long been replaced by the reality of today's life. Here is a news column about the festive celebration of the Armenian language uniting the students of Armenian schools in the Netherlands. Or there is the news that the Dutch composer Rolfe Strafer, after visiting Armenia, fell in love with our country and now is studying Armenian. In small Holland, where the Armenian community, according to various estimates, numbers from seven to nine thousand people, there are several organizations under the umbrella of the Federation of Armenian Organizations in the Netherlands (FAON) that maintain the Diaspora's unity. The Armenian youth hold regular events on April 24, the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day. Reports on the marches are quite touching when, with Dutch thoroughness and accuracy, they describe how the torches in the hands of participants have been replaced by flashlights. And it is certainly moving that members of parliament and representatives of other communities participate in these commemorating events.

As often happens to me, I continued talking about what I had read, re-living the absorbed information, sharing my happiness, pride and anger without even noticing that the hotel's hall was long empty, that the other Internet-before-bed maniacs had retired to their rooms, that the bartenders were looking at us with irritation, showing with their body language that no more drinks would be offered, and my last lonely listener was still obediently nodding to my appeals. It seemed really suspicious, since I knew that sometimes he just liked to listen to the sound of my voice. But no, he was so inspired by what he had heard that he was ready to admit that, "Amsterdam is quite an Armenian city." This was, of course, an exaggeration, but deep in my heart I knew that the city with the broken roof line will never be alien to me and the "golden page" once turned by Napoleon will not become the last one in the Armenian chronicle of Holland. ■

Art Appeal



Vahram Muradyan

Art has the ability to speak to people of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The defintion of art has no boundaries. Whether it is original, a depiction of reality, abstraction, or just a novelty, it is nevertheless defining. Tastes differ and so does the perception of art according to participants we polled at the 2013 LA Art Show.

Vanessa Schreiber
Interior Designer
Art is life. What turns me on in art is when somebody's mind allows the expression of what so many other people don't allow themselves to express. It's like that moment of explosion and they put it all together and the canvas becomes live. It's just an incredible expression. The time and the ability to bring life into people's homes is also a huge part of it. Art is about exploring our minds and expressing them. From the classics, I like Picasso, Monet, Van Gogh and the history they represent, but the evolution of art continues. There's a lot to keep up, like technology.

Lilit Harutyunyan
Art Historian
What I like in art is when people express themselves through new mediums, through their own ways of expression. Even if it is something that has been said before, if the artist expresses it in a new way, in a unique way, that's what I like to see. Going beyond the regular way of thinking and creating something in a new way. That's great art.

Emil Kazaz
Artist
Art is my life. That's what I live for. Art is my way to express myself. I am a man of few words but of many art pieces.

Marie Johnson
Artist
Art is a way to liberate myself. I love seeing how different people like to liberate themselves and explore in the realms of the consciousness and subconsciousness. I like seeing how art keeps evolving. It's never the same and that's just amazing.

Rodrigo Rosquette Leonardi
Owner, Galeria Moro
Everything turns me on in art. Art is a means of creation and passion. But what turns me off in art are the so-called "wanna be" artists. Art is an idea, a creation and expression.

Bruce Lurie
Owner, Bruce Lurie Gallery
What makes great art? Spontaneity, balance, creativity, something that's innately there from birth. Hopefully you can go farther in developing your artistic gift once you take schooling. Sometimes schooling can put you back, though, because you become too concerned with the academics of it and you lose your god given talents. You either are talented or you are not. For example, you cannot start out to be a great abstract painter. You have to be a photorealist; you have to learn to draw first before you can become an abstract painter. What turns me on in art? The energy that it elicits, the power of it.

Bill Gilliland
Architect
If it's devoid of context and time, it doesn't matter who it's made for or who has made it. Art has a universal appeal and requires no understanding of written or spoken language, history or math or science, or cultural frame of reference.

Flavio A. Bisciotti
Architect
Being able to create something and express my vision makes great art. That's the magic of art and that's what makes it so amazing.

Alexandra Fulton
Performing Artist
Art is a celebration. Art is like a party of our inner world.

Alex Cao
Artist
Beauty is art. Art enriches everybody's life, including mine, and I like capturing that beauty and expressing it through my art.

Monching Flores
Photographer
Art is a reflection of people's creativity. It expresses either the reality or the people's imagination of reality. I like the colors and the tones in art. Art is captivating. In terms of subject, the human body is what fascinates me.

Robert Avellano
Director, Gallery Michael
The artist is what makes great art – the artist's vision and ability to put down and express inner feelings and emotions, passion in whatever medium they are working with. You can't serve everybody, and art is subjective. There is that *je ne sais quoi* quality about art. I think a great piece of art is going to be in the eye of the beholder. I think certain artists will create in a manner where they will be more accepted by the public. What's fascinating though is that *je ne sais quoi* quality about a certain artist that can really appeal to an individual and resonate at a deep level. And that's the magic of great art.

Monet Arian Kazaz
Founder, Arian Dome of Fine Art
The process of creation is amazing to me. Being the wife of the artist Kazas, I am fascinated by the process when a piece of art is created. Kazaz creates his characters from his mind and imagination. He doesn't look at figures and replicate these in his paintings, even though many artists do. He doesn't use models. That's why every piece of his art is unique and has a philosophy of its own.

Razmik Grigorian
Arts and Culture Commissioner
Art is subjective. Great art to me has to make you react to it. Great art evokes inner feelings, emotions and passion. Also, if you find something new every time you look at the piece of art, that's also an indication of great art. Art is fascinating in the sense that it captures you and allows you to explore the unique expression we call an art piece.

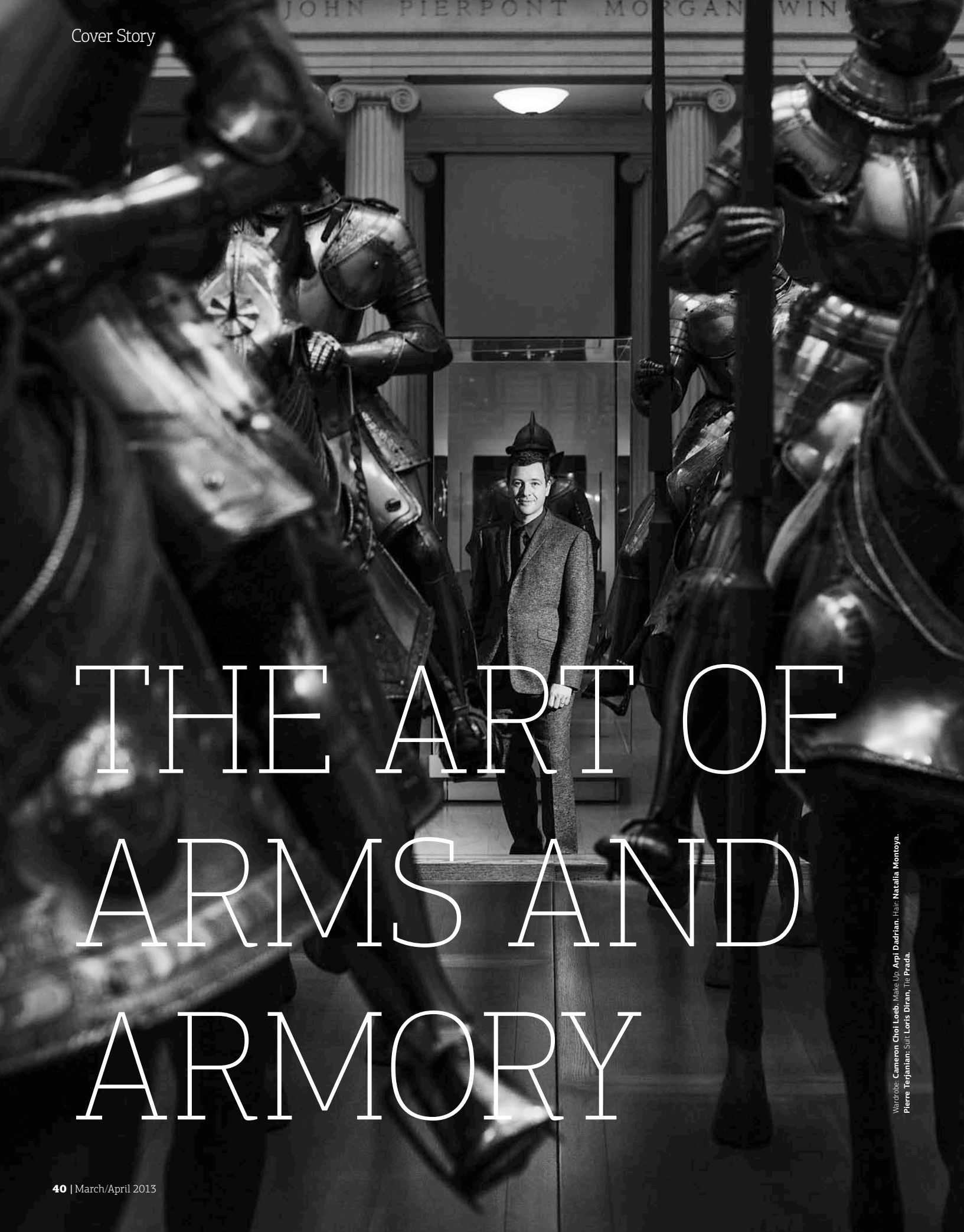
Jason Kirk
Director, Axiom Contemporary
Great art takes you there to that moment, stealing your reality. To be able to affect somebody is one thing, but to make them truly feel something through your art and even more than that truly make them feel what you've felt as an artist, that's a real talent.

Irina Chapkis
Art Director and Owner, Gallery G-77
Art is about finding something new and expressing it. It's a about being able to express one's take on life. The most important thing in art is the authenticity and the ability to express what's within. The technical part of how you express it can be learned, but you cannot learn to have the unique inner world and vision that is so peculiar to great artists. Art is about that grand idea within that is expressed and created through different art mediums. If the artist has a vision and a great technique, it's even better. To me, being able to express one's vision makes great art.

Armand Bolling
Art Advisor
Great art is whatever you think it is. Sometimes you can't explain why you respond to a work of art. Sometimes it is this reflexive response that comes from your heart. Art may kick you in the gut. Art can make you pensive and lead you to reevaluate your life. Also it appeals to you at different points in your life. You might love something this week and next week you love something else. I am loving John Chamberlain this week.

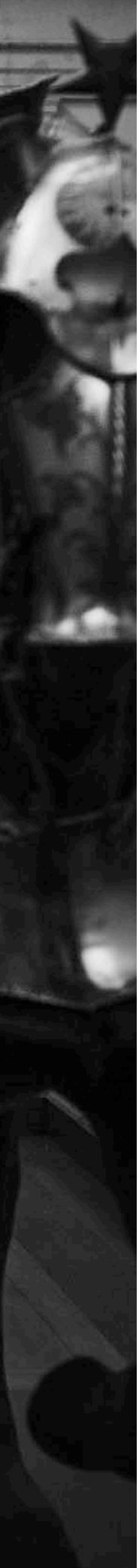
Christian Dorey
Owner, Arteria Gallery
What turns me on in art? The novelty. I like a lot of pop art. I am a painter myself. I don't care if the piece is by Picasso, worth millions of dollars or by an unknown artist. What I care about is the kind of effect an art piece has on me. If you can't pass by it without noticing it, that's great art to me. If you want to wake up and look at it every day on your wall, that's art to me.

Ded Vassilev
Leisure professional
A great artist is what makes great art. The communication, the message and the vision that the artist shares. That message may not be clear, and that's why it is called art. That unique expression is what turns me on in art.



THE ART OF ARMS AND ARMORY

Wardrobe: **Cameron Choi Loeb.** Make Up: **Anpi Dadrian.** Hair: **Natalia Montoya.** **Pierre Terjanian:** Suit **Loris Diran,** Tie **Prada.**

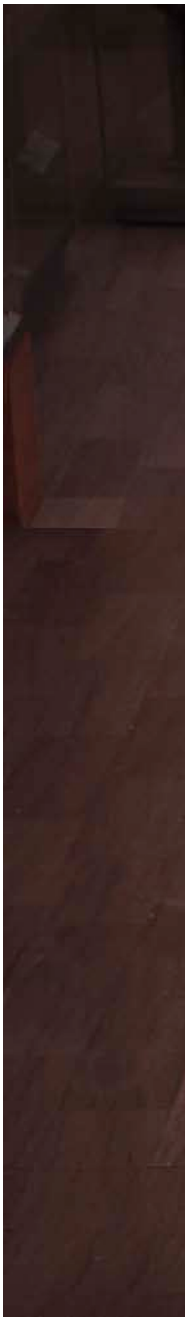


“THESE ARE WORKS OF ART,” GUSHES PIERRE TERJANIAN ENTHUSIASTICALLY, AS HE WALKS ME THROUGH SOME OF THE MORE THAN 14,000 SPECTACULAR OBJECTS FROM EUROPE, JAPAN, THE MOSLEM WORLD AND THE AMERICAS IN THE ARMS AND ARMOR COLLECTION AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK CITY. “I SEE THESE OBJECTS DIFFERENTLY EACH TIME I LOOK AT THEM. IT’S AN INVITATION TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THEM,” HE RELATES, HIS EYES GLOWING WITH EXCITEMENT.

Text **Florence Avakian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

Pierre Terjanian was recently appointed as the curator in the Arms and Armor Department at this world-famous institution. Thomas P. Campbell, Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has called him “an impressive scholar with strong curatorial credentials and experience.” At age 43, Terjanian is one of the youngest to serve in this coveted role, and comes from a background that includes simultaneously holding dual roles of the J.J. Medveckis Associate Curator of Arms and Armor as well as the Acting Head of the Department of European Decorative Arts and Sculpture Before 1700 at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, where he has worked in different capacities since 1997.
Born in Strasbourg, France, he received a master’s degree in law from Universite Paris II Pantheon-Assas, a Master of Science degree in Management from HEC Paris, and a doctoral degree in history from Universite de Metz, as well as graduate study in history at the University of California at Berkeley.

Why are you attracted to the world of arms and armor?
There are several reasons for my interest. First, the objects are spectacular. I’m attracted to their beauty. I see in them an incredible accomplishment in terms of design and execution. When you’re in the galleries, you experience the excitement of these objects. You are often as surprised as you were when you saw them for the first time. Most of the objects in our collection were made to order for specific circumstances, maybe as gifts, an occasion of great importance, a political summons, a presentation of diplomatic negotiation, a military campaign. The significance is behind the creation of the object. Then the objects have taken on a life of their own. After these objects were used, they were preserved because somebody actively prevented their destruction. And there are various reasons for that. That is what we love about the history of the objects in our collection– where they have been and what it meant to the people who were taking care of them. So that is another layer of discovery which fascinates me. These objects, because they were practical, always have a utilitarian aspect. And of course they were designed to be aesthetically pleasing and to project a certain image, an image of the person who owned them and used them. So they contribute to the representation of authority, power. And it’s not always for powerful men, but also for powerful women. Some were also made for children, for their training, to herald their membership in the social elite world.
How were these objects used by women? And were most of these 14,000 objects that the Museum acquired from the many different areas of the world mainly for the upper class?



"AT HEART, WE ARE ALL STUDENTS. AND I WILL STUDY AS HARD AS I CAN. IT'S NOT SO MUCH THE TITLE, BUT THE PROCESS."

Women used them in a number of contexts, but mainly for hunting, since women participated fully in the hunt. Women hunted birds, hares, deer, bears, bigger game. These were noble women who also played an important role in commissioning objects for presentation. The Metropolitan has recently acquired a wonderful 17th century gun made in the French tradition for Austrian Empress Margareta Theresa of the Hapsburgs.

Most of what has been selected in this collection tends to represent the high end of the work done by these creators who collaborated and represents what was commissioned by nobility and royalty. But there are exceptions. There are weapons made for bodyguards, which typically have the coats of arms of their sovereign. And in some cases, the bodyguards had to be noble in order to serve.

What are the many facets involved in this specialized work?

There are so many different facets to this work. It is a convergence of things – there is the utilitarian aspect, the artistic dimension, the historical and social context, and beyond that is the fact that these objects are under-researched. There is a lot of information about them, and it requires collecting and contrasting them. Much of this information remains unpublished and is kept in storerooms in other museums or in private collections. It requires going back to the sources, archives, and documenting the conditions in order to identify the makers and patrons, and then reconstructing the circumstances for which the objects were expected to be used. So there is a lot of detective work

So as a curator, is that the way you spend most of your time, as a researcher and investigator? And how has technology impacted your work?

Researching and investigating are critical parts, and scholarship is something the Museum is deeply committed to and makes possible. But we are also custodians and must make sure these valuable objects are well taken care of, properly exhibited, and the information is disseminated in the galleries and through the Web. We also worry about conservation projects, storage, lending to potential exhibitions in other museums. So there is a wide range of activities to make life more interesting.

In terms of technology, it has had a tremendous impact on my work. In research, it has allowed me to gather much more information on objects (digital photography and cataloguing), and documents (situation and reproduction of primary and secondary sources), and to share them more easily with colleagues and other experts (communication of information through the Internet). Interestingly, however, the vast majority of books and catalogs that I routinely use do not exist in digital form and thus are not available online. And the archival records relevant to my work (above all payment records and inventories from the 15th century onward) are a long way from being digitized. Clearly technology is also offering increasingly sophisticated and flexible ways of enriching the visitors' experience of the Museum and its collections. We are only beginning to see the vast possibilities offered by wireless access to information and interpretation. I intend to fully explore what contributions they may allow us to make in the near future in the galleries and beyond.

What are your feelings about working at such a prestigious and famous institution? And what was the catalyst in your life that drew you to this field?

Naturally, I'm thrilled. It's fair to say that this was a strongly supported institution when I was employed at the Pennsylvania Museum of Art. I came here regularly because the library is one of the best in the world, because my colleagues were always willing to share their knowledge and show me objects kept in storage or on display, and give me access to them and other sources. And of course, previously I worked alone as a specialist in arms and armor, and here there was a sense of fellowship. The collections here are larger and more diverse.

My attraction to this field began when I was studying law in France in 1989 and 1990, and bought some woodcuts to decorate where I was living. They showed people in 17th century costumes. I looked them up and saw that some people were wearing armor and thought maybe the armor is the key. Much to my surprise, there were no books on the subject in the bookstores. At the municipal library, I found only one. At the National Library they had several books, only two or three written in French. And all the authors disagreed with one another on the same objects, the dates, and who made them. I said I have to go to museums to figure it out.

In the museums, the objects were composites, different pieces put together. This was not giving me the answers I wanted. I embarked on my own original research, including the archives, finding iconography, sculptures, paintings, and discovered there were specific styles.



In the gallery, there is armor with gold and precious stones. So these objects were not only used for defense, but were also works of art. What were the major sources for these objects? This is a field of work that few seem to pursue.

The art comes with the material, then with the treatments, the way the material has been handled. The construction of how they are put together can be artistic, too. The materials include also textiles, wood, mother of pearl, shell, of course metal, and drawings that shed light on the designers. The major areas they come from include southern Germany, northern Italy – the cradle of armor-making; Spain and Japan, which reigns supreme in workmanship; also Tibet, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and the Balkans.

You have degrees in law, management and history. How did each of these contribute to the work you are now doing? What languages necessary for your work are you fluent in?

That's a difficult question. They are part of my trajectory. Law has given a good attention to detail in terms of choosing my words and researching. Business school was a great environment because it helped in entrepreneurship – taking and measuring risks, thinking broadly and turning around companies that are failing, and reinventing the mission. And history gave me a method of connecting with the archives, testing the evidence. At Berkeley, I studied mainly European, Japanese and Ottoman history, because these are our main strengths here. I am fluent in German, English,



THE METROPOLITAN IS ONE OF THE FEW MUSEUMS WHERE THESE OBJECTS ARE BEING USED TO TALK ABOUT ART.



conversational Spanish and of course French, and can read in other languages. Most of the institutions that are major depositories of these objects are mainly municipal museums, local historical museums and military museums, so the types of narratives that are built around their objects are completely different, even though they may be of high quality and artistic value. And the Metropolitan is one of the few museums where these objects are being used to talk about art. And maybe one of the deterrents to going into this field is that there aren't such opportunities everywhere.

What are the main messages you want to convey in your work?

It's the excitement of taking the time to discover the meaning of these objects, to respond and to experience these things that speak to us. I'm a visual person, but the last thing I want is to view them as icons.

You were born in Strasbourg, France to parents who are French citizens. What is the origin of the name Terjanian? What memories do you have of your youth, and have you visited Armenia?

My parents are both French citizens. My father is the son of an Armenian man (Bedros Terjanian) who came from Kayseri and moved to France in the mid-1920s. The family was displaced, found their way to Greece, then Lebanon and finally France. There is a picture of my father with some American GIs after they freed Paris. He married an Alsatian woman, my grandmother, moved to Strasbourg and opened a rug store. My father and grandfather were both rug dealers. I have brought to America one heirloom rug that belonged to my grandfather. Only my grandfather spoke Armenian, but he apparently decided that France was now a new home, and the family had to build on that foundation.

My grandfather died when I was five. However I recall that he believed that children represented the future and insisted on acquiring a television set, something my parents never had. He did it for my benefit, so that it would be an important asset in my education. My grandfather could be, and often was, extravagant.

The language at home was French, but when we visited distant relatives, there was always talk of Armenian culture and history. However, Strasbourg was not a strong Armenian area like Paris and Marseilles. But because of their rug business, my father was always in contact with Armenians. He was always proud of Armenian contributions, and we often discussed the history of Armenia. We were the only people in our neighborhood who bought eggplants, because we cooked Armenian food. We loved imam bayeldi. The Armenian foods were one way our identity was cultivated. My father used to bring sujukh and pasterma, cured sausages and meats from Paris.

And as I grew older, I read books about Armenia. It was a series of repeated exposures that raised my curiosity, and it was constantly fed by the proximity of mysterious places that were once grand and then falling apart. I would like to visit Armenia someday. My non-Armenian maternal grandfather and one of my two sisters have been to Armenia. I want to pass on my Armenian background to my children.

In old documents, it says that Armenian steel was poisoned, toxic and was among the most feared weapons because anyone who touched that metal instantly died. This is impossible to verify, but it indicates that Armenians were advanced in their metal work.

What do you view as your most positive qualities? And what is the best advice that you have received?

Passion and determination. At heart, we are all students. And I will study as hard as I can. It's not so much the title, but the process. The best advice has been 'Do what you do well. If you are good at it, then just pursue it.'

If you could live anywhere in this world, where would it be? Besides art, what other passions do you have?

In a museum (answered instantly). In a museum, I am in contact with all parts of my background. And my passions include being with and doing things with my family which include my son (eight-years old), daughter (ten-years old), and my wife who is American, and it's wonderful to explore the diversity and energy of New York. I also like to cook, which I am passionate about, especially French and German dishes since I grew up on the border of the two countries. I like to experiment. I go to the market and let the ingredients dictate what I should buy. And I like simple wines.

Who in your life has been a role model for you?

My parents, and especially my mother who is an extraordinarily positive and encouraging person. In the cases of adversity, she has always looked on the bright side. I want to produce that for myself, and pass it on to my children. I'm skeptical of the idea that individuals encompass everything, so I look at the good side of every personality I've learned about or met. Ultimately I stay away from sheer admiration.

And how do you balance your professional and personal lives? And who is Pierre Terjanian, and what is his future?

My life balances itself out. The reason I love cooking is that it gives me time off from the computer and reading. I spend time with my family. It's all interconnected. I bring my family often to the Museum, and to see the New York sights. It's not mutually exclusive. I haven't yet figured myself out. (*He laughs heartily*). I'm a passionate person who is excited to be in a position to explore more, and this exploration is enriching my life, not only in seeing great things, but also meeting new people. I think there's a wonderful social component in the job that I do. I want to broaden my horizon and make significant contributions in terms of scholarship in my field, and also get a good grasp of the fantastic 14,000 objects in this museum, which will take some time. The process is ongoing. ■



Wardrobe: **Cameron Choi Loeb.** Make Up: **Arpi Dadrian.** Hair: **Natalia Montoya.**
Lee Abrahamian: Dress **Nanette Lepore,** Chain Necklace **Chanel,** Bracelet **Chanel,** Shoes **Louboutin.** Goldinfisch: 90 7th Ave NY, NY 10011 (212) 633-6965

ENERGY, PERSISTENCE, PATIENCE

Lee Abrahamian is a bubbling bundle of energy as she sprints into her office at the world famous Metropolitan Opera in New York where I am waiting for her, greeting me with an enthusiastic "Parev. Is that a good start"? And from there, it's nothing but high spirits as she answers the phone, which rings every few minutes, or runs off to a ten-minute meeting every half hour with Metropolitan Opera General Manager Peter Gelb. All this activity causes a one and a half hour interview to last three and a half hours. She smiles easily and speaks openly and passionately.

Text **Florence Avakian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

Director of Communications at the world famous Metropolitan Opera in New York, her list of responsibilities is endless, including playing a key role in season press announcements, conducting interviews, producing videos of all upcoming productions, representing the Met at openings and special events, overseeing public relations, advising senior staff, cultivating and maintaining high level media relationships and overseeing photography efforts from production shoots to public event coverage. And these are just a few on a long list.

A previous Emmy Award-winning journalist in the early 1980s, Lee was the Executive Producer for MSNBC, producing four hours of live programming daily. Before that, she was the News Director at WCBS-TV, running the day-to-day news operation. She also served as Executive Producer for several specials, including the Pope's New York visit, the political conventions and the Tony Awards. A graduate of New York University in English and Journalism, she was a music major at the University of Connecticut and has played the organ in the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection in New Britain, Connecticut where she grew up. ▸

There are countless stories at the Met. It's a city within a city with 1600 employees here on a daily basis, staging more than 200 performances over our nine-month season.

You have had and are continuing to have a storied career. Winner of the prestigious Emmy Award and high-level positions at WCBS-TV and MSNBC, you literally worked yourself up the ladder through hard work, talent and determination. What was the Emmy for, and what was the catalyst that took you into this field of communications and journalism?

I received the Emmy Award in the early 1980s for breaking news back at WCBS when there was a major snowstorm in New York. We had every crew out in the horrible conditions, and they were live on television. Even though I majored in English and Journalism at NYU, I had no clue as to my future work. I wanted to stay in New York, so after graduation, I took a job as a secretary at the old Columbia Records. Because it was an election year, 1979, they were looking for volunteers in one of the primaries, and I walked into the WCBS newsroom. It was like being home. There were people my age running around, and the energy was so intense. It was the old days with no cell phones. A girl with a walkie-talkie was barking orders into it. She was my age, and I thought that's what I want to do. I want to be a boss, have that microphone, and be part of that whole energy. (A knock at the door calls Lee to a short meeting, and after about ten minutes, we resume.) I told my boss that I wanted to be in news, so he arranged an interview with the news director who hired me as a secretary.

After six months, I was chomping at the bit and would do everything I could after hours – sit with writers, reporters. I became a researcher, and literally for the next ten or fifteen years, I kept going up to every position – producer, executive producer, until I became number two, and even for a while number one. That literally was a twenty-year career. You go back and forth, because I was also in the consumer unit. There are different ways you go up. I'm a good manager because I'm fair. I did every single job they asked me to do – worked the overnights, the weekends, from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. I was the kind of person who never asked for anything. I just did my work and got my promotions.

In this meteoric rise, you didn't curry favors with the boss, or employ other maneuvers sometimes used by others. You literally worked your way up. What was the special passion that you felt about this kind of a killer schedule?

Yes, and working my way up fair and square gained me the respect of everybody that I worked with. Passion, that's a good question. My aunt once saw me at work and said she hyperventilated just watching me. It's the adrenaline. It's just a part of my DNA. If I have nothing to do, it's a really bad day for me. What I loved about my work was that we were all in it together. It was a good group. We were young, and weren't afraid of challenges. We made mistakes, but the energy was there. It's a competitive environment, so you're against other television stations. We would look at the ratings every day. We would strive to be number one, even though we never achieved this except for a few days when I was there. To be underdog at some point is a good place to be because you get excited about what you do, and you strive to be number one.

What I miss about news now at the Met is not knowing the inside stuff. I have that in me. I want to know when someone is coming out with new polls. I like the immediacy of news, and the fact that when you go home, it's over.

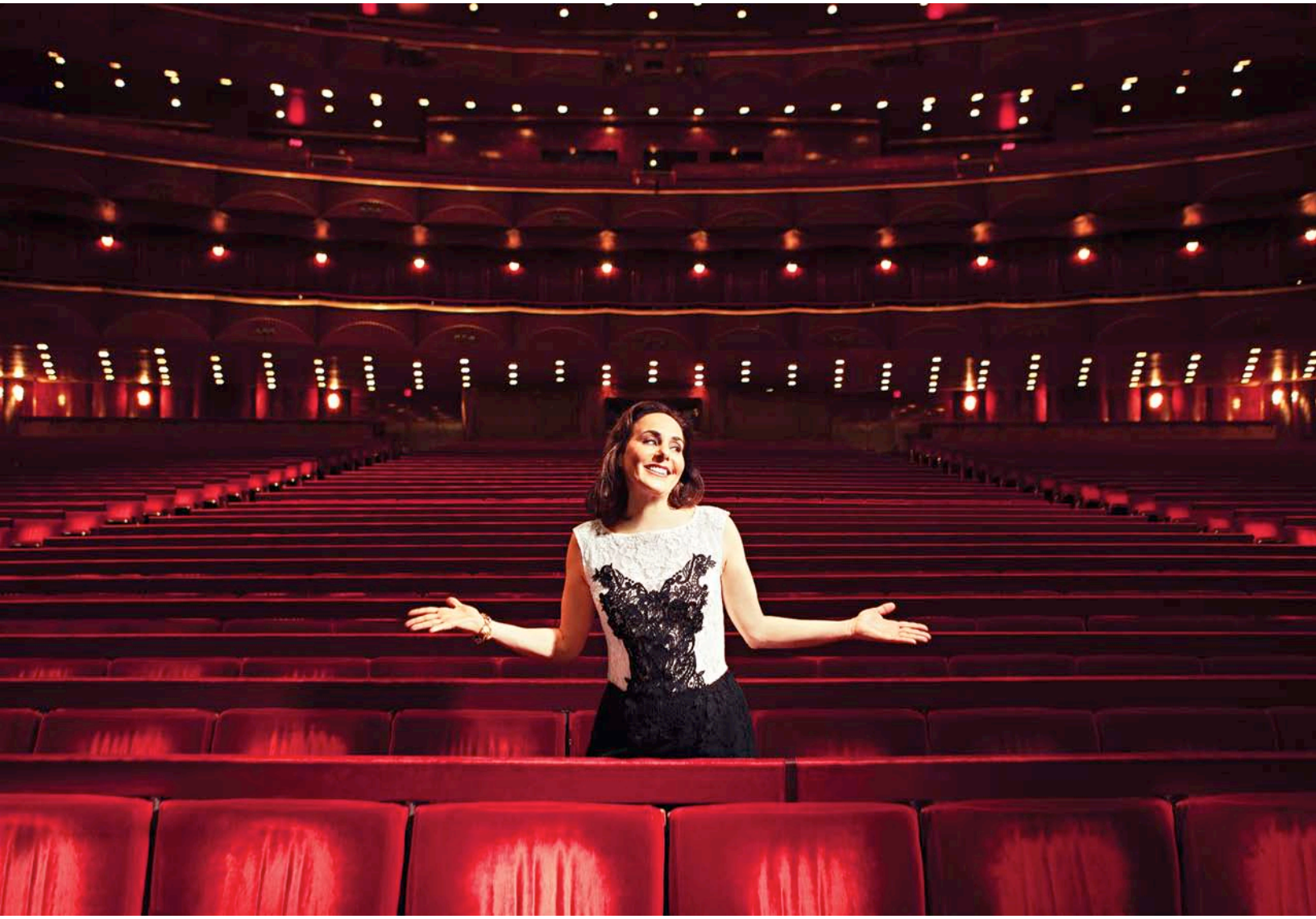
So why from the immediacy of this vibrant, chaotic atmosphere that you obviously loved, did you come here to the Met?

I love music and opera, but I realized I wasn't talented enough. Peter Clark, the Met Press Director, asked me to come here. (At this point, Peter Clark calls her for another brief meeting.) I used to come here often because my best friend sang here. (Her favorite opera is La Boheme). When I was at CBS and was going up the ladder, I was able to assign arts programs because of my high position. I did two or three different stories, and Peter Clark would ask me every year how he could get press coverage.

Six years ago, he asked me to consider working at the Met. I answered that if ever there was an opening to call me. I just said it without meaning it. Four or five months later, Peter called and said that General Manager Peter Gelb was looking for someone for a new communications position. It became six weeks of discussion. I told them I was happy as Executive Producer at MSNBC, but then all of a sudden I really wanted the job. I knew I could stay in TV for the rest of my life, but this was an opportunity to go into a field that I loved deeply, and I would never have this chance again. So I fought for it and told Peter Gelb he should hire me. It was a no more than two-minute conversation. He said, "Just tell me why I should hire you." I said, "Because I really want to be here, and I will work so hard for you, you will never regret it." He said, "Fine." I said, "Does that mean I'm hired?" and he said, "Yes." I literally went home and e-mailed him, because I wasn't sure.

Describe a day in this high-energy environment. What are your responsibilities?

It's never the same. In that respect, it's like the news. You come in with a game plan, and everything is changed. It will depend on how the sales are going, what reviews have just come out, what Peter Gelb's new idea may be overnight. For instance, 60 Minutes with Bob Simon is doing a story about the Met with the focus on our new production of Rigoletto, which they will do through its worldwide transmission. His idea of a piece is to do the process from the first day of dress rehearsal to the opening night. Usually, they come with a producer, associate producer, at least two camera crews and spend the day here. They have tremendous access. They've already



been here three or four times, and next week they will attend our first on-stage rehearsal with orchestra as well as be back stage with the artists and in the orchestra pit. I'm coordinating the whole thing. I have to get approvals from all concerned, including the orchestra, conductor, principal singers, chorus, wardrobe and technical people. All I need is for one singer to say 'no', then either it's all off or it's my job to convince that person that it needs to be done. This is an important shoot, and it's their first program on the Met. At the same time, we have Parsifal in rehearsal, and the debut of a new singer from South Africa. What 60 Minutes wants to show is that the Met is a constant source of artistic activity. So when someone is rehearsing on stage, someone else is downstage in a rehearsal, someone else is coaching, and another person is getting a costume fitting, while scenery is being built – all this activity occurring for four current operas at the same time and newer operas that are coming in next season. It's constant chaos here, but it's a controlled chaos!

How does technology impact the work you're doing on a daily basis? Does it perform a positive, or a negative function?

There are two different ways of looking at it. One is that the Met is aware about social media like Facebook and the new ways that people can get more information. For every opera, because of my TV background, I shoot clips of the dress rehearsal, edit the clips with an outside source and get approval from Peter Gelb. Then I put them up on the website, on Facebook, and send them out to the media everywhere so people can see something before they attend a performance. This is new. Secondly, we're now on Sirius Radio three nights a week. It's Internet radio that tons of people have through subscription. And we are live in the movie theaters in 64 countries and on the radio every Saturday worldwide. Managing all this is a radio team, but I coordinate as far as publicity goes. We're all publicizing the same thing. Radio will make sure that they're promoting an upcoming broadcast. And in movie theaters around the world, during the intermission of the opera they are watching, we're putting in another opera segment so they will get a tease for the next opera. What we are doing is taking live TV cameras into that rehearsal below stage level. There is now going to be a live feed watching that rehearsal which will be transmitted. That's technology. That would not have been done five years ago. ▸



Your job is so varied and encompassing of so many different aspects. It's hard to pin down exactly what you do because it involves so many things.

I do everything. (Again, another short meeting with Peter Gelb). What really happens is that I wake up in the morning at 7:00 a.m. and reach for my Blackberry which is by my bed, and Peter Gelb will usually have sent a handful of messages. You sort of know how your day will transpire from then on. Yesterday I woke up to an e-mail that this new 27-year-old singer, Pretty Yende from South Africa who debuted in Le Comte Ory and learned her role in ten days, was terrific. So I had to get press for her and basically maximize her publicity. Bob Simon heard her in a coaching session, and wanted to film her singing, so I had to ask her, her coach, and the conductor for permission. It was approved, but every one of these ventures is a whole process.

We do have weekly meetings. On Monday mornings, we have an HD meeting with Peter Gelb, and discuss how they're selling, whether videos should be sent out, and what performers to push. Then I'll talk to journalists around the world, depending on what country a performer is from. An HD press meeting then follows, and I speak to my staff about what kind of publicity to push – radio, NPR, whatever. That same day, we have a marketing meeting with Peter Gelb and go over images of productions and which one we should use to grab audiences more. We go over the words to be used in the ads. While all this is going on, rehearsals are taking place. I may check in or sit in on a rehearsal, watching it so I can cut clips from it later on. Maybe I have a performance that night where I'm on duty, or there's an opening and there's a prominent critic there, and I have to meet with them. Sometimes there's a last minute cast change and someone will have a debut so we have to get publicity out on this person. Every day is different, and every day something can happen, can change. We have to be ready.

For gala opening nights, which are usually in September, I start working in August

There are countless stories at the Met. It's a city within a city with 1,600 employees here on a daily basis, staging more than 200 performances over our nine-month season.

on the guest list and the celebrities to be invited since we are looking for worldwide coverage. I have to arrange for cars, work with the press, city officials, and then I have to dress at five o'clock for the event. (She shows me a fancy outfit – gown, shoes, makeup that is always ready). I'm basically working at every level of the event. Every person on that red carpet will know who I am. And I make sure that Peter Gelb and Met people also get in the photos.

What are the biggest challenges of your job? And what are the its best and worst aspects?

It is getting the best publicity for the country's largest performing arts organization at a time when media coverage of arts, especially opera and classical music is dwindling. We are always trying to reach a new and younger audience because the audiences are getting older. For me, the love of classical music started with my mother. But if you didn't get that at home, where do you get it from? For me, I received this exposure from my home and the Armenian church.

There are countless stories at the Met. It's a city within a city with 1,600 employees here on a daily basis, staging more than 200 performances over our nine-month season. The challenge, and we have to work quickly, is deciding which journalists to pursue for optimal local, national and international newspaper, radio, TV and online coverage. We've learned to cultivate our contacts. In October, CBS Sunday Morning did a terrific piece on our Live in HD series, but it took two years of pitching and planning. The story came together primarily because of some sheer persistence and patience on my part. The best part of my job is that I'm around, and want to be around, music all day. Even when you're having a rough day without a break and you're starving, all of a sudden you hear some lovely music, and it gets to my soul. I feel the same about Armenian music, the *Badarak*. The worst is that I don't get enough sleep.

Do you consider yourself a big star being that you are in such a prestigious position in a top level institution like the Metropolitan Opera?

I think I'm a big star because I have "ian" at the end of my name. Every time you see an "ian," everybody reacts. I walked up to Eric Bogosian one day, not having met him before. I said to myself he'll talk to me because I'm Armenian. I introduced myself and said "I'm Armenian." He said, "Really, how nice to meet you." We had a conversation about being Armenian and nothing about what he or I did. We ended up knowing people who went to my church and his church, being that he's from Rhode Island and I'm from Connecticut. If there was someone at the Met with "ian," I would go up to them, but there isn't. My point is that Armenians seek each other out because we're so few and far between. We all know that we came from the same stock, and we're all survivors.

You're a second generation Armenian. Were your grandparents survivors of the Genocide? And what special childhood memories can you recall? What does being Armenian mean for you?

My grandmother from Kharpert was in the Genocide, and my father's family is from Garmery. I was raised in New Britain, Connecticut. My parents met and married in the same church and had four children. My grandfather worked in a factory in New Britain. His family was killed in the Genocide, and he married again here. My grandmother, Rose Yessian, who was in an orphanage in Armenia came here under a different name, looking for her father who had come previously, and miraculously they found each other. My mother Mary was a public school teacher, then left to raise her children, and my father Greg was a civil engineer, instrumental in building our Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection in New Britain, a strong vibrant community. When I was growing up, our church was quite decrepit in a bad section of town. In the 1980s, we got a plot of land and built a new church. My dad was the general contractor, and following his request, they named the auditorium after his parents, John and Mary Abrahamian.

I have many memories from childhood and don't really think about it that way. I loved my Armenian community back home, and they're still my family, the friends that I met as kids in the church. I thought they were all my cousins even though they weren't. We went to Sunday School and Armenian School and ACYOA weekends together. I feel closest to them. I'm proud of being Armenian. It defines who I am. We belong to something.

When people ask me, I always say I'm Armenian. I never say I'm American. I think it comes from being survivors. We don't take anything for granted. We fight for everything we believe in, and it's been reflected amply in my work. I feel personally that it's up to my generation and the following generations to carry on what my grandparents brought to this country. Whenever I travel I find the Armenian church, and when you hear the music, you know you're home.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

You don't take "no" for an answer; you go ahead. And if someone says no, you go to the next person.

Do you have role models you admire?

My Kharpertzi grandmother took care of me during the first years of my life when my mother was teaching. I was close to her my entire life. And in my work, it was Gerry Nachman, once the *New York Post* editor, who guided and influenced me.

I can see doing this job until the day I die. I want to take advantage of everything life has to offer. I'm positive and try to get other people to be positive. My parents made me who I am. I'm a bundle of energy, a great friend, daughter, niece, and the best aunt in the world, and give a lot of pleasure to my family and friends. ■

Core Symbols

Armenian artists have always been the nation's best cultural messenger, opening windows to their people, history and heritage. Whatever the media, their art tells the unique story of history and contemporary culture. It is through their works that one is able to gain an understanding of the Armenian people. Several hundred years ago, Armenians began developing an extraordinarily rich culture, influenced by a number of factors. The form of their art reflects both their spiritual nature and their message.



Martiros Sarian – Composition

"The light of Armenia reaches us thanks to Martiros Saryan. ...he is the painter of happiness," said French poet Luis Aragon. The vitality of Saryan's genuinely national art lies in its truth to the character of the artist's homeland, in its originality and its purely coloristic beauty. In his paintings, the artist creates a generalized image of Armenia. The master always managed to achieve a striking clarity and simplicity in the expression of complex ideas. His works are in no sense rationalistic; they are deeply emotional. He was striving to represent nature symbolically as a "living entity." Landscape always remained a leading aspect of Saryan's art. "Nature's ways are wonderful and unfathomable. The grain swells in the soil, the sprout grows and flowers when the time comes, and then it bears new fruit and so does not die," said Saryan. The absolute harmony of color and light arouses in the viewer a restful feeling, a deep sense of peace. The artist brings to each of his works the most delicate shades of a mood.

***Khachkars* – Craft**

Khachkars are created using local stone and carved with chisels, die, sharp pens and hammers. The carvings are then ground using fine sand. Small breaks and rough surfaces are eliminated by a plaster of clay or lime, and then painted. This is the description of the crafting process of one of the most characteristic symbols of Armenian identity. The symbolism and craftsmanship of Armenian cross-stones are transmitted from generation to generation within families or from master to apprentice, teaching the traditional methods and patterns while encouraging regional distinctiveness and individual improvisation. These hand-carved stones are usually up to 1.5 meters in height with an ornamental cross carved on the symbol of a sun or the Armenian wheel of eternity and usually accompanied by carvings of saints, animals or other geometric designs. After more than a thousand years, the *khachkar* is also a contemporary cultural phenomenon. Among more than 50,000 *khachkars* in Armenia, each has its own pattern, and no two are alike.





Aram Khachaturian – Rhythm

Written in the 1940s for the "Gayane" ballet, *The Sabre Dance* melody, due to its exceptionally exciting rhythm, soon established a place for itself in common concert practice, and this rhythm has become one of the most recognizable in the world. Aram Khachaturian's strongest technique in *Sabre Dance* is its pulsating rhythm. He also uses a fast tempo, repetitive theme and a simple melody to express happiness and patriotism. Khachaturian spent much time in Armenia gathering folklore material. He wanted the folk songs and dancing melodies to be integrated into the ballet and become inseparable from the whole music of the ballet. *The Sabre Dance*, according to the author's words, was born by chance. The rehearsals began after the completion of the "Gayane" score. The theatre director called Khachaturian and said that a dance should be added to the last act. As a result, the melody evokes a whirling war dance where the dancers display their skills with sabres.



Minas Avetisyan – Color

Minas Avetisyan used uncommon and expressive colors in his paintings depicting Armenian nature, people and history. He is one of those Armenian artists who put the color back into painting as he works with more intensity of color than any other artist of his generation. He follows the national traditions in painting, yet he shows great freedom and originality in his use of the means of expression found in the work of ancient miniaturists. The influence of Armenian medieval art is strongly apparent in his landscapes, self-portraits and scenes of peasant life. Most of his works were drawn from memory and imagination as recollections of various events and places. It was by chance that the artist's parents escaped the 1915 Genocide, and this is why a dramatic note is perceptible in many of his works, which include main canvases that are devoted to the past of Armenians. Laconicism, reserve and thoughtfulness are also characteristic for one of the most prominent figures of Armenian painting, the Honored Artist of Armenia, Minas Avetisian.



Armenian Manuscripts – Artistry

Ancient Armenian manuscripts are the greatest treasures of the Armenian people. They represent the rich cultural heritage of the nation and convey power of art and the universality of its language. These magnificent illustrated manuscripts evoke wonder, and it is not accidental that the creation of manuscripts is considered to be "the art of writing." Many manuscripts are elaborate, covered in gilt and brilliant colors. Many were adorned with miniatures of fantastic creatures and birds, which often formed the initial letters of chapters to attract the eye, while emphasizing the beauty of the illustrations. Armenian illuminated manuscripts are of various forms, including the prayer rolls, which originally held images from Biblical passages and the Armenian iconography, as well as images presenting the history of Armenia or the Armenian church.

David of Sassoun – Spirit

The iconic statue of David of Sassoun created by Yervand Kochar symbolizes the collective Armenian character – the Armenian people's love and desire for freedom and independence. In his hands, the national epic hero holds the sword of lightening, which is always ready to fight and drive invaders back. The statue is erected on a stone pedestal. The pedestal depicts a bowl from where water flows. The flowing water stands for the patience of the Armenian people, which shows that once it's abused it always turns into fury. Kochar once said, "The Armenian nation has always been peaceful. It has never invaded or any nation throughout its history and instead always tried to defend itself from external threats. The statue of David is located near the train station of Yerevan. This is a message to the visitors of the city. They see how David meets them with a sword and this shows how the Armenian people protect themselves from enemies when their patience bowl is filled." Unveiled in 1959, the warrior-like figure of David has become the symbol of Yerevan and has appeared on various postcards, photographs and travel guides.





Sarkis Baghdasarian – Shape

The sculpture "We Are Our Mountains" in Stepanakert is regarded as a symbol of the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh. Also known as *Tatik yev Papik*, it is a large monument made from volcanic tufa, and depicts an old man and woman hewn from rock and representing the brave people of Artsakh. It was inspired by Hovanes Chiraz's poem "Eternal," and designed and built in 1967 by sculptor Sargis Baghdasaryan. The sculpture is featured on Artsakh's coat of arms.



Charles Aznavour – Voice

Just as the *duduk* is the national symbol for sound, Charles Aznavour's voice is the same for entertainers. "I feel myself a Frenchman by my land and education, but I am an absolute pure-blooded Armenian by my heart, soul and my way of speaking. A thing that enables me to have really a peculiar, an exclusive wealth," said one of the best-known singer/songrwriters in the world. Aznavour composed about a thousand songs in different languages, sold over 100 million records and has appeared in more than 60 movies. Thanks to his efforts and contributions, the world remembers with much affinity of the pain and suffering of Armenians.

Sergey Parajanov – Symbolism

In his film *The Color of Pomegranates*, Sergei Parajanov creates his art of symbols and allegories, beauty and poesy, combining and developing his experience of art and in the process revealing for spectators the history of the life of the poet Sayat-Nova. In an almost silent movie, Parajanov manages to show the whole vision, where pomegranate means life, its juice signifies blood, fish stands for Christianity and rose is a metaphor of love. In this thematically Armenian film, Parajanov has made four parallels, showing the life of the medieval poet, his own life, his historical motherland and all about the Caucasian countries. In one of the greatest masterpieces of the 20th century, the characters simply repeat slow moves against a minimal background to represent an event or an inner expression, almost like a stage performance in an extremely abstract form.





Arshile Gorky – Theme

Mothers have had particular importance in the thinking and life of the Armenian people: they have been the example of self-sacrifice, service and loyalty. "The Artist and His Mother" by the founder of the school of abstract expressionism Arshile Gorky, symbolizes the collective image of the Armenian mother during the Armenian Genocide. In this famous painting, Gorky acknowledges his mother as the martyr, sacrificing her life that her son might live. For the greater part of his working life as an artist, he labored on a number of works devoted to themes inspired by the experiences of his youth, and many of his paintings are directly related to the Armenian Genocide and his mother.

The art symbols listed here do not represent the entire complexity and variety of Armenian art. There are more aspects and features we could have included, so just consider the list a conversation starter with someone who's in the dark when it comes to art of our country.

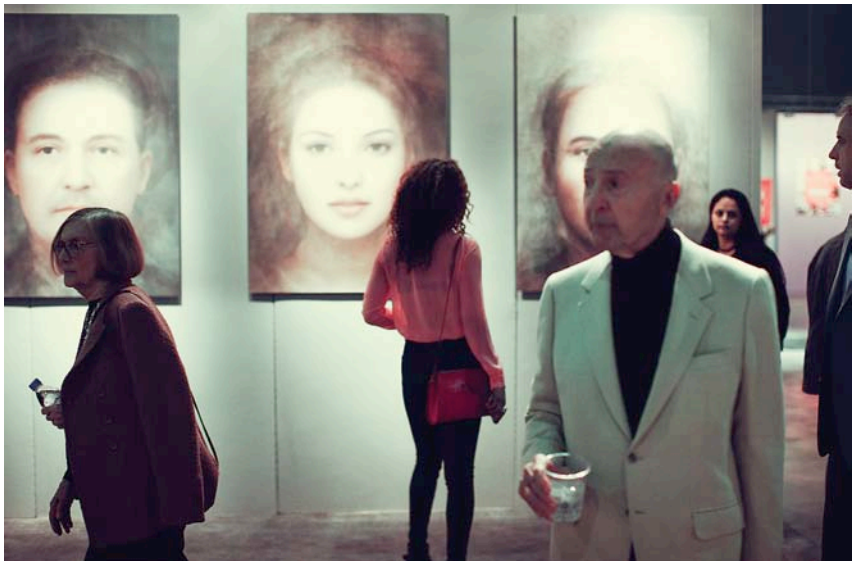


Art Live in L.A.

If you want to be stubborn about your new-fashioned ways of exploration because your idea of viewing art is clicking the "images" icon on your search engine, then carry on, I'm not going to judge you. But sometimes, it's good to actually see something in person – just ask Manti Te'o. Come take a walk with me in this great City of Angels as I visit some vibrant art galleries. Who knows, you might enjoy yourself and at the very least reduce the risk of developing a peripheral artery condition.

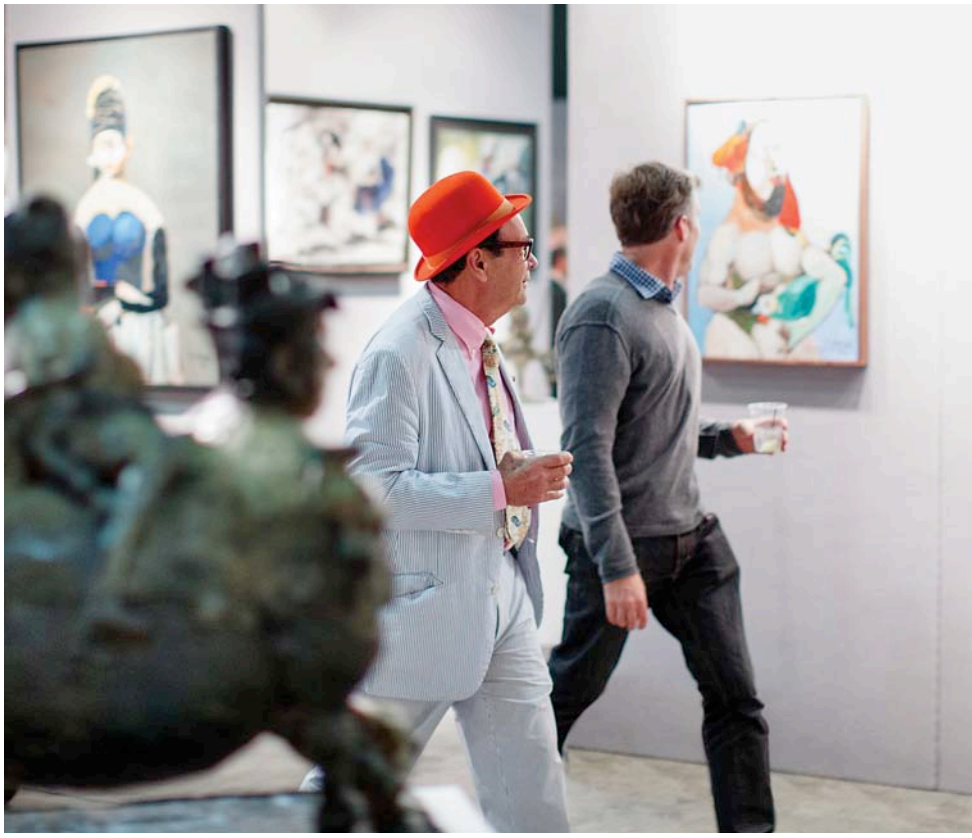
Text **Ara Tahmassian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan and Tigran Tovmasyan**







An ark carrying galleries of historic, contemporary, modern and just about every "-ism" in the art world docked itself on the South Hall of the Convention Center this past January. Aboard were 850 colorful crack pipes that made-up a portrait of Amy Winehouse by artist DOC (Desire Obtain Cherish) and a performance piece by Japanese artist Hiroko Tsuchida, which quite literally chained her high-heeled petite frame to a giant metal mirror on the floor. I tried immortalizing some of these powerful pieces on my iPhone, but at a certain point gave up on camera-focusing and engaged in the maze of mediums that is the LA Art Show.







His Civil-War-era sideburns could not shield him from the media brigade that shined lights, pointed cameras and handed microphones to the leaning male figure covered with a crimson bow-tied onyx suit and anchored by black and white wingtip oxfords. Emil Kazaz's presence was undoubtedly evident at the LA Art Show, even if Emil Kazaz would rather be somewhere else, like inside one of his paintings. What's that like? Imagine taking a ride with Hunter S. Thompson into the land of Narnia, only to be lead out by gluttonous sirens so you can mix it up with Dionysus and his gang of misfits in Fellini's "Satyricon" – maybe then what dreams may come can stir you toward the world of Emil Kazaz.

Garen Ordanyan, a gallery spokesperson said, "Kazaz is very hands-on, as he should be. He wants to make sure each work is under the correct lighting and in the best possible setting." When asked about the dynamics between the artist and his wife, Monet Airian Kazaz, founder of the Airian Dome of Fine Art and KAZAZ Gallery, the exclusive worldwide representative of Emil Kazaz, he said, "It's always tumultuous working with an artist – imagine being married to one. In this case, their relationship always makes for a rewarding gallery experience."

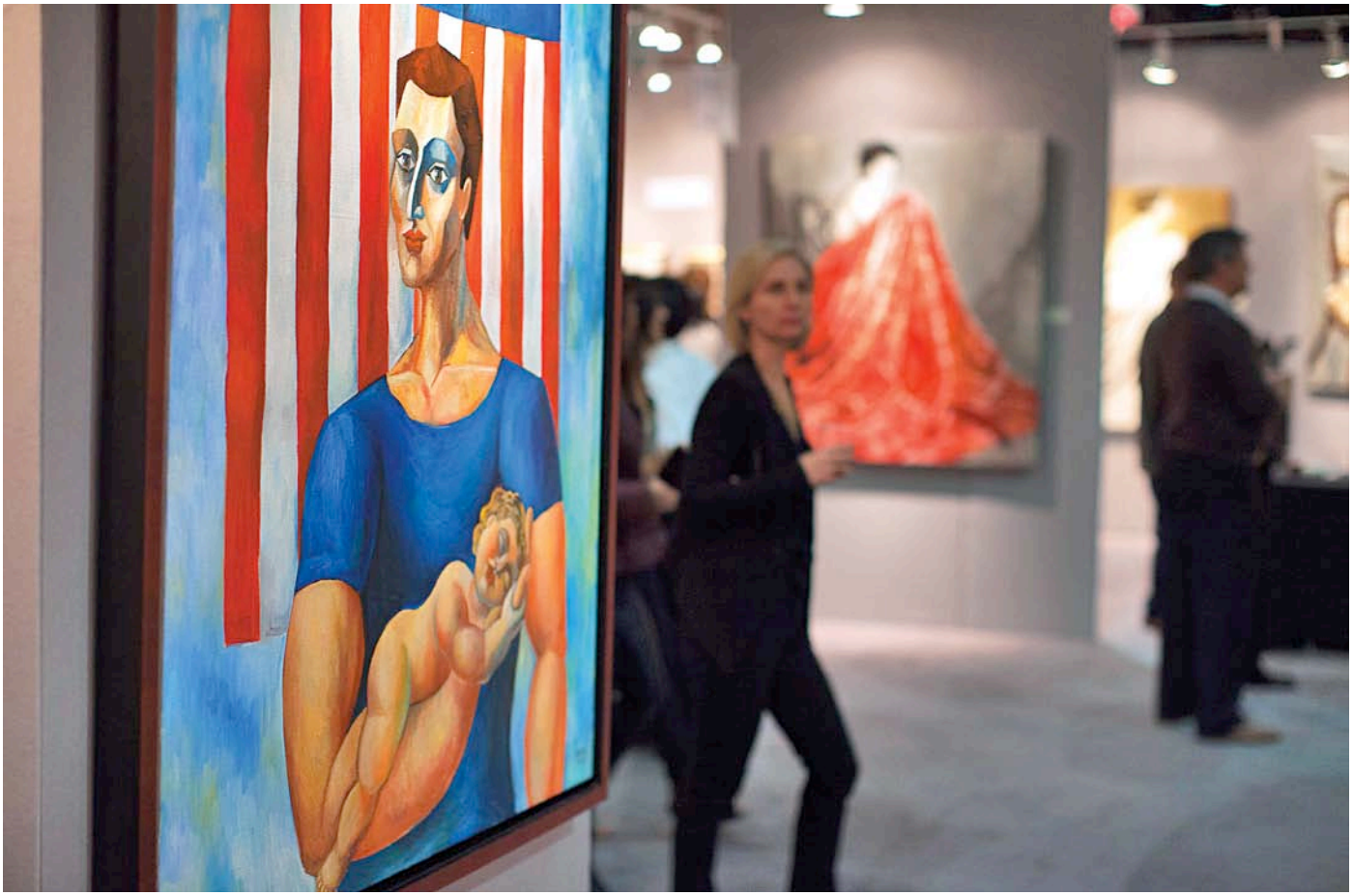


For an artist who has shaken hands with the Pope, Yuroz seemed as approachable and familiar as the blue roses that appear in his works – the kind of guy you want to have a beer with.

"I'm an old timer," he says to me, "a sixties kind of guy – Jimi Hendrix and Led Zeppelin." Then he briefly excuses himself to greet some actors who have made their way from Armenia to support him. But just as I begin to walk away so as not to intrude, he pulls me into their conversation. "Art itself is a form of communication, conversation with each other," he begins to say. "I don't agree with the phenomena that artists don't want to show their work."



The Murloge Gallery of Fine Art created an environment at the LA Art Show that is conducive to his dialogue. Now I'm not a guy who knows much about centering myself, but Yuroz's painting, "Peaceful Warrior," pretty much got me as close to Zen as I was going to get that night.





Walnut-shells give birth to viciously puckered pink lips inside the immaculate milky walls of the Garboushian Gallery on Camden Drive in Beverly Hills – where at the present time nature has begot nature – rather unnaturally. No, this is not some Mick Jagger anatomy cloning experiment, but the current living space of artist Curtis Weaver's ecological system dubbed "ECO-LIBIDO." And unless exposed silicon tongues slithering their way through bronzed branches is a normal occurrence on the planet where you're from, then this experience is bound to feel, well – "cutting edge" – at least that's what gallery owners Herair and Lori Garboushian hope for. Keeping on the brink of contemporary cutting-edge, the Garboushians aim at challenging your artistic palate by staging art that engages the senses. The couple spends their days carefully navigating from one artist's submission to another, until they unearth something that speaks to them. "If you are a curious person, you never want to stop exploring," says Herair. "Exploration is a sign of intelligence."





If you're jonesing for a fix of internationally-recognized Armenian artists like Jean Carzou, Arsène Chabanian, Edgar Chahine, Arthur Pinajian and Jean Jansem, then make a stop at Stephanie's Gallery in La Cañada Flintridge.

But if those names don't ring a bell than check out contemporary artist KOKO (Koko Hovaguimian), whose paintings explore concepts of identity and harmony within a collective environment. Gallery owners Linda and Sepon Stepanian have represented KOKO for twelve years because they believe "he paints from the heart." Originality is important for Linda, especially when it comes to running the gallery. "I do not like copying other galleries or jumping on a trend. Doing that will only take away from my own energy. It's my way, my energy." The three principles Linda uses to maintain a successful gallery are knowledge, patience and love of the art business.

I hope you've enjoyed yourself and mustered up some energy of your own to trade in an occasional recycled Hollywood flick for a visit to your local art gallery. ■

Pursuing Justice through Art



The discussion at the New York Academy of Medicine with an attendance of more than 300 people and moderated by *Armenian Weekly* editor Khatchig Mouradian, was all too important to overlook. With the 100-year commemoration of the Armenian Genocide just two years away, four prominent artists – filmmakers Atom Egoyan and Eric Nazarian, actress Arsinée Khanjian and author Chris Bohjalian – discussed the past, present and future of Genocide-related works of art and their impact on the Armenian cause. The essence of the discussion was captured by *Yerevan Magazine*.

Text **Florence Avakian** | Photo **Brian Vu**

The award-winning filmmaker Atom Egoyan focused his fascinating talk on the book about the making of the film *Ravished Armenia*. He began by saying that he has never forgotten the moment when he first discovered Anthony Slide's book, *Ravished Armenia*, several years after its original publication. He was delivering a lecture in a small college town and noticed the book on one of the shelves at the campus bookstore. Flipping through the pages, he related that he looked at the "extraordinary images, and realized the irony of discovering this book in the most unlikely place at that time." Egoyan was at the university to lecture on his film *Ararat*, which "considers the residual effects of the Armenian Genocide as trauma filtered through various generations. *Ararat* is a film about hidden, denied, or simply forgotten histories. And here within the pages of Slide's book was an almost unbelievable story about which I hadn't even heard."

As he read Slide's detailed introduction, Egoyan found himself overwhelmed by Aurora Mardiganian's unique and harrowing journey. "I was shocked that as an avid student of Armenian history, not to mention being the filmmaker of what has been heralded as the 'first widely distributed film about the Armenian Genocide,' I could be ignorant of what this young woman had endured."

Super-Survivor

"There is something deeply disquieting about using the term 'super-survivor.' The idea that one experience of genocide might be more tragic and extraordinary than another is problematic at many levels," said Egoyan. In doing research for his film *Ararat*, he had come across many horrifying survivor stories, but Aurora Mardiganian's narrative "was clearly unique." Egoyan noted that, as Slide detailed in his introduction, the fact that this young woman witnessed the slaughter of her people, only to relive the trauma for a Hollywood film based on her story "speaks volumes about the exploitation of personal trauma in the production of entertainment."

Aurora, he said, is a super-survivor because she not only witnessed the elimination of her family and community, but also "inspired a dramatic re-telling of this experience, only to observe both experiences fade into complete obscurity." Egoyan pointed out that while *Ravished Armenia* was a commercial success in its time, celluloid prints of the complete film have never been found." Aurora then witnessed both events effectively disappear – Genocide through the denial of its perpetrators and the movie – through the physical loss of the film itself. The combination of these two events raises Aurora's survivor status to a profound level, and her experience demonstrates not only the mutability of physical evidence, but also the fragility of popular media in creating permanent expressions of catastrophe. It is striking to imagine what must have been going through this young woman's mind as she retold her cataclysmic story a few years after it happened, watched as costumed strangers played her torturers in the film version, and then went on a press tour to promote the film until she suffered a nervous breakdown."

As Atom Egoyan read the film script of *Ravished Armenia*, published for the first time, he said, "One cannot help but be impressed with the sheer scale of the story being told."

Haunting Detail

Egoyan revealed that this last detail has haunted him. Slide wrote that Aurora was "having difficulty meeting the social responsibilities forced upon her by public appearances, and also that there were too many presentations for one individual to handle," so her publicity managers decided that seven Aurora Mardiganian look-alikes would circulate for future appearances. For Aurora, this would be the final straw. Slide recounts how she threatened suicide and eventually escaped to New York where she tried to sue her guardians.

"In this sense, not only was Aurora Mardiganian a survivor of the first 'modern' genocide, she was also one of the first victims of contemporary celebrity culture. The attempt to replicate and distribute Aurora's actual physical being was further dehumanization after the horrors she had experienced a few years earlier in Ottoman Turkey. We have become accustomed to the current phenomenon of celebrity crash and burns," Egoyan continued, then asked, "Is it possible that we have found in this Armenian Genocide survivor an early example? Was this early experiment in 'celebrity-stretching' a cautionary tale on the limits of psychic endurance in the wake of insatiable media curiosity?"

One of the most remarkable features of the Armenian Genocide is the "absence of documentary motion picture records despite the fact that the horrifying events in Turkey were widely reported at the time," the filmmaker noted. While there is a substantial archive of still images (most taken by the courageous German army medical officer, Armin Wegner), no film exists of the death march through the Syrian desert, he pointed out. "And so, disturbingly, while there are several documentaries on the Genocide that have used images from *Ravished Armenia* to illustrate the event with fictional footage, it is therefore highly plausible that the scenes which survived from the film were hastily edited together into a cinematic 'show and tell' to educate a new generation of Armenian school children." ▸



→
Actress
Arsinée Khanjian

Promotional Tool

Ravished Armenia had been used as a promotional tool from the beginning, Egoyan stated. According to Slide, the film was promoted as a production for the *American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief*, and due to its great success, it raised a great deal of money for this cause. But the suffering that Mardiganian endured was overwhelming. Not only did she suffer a mental collapse upon the film's release, but the shooting of it was physically tortuous for her. While performing a stunt in the film, Aurora broke her ankle and was forced to continue performing. In an interview with Anthony Slide, she reported that certain scenes in the film clearly show her ankle bandages, and audiences "were expected to believe that they were wounds inflicted by the Turks, rather than the barbarians of Hollywood." Egoyan commented that "we can never know if *Ravished Armenia* would have endured as a great work of cinema. From the fragments that remain, it certainly marks itself as a substantial production, and as one of the producers exclaimed, it was seen as "a thing of magnitude." The film was regarded as a "box office energizer," and several attendance records were apparently broken. The influential trade paper *Variety* commented that the film was "superbly produced, in both characters, setting, and playing." In a century that would be marked by many films about genocide, and especially the Holocaust, "it is certainly the first film to depict scenes of mass murder and racial hatred," Egoyan stated. What has endured, and what this new edition of Anthony Slide's book makes clear, is Hollywood's "uneasy marriage of glamour and atrocity. In setting a story with the magnitude of the Armenian Genocide against the unique personal journey of this super survivor, Slide has achieved a remarkable literary feat," Egoyan declared, adding that "This invaluable book is at once a unique example of film scholarship, as well as a harrowing metaphor for the precarious status of the Armenian Genocide a century after its occurrence."



↑
Filmmaker
Eric Nazarian

Act of Resurrection

As he read the film script, published for the first time, Egoyan said, "One cannot help but be impressed with the sheer scale of the story being told." Again paying tribute to Anthony Slide, declared that the author, whom he called a "great film historian and scholar," has come as close as possible to "resurrecting the full power of the lost film by highlighting the fragments which survive, and seeing them in their proper context. Like the event itself, almost forgotten in history, the film seems to miraculously re-emerge from these pages. In telling the story of Aurora Mardiganian, he brings dignity to the brave and haunted life of this tortured soul. We will never fully comprehend the horrors this woman experienced, but with the book, we come close to an act of resurrection."

Power of Images

Filmmaker Eric Nazarian emphasized that "today, everything involves images," which he called "so powerful." As a 13-year-old, he was introduced in the photo lab of his father to the "beauty of the greatest photography." He uses the image of a horse running with all four feet in the air as an example. "You get the incredible illusion of movement through several frames." He also spoke about the making of the film *Ravished Armenia*. The beginnings of the Armenian Genocide in 1895 were coordinated with the birth of motion pictures, he noted. "The genealogy of the photographic image is precious and powerful." Clips of the film *Ravished Armenia*, made in 1919, emphasize the strength of a



survivor of the Armenian Genocide, Aurora Mardiganian, who was cast in the main role. "These are the first moments of silent movie history. You can try to kill a people, but images cannot be denied and will not go away," he said with an emphasis.

Obligation to Support

Arsinée Khanjian, who has starred in many of the films produced by her husband Atom Egoyan, focused her statement on the obligation of our community to support and invest in artistic expression. "To tell our story and lobby for it costs millions," she said, adding, "We missed the opportunity to make the film *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. The history of the Armenian Genocide has survived in the Diaspora through art, literature, and film. We have to look where our obstacles are and support financially all these efforts that tell our story."

She related that she went to Turkey with the understanding that she could talk about Armenian history. "We have the right to go there. It's our land." She says that she found the Turkish woman Fethiye Cetin, who wrote a book *My Grandmother: A Memoir*, after she discovered that her grandmother was Armenian. "This book has reached the farthest corners of Turkey," she revealed. "This woman has triggered such strong emotions through her book."

Because Nobody Knew

Author of several books including his recently published book, *The Sandcastle Girls*, Chris Bohjalian noted that he wrote *The Sandcastle Girls* because "no one in the United States knew about the Armenian Genocide and its denial. The sands of Der Zor are invisible to them. I wrote it in a way so that people in Kansas and Oklahoma would want to read it. Sometimes art becomes propaganda."

Author Chris Bohjalian noted that he wrote *The Sandcastle Girls* because "no one in the United States knew about the Armenian Genocide and its denial."

↓
Author Chris Bohjalian



Concluding the discussion, *Armenian Weekly* editor Khachig Mouradian spoke about one of his trips to Turkey and his meeting with a ten-year-old Armenian boy whose father was the sole survivor of the Armenian Genocide. "The boy is now grown up and says you can still hear the Armenian people in this area celebrating their heritage." Paying tribute to the Armenian community in the United States, he says it has preserved the story of the Genocide. "Without the Armenian community's pressure, no one would talk of the Genocide, but there's still much work to do, especially with the coming of the 100th anniversary, which will be commemorated in 2015."

Following the event, Atom Egoyan, in a private discussion with me, commented, "We shouldn't expect recognition of the Armenian Genocide by Turkey by 2015. The Turks want to look at the other side. There is no other side! Art should not be based on recognition, but rather WHY the Genocide is not recognized. We are victims of a denial, but we haven't moved on. We're living in a peculiar state of mind. Through artistic expression, we must provide discussion!" ■



CAPTURING HISTORY IN THE MAKING

Robert Frank once said, "There is one thing the photograph must contain, the humanity of the moment. This kind of photography is realism. But realism is not enough – there has to be vision, and the two together can make a good photograph." Following his description, Scout Tufankjian is not just a photographer; she is a true visionary of photojournalism. *Yerevan's* team met with Scout as she returned from Presidential Inauguration celebrations in Washington D.C.

Text **Ani Nazaretyan** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**

As she walked out of an event in Austin, Texas, she stopped to allow a few cars to drive by when one of the cars, a minivan, stopped right in front of her. The back door slid open and there was the Senator of Illinois himself.
"You going to be everywhere I go?" said the Senator, grinning.
"Pretty much, sir," was her response.
"What's your name?"
"Scout," she replied.
"Alright, Scout, see you around."

SCOUT'S PHOTO OF BARACK AND MICHELLE OBAMA EMBRACED IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS TOOK SOCIAL MEDIA BY STORM OVERNIGHT, SETTING ALL KINDS OF RECORDS.

This dialogue took place in February of 2007, and it was the first conversation between independent photojournalist Scout Tufankjian and then-Senator now-President Barack Obama, whose presidential campaign she decided to document after spending four years working in the Gaza Strip during "Operation Summer Rains" (the series of battles between Palestinian militants and the Israel Defense Forces). Scout eventually covered Obama's campaign from start to finish (2006-2008), taking over one million pictures, many of which were later featured on the pages of *Time*, *People*, *The New York Times*, *Esquire* and *Rolling Stone*. In December of 2008, more than 200 of those color photos were collected and published in a book authored by Tufankjian – *Yes We Can: Barack Obama's History-Making Presidential Campaign*. It seemed like Tufankjian had reached the pinnacle in covering the presidential campaign, having her name forever associated with documenting the history of Barack Obama's path to victory. But fast forward four years, and there she was with her hard-to-pronounce Armenian last name once again on everybody's lips in media circles: on Nov. 6, 2012, Scout became known as the author of the most popular photo in the history of social media.

Would our lives and the choices that we make be any different if we had a different name? Do our names have any impact on our personality? Apparently, Allan Tufankjian was highly enchanted by the smart, adventurous and witty personality of the young girl from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* when he decided to name his daughter Scout. It is hard to tell whether or not this unusual name influenced the personality of the Tufankjian girl, but the entire time I was working on this interview, I couldn't stop thinking that if Lee's character Scout Finch lived in our times, she would resemble Scout Tufankjian, the vivacious and daring photojournalist who lives in a thriving megalopolis, listens to the Gypsy punk band – Gogol Bordello, reads detective stories over a glass of sherry, watches *Masterpiece Mystery* and does the job that she loves most – quenching her thirst for adventure as an independent photojournalist who chases moments in history around the world.
"I think one of the reasons that I am a photographer and why I love my job so much is because I am absolutely fascinated by people and their stories. Not just the powerful ones like the Obamas, but regular people. I am extremely fortunate to have this job, which gives me a window into people's lives," explains Scout. "For in fine-art photography, the art is what matters, whereas in photojournalism, the story is the most important part. If the picture is beautiful but it tells an inaccurate story, you can't use it," Tufankjian says.
Scout is the daughter of the Armenian-American lawyer Allan Tufankjian and his Irish-American wife Betty Tufankjian, a guardian ad litem for mentally disabled adults. "I am the only child in the family, although my mother always wanted to have eight kids. I have a lot of cousins on both sides of my family, but since my Armenian grandparents were my only surviving grandparents, I was raised much closer to my Armenian roots. Most of my earliest childhood memories involve my cousins and I roughhousing while my grandmother yelled "*Gamatz*! *Gamatz*!" (careful in Armenian). Frankly, I could still do with someone saying "*gamatz*" to me every once and awhile," says Tufankjian laughing. "My dad's grandfather Kevork (George) Tufankjian came over as a lone child after some of the earlier massacres in Harput. His other grandfather Hetoun Mazmanian came over with his cousin and a few other young men from their village during a series of pogroms (before the genocide). Both my great-grandmothers were from Musa Dagh." ▸

In 2012 Scout traveled to Eastern Anatolia armed with photographs of her great-grandparents' home in Harput that they had brought with them. She eventually found the remnants of that home.

At 19, Scout was spending a semester in college in Northern Ireland when one day the street where she lived was closed because of a riot. "Since I was not going to riot in someone else's country, I decided instead to document what was going on around me." For the young Tufankjian there were only two options. The thought of staying away from the disturbance, like any other visitor would do, didn't even cross her restless mind. "I grabbed my camera and started to photograph the scenes of the riot. I was always fascinated by journalism, so upon my return to the U.S., I realized that photojournalism was exactly what I wanted to do in life." Scout graduated from Yale with a bachelor's in political science in 2000. While in college she met her future husband Nate Schenkkan, and the couple has been together for nine years. "My husband does human rights and pro-democracy work, mostly in the parts of Central Asia that belonged to the former Soviet Union like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan," said Tufankjian. She added with pride, "Also, he is awesome."

The riot in Ireland would be first on the list of hot spots where Scout would set off armed with her camera.

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Girls go crazy as Barack Obama enters Dillon, South Carolina.



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE FIRST LADY HAS ALWAYS BEEN INSPIRATIONAL FOR SCOUT, WHICH IS WHY SHE WOULD OFTEN FOCUS ON JUST THEM.

→
Pizza Man Scott Van Duzer bear hugs Obama. "It was so shocking that I gasped out loud," says Tufankjian.



Scout Tufankjian/Obama for America



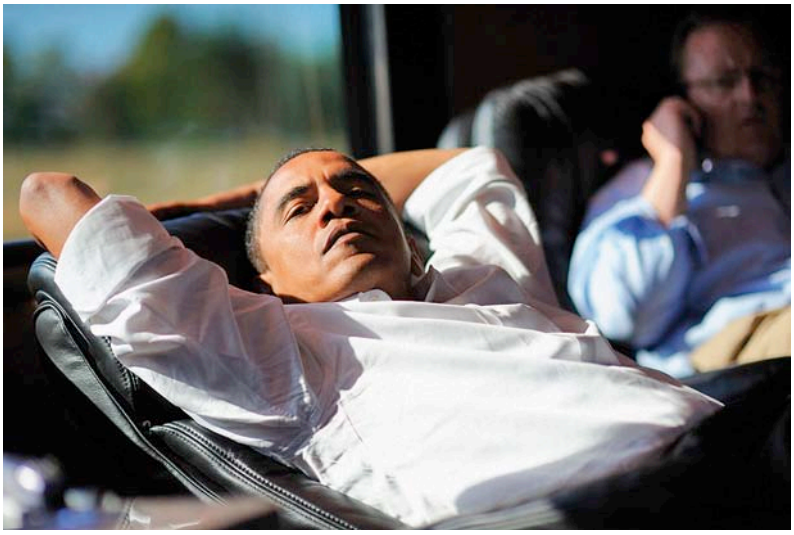
Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images

← Obama playing pool in Charleston, West Virginia, May 12, 2008



Scout Tufankjian/Obama for America

↓ The most famous photo in the history of social media



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images

↑ President Barack Obama taking a quick breather.

From the Gaza conflict to the devastating earthquake in Haiti and on to the upheaval in Egypt, she was there to capture the moment in time and drag it into the future where it would tell the story in the universal language of photography. Her camera is almost always pointed at ordinary people. "The civilians caught in a conflict are the people who stick with me. When you see how they live their lives and try to raise their families even in the toughest situations possible, that's when you realize how amazing people can be," she says.

Obama Campaign

"After the 2006 "Operation Summer Rains" in Gaza, I was a little burned out, so I came back to the United States, and my photo agency asked if I would photograph a book-signing in New Hampshire of then-Senator of Illinois, Barack Obama. I didn't want to go. It was a five or six hour drive, I had a date with my now-husband whom I hadn't seen for a long time, and I just didn't feel like going because I assumed it would be just another dull book signing," recalls Scout. But after her agent told her that some German magazine was willing to pay her, she finally agreed to go. "People in New Hampshire are very conservative, and generally they are not particularly impressed by the politicians who visit them. A few days before that event another politician had showed up with his team, and only four people came to see him. Also, taking into account the fact that more than 90% of the population in New Hampshire is white, I was sure that hardly anyone would appear." But soon Scout was astounded to witness the unexpected. "When Senator Obama walked into the room, the people there almost lost their minds. More than 600 people had gathered there and were all freaking out over him! I thought, 'if this guy can make people react like this when he hasn't even announced yet that he would be running for President, then he can really do it.' I knew that it would be one of the most amazing moments in American history, and I wanted to be there." Then and there she decided to document it all. "I called my agency and said that I wanted to do the Obama campaign, and that's what I did all the way up to the inauguration." During those two years of covering Obama's presidential campaign, Tufankjian took hundreds of thousands of pictures, and in 2008 a literary agent called her saying that there was a book in these photographs waiting to be published – Barack Obama's history-making presidential campaign – and suggested Scout work on that project. It was an offer that she willingly accepted. The book was eventually titled, *Yes We Can: Barack Obama's History-Making Presidential Campaign*, and a month before the election the agency signed the contract with Powerhouse

Books and put it out on Amazon on Election Day. In her book review of *Yes We Can* for *TakeGreatPictures.com*, writer Sarah Coleman says, "What distinguishes Tufankjian's book is that it carries the sensibility of a single photographer, one who wasn't beholden to a major news organization and who maxed out her credit cards to get the story. Somehow, it manages to be both joyous and low-key, in a way our new president would most certainly approve."

Yes We Can became an instant bestseller.

After chasing Obama for two years as an independent photojournalist, Scout suddenly was hired in 2012 by the Obama campaign itself and became one of only two photojournalists on Obama's 2012 campaign team. Subsequently, one day in August on the third day of an Iowa bus tour, she appeared to be in the right place at the right time to immortalize the now world-famous gentle hug given by the President to the First Lady. The photo immediately made history as a symbol of victory after the campaign tweeted it to the world and posted the photo on their Facebook page the day after the elections along with the line, "Four More Years." Within hours, Tufankjian's photo broke all records and became the most "liked," "shared" and "re-tweeted" photo of all time.



Tigran Tovmasyan

Scout confessed that she didn't know why the Obama administration chose that particular photo, but she was extremely excited when her friend called her to share the latest news. She never expected it to get so much press. Scout often says that its popularity is not about the image, but rather about the message it conveys and about how people see the Obamas. One way or another, Tufankjian's photo immediately won the hearts of millions. It was unlike any other static shot of the leader of the country standing in front of his voters with the U.S. and campaign flags waving in the background. The relationship between the President and the First Lady has always been inspirational for Scout, which is why she would often focus her lens on just them as a couple. This relationship was probably best described by the President himself, when ABC's Barbara Walters,

SCOUT TRAVELED TO EASTERN ANATOLIA ARMED WITH PHOTOS OF HER GREAT-GRANDPARENTS' HOME. SHE EVENTUALLY FOUND THE REMNANTS OF THAT HOME.



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images

In Gaza in 2006, Palestinian refugees were housed in a U.N.-funded elementary school in Rafah. On the photo, Maryam al-Khader clowns around in front of a blackboard in the classroom where her family is staying.



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images

Photos from the collection *The Old Country - Travels in Eastern Anatolia*



Scout Tufankjian/Polaris Images

Armenian Diaspora Project

"I am very fascinated by my Armenian background and am very conscious and aware of it," says Scout. "In fact, I am working on a project called Armenian Diaspora, trying to create the portrait of our Diaspora in this time. I am going to Armenian communities throughout the world and have been to Ethiopia, Syria, Lebanon, Brazil and Argentina. I plan to visit Russia, Paris and Calcutta. I think our communities are in a very interesting time right now, as some of them are on the verge of completely assimilating, whereas others have remained much more insular."

during the exclusive pre-Christmas interview in the White House, suddenly pulled out the much-talked-about photograph taken by Tufankjian, and asked the President why did the hug appear so gentle. "Cause I love my wife," was the President's laconic reply. Scout's photo was different – it was fresh, sincere and very personal. Perhaps that was the reason why, out of thousands of images taken throughout the campaign, Obama's team picked that one.

So contrary to what its humble author says, I think many would agree that the success of that photograph was about the message as much as it was about its composition.

As I was talking to Scout about her work and the famous shot, it suddenly crossed my mind that somehow history had repeated itself several decades back, when in 1940, an image taken by another photographer of Armenian descent made history, becoming the most reproduced photographic portrait of that time. It was Sir Winston Churchill's image taken by the accomplished Armenian-Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh.

At times, it seems that photojournalism as an art form should have come to a standstill. The online world is prolific with video and photo-sharing websites, abundant in social networking services, and is suffocating by countless amateur photographers snapping and posting millions of pictures. But it isn't until the moment you come across an authentic work that you start to appreciate this creative profession, for it takes impeccable talent to be able to convey an entire story within one image. ■

Never Underestimate a Woman

Lara Setrakian first turned up in the ratings with her involvement with ABC News and as a foreign correspondent with Bloomberg. Setrakian, the daughter of AGBU President Berge Setrakian, splits her time between New York and Dubai, and has primarily been living abroad for the past five years, covering everything from politics, markets, economics and the occasional revolution in the Middle East.

Text **Mery Khatchatrian** | Photo **Heidi Gutman**



Knowing Lara Setrakian's dedication to her Twitter account, it took me less than 140 characters to get in touch with her. I caught up with Lara as she just returned from Davos, where she was working on a project for the World Economic Forum. Naturally, I was interested in her take-away of the sentiment at the forum. For 2013, she says, most of the participants were more concerned with the fiscal outlook in the U.S. and how it affects the rest of the world. "There were singular pointed fears that any kind of imbalance in the U.S. would throw off the entire global economic outlook." Concerns were also expressed with regards to Syria, Mali, food and water scarcity and the lasting effects of the Arab Spring.

Many in the investment community use the phrase "It's Dubai, Mumbai, Shanghai, or bye-bye" to indicate where the growth and economic boom lie. I was interested in knowing if these three would remain the regions of growth, or attention would shift to new regions that are perhaps not on our radar. "Myanmar is a big step, and we need to understand the competitive advantages there, the ecosystem." Setrakian also noted that Russia and Brazil are places that will allow for opportunities, but it's important to "understand the cultures so you can make better use of opportunities."

Starting her career, Lara took the practical path, working as a business analyst with McKinsey & Company for over a year. However, soon she had a change of heart. "I realized I had a great job, but I also realized that I needed to do something that would feel like my contribution in my lifetime." That's when Lara's career as a foreign correspondent took off. In fact, Lara confessed that she had secretly made up her mind about pursuing journalism years ago in high school during a career day when a producer from CBS came in as a guest speaker, "I was amazed that one could capture so much by documenting conflict zones and cultures, and how every word chosen has an impact on the viewer."

Her previous experience provided her with the structure and familiarity with the business community which, in turn, allowed her to engage in her journalistic endeavors in a more meaningful manner. Traditionally, Middle Eastern politics and business often share the same headline spaces. It's no secret that political turmoil of any kind causes volatility in oil prices, and what happens on the government level impacts business not only in the region but in emerging markets as well. "Politics and revolutions all matter to companies because that's how they get things done, based on the stability and instability of the region."

When the opportunity presented itself to work for ABC News, Lara was certainly ready to make the change, "I agreed to cover Iran and Dubai for ABC news without ever going to either place – I was just ready to be dropped there. I said 'yes' before I had a chance to get nervous."

"I agreed to cover Iran and Dubai for ABC news without ever going to either place – I was just ready to be dropped there," says Lara Setrakian.

Since then Setrakian worked in all hot spots of the region. Lara's coverage of the chaos following the results of the Iranian elections in 2009, is widely acclaimed. She live-tweeted from Dubai when details of the riots and protests broke out. She was even re-tweeting firsthand account of the events. This catapulted the number of her Twitter followers overnight, as she gave a new meaning to social media news coverage. She credits her talent of capturing the story in its essence mainly to an ability to connect with people. "Just listening more than talking is important," she explained, revealing her professional and personal approach. "Come in with calm, dignity, humility and respect into any stranger's house." However, anyone who knows her will add to that her absolute dedication to work.

All aspects of our lives are impacted by our cultural awareness, which particularly heightens in times of change. Knowing the region firsthand, Lara

shared her view on Westerners' misconceptions of the Middle East. She believes not having enough information leads to unjust impressions. "There is a margin of misconception that is going to get a lot bigger because everything in the region is in a state of change. Being familiar with the culture will do part of the job. We are living in an era where Islamist politics are the biggest governing force in the Middle East. We are seeing Islamist politics rise – it's a popular and powerful movement. There is a need to grasp where it is coming from and why it has gained such popularity. If [the Westerners] understand Islam and political Islam, how people [in the Middle East] perceive and interact, then we will understand the choices people in the Middle East are going to make. The world is changing and we are feeling its impact in our wallets now. We need to understand that seeing the context of what is going on is important."

"In our families, in our community or as Armenians – we made it. We are here 100 years later, and that's a sign of success, not catastrophe."

The impact that the ruling dictatorial governments have had on the region over the years and the oppression experienced by civilians has being largely overlooked. "The governing bodied had set up such systems of control that it was difficult for things to flourish, especially from the ground up. The world is not seeing the extent of how the civil societies in these countries are working now diligently trying to fill the gap of thirty to forty years."

Setrakian was on the front lines covering the succession of recent revolutions. It was interesting to learn how she identified winds of change in the countries of Middle East governed by a dictatorship. She explained, "The best way to identify that change is when even those living comfortably in a society think that things need to change." Lara recalls being in Egypt three weeks before the revolution at a dinner party in a "fancy home, in a nice area of Cairo." Even those at the "dinner table said things need to change. When the comfortable people feel that there is need for change, and it overpowers their love for the status quo, this holds significance as a bellwether for change since a lot of the fear of change comes from the uncertainty of people not knowing the alternative. In Syria, nobody knows what the alternative is, and people are afraid of every possible outcome, but we have clues about what's happening on the ground right now, which typically isn't what's in the headlines." Understandably, it is imperative to set the foundation and steer the rebuilding process in right direction because, "Forty to fifty years from now these countries are going to be the result of [current] efforts of the people."

The Middle East is Lara's area of expertise. She knows that how foreign affairs are dealt with is significantly impacted by the media coverage the region gets. She also knows that when the news is not presented in a cohesive manner, it can lead to disaster. Those of us who have lived through revolutions are all too familiar with this phenomenon – regime changes and the toppling of governments, followed by the rebuilding process, immediately accompanied by the struggles of entering a global economy. Regime changes have become a defining part of each generation. Media coverage of a revolution impacts how democracy is brought to the people.

With this in mind, Lara acknowledged the need for a source of news coverage on a new, user-friendly platform of presenting the underlying information that is available. The idea led her to launch the program News Deeply, which debuted its first version as Syria Deeply, a single-subject news media site dedicated to the Syrian crisis. This has been a merger of both her professional sensibilities and her journalistic reporting, but also a major risk on her part as there really was no evidence that indicated the need for such a platform. Fortunately, since the launch there has been a growing demand for "creative media" by other news outlets. She says, "There is a lot of need in the market. The industry has been in a sense slow to find new ways of doing what it does." This wouldn't be the first time Lara has carved out her own niche when she needed creativity and just built her own job description to accommodate it.

Less covered is the fact that the rebuilding of Syria commands a significant amount of interest by multinational companies. "There are frontier marketing firms and advisory groups looking at Syria in those terms and have their eyes on the transition." Many are reminiscent of the trading hub Syria was once known as. Naturally, multinational companies are eager to take advantage of the



Lara Setrakian

• Graduated Harvard College with magna cum laude, studied Government.
• Fluent in Arabic, Armenian, French, Spanish, Persian, and Portuguese.
• In 2012, was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders group and is the third most followed Bloomberg personality on Twitter. Led panel discussions during 2013 World Economic Forum.
• Co-Founder and Managing Editor of *Syria Deeply*.
• Contributed to *Monocle Magazine* and Monocle TV from the Middle East covering human interest stories.
• In 2012, she was named number two on the Top Reporter list by *Marie Claire* Magazine
• In 2011, joined Bloomberg while maintaining her position with ABC.
• Headlined Middle East coverage for Bloomberg during the Arab Spring, covering the aftermath, including the latest from Libya, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Bahrain. Notable coverage include interviews with Lebanese President Najib Mikati and President Ali Abdullah Saleh.
• Contributes to Foreign Policy blog; Mideast Channel with articles on Lebanon, the impact of media on the Arab Spring. Including Economics of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. In 2011- listed on Foreign Policy's FP Twitterati 100 "A Who's Who of the Foreign Policy Twitterverse."
• Named as one of the top 9 most Influential Young Professionals in Foreign Policy Under 33 by The Diplomatic Courier.
• In 2007, received a fellowship from the Peter Jennings Project for Journalists and the Constitution part of the National Constitution Center.

revolution and cater to the post-revolution market with goods and services as a whole new demographic and market opens up within their reach."Companies are looking to help make strides in the rebuilding, stabilization operations and peacekeeping." She adds that many in the Syrian community are much in tune with events in Syria and have a keen sense of the laws. This is all a part of what business can be done after the revolution.

One aspect of change in the region is the struggle for women's rights and leadership – a major topic of discussions at WEF at Davos. While in many parts of the world women achieve great recognition in their professional lives, women in other countries don't enjoy even the most basic rights. Setrakian said that contrary to the impression in the West, women in countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran have a strong standing. She thinks that women in Islamic countries deal with social barriers with grace, "...especially in Saudi Arabia, they have made so much progress in their own capacity. They have made incredible strides in professional and public life and continue to excel."

In Iran, considering a different atmosphere, women are, in a sense, more "frustrated, but they are excelling elegantly in the push forward into the public space."

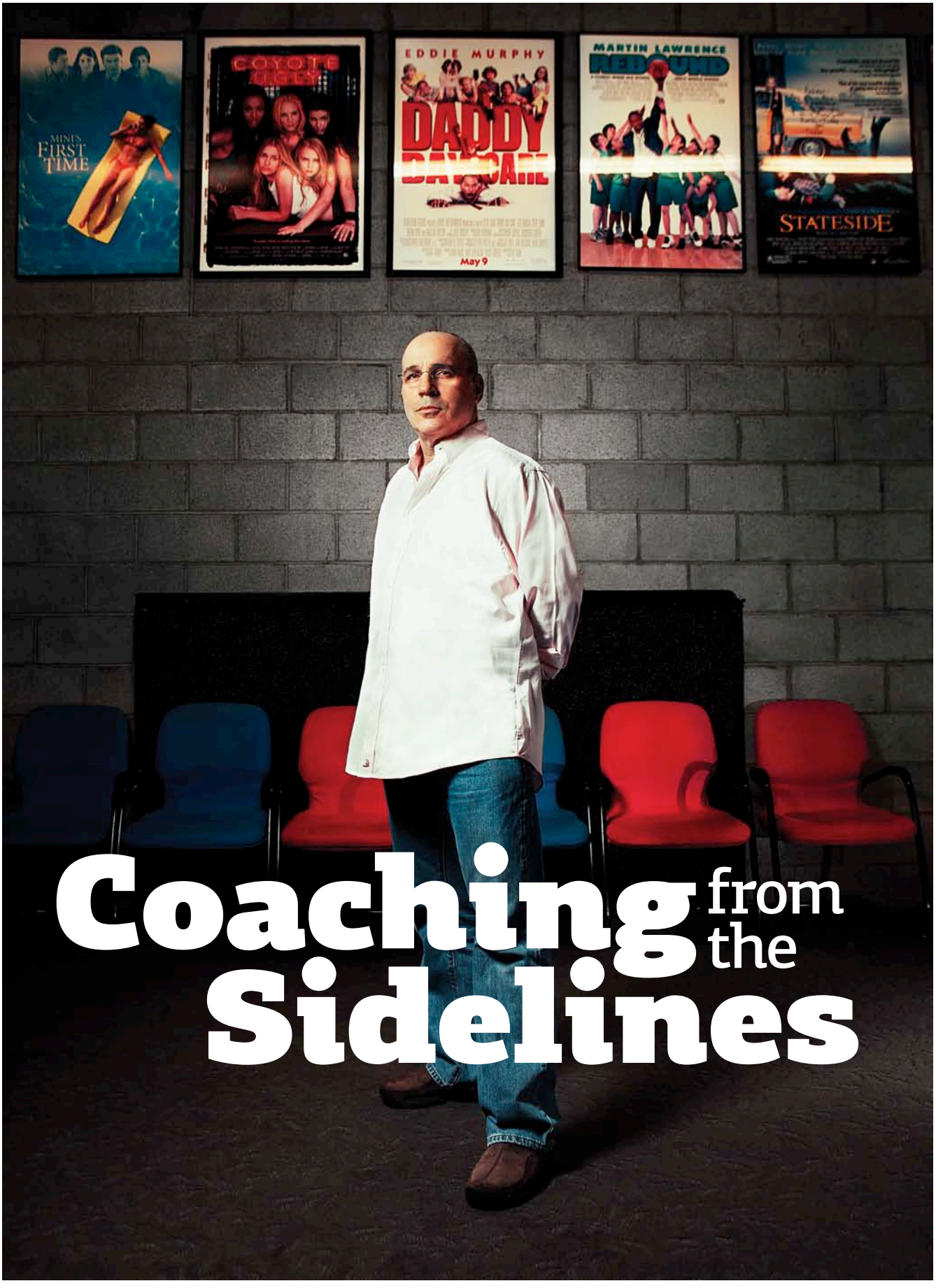
She shared her greatest source of influence and encouragement, which comes from her family. She draws inspiration from them and their ability to overcome obstacles. She's thankful for the trailblazers who went to college even when Harvard, her alma mater, didn't allow women students, including a long line of "fiery characters" that paved the way for her. Her line of work has brought her closer to her roots. Having full access to travel to the homeland of her ancestors adds a certain sense of spirituality that a desk job just would not be able to accommodate.

For a woman who took a step toward an "unpredictable path," her sentiment toward her background is admirably predictable. Reflecting on the devastating hardships, yet always being optimistic, she says, "I am amazed that for 100 years no one in my family ended life where they started. That shows how well we have done collectively, yet we always tend to focus on what worries us. In our families, in our community or as Armenians – we made it. We are here 100 years later, and that's a sign of success, not catastrophe. The start of a new life and exploring new opportunities has shaped our community in many ways."

I had a sense that among her intrinsic traits, other than her old-world charm, her quintessential Armenian character is her strong suit. "We are infinitely adaptable. I joke that Armenians are the tofu of the Middle East; we take on the flavor of the sauce of whatever country we are in. I couldn't have done any of it if it wasn't for adaptability," she smiled. To support this, Lara shared a story about when she was reporting from Tahrir Square and news broke of food shortages. The occasional mini-bar food hoarding did take place, and she formed a stash of mini-bar items on the closet floor in her room.

She credits her strong work ethic to the examples set by her parents. "I go back and forth on who is a bigger hero – my mom or my dad. Sometimes I joke with them. I draw as much strength from my mother as my father in how I run both my professional and personal life." Having a demanding job and finding a balance in personal and professional life can have its struggles, Lara admits. "Especially when you love what you do, it's easy to get lost in it. You know, it's tricky, but you try to keep in mind the full picture of what you want. You can have everything you want in life, it just takes time."

The quote "Never underestimate a woman born and raised in New York City" was a sentiment expressed by *The Real Housewives of New York* cast member, Aviva Drescher. It most definitely rings true for Lara Setrakian. ■



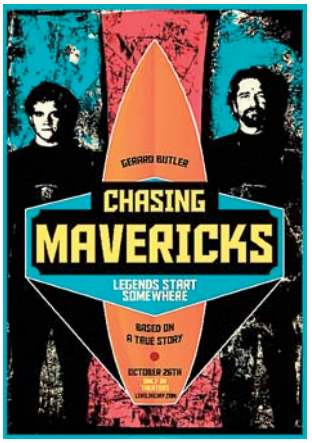
Coaching from the Sidelines

You may not recognize his name or even know that he plays an important role in the entertainment industry, but Andrew Magarian's signature is quietly branded on many of America's blockbuster movies and television shows, including 20th Century Fox's *One Fine Day*, Disney's *The Game Plan*, Miramax's *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl*, Fox Searchlight's *Thirteen* and Dreamwork's *Hotel for Dogs*.

Text **Azzie Mekhitarian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

Much like sports, being a good actor takes years of practice and fine-tuning. It is a fascinating craft that requires both physical and mental balance and continuous feedback and development. This is exactly where one of Hollywood's premiere acting coaches, Andrew Magarian, comes into the picture. Magarian has devoted 25 years of his life to coaching actors on film sites, in group classes and one-on-one. His client roster not only includes some of the biggest Hollywood studios but also some of the most recognizable young names in the industry like Dakota Fanning, Taylor Lautner, Miranda Cosgrove and Abigail Breslin. As an acting coach his role is mainly in the background, making sure his actors hit their marks with truthful and authentic performances. His role is one of many background roles that keep the wheels of the industry rolling smoothly. Most movie sets have acting coaches on-site, most actors have acting coaches with whom they study regularly, and most directors and agents have a roster of acting coaches they can call upon when they are not able to get the performance they want out of a specific actor.

"I work with a lot of young actors who don't have, let's call it, a base yet. My role is to help the actor achieve their maximum performance, to create efficiency so that everyone gets what they need. The acting coach works on fine-tuning the craft," says Magarian.

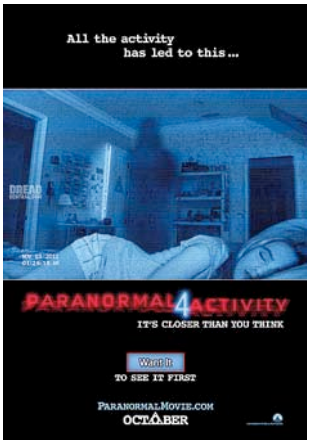




Hollywood attracts the young and ambitious with hopes of making it big or at least making a living as actors. But many underestimate the amount of work and training that is required in this industry. I have had many actors tell me that actors are much like athletes in that they require constant training to keep the fluidity in their craft. One can surmise that acting coaches

"I want to watch the veracity of the moment. What I work for, and what I've been successful at, is getting really honest or natural performances from young performers," says Andrew Magarian, an acting coach of over 25 years.









are also much like athletic coaches in that they play a crucial supporting role. Magarian describes his role as someone who provides the overview, depending on what the director wants. "My philosophy on acting is pretty simple: The actor's job is to play in the moments, the moments equate to a note of music. So if I am teaching someone how to play music, I would teach them how to hit the notes; I would make sure they played the notes with proper clarity. Once you get them to hit the notes you look for the artistic things like their contribution. Basically, you have to give the kids a base. Good acting is the ability to collaborate and share. You can improve anybody, and quite frankly I feel that I do."

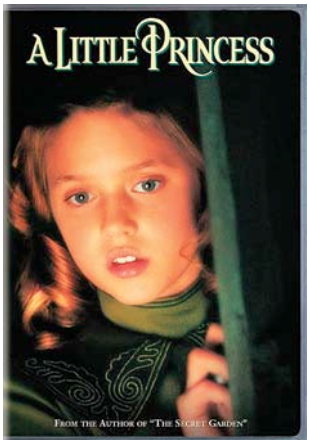
A good scene takes us on an emotional journey. Watching a good actor we become momentarily transported into a character's emotional and physical space. But this only occurs when the scene is convincing, when the movements and emotions are believable even if the story is not. The acting coach provides the feedback that helps the actor bring a scene into the realm of reality. On set Magarian watches each take and judges each moment for its truthfulness, its viability, and its believability. "I want to watch the veracity of the moment. What I work for, and what I've been successful at, is getting really honest or natural performances from young performers. A great moment is when the audience is able to experience it as it grows and develops and translates."

It is that moment that is so intoxicating for most actors. It becomes a driving force, a space in the mind that can only be reached through an extraordinary psychological mining that is required to get to the raw emotions that bring legitimacy to a scene. As connoisseurs of art we search for those moments in movies and love the actors that are able to take us on those journeys. Whether they produce laughter or tears, we don't care, as long as they draw emotion from us. "It's all storytelling. If you want to create, you write. If you want to shape and sculpt, you direct. If you want to make, you produce. If you want to play, well, you act. That's what an actor does. He takes a story that's pretty much there and he plays in the moments with other actors," describes Magarian.

The globalization of the industry has broadened the pool of talent; filmmakers can seek talent from any corner of the world, especially since the audition process has become tape heavy. In the past, most auditions were conducted live in front of the creative team. Today, many auditions are sent in digitally or conducted via Skype. The interaction an actor would get during an audition is now limited to what can be conveyed through a recording. Magarian says, "The audition has become a super powerful tool. It's moved to tape so the person-to-person encounter has been devalued, so you don't know what an actor can do until you have them on set." Since the audition tape may be the only chance an actor gets to prove he or she is right for a part, actors spend many hours with their coaches preparing their audition tapes. Magarian continues, "Most directors don't wish to understand the craft of acting anymore. They rely on casting directors, and many executives want to get involved with the casting also. Most of these directors have developed their scripts but don't necessarily know how to develop a performance with an actor." The acting coach's role becomes manifold as the industry changes. He is not only aiding in the preparation of an audition tape, but also works with an actor to bring a character to life from the script and aids directors in extracting efficient

"It's all story telling. If you want to create, you write. If you want to shape and sculpt, you direct. If you want to make, you produce. If you want to play, well, you act. That's what an actor does. He takes a story that's pretty much there, and he plays in the moments with other actors," says Magarian.









Andrew Magarian

Magarian has spent years in the entertainment industry perfecting the art of capturing authenticity in a scene. His 25-year career has spanned every aspect of the world of acting from TV series' to blockbuster films. Magarian has developed the acting skills of many of today's hottest young actors.

Filmography

Hotel for Dogs
The Ode
Kit Kittredge: An American Girl
The Seeker: The Dark Is Rising
The Game Plan
Flightplan
Bee Season
Rebound
The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl 3-D
Dark Water
Man of God
Thirteen
Coyote Ugly
Down to You
Anna and the King
Anywhere But Here
The Deep End of the Ocean
Urban Legend
Dance with Me
Corrina, Corrina
One Fine Day
A Little Princess (consultant)
A Cool, Dry Place (uncredited)
Mini's First Time (uncredited)
Mercury Rising (uncredited)
This Boy's Life (uncredited)
Trapped (children; uncredited)
Daddy Day Care (children)
When a Man Loves a Woman (children)

and strong performances from their actors. Acting coaches play a crucial, if often invisible, role in the movies we love to watch. The pool of talent has widened with technological advances. Magarian says, "There is more good acting today than there has ever been. But the performers have to really love it and understand that it's not a fair business. You have to really love doing it or it's not worth the endeavor. So much of this business is luck." Considering the emotional stakes of the craft, it seems that actors must build a shield around themselves not to be psychologically impacted by what the craft requires. This must be even more amplified for young actors. If a role requires that the young actor cries in an emotionally difficult scene, it is usually the acting coach that helps the child get into that dark place in the young actor's consciousness and then it is the acting coach who safely pulls the young actor out of that emotional space. It is a fascinating skill to be able to tap into raw emotions that convey truth and then cut the scene and leave that emotion behind. This is emotionally and physically exhausting. Many actors know their limits and understand that they can only give a certain number of takes. I remember watching Anne Bedian rehearsing for a play where on cue she became her character and at "cut" she returned to being Anne, but as she left character I could see the exhaustion in her eyes. This process is enthralling to watch. It is pure skill and talent. But asking this much emotional involvement from young actors must be a delicate balancing act. Magarian explains, "There is a certain generosity in being an actor. Actors aren't brave or courageous but they are generous. In order to do these things they have to share parts of themselves. This is an act of generosity. The story deserves it. The actor's area of creativity is thought and feeling. As an acting coach you help the actor navigate through this. With children I'll take them in and then take them out."

When I ask Magarian if he can identify the "it" factor in someone when he sees it and what that factor is, he brings examples from some of his notable clients. "It's different for different people. Mea [Whitman] is an artist, you could see that early on. She's great at trusting. She knows how to make herself at home. That was her skill. Dakota Fanning just had this amazing mind, and she needed a place to play. So in recognizing her mind, I was able to guide her a certain way. For some it's their physicality. Like Taylor Lautner was an extremely talented physical specimen who had the ability to move, plus he was disciplined and trained."

Magarian's role in the industry has given him an insider's view on what works and what doesn't for acting on film. This very integrated art of storytelling that engages our senses of sight and sound and asks us to suspend disbelief long enough to take us on extraordinary journeys through time and space, has become the medium that reaches the masses in ways no other art medium can. We are beholden to this art form for expanding our minds and allowing us to experience a wide spectrum of sensations. It takes many elements to bring a great performance to the scene; the actors' generosity of emotion, the director's vision, the screenwriter's imagination, and the acting coach's guidance are just a few. ■

Rue de **Mode**



A beautiful mysterious woman is seen passing time with her sisters as she receives alarming news over the phone and rushes out the door. Dressed immaculately, she runs through the narrow streets of London on a cold spring day, jumping over rain puddles as police are chasing her. She encounters a strange masked man. She makes a phone call within a telephone booth and kisses the masked man goodbye. He is left wondering who she was. With perfectly winged black eyeliner in true French fashion, she not only represents Cop. Copine's 2012/13 ad campaign but also embodies the character of femme fatale perfection that the Paris-based clothing company stands for. French-Armenian brothers Leon and Alain Nedelian created Cop. Copine over twenty-six years ago with hopes to be in the retail business like their father. Today, they represent French elegance worldwide as they fill the gap between high fashion and mass market.

Text **Sauline Kojababian**





Everyday French Chic

Parisian women have a firm sartorial confidence about themselves– a certain je ne sais quoi if you may. They can be underdressed yet look graceful and well-put-together at all times. Their laissez-faire attitude is admired across the fashion world. Charmed by clothing design from a young age, the Nedelian brothers felt a need to satisfy a void in French fashion as women in the seventies didn't work outside their homes and had only a number of dresses for everyday wear. As the times were beginning to change and women wanted more assortment in their wardrobe, the brothers wanted to design more ready-to-wear pieces. "Cop. Copine is intended to be a brand for a woman's day to day life. When choosing outfits for special occasions, the task is much easier considering the number of events a typical woman attends are few and far between. Daily dressing becomes more of a chore. It needs to fit the budget and the lifestyle without much effort," says the American CEO of Cop. Copine, Lillie Mosaddegh, M.D. Cop. Copine doesn't discriminate age-wise as their youngest customer can be 16 while their oldest is in her 60s with a continuous zest for life. "I remember a bride-to-be came to the San Francisco store with her mother and grandmother, and they all walked out with outfits and discussed how they would share their pieces with one another. Our clothes make women look younger and look their best without trying too hard," she says. Their old ad slogan used to read, 5 women, 5 styles, 1 brand. The Cop. Copine lady is on the go and needs functional unique pieces in her closet that will make her stand out from the crowd in an understated way. She doesn't want to wear loud logos as they take away from her class and love for being original. "At the heart, Cop. Copine is truly different. It's for those who are tired of seeing the same thing. But with that in mind, the brand walks a fine line; the designs are never really trendy. The same article of clothing you buy today can be worn ten years from now. The brand doesn't age," explains Mosaddegh.

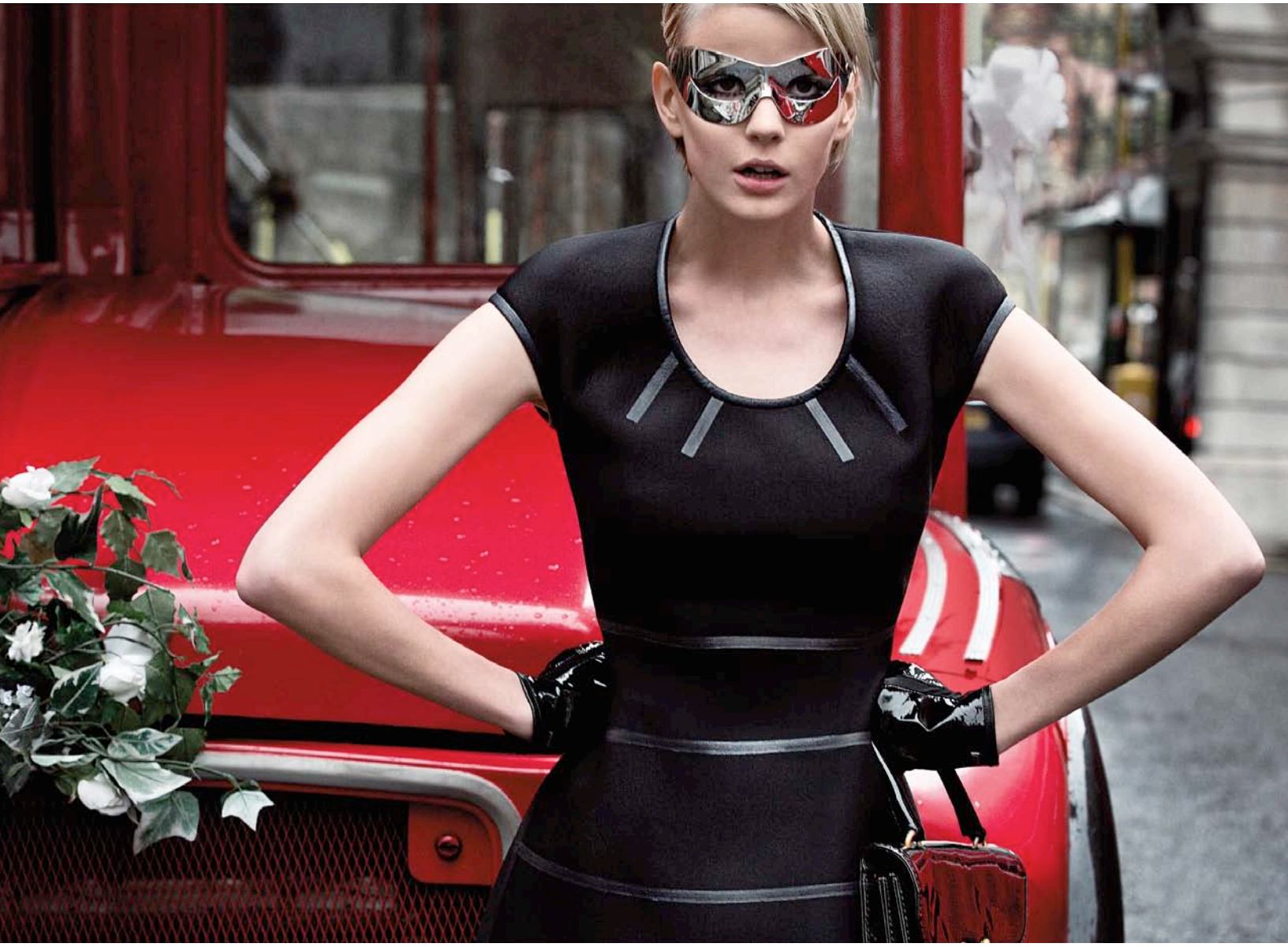
America

Cop. Copine has stores worldwide, including one in Yerevan, Armenia. In 2009, Lillie Mosaddegh opened the first U.S. store in Chicago with its second location in Union Square, San



Francisco. A long-time family friend of the Nedelians, she was a customer ten years before she was a business partner. "Whenever I would visit Paris and tried shopping the stores, I would come out empty-handed unless I was shopping at Cop. Copine. Being a professional woman, it was hard to find time and look your best everyday. I figured if they kept someone as picky as me happy, there are a lot of women in similar situations in the United States that would benefit from the effortless and affordable appeal of Cop. Copine. I know not everyone has the privilege to just jump on a plane and fly to Paris, so my husband and I brought Paris to America. I remember calling Leon and briefly talking about the venture until two years later, when we actually decided to bring the brand oversees," she laughs. The U.S. customer is quite different from the European one. European women are a bit more carefree when it comes to fashion. They are not afraid of wearing bold colors and loud patterns. American women tend to be more conservative and stick to solid colors and subtle patterns. A European lady isn't frightened of florals whereas an American will be more skeptical. The American customer also tends to be swayed more toward functionality that transcends from day to night. "On my first buying trip to France, I bought what I liked but also what I thought customers would like. It turned out everything I liked sold first. I was the ideal American customer," she says. The company is looking to expand across the States with prospective locations in Los Angeles and other fashionable cities. "My vision with Cop. Copine was to use the aspect of my personality that loves art and fashion. The Nedelians are my Paris family. There is a different aspect to our

> "Cop. Copine is a French example of a kind of style and uniqueness that goes on forever."



relationship than just business. It's not all about dollars and cents. They didn't need this partnership; it came about with a great deal of honor. At the grand opening of our San Francisco store, Leon said to me, 'Within the first 30 seconds, I knew this was a good partnership." Branding the city of lights persona in the United States has been welcomed and has many coveting what Cop. Copine has to bring to the table.

Elements

Cop. Copine has eternally been true to their style. Even looking back at old catalogues, the distinctive edgy yet refined look has always been a staple. The brand has a few components that distinguish it from others. First, the element that the company has been family-owned for so many years is a great representation of the values the Nedelian family has for their work. Later, Alain Nedelian, owner and former head designer, hired Mary Jo, an affluent French designer, as their new designer working as a team with every aspect of the business. With over 100 stores worldwide, the brothers continue to attend board meetings, choose fabrics and trims, decide whether or not an idea will be transformed into a design, and assist in all other daily necessities. Second, a lot of attention is paid to detail at Cop. Copine. The brand manages to maintain their mission of affordable fashion for the general public without being mass market and without taking away from quality. They have built lifelong relationships with their distribution centers and factories. They continue to use European cottons versus Chinese cottons. Ninety-five percent of their factories are based in

> "They have been true to their initial vision. Atypical and always different without being trendy."

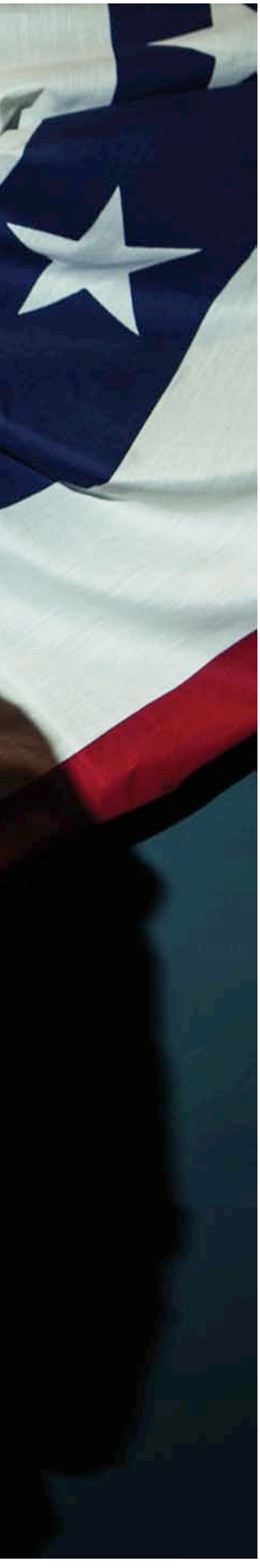


Origination
When Cop. Copine first came about, the designers had in mind both a men's and women's line under the brand name Copain. Copine, which in English translates into platonic Boyfriend (Copain) and Girlfriend (Copine.) The women's line was so popular, however, they redirected their attention and designed for women only under the name Cop. Copine.

Paris and other parts of Europe. "They have managed to keep their design unmatched for their bracket of retail, and their prices don't insult anyone's intelligence," says Lillie.
From a design standpoint, Mary Jo completely understands the female body. She designs for herself as she does for the Cop. Copine consumer - clean asymmetrical lines, tailored fits, and timeless designs. For as long as she has been a designer for the company, the colors have been rather muted with greys, blacks, and neutrals. For the upcoming season, Mary Jo is incorporating a lot of color into the collection, which is unheard of for Cop. Copine. She is pushing the boundaries and going against the grain of her own rules on fashion. "It's a woman's prerogative to change her mind," laughs Mary Jo when asked about a sneak preview for Spring/ Summer. Walking into the Cop. Copine fashion house, one feels the energy of a company that is loved. "They invest in top graphic designers to print tags and details, they designate a special cubicle for buttons, they gather around an idea and discuss it for hours. It is a beautiful genuine process," says Lillie. The designers make what they like and the creativity shows in every piece. Mary Jo is also brilliant in mixing different types of fabrics together. She will use silk with cotton and a knit and incorporate it into one article. Many of the pieces from their line make a whole outfit on its own. Not much else is needed to make a look complete. The brand is evolving with the times; expect the clothes to be even more polished and higher end without losing their ticket charm. "You expect the price tag to be much higher. In this day and age, if you aren't mass producing and outsourcing, the price of doing business is naturally greater reaching a higher-end clientele. With Cop. Copine, they really stand out because their merchandise does not lack superiority in its category."
The French fashion icon Coco Chanel was adamant about looking her best every day. She believed whenever leaving the house, one should look in the mirror and remove one article from her ensemble to keep it simple and clean. Cop. Copine allows a woman to look and feel chic with Parisian flair that would certainly stack up to Coco's standards. ■



Painting the Pitch



Baseball can be simplified into a basic game of throw the ball, hit the ball and catch the ball. Yet pleasant baritones perched above stadium decks call such sequences as if they were poetry in motion. Their artistic dialogue has bridged the gaps between generations much like the game's glorious history does. Fans recognize the voices of Scully, Harwell and Buck telling stories about Koufax, Kaline and Musial better than their relatives. Baseball and its broadcasters blissfully eased Americans into turning the sport into the nation's pastime. Matt Vasgersian is a product of the greats on and off the diamond. Today, he shares a host of stories on MLB Network and FOX as a play-by-play announcer.

Text **Manouk Akopyan** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**

There are hegemonies in sports broadcasting. The Bucks, Careys, Alberts, Kalases, and Brennemans are just some of the notables among them. Their children were raised on sports, brushing shoulders with legends before learning to brush their hair. Getting a job in the business was a foregone conclusion – they were successors synonymous with the surname.

Matt Vasgersian didn't have such luxuries.

He was the successor to his Boston Red Sox-loving father, Ed – a former Marine who spent a career in San Francisco's law enforcement. Ed schooled his Oakland Athletics-loving son on baseball.

Vasgersian was born in 1967, a year before the A's relocated from Kansas City. After a World Series three-peat from 1972-74, Matt was hooked and spent his formative years at Oakland–Alameda County Coliseum as a diehard fan, listening to Bill King.

The late King called A's, Golden State Warriors and Oakland Raiders games, all of Matt's favorite teams.

"I always knew that I wanted to be in broadcasting, but I never knew if it would actually happen," says Vasgersian, who was also a child actor.

Well, it did happen.

Today, Matt Vasgersian is 45 years old, looks 25, and has been a baseball announcer for half his life. He estimates calling over three thousand games and has broadcast everything from the Olympics to the NFL and college sports to blackjack and poker programming.

However, there was an unfulfilled benchmark on his credits list – calling a baseball playoff game. Last October, he took care of that by announcing game two of the Divisional Series between the Detroit Tigers and Oakland Athletics.

After centerfielder Coco Crisp dropped a fly ball that would have preserved a lead, Vasgersian yelled, "...and he can't make the catch! Two runs will score and the Tigers have taken the lead! Santa Maria!"

Santa Maria is the occasional euphemism Vasgersian drops for his "Holy ----!" moments.

Fans have known the witty Vasgersian well before his postseason debut; his professional ascent has played out to plenty of satisfying Santa Maria's. He currently calls games and hosts a variety of shows for the MLB Network. He's also the play-by-play guy for FOX's Saturday Baseball Game of the Week and the voice behind Sony Playstation's *MLB The Show* since 2005.

He previously worked as the play-by-play man for the Milwaukee Brewers for five years and the San Diego Padres for seven, but before the big leagues and national audiences, he toiled in small-time radio across every stage of the minors.

"It's going to sound like false humility, but I've been in the right places at the right time," says Vasgersian. "Even if you're not everyone's cup of tea, at the very least you hope that you are respected. I feel that I've worked hard enough for that and to be deserving of the opportunities that I was given." ▸

Backdoor Slider

In order to be a play-by-play man, you need to be an artist. It requires methodical consistency while being able to speak with the comfortable rhythm of the ocean at night. And yeah, you also need thick skin.

Although Matt was born in Berkeley and raised a half-hour away in Moraga, he did not get into Cal or Stanford, he says, so he moved to Southern California in 1985 to attend USC. By 1989, he graduated as a communications major, and was working at Universal Studios in Hollywood as a tour guide. He then got a PA job, but was nowhere close to getting his foot into broadcasting. At 22, he simply didn't know how to do it.

Then as fate would have it, he caught a break through the Western Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church's summer camp. Vasgersian, an ordained sub-deacon at Oakland's St. Vartan's Church, attended the annual camp both as a child and young adult, where he took on such roles as campfire coordinator and counselor.

That's when Vasgersian met Dr. Jim Amerian, who owned a 20% share of a minor league team in West Virginia. After night-long conversations about baseball, the two became fast friends. A few months later, Amerian called with a promising opportunity – the team's announcer was leaving, and he asked Vasgersian to send in his reel.

Matt went to the third deck of Dodgers Stadium, recorded a demo-tape and sent it to Amerian, who shared it with his partners. Soon Vasgersian was headed to Huntington, West Virginia to call short-season Single-A ballgames for the Chicago Cubs affiliate.

"It was a low-risk move. Even though I made $500 a month, I would have worked for free," remembers Vasgersian. "At that point, I knew what I wanted to do. But I like to tell everyone how I had to backdoor the start of my career through Armenian camp."

"I don't want to overdo my role because he is superbly talented," says Amerian, the conduit who currently is a gastroenterologist in Los Angeles. "It was a fortuitous situation, and I feel great that I could be a part of it. He's always been thankful, but he doesn't have to be."

Vasgersian's rise through the minors between 1991-96 covered a stop at every level, where he successfully doubled as an advertising agent, a common occurrence in the minors. Being a dual threat asset allowed him to climb through the ranks. "Organizations had to justify having a broadcaster on payroll. I had to sell outfield fence signs and radio commercials. I didn't enjoy it, but I was successful at it."

Thanks to Michael Jordan's midlife crisis that was minor league baseball and the eventual craze that ensued, ESPN launched game-of-the-week programming. It was a low-paying gig that established guys didn't want and a perfect opportunity for Vasgersian to have time away from radio and build a TV tape reel.

With that, on April 1, 1997, the 29-year-old Matt Vasgersian was called up to the majors.

He was now the play-by-play man for the Milwaukee Brewers.

"There isn't a moment where I don't expect him to say something funny. I have to be very careful that I am not eating something that could come out. He had me choking on a pretzel once," says John Smoltz, Vasgersian's game analyst at MLB Network.

The Natural

Whether it's video gamers incessantly playing to the sound of his voice, baseball die-hards watching him year-round, or his 98-year-old grandmother who follows him without understanding baseball, Matt Vasgersian has a legion of fans.

What gives him the *it* factor is his charismatic personality, the moments where he pushes the envelope by not resisting the temptations of innocuous humor. In today's DVR culture, every broadcaster's blunder is magnified. Viewers wait to point out mistakes just as much as they anticipate the final outcome of a game. A garden variety of Vasgersian's gaffes have landed him on watchdog websites in the past. Vasgersian – who's still waiting for a shot as a head writer on *Saturday Night Live* – says his missteps are always intended to be playful.

"There are so many inflated egos in broadcasting who believe they are just as big as the game. I see that around me a lot, and I've made it a point to not emulate that. It's not organic to who I am. I am a

Matt Vasgersian

Matt Vasgersian is currently an MLB Network play-by-play announcer, anchor and studio host. Since the network's launch in 2009, he's regularly appeared on *MLB Network Showcase*, *MLB Tonight*, *Hot Stove*, *Quick Pitch* as well as other feature programming. He also serves as the play-by-play announcer for MLB on FOX. Baseball has always been at the center of his career, but he's worked across other sports.

▸ **Major Leagues:** Milwaukee Brewers (1997-2001), San Diego Padres (2002-2008), FOX Sports Net's Baseball Thursday, FX's Baseball Saturday Night

▸ **Minor Leagues:** Single-A (Cubs, 1991), Single-A (Padres, 1992), Double-A El Paso (Brewers, 1993-1994), Triple-A Syracuse (Blue Jays, 1995), Triple-A Tucson (Astros, 1996), ESPN2's *Baseball Across America* (1995)

▸ **Football**

FOX NFL Sunday (2005-2008), Toyota Gator Bowl (2001), FedEx Orange Bowl (2007), Tostitos Fiesta Bowl (2008, 2009)

▸ **Olympics**

2004 Athens Games (baseball and softball), 2006 Torino Games (ski-jumping), 2008 Beijing Games (daily studio coverage), 2010 Vancouver Games (ski-jumping)

▸ **Other Credits**

USC Trojans basketball (2004-2006), Sony Playstation's *MLB The Show* (2005-Present), UFC 56 (2005), FX's *Toughman World Championship Series* (three-seasons) *The National Heads-Up Poker Championship*, *Poker Superstars*, *Celebrity Blackjack* on GSN



MLB Network

← Matt Vasgersian alongside analyst Harold Reynolds

smartass by nature. But being honest with myself, there are moments where I should be straighter."

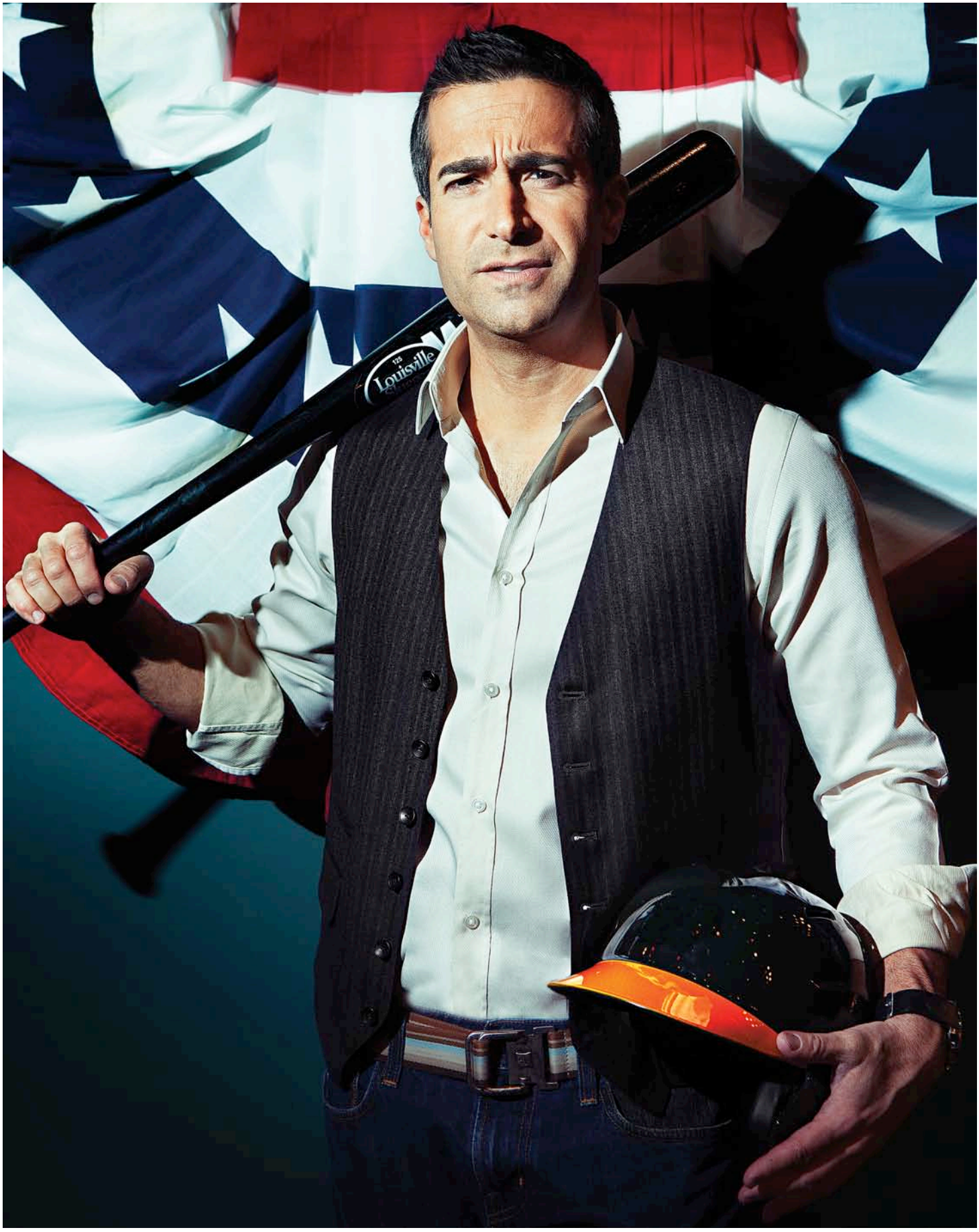
Analyst John Smoltz tells *Yerevan Magazine* that Vasgersian's unique ability to balance a broadcast with his humor has made the former eight-time National League All-Star's transition into TV much smoother.

"There isn't a moment where I don't expect him to say something funny. I have to be very careful that I am not eating something that could come out. He had me choking on a pretzel once," says Smoltz. "He knows how to make situations work, and it's not even a struggle. He cares about making a team effort. It's right up my alley, and I couldn't be more comfortable. If you're not having fun, I don't see how you can stay in this business."

Outspoken and clever by nature, it's exactly the reason why Vasgersian can't be found on the loaded gun known as Twitter, a platform where fan feedback is either flattering or borderline susceptible to filing a police report.

"I don't trust myself on Twitter," says Vasgersian, frankly. "I'm not particularly comfortable with people having that kind of access to me. So many of my baseball friends and colleagues are on there, and they have to put up with such vitriol. I don't need that. I like to keep the happiness in my life in check. I don't need everyone to tweet at me every time I misspeak. That's what my bosses are for."

The most incredible supporter Matt has had was Ringo Starr, who in 1997, sent a compliment his way,


Louisville

thanking him for an in-depth in-game interview he did with Peter Frampton.

Vasgersian can count similar "wow moments" on one hand. There was also the time he called his first game at Dodgers Stadium.

"It was the second inning and still quiet, and all of a sudden, next to our booth, I hear Vin's voice, and I'm thinking to myself, 'Wow! I'm calling the same game as Vin Scully. I have no business even being here right now. Who screwed up to allow this to happen?'"

Then there was the 2001 Gator Bowl, a game he called with Pat Haden, the former USC quarterback he grew up watching.

"We were rehearsing our on-camera open, and I looked at Pat and told him, 'when I was a kid living and dying USC football, if someone had told me that I would be broadcasting a game with Pat Haden, I would have considered myself lucky.' Pat understood that I was being sincere about it, and that moment sticks with me."

"Looking back on it, I regret piling on my work schedule because my personal life suffered. If I had to do it all over again, I can honestly say I would have not tried to tackle as much as I did when I was younger. You feel like you have to accept everything that's offered because at some point, the phone might stop ringing. That was a mistake on my part, but it's okay – I've made my peace with it."

Vasgersian received the balance and year-round stability he was looking for on New Years Day of 2009 when the next great opportunity came knocking.

He became the centerpiece face and voice of the newly launched MLB Network.

Headed by President and CEO Tony Petitti, MLB Network has given Vasgersian the creative latitude he's longed for.

Former baseball All-Star Harold Reynolds, Vasgersian's on-screen partner and analyst, tells *Yerevan* that the "smartest person in the building" has been allowed to utilize his talent and charisma.

"He knows what it takes to be a great broadcaster. He has a huge upside in this business with the future ahead of him, and he'll be around for a long time. At the end of the day, he'll go down as one of the great broadcasters of all time," says Pat Haden.

Haden, now the Athletic Director at USC, tells *Yerevan* that Vasgersian has all the tools one in the business needs – professionalism, listening skills, work ethic and of course, a great voice.

"He knows what it takes to be a great broadcaster. He has a huge upside in this business with the future ahead of him, and he'll be around for a long time. At the end of the day, he'll go down as one of the great broadcasters of all time."

Flirting with Perfection

The Bay-Area-born USC alum had it perfect for a while when he returned to California in 2002 and called games for the San Diego Padres. He purchased a home, was working the dream gig, and had a career that supported his lifestyle.

But the accomplishments were bittersweet: there was no one he could share it with.

In hindsight, he admits that his arduous travel-based profession has been the reason why he's not married or has children. The heavy workloads he created for himself created disconnects in his relationships.

"He's got a great personality and unbelievable wit. I think he's missing his calling in Hollywood. He's that type of a sharp-witted mind. He's a pleasure to be around everyday and I've enjoyed it," says Reynolds. "It's been amazing to watch him grow. For him to make the transition from being a play-by-play guy to being able to host any show speaks volumes about his talent. He's a backbone to the network, and we wouldn't be able to accomplish a lot of things without Matt in the middle of it."

Vasgersian says joining the MLB Network is the best professional decision he's ever made.

"I did a lot of random stuff between baseball seasons back in the day, and I feel that I don't have to do that anymore."

With respect from his peers, Vasgersian can now kick his feet up a bit and wait to entertain an offer from *Saturday Night Live* whenever it comes.

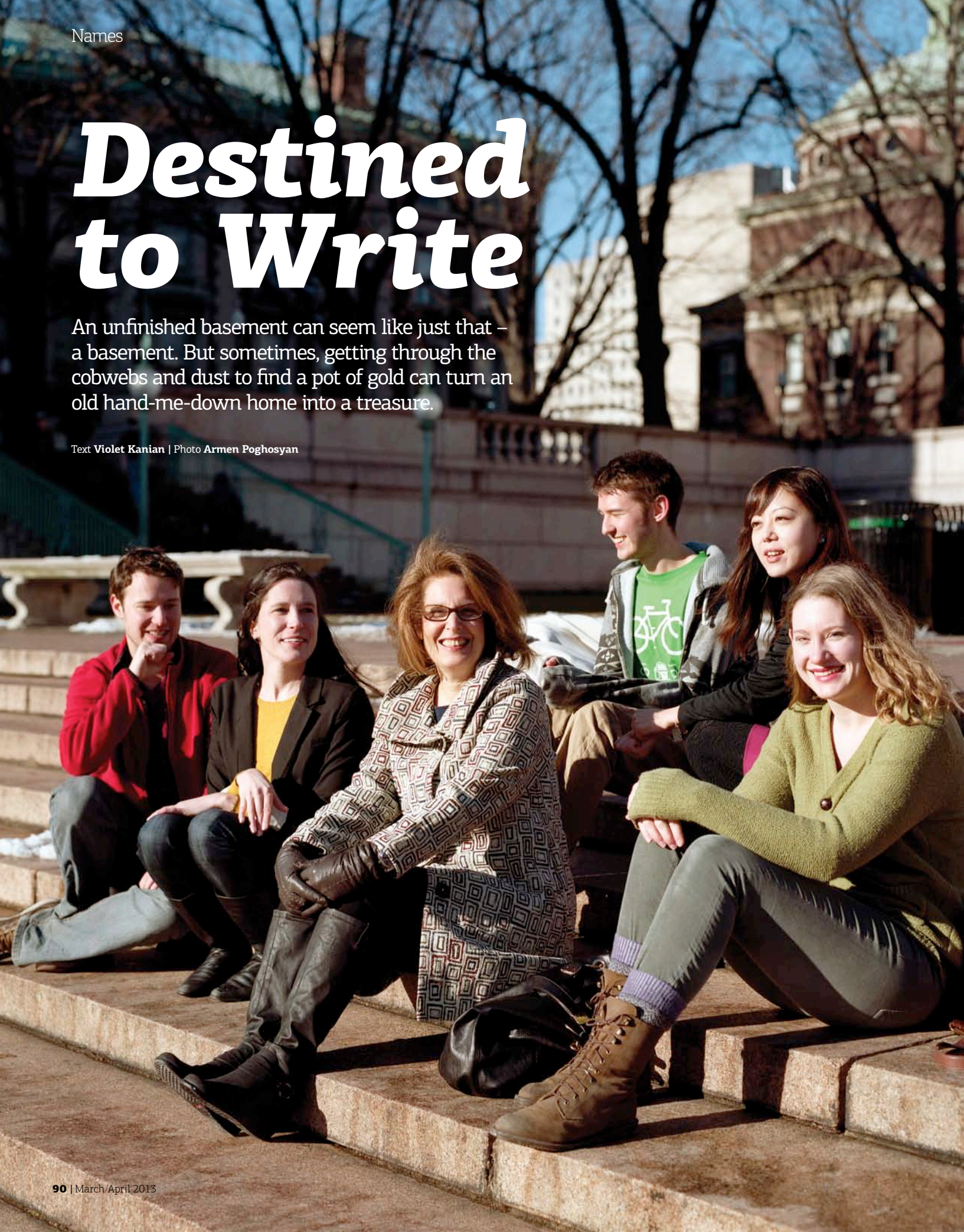
His plan until that happens?

"I want to have a family," he says. "And I want to write the next great American novel and learn how to play the piano." ■

Destined to Write

An unfinished basement can seem like just that – a basement. But sometimes, getting through the cobwebs and dust to find a pot of gold can turn an old hand-me-down home into a treasure.

Text **Violet Kanian** | Photo **Armen Poghosyan**



Leslie Ayvazian did just that when she inherited her grandparents' home in New Jersey. Her grandfather – a minister of the 34th Street Evangelical Church in New York – had left the basement as is with walls covered from ceiling to floor with sermons and diaries written in Armenian, English and Turkish. Pages and pages described the struggles he and his family faced living in Turkey during the massacres and Genocide. Drafts of 15 books written in Armenian were left behind by Reverend Bedikian. Ayvazian's grandmother left her wedding shoes and wedding veil along with an Armenian costume that has been mounted in history. "On the wall next to me is a picture of my grandmother standing with 21 Armenian women in Armenian costumes," says Ayvazian. "It's a picture from the *National Geographic* of 1915 and my grandmother is right in the middle. I found the outfit she is wearing in the picture in one of the trunks in my basement – I have that." Seventeen years ago, Ayvazian took everything she learned from her grandparents' left-behind treasures and turned it into a story that is still being told today. She wrote the play "Nine Armenians" and never once had an inkling of hope that it would get the recognition it has received. In 1994, Ayvazian was the recipient of the Roger L. Stevens Award, and in 1996 she received the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for her work on the story of a three-generation family whose youngest ventures to Armenia to learn about her heritage. What the character learns empowers her and her family beyond the scope of her nation's troubled history. "I was living in my grandparents' house and I felt it was my destiny to write that story," explains Ayvazian. "It was my first full-length play and although some of it was unbearably heartbreaking, I wrote it quickly." Ayvazian remembers having her father read the script for "Nine Armenians." She says that although he took a while to read it, what mattered the most – it made him proud. On her part, she was proud of the fact that reviews of the play didn't use the word "alleged massacres," but used the term "genocide" which she says still makes a difference today. In fact, the script is still being bought and the story is still performed on stages across the nation. You could say that her gift of storytelling has been passed down by her grandfather. He was a man who wrote every single day of his life – and at one point during World War II, he wrote to every single Armenian soldier who was stationed anywhere. Ayvazian says that her grandfather took his writing seriously and was able to write sermons that "could soothe people's souls."

With that gift, Ayvazian teaches playwriting at Columbia University. Aside from this prestigious role, she conducts workshops and is a guest artist at numerous universities. She also has her private one-on-one students as well as classes. Twenty years ago, Ayvazian began a women's only writing group. She invites 10 to 12 women at a time to come together every Wednesday night and write in the presence of each other. They read their stories to each other and when they return home, they are able to turn them into something else and bring them alive. The group became so successful that seven years ago the women asked Ayvazian to work with their husbands, boyfriends and sons. Because of her Columbia teaching schedule, this class has recently been put in the hands of Ayvazian's son, Ivan. "I had these three-hour groups every week where I could constantly write, and that would inspire all kinds of ideas," explains Ayvazian. As for balancing her teaching schedule with writing and acting, Ayvazian says, well… she's really not that good at it. Her acting career has taken a backseat to her other creative outlets. She's had a recurring guest starring role in the *Law & Order* franchise for many years and has acted on the theater stage. However, Ayvazian became less interested in doing long running plays because it interfered too much with the writing process. Although she does believe she's a good,

Ayvazian is a recipient of the Roger L. Stevens Award and Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for "Nine Armenians," a story of a three-generation family whose youngest ventures to Armenia to learn about her heritage.



natural-born actress, she says that writing pulls her in a different way. "What I do as an actress can be done by anyone that can act – but what I do as a writer – and it goes for any writer who really gets to know themselves, that once you start writing from something true inside yourself, then there's no one like you, and it feels more unique and more of a gift," says Ayvazian.

The world of Broadway and theater today isn't what it was 50 years ago. With A-list celebrities playing lead roles for the sake of ticket sales, the art form has altered a bit. Although Ayvazian would cast an A-lister in any of her plays – if it seemed fit, of course – she believes that casting a role is about getting the best people possible and most importantly, someone who understands the world of that specific play. Looking at big blockbuster hits like *Chicago* and *Les Misérables*, Ayvazian says that because plays on Broadway are so different now than they used to be, it's much easier for them to convert to film. Today, a big star in a New York Broadway play can equal huge box office sales. "Before, you didn't have to have stars in your plays, you could just have excellent actors. Now, if you don't have a movie star in your play, you're not going to sell tickets. So the relationship between film and New York theater is far closer than it used to be," explains Ayvazian. The two mediums were once expressed differently. Ayvazian just wishes that more New York actors were able to get the kind of jobs that were once available to them.

As for the difference between acting on stage and acting on the small screen, Ayvazian says that it's two different concepts. "On television you have to learn how to act with a full inner life so the expression on your face, the movement of your hands, even the way your body is held needs to contain feeling that isn't expressed in gesture. It comes through your eyes and the absolute ease with the way you deliver your lines," describes Ayvazian. "The theater is far more expressive. Your gestures are bigger, your voice is louder, and emotion is more demonstrative. It's a scale thing – it's the size of your acting." Leslie has high hopes for the future of theater. She hopes that the box office doesn't have to be supported by big names – that it isn't just a place where movie stars come in between their movies, do limited runs for 10 weeks, make millions of dollars and simply walk away. She also wishes that it became edgier, "I'm hoping that the world of theater can continue to bounce along and deal with its experimental playwrights and allow unusual theatrical experiences to happen," says Ayvazian. "That it doesn't get homogenized and it allows itself to become and evolve in a more personal, more creative way with every new season of playwright."

Seventeen years, seven plays, lots of recurring roles and a career as a Columbia University playwright professor later, Ayvazian has recently found herself inspired by her family's legacy once again. She is about to emerge into the world of theater with her personal and unique point of view. She suddenly found herself picking up her old Armenian books again and reading them – at first, without an intention of writing another play about the Armenian story. "Suddenly I was into it," says Ayvazian. "I started this new play that isn't completely like "Nine Armenians," but it's the same story – and here I am, 17 years later, back in the throes of being surrounded by Armenian books." The story has been flowing through her pen quite rapidly – she even put aside for a while writing another play she was working on because the inspiration for her second Armenian play was so strong. Ayvazian believes that it is clear to her that she was meant to write this play at this moment. Although there are only 25 pages to the script thus far, and it is actually in the hands of a respectable producer who described it as 'giving her goose bumps,' Ayvazian's new intense play is merely in its beginning stages. "I have no idea what will happen after the initial reading which the producer put together," says Ayvazian. "Who knows if it will materialize. But my hope is that it will. I call it my 'new Armenian play' for now." ■

"Before, you didn't have to have stars in your plays, you could just have excellent actors. Now, if you don't have a movie star in your play, you're not going to sell tickets," says Ayvazian, a playwriting teacher at Columbia University.



A Cello for His Daughter

"If I made an airplane out of wood as a boy I can make violins as an adult," thought the 45-year-old organic chemist Peter Aznavoorian. Confident of his skills as a handyman, he decided to end his decades-long successful career at Argonne National Laboratory and enter a three-year violin-making program at the Chicago School of Violin Making. His confidence was not unfounded.

Text **Ruzanna Tantushyan** | Photo **Lisa Marie Mazzucco**

His instruments have since appeared in the hands of the world-renowned concert violinist Stefan Milenkovich, musicians of the Escher String Quartet, the nominees for the BBC's *New Generation Artists* for 2010-2012, but most importantly, his daughter Ani Aznavoorian, an acclaimed cellist. New York Concert Review calls Ani Aznavoorian a "true artist." The *Los Angeles Times* says, "the discovery of cellist Aznavoorian, who shows great sensitivity and great virtuosity at all moments, was particularly satisfying."

Ani has appeared with many of the world's leading orchestras, like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Boston Pops, the Tokyo Philharmonic, the Helsinki Philharmonic, the Finnish Radio Symphony, the International Sejong Soloists, the Indianapolis Philharmonic, the San Jose Symphony, the Juilliard Orchestra, Concertante di Chicago and the Edmonton Symphony.

Her talent showed early on. As a first-year student at The Juilliard School, Ani won the first prize in the institution's concerto competition – the youngest cellist in the history of the school's cello competitions to do so. As a result, she performed with the Juilliard Orchestra in a concert with conductor Gerard Schwarz at Avery Fisher Hall.

In 2000, Ani received the prestigious Bunkamura Orchard Hall Award for her outstanding cello playing and artistry. That same year her father made a cello for Ani.

Peter explains that when musicians reach a certain level of proficiency they have to have an instrument

that is suitable to their playing and their talent. So, armed with chisels, gouges, cutters and scribes Peter made his daughter a cello.

Prior to that Ani was playing on an old, valuable Italian instrument made by Matteo Goffriller that was on loan to her through the Samsung Foundation of Culture. "I was happy with this beautiful instrument, but rather oblivious to the fact that since it did not belong to me, it could be taken away at any time for one reason or another," says Ani. "My father, however, knew this could be the case and wanted to be proactive in the event something should happen. So he made me a cello."

The instrument that has a unique tone and carrying power also has something special: the letter "A" artistically carved on the scroll.

"It stands for 'Aznavoorian,'" says Peter with a warm laugh. But his daughter likes to think it stands for her name, Ani. Practical as they both claim to be, they knew that if the cello wasn't right for Ani, Peter would sell it.

The cello was ready and for months it stood waiting for Ani to arrive from New York and give it a play at last. "I came home, and I think my father hardly let me take my coat off before insisting I try the cello!" remembers Ani. "I was happy to do so, though, as I was terribly curious as well."

They knew from the first note that the cello was something special. As Ani and the cello got to know one another, the instrument continued to improve. The cello turned out so beautifully, that soon Ani gave the old Italian instrument back to its owners and started playing exclusively on her father's cello.

There is mutual pride between father and daughter as they talk about the cello and their gift to each other. "The fact that she is playing professionally is rewarding enough, but that she is playing the instrument I made, that makes it even more rewarding," says Peter with a tremble in his otherwise joyous voice.

At The Juilliard School, Ani won the first prize in the institution's concerto competition – the youngest cellist in the history of the school's cello competitions to do so.


Ani Aznavoorian


Martha Aznavoorian



The cello turned out so beautifully, that soon Ani gave the old Italian instrument back to its owners and started playing exclusively on her father's cello.

"I feel a great sense of pride playing on his instrument," says Ani. "I have never met another musician who has been able to say they play on an instrument made by their father, and I think that makes it pretty special."

Music has always been part of the Aznavoorians' family. Peter had always wanted his children to take music lessons and perhaps become professional musicians. In the mornings, during play and at bedtime, classical music would accompany little Aznavoorians.

"Getting your children into music and playing professionally is almost a career in itself," says Peter, looking back at his children's vocational choices. "It requires a lot of tact and determination."

"You have to see that they practice and listen to enough music but you can't press them too far, otherwise they will flee from it," shares Peter about his tactics. He confesses that the fastest way to drive children away from music is to push them toward it. That is probably what happened to Martin, his son. He used to play the violin. Martin was so good he was in line to practice with none other than the greatest violin teacher of the 20th century, Ivan Alexander Galamian. For better or for worse, Martin has pursued a medical profession.

While Ani took an interest in the cello, following her father's passion, Marta, the older daughter, gravitated toward the piano. She has performed in the most prestigious venues such as the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., the Sydney Opera House, and many others. Marta has appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, and the New World Symphony, to name a few. A member of the Lincoln Trip, an ensemble-in-residence at the Music Institute of Chicago (MIC), Marta has made a recording of sonatas for violin and piano by Stravinsky and Ravel under the ARTEC label. She is currently working on her next recording with Cedille Records.

A long time ago Loris Tjeknavorian, composer and conductor, invited Marta and Ani to perform in Armenia. Regretfully, their trip was canceled because of the tensions that arose between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Once a chemist, always a loving father, and a frequent handyman by nature, Peter is also a grandfather of four. His granddaughter shows an interest in playing the violin. "If she grows up to become a violinist, who knows – I will make her a violin," says Peter. After a short pause he adds, "But the love of music has to come from within, so that is entirely up to her." ■



LARK Musical Society and Opera A La Carte Present 'The Mikado'

Gilbert and Sullivan's famous comic opera "The Mikado" premiered at the Ambassador Auditorium to raving reviews.

The Mikado shares the story of Nanki-Poo, the son of the emperor disguised as a wandering musician in search of his lost love Yum Yum. Meanwhile, Yum Yum is set to marry Ko-Ko, the town's Lord High Executioner. The Operetta was put on through collaboration between Opera A La Carte and the Lark Musical Society. Opera A La Carte is a theatre company specializing in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.

President and conductor of numerous operettas including "The Mikado," Vatsche Barsoumian created LARK Music Society in 1989. Graduate of Westminster College in Princeton, New Jersey, he has been a music director and teacher for over thirty years.

"The mission of LARK is to serve as the musical and cultural brain trust for the Armenian community in Los Angeles – at LARK, music is studied, researched, created, published, felt, and performed by young and old. In so doing, LARK instills the beauty of Armenian heritage, history and culture in the hearts and minds of our next generation and ensures that our collective voice will reverberate in the Diaspora for years to come," shared Vatsche Barsoumian.

The partnership between Opera A La Carte and LARK Musical Society is the beginning to new adventures for Barsoumian, who has previously brought to stage three acclaimed operettas by Dikran Tchouhadjian.

"We are delighted by the unique response this program has inspired and are so grateful for the individual and corporate sponsors that have stepped forward to pledge support and encourage the success of 'The Mikado,'" said Chairman Aris Artounians.

Better known as "The Carnegie Hall of the West," the Ambassador Auditorium has hosted famed performers such as Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo. "The Mikado" cast included Opera A La Carte's artistic director Richard Sheldon, Raffi Kerbabian, Shoushik Barsoumian, Garineh Avakian, Michael Gallup, Matthew Welch, Ann Noriel, Diane Sawyers, and Marc Goldstein.

AJA Celebrates 15th Anniversary

The Armenian Jewelers Association 15th anniversary celebration in Los Angeles completed a series of festive events that were also organized in Yerevan and New York.











The AJA's dinner gala at the Glendale Hilton was both a unique and festive atmosphere, prevailed by congratulations, jovial moods and Armenian songs and dances.

Addressing members and guests was AJA President Gagik Gevorkyan, as he congratulated everyone on the success and achievements of the association. He noted that Armenian jewelers are world-renowned as leading representatives.

"The AJA is one of the all-Armenian professional organizations, and not to sound conceited, it is one of the well-established and well-organized ones. The key mission and goal of our organization is to unite the Armenian jewelers, diamond and watch producers from all over the world around Armenia. Today we can state that AJA has become widely known, and people have started taking a keener interest in it. The 15th anniversary is an important milestone, and our Association will remain intensely engaged and active to have an even more substantial presence in the world," said Gevorkyan.

He also briefed guests on the results of AJA's "Yerevan Show 2012," held in Armenia on Oct. 28-31. Among the participants were renowned Armenian and foreign jewelers from different corners of the world. The RA Government Decree was symbolic too: the last Sunday of October was declared National Day of Jewelers, this serving as another emphasis of the fact that "jewelry is part of the Armenian culture, one of the special gifts granted to us, which has contributed to the recognition of our nation throughout the world," as mentioned by Gagik Gevorkyan.

"We've come a long way and we've changed with times tremendously. As an organization that is always looking forward, AJA West Coast has added a new division to its group of jewelers to acknowledge and unite the new, young generation of Armenian jewelers. The Young Armenian Jewelers Association held its first social event this year at the JCK Las Vegas show, which drew nearly hundred guests and was a huge success," noted Vatche Fronjian, AJA West Coast President. Among the 200 attendees were prominent representatives of the Armenian Diaspora.

"I am impressed, it's emotional. Among the people present here I am happy to see jewelers well-known in America who are Armenian by nationality," said Levon Shant Haytayan.

The festive cake candles brightened up the event held in Los Angeles. Yerevan Magazine had its unique contribution to the AJA event: sponsorship and nice surprises for the participants.



Biking to the Top

From time trial races to stumbling upon Amish villages, there wasn't a story that failed to entertain. These are the tales of one man's many adventures in mountain biking. Grigor Gevorgyan has been riding for almost six decades and does not plan on stopping any time soon. Besides his mission to bike up Armenia's Mount Aragats, acts of spontaneity and opportune timing have served as the underlying reasons for his random bike rides throughout the U.S. Whether it's taking first place in a race, navigating the Kamikaze Trail in Mammoth Mountain or riding a hundred miles in Utah, Gevorgyan's hobby cannot be duplicated.

Text **Lilit Barsegyan** | Photo **Tigran Tovmasyan**

Oh, and he's kind of crazy! You would like him." These were my uncle's exact words as he wrote down the phone number of an old friend he asked me to see about a business matter. "He's a nice and fun guy who mountain bikes in all sorts of crazy places." With this brief introduction, I set up an appointment to meet him. It seemed like the perfect icebreaker knowing we had a common interest, yet I must admit my initial reaction lacked enthusiasm. After all, how impressive could a 58 year-old Armenian man with a bike actually be? But Grigor Gevorgyan took me by surprise and once I learned about the wild explorations of this daredevil, I realized that I had discovered a person who actually rode with Lance Armstrong's team in Texas.

Born in Syria and raised in Armenia, Gevorgyan did not grow up in an athletic environment, and moreover, he was ridiculed for his unconventional methods of getting fit. "My classmates would

↓
A contrasting encounter between Grigoryan and his lifelong friends.



complain when their fathers made them do manual labor. We didn't have any property growing up, so I would always offer to help." I highly doubt digging dirt was something a boy, even back then, would look forward to, but Gevorgyan certainly did. As a scrawny kid, building some muscle must have been exciting and definitely an advantage once he began biking. Even now, this grandfather is quite a slim man – one would never suspect legs of steel on his slender frame. Listening to Gevorgyan share his adventures is like flipping through the pages of *National Geographic*. Although one of his biggest accomplishments was his biking trip in Armenia, Gevorgyan's countless stories of his mountain biking experiences in the U.S are even more intriguing. Aside from competing in Armenia when he was young, after moving to Los Angeles Gevorgyan entered a handful of races, but never on a professional level. He's never competed to win, but "always went to enjoy the race." Speed is one of Gevorgyan's strengths, but he is not a big fan of the road. "Sometimes cars try to catch up with me and get upset when they can't. I use the wind of a car passing me on the street and can go as fast as 35 to 45 miles per hour." When asked about the dangers of encountering animals in the mountains, Gevorgyan replies, "Animals have no intent to attack; cars attack me instead." And this is the reason why he prefers mountain trails over roads. Even in his daily commute to his business site, he prefers the slightly longer scenic drive from his house through the Verdugo Mountains to a 20-minute shorter route via the freeway.

"I've never once took a planned a trip, but Minnesota and Alaska are probably the only two states I haven't biked in yet," he said. But how does this devoted husband, father of four, a grandfather and a successful business owner find the time to explore the mountain tops of America? The answer is in the combination of his upbringing and the nature of his work. "My father hated television and said we must read books," he said, which explains Gevorgyan's frequent references

"I've never once planned a trip, but Minnesota and Alaska are probably the only two states I haven't biked in yet."

to Armenian poet Paruyr Sevak. At the same time, he appeared somewhat technologically challenged when trying to show me pictures on his phone, "I've figured out how to take them, but I don't know how to look at them." However, once we opened his picture gallery, I was in awe. The images looked like views from an airplane, which is explained by the fact that when heading up a mountain his only goal is to reach the highest point possible. "I feel like an eagle – victorious and triumphant!"

After so many years Gevorgyan is as enthusiastic as ever, and when asked about his recent biking endeavors, his eyes start sparkling like eyes of a kid on his first trip to Disneyland.

Gevorgyan runs a trucking business – which is how his nationwide cycling began. Driving an 18-wheeler from the west coast to the east for so many years, he has never once travelled without his mountain bike in the truck. While most drivers relax during their breaks or hang out at the rest areas, Gevorgyan hops on his bike and starts pedaling up the highest mountain he can find. His carefree spirit takes him "where the path may lead." This attitude causes concerns for his family. "My sons fear that I might get lost one day and not be able to find my way back. They tell me they're going to put a GPS tracking system on me." But Gevorgyan is fearless because he believes that getting lost in mountains is much safer than the dangers of the road. He has encountered snakes, mountain lions, packs of wolves and coyotes, of course. "I've seen bears with their cubs and deer with fawns drinking water from a stream. They didn't even pay attention to me. Animals are harmless," he says with assurance. ▸



The trucking industry has been a dream come true for Gevorgyan considering the opportunities offered by his work schedule. He told me about a mystical journey he took one October day.

"I had to drop off a load on Interstate 40 in Kingman, Arizona. I must have arrived early because they declined to accept the load until the next day. I said 'great!' That meant more time for me to explore." So without wasting any time he grabbed his bike and took off into the wild. "It was a total desert-like area, no vegetation, just sand. Imagine the Interstate 15 going to Las Vegas. I spotted a steep paved road with no cars that led to the top of a mountain." Naturally, he decided to bike up that road and see what he could find on the other side. "The hill was so steep I had to zig-zag up, barely going three or four miles per hour. There were bolts and nails all over the place though. I stopped to pick them up, as I always do for other cyclists on the road." Wrapping them up in paper and stuffing them in his pockets, Gevorgyan continued his strenuous ride until he reached the top. "Then suddenly, between two peaks, I discovered heaven." As Gevorgyan was describing the vibrant forest of the Hualapai region, I envisioned Lucy stepping into Narnia.

"It was simply magical! There were about seven or eight houses with elk wandering around them." Making his way down, he found a bar where he met some of the locals and a lodge where he spent the night, which he described as one of the best places he's every stayed. "I had a blast eating and drinking with strangers at the bar!" The next day, he headed back to the lifeless desert outside Hualapai flying down the steep paved road. "My speedometer displayed 58 MPH. I guess I picked up those bolts and nails for myself," he says with a chuckle.

Even though Gevorgyan generally considers himself a cautious biker, caution and Moab, Utah, do not seem to fit together in the same sentence. Moab, known as the "mountain bike Mecca," was one of Gevorgyan's latest and most dangerous adventures thus far. His descriptions were vivid and detailed, yet I couldn't grasp the level of risk until I watched YouTube videos of the area posted by other cyclists. Imagine biking on the edge of a rocky cliff against strong winds. One blow is all it might take to plummet down to a gruesome death. And sadly, this has happened more than once. Fortunately, Gevorgyan's top of the line XTR full suspension mountain bike has probably helped keep him out of harm's way. Unlike his car-enthusiast sons, his favorite ride is his $7,500 mountain bike, a gift from his kids which he's been riding for years.

> "My sons fear that I might get lost one day and not be able to find my way back. They tell me they're going to put a GPS tracking system on me."

One of Gevorgyan's highest achievements was in Armenia in 2007. After three frustrating days of trying to get his bike back from the customs, which involved quite a large sum of money and a lot of yelling, he embarked on his mission – to bike up Armenia's highest peak – Mount Aragats. A rough terrain covered in big jagged rocks was all one could see at this elevation. At 44 beats per minute, Gevorgyan's heart rate is equivalent to that of professional athlete between the ages of 18 and 25 years old. But even with his superb athletic form, he had to prep for the ride in advance by training in mountainous regions to adapt to the high altitudes. Few people hike up Aragats' 13,000 feet elevation, let alone bike it, but Gevorgyan is one of the pioneers.

For someone who claims cycling as merely a hobby, it would essentially be impossible to participate in Tour de France, or anything more difficult for that matter. However, surpassing his wildest dream, Gevorkyan completed the Everest Challenge last year, the hardest two-day cycling race in the U.S. Considered to be more brutal than Califonia's Death Ride and tougher than the Tour de France's climbs, the Everest Challenge is a 200-mile race with 30,000 feet of climbing. Covering six mountains from California to Nevada, Gevorgyan competed amongst professionals and semi-pros. Furthermore, he was somehow placed in the wrong age category and still ended with better results than most of the younger men he competed against.

As if he's not thin already, Gevorgyan exclaimed, "I lost 10 pounds in two days but had never felt better in my life! I am now certain that there is no race that I would be unable to complete."

What else is left? ■



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To Europe Through a Window

While in Holland, the young Russian Tsar Peter I became personally acquainted with wealthy Armenian merchants Peter Abro and his brothers. After a hard workday at the shipyard, the king-carpenter spent his time in the company of the young merchants. Having opened "a window to Europe," the tsar was trying to convince the brothers to recognize the benefits of transiting oriental goods through Russia.

Text **Erna Revazova** | a joint project with the **Digital Library of Classical Armenian Literature Department at the American University of Armenia (AUA)** | supervisor **Meruzhan Karapetyan** | *www.digilib.am*



"Out of Muscovy's fierce rigor
He crossed hither in one stride…
Sunburnt, rough-hewn, full of youth."
Vladimir Nabokov, "Peter in Holland"

The young monarch had no time for fun – the start of his reign was marked by the unsuccessful Azov military campaign. He intended to go to Europe, however Admiral Franz Lefort believed that they should travel there only after manifesting themselves in the Sacred War against the Turks. Azov surrendered after the second military attempt, and once the campaign was over, Peter traveled abroad incognito. Having decided to gain some shipbuilding skills, the Tsar arrived in Amsterdam in 1697 where, during one of the assemblies, he became acquainted with the members of the famous Armenian merchant dynasty – Peter, Abram and Stephen Abros.

Russian tsars were always interested in the great wealth of the Armenian merchants in different countries around the world; they seriously intended to attract these merchants to Russia. In 1667, the government of Moscow signed



Russian kings were always interested in the huge amounts of money made by the Armenian merchants in different countries. They intended to draw the merchants to Russia by offering them favorable conditions.

an agreement with an Armenian trading company in Isfahan. The agreement's main condition was that the merchants had to stop transporting their goods through the land routes of the Ottoman Empire, and instead use the Caspian Sea via the Volga River route to deliver their goods to Europe. However, Persian goods – most importantly raw silk – were still transported by the overland routes of Turkey. The well-known trade routes with their developed infrastructure and easily manageable bureaucrats seemed significantly safer than the unexplored roads of uncivilized Russia where the travelers risked facing numerous perils such as the uprising of Stepan Razin (1670-1671) or the "thieves' riots" (1705-1707).

In fact, a paragraph about the attacks on Armenian merchants was added to an indictment and was announced before hanging and quartering the famous leader of the Don Cossacks, Ataman Razin on the scaffold near the Lobnoye Mesto (also known as the Place of Skulls). Few Armenians were tempted by the terms of the agreement signed with the Moscow government. Over the last quarter of the 17th century, only a few thousand pounds of Persian silk were transported by the rough Russian roads to Europe, whereas, according to the estimates of one "convivial Armenian" Gregory Lusikov, the annual export of that product only to the countries of the



RIA Novosti

All in the Family

The decree of Peter I to bestow the Abro brothers with trading privileges was kept in their ancestral archives for years. Russian consuls in Cairo have tried to buy the document from the family of the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Tigran Pasha d'Abro (1846-1904). (In the 17th century Louis XIV conferred a noble title upon the family). This high merit issued by the Russian emperor to the Armenian merchants is certified by his personal seal. Its stamp is unique, as the seal itself has not been preserved. Today the decree is kept in the Museum of Mkhitarian Congregation in Venice. According to legend, the Abro family came from Ani and later moved to Karin (Erzurum). In the 16th and 17th centuries, their offspring could be seen in Belgrade and Kamenets, in Smyrna and Crete. They founded the Mesrobian Seminary in Smyrna, schools in Bulgaria, raised the Armenian Church of St. Nicholas in Constantinople (1660), in Silivri (1675), and in Kamenets (1676). They set up trade offices, where Armenians worked. After the Ottoman conquest of Crete in 1669, the Armenians managed to open the St. Baptist Church that is still active, thanks to the negotiations led by Abram Abro with the Turkish vizier. The text of this conversation is preserved in the manuscript of Jeremiah Kemurdzhian (French National Library, Armenian collection, N 338).

Old World was 8,000 bales or, 48,000 pounds. This ratio remained unchanged during the first two decades of the next century as well. Moreover, in the initial stages of the Great Northern War and up until 1705, raw silk was not transported via the Russian harbor either. But the next year, as stated in merchant Safar Vasilyev's report, he gave 30,000 rubles of income to the Russian Treasury. The report also contains information about the "great shortage" – the losses that Armenian merchants and consequently the state treasury – suffered during the transit through the port of Arkhangelsk. Peter, who was well aware of raids attempted by European pirates on the Russian Belomorsky (White Sea) vessels, gave his permission to the Armenians to import goods through Rugodiv (Narva) and St. Petersburg "by sea on any ship they want," even Swedish. And on March 2, 1711 the tsar issued a decree to "increase the Persian trade and to fund and assist the Armenians properly, in order to provide incentives for their further arrival."

"Order: leaving the icy fogs inch by inch explore the hot countries and describe it all in verses."

Marina Tsvetaeva "Peter and Pushkin"

The Armenian trade to Europe flourished. The profits were waiting in the largest banks of Europe and the Ottoman Empire for the right opportunity to be invested in some business. Tsar Peter's personal acquaintance with the brothers Abro confirmed the reports of secret agents sent from the southern borders of Russia and Persia about the unprecedented scope of activity and the huge profits gained by the Armenian "khoja" (merchants). In 1715, Artemy Volynsky, who was sent to Persia as an envoy, received direct instructions from the Russian tsar to change the status quo regarding the "Persian export" and stop the transit of the goods to Europe via Turkey. Volynski was ordered "to create all possible obstacles for the trades of Smyrna and Aleppo" as the trade routes of the Ottoman Empire, one of which passed through Izmir and the second through Aleppo, were called. He has also allowed persuading and offering bribes to the Shah who was amenable to flattery and gifts. However, in spite of all efforts to convince the Persian ruler to force the Armenian company to "redirect



← The Mercantile Exchange in Amsterdam (17th-18th centuries)





→
The Holy Spirit (Sourb Hogi) Armenian Apostolic Church in Amsterdam. Engraving, 1788

Denmark official George Grunt reported to his government that the Russian emperor intended to "cover all the costs of the war against the Swedes" with the Persian transit.

all its trades through Russia," the Shah replied quite clearly. His letter stated that the government could not compel the Armenians to turn to the Volga river route: "Inasmuch as the merchants have the will – they trade the way they want. It is an indecent command to force the company to stop trading with certain countries and to turn to Russia." Armenian khojas too were not particularly inclined to abandon the old trade routes and cease their business relationships with counter-parties with whom they had associated through the transit routes of Turkey and the Persian port of Bandar Abbas (port of Shah Abbas). In addition, they found themselves between a rock and a hard place – England in its turn demanded that the Persian-European trade be transferred from the caravan routes through Turkey to the sea routes to India. And only the military actions that had started in the Ottoman Empire forced the Armenians to redirect their attention to the Russian option – the situation changed, and now the risks in Muscovy were much smaller.

"And in the rainy days they met frequently, bent – God forgive them! – from fifty to a hundred. And won, and legate with chalk. Thus, in the rainy days, they were engaged in business."

Alexander Pushkin, "Queen of Spades"

At the beginning of 1717, Peter I, or Peter the Great as he came to be known, made another attempt to entice the brothers Abro toward the endless lands of Russia in his efforts to "multiply commerce in the states and the lands of ours." They met as he stopped in Amsterdam on his way to a meeting with a lovely lady who was waiting for her royal beloved in Europe. But as they say – lucky in love, unlucky in gambling. The Abro family's legend says that the brothers paid a large amount of money for the gambling losses of the Russian tsar. So he decided to kill two birds with one stone – to return the debt tend to his country's interests. "The Tsar and the Sole Ruler of Russia and so on, and so forth" bestowed "the Armenian Peter Abro and his two brothers, Abram and Stephen Abro who were staying in Smyrna and led great trades in India, Persia, Turkey and in the European countries" with privileges previously granted to "Armenians from Julfa." Peter the Great commanded "the governing Senate, the governors, vice governors, commandants, officers of various ranks, military and civil rulers and inspectors in the cities, bailiffs and the customs ministers to let them pass freely and without detention anywhere by land and water, to assist and protect them and demonstrate to their other Armenian brothers the advantages of sending goods to Persia through our lands." And "under the fear of anger and severe fines," officials were forbidden to charge the Abros anything besides the prescribed fee – "per 10 coins from the ruble and a ruble per pound for transportation." In fact, Denmark's official George Grunt reported to his government that the Russian emperor intended to "cover all costs of the war against the Swedes" with the Persian transit.

One thing that the Abro brothers never took advantage of was Peter's invitation to "have a free stay in his residences in St. Petersburg." Although they enjoyed the company of the reformist tsar, they still considered the Russian government to be barbaric and unpredictable. ■

SEMANTIC HALLUCINATIONS

The whimsical forms of costume designer Venera Kazarova's creative universe could be inspired by Russian avant garde art, the minimalism of Japanese origami, surrealism, or the works of Giorgio de Chirico. Whatever the influences, her designs are invariably theatrical, enigmatic and captivating. Born in Russia to an Armenian family originally from Georgia, she graduated from Moscow State University of Design and Technology, worked as a stylist in magazines and television, and participated in numerous competitions and creative projects, including Moscow Fashion Week. Her costumes have walked onto the theater scene in Maurice Ravel's comedic opera "Spanish Time," Pietro Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," as well as Maeterlinck's play "The Blue Bird." Each of Venera's costume and fashion shows is a small theatrical performance with vivid and unforgettable characters. The designer claims that these images come to her as meaningful visions – semantic hallucinations.

Photo **Ira Bordo and Katya Belkina**





Potato elf









Paper meringue



Henri Rousseau inspired motifs







It *IS* Rocket Science

Though Karl Kachigan would humbly call himself a Dynamics Engineer, he was in fact a scientist of rockets. He and his teammates wrote the rules and procedures on how to successfully build and launch missiles into space. Atlas missiles are considered to be the basis for American space exploration. The Atlas launched America's first astronaut into orbit; sent the first probes to Venus, Mercury, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter; fueled the first lunar orbiters and landers; and was America's most successful commercial launch of communications satellites.

Text **Ani Garibyan**



Though Karl is no longer with us, his son Kent Kachigian took me through his father's story. Karl's father was from Harput, Turkey and after a long journey, ended up in Carrollville, Wisconsin. Due to his management and multilingual skills, Karl's father became the foreman of a glue factory. He passed away when Karl was only 15.

Karl worked nights as a janitor and put himself through Marquette University, receiving an engineering degree in Dynamics. Upon graduating, Karl interviewed at Convair with Dr. Hans Friedrich. Hans and his counterpart Wernher von Braun (the "Father of Rocket Science") were lead engineers for Nazi Germany and developed

their V-2 missile and jet program. After the war, they emigrated from Germany to the United States to continue their work. Before digital calculators and computers, complex math was done via slide rule, and one of Karl's first duties was to check Hans' math with a slide rule. In 1952, Karl moved to San Diego to work for one of the masterminds of the modern day missile at Convair, which later became General Dynamics.

Upon joining the team, Karl began researching why liquid propellants would cause the missiles to go out of control. By the time he was 25, he and his team had already solved that problem. Kent recalled his older siblings helping their father with his experiments by walking around the house holding glasses of water. The vibrations from walking swayed the water, which in simple terms is the same thing that happens when a missile is launched. At the time, the nation's attention and funding were allocated to such projects. Everything about the project was highly secretive because of the space exploration competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. This competition was especially heated because the Soviet Union was already ahead in the race to space. The majority of U.S. satellites launched between 1965-1980 were delivered to space through the perfected Atlas missile. He would test every aspect two weeks before the launch. His procedures and standards continue to be used today. In the book, *Taming Liquid Hydrogen: The Centaur Upper Stage Rocket 1958-2002*, the authors write, "He [Karl Kachigan] produced a major paper in 1955 that described forced oscillation of a fluid in a cylindrical tank. Because Atlas had no rings inside the tank to dampen the oscillation of the liquid propellants, it needed baffles to prevent the propellant from sloshing. Kachigan's contribution to the problem of sloshing proved to be a major contribution to rocket theory."

Kent explains, "My grandfather was an excellent manager, being able to speak many languages. He was able to relate to people, and this he passed on to my father." It was said that Karl was able to ask straightforward questions without embarrassing anyone. One of his keys to success was being open. "He had an open door policy. If there was a laborer on the assembly line who said, 'I think this is wrong,' he would take it seriously. He didn't care where the answer came from, as long as it was correct," said Kent. From a young age, Karl was the head of the program, yet he remained humble. Kent explained that he never allowed himself to forget his past. His hardships allowed him to understand every employee, no matter their rank. At an anniversary event, there was a long line of people waiting to speak with Karl. Kent recalls one man coming up to his dad saying, "Mr. Kachigan, I don't know if you remember me, but you asked me 22 questions until I got one right, and from then on I engineered all of my projects in that fashion. After that, I never came unprepared."

> The Atlas missile allows people to use Google Earth images, GPS navigation, and wireless communication, among other luxuries.

There were no textbooks about engineering missiles when Karl and his teammates were constructing these missiles; they were true scientists. They had to test and fail in order to understand and perfect their product. They were pioneers in the field. Karl stopped launches if he found something out of place. He was a true perfectionist. Karl's leadership was written about in *Taming Liquid Hydrogen: The Centaur Upper Stage Rocket 1958-2002*, stating, "Kachigan's leadership helped shape the early General Dynamics Centaur culture. Several weeks before a launch, he sent a 'tiger team' to 'muck through' all the paper, look at all the hardware, and examine all the test procedures and analyze the data." It continues, "Though analytical and fair, he was universally respected for his ability to ferret out problems and make decisions under pressure."

"He would always cross his fingers during every launch," said Kent. Once Karl snuck Kent, then in his 20s, into the base to sit in the control room and watch the launches. It is believed that Karl is the first civilian to receive "Public Service Award" from NASA. And yet, Karl Kachigan did not really have the intention to apply to college until one of his teachers pushed him to go. Karl had written, "I always felt that if Pa and Ma had not come to the USA, I would have become a sheepherder with a good view of Mt. Ararat."

After Karl Kachigan's death, there was an outpouring of letters and e-mails to his family expressing the profound influence he had in the lives of those who knew him. Dick Martin wrote, "Our space careers have been intertwined since 1952. I remember clearly in 1952 Hans Friedrich turning around after a phone call and telling the four-person Atlas Dynamics Group with a pleased look on his face that he had just received acceptance of a job offer to a new graduate from Marquette University and telling us, 'I think this young man has great potential and will be an important addition to our little group.' He sure had that right."

Joe Neiberding, president of Aerospace Engineering Associates recalled, "Over the years, I worked a lot with your dad. I can honestly say that he was one of the best engineers I ever worked with. He made a significant contribution to the nation's space efforts."

Larry Ross shared, "He was my role model for what an engineer should be – a remarkable blend of theoretical expertise and substantial down-to-earth common sense." Another letter read, "The opportunity to work for your dad was one of the main reasons I joined [General Dynamics] out of college."

Martin Winkler wrote, "Karl really was the smartest guy in the room. He always listened patiently, he asked good and pertinent questions, and he never embarrassed anyone, even if at times they perhaps deserved it. And most of all, Karl made us all better engineers." ■

Creative Minds

It is said of Armenians that through the centuries, whether free and independent or subjugated, they have never stopped creating. And so it is with these two artists, both Genocide survivors, both who found their way to Worcester, Mass. The woman was an untrained folk artist who probably never considered herself an artist. The man was known for his natural artistic abilities and became a professional painter and sculptor. Both artists' works speak of universal themes rather than Armenian traditional expression. One was a talent known only to her family. The other was a world-renowned artist who left Worcester and pursued his artistry in places like Jamaica and London. But the artistry of both speaks volumes about the influences of daily life on artistic expression.

Photos and text provided **Ruth Thomasian from Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives**



Makrouhi Fermanian Adjelian 7-84, Worcester, Massachusetts

Needle Work

Makrouhi Fermanian Adjelian of Worcester stands next to a crewel-embroidered wall hanging made by her mother Verkiné Kehyanian Fermanian (1878-1960). Verkiné, a teacher in Constantinople before she married in 1900, went to night school to become a registered nurse and midwife. As a private duty nurse, she often worked among the contagiously ill and also volunteered among orphans. During these years, in her spare moments, Verkiné embroidered on small pieces of wool the faces of people and animals she saw in her everyday life, capturing the charm and variety of people among whom she walked and worked during grim times. She blanket-stitched the edges and added a decorative stitch. In 1930 at age 52 she joined daughter Makrouhi in Worcester. With her she brought her world of faces and stitched them together around a floral needlework piece. Finished piece measures 28" x 36".



Mary Melikian 58-84 Worcester, Massachusetts

Stroke of the Brush

As a young man, Koren Der Harootian (1907-1992), a natural-born artist, was encouraged and supported by his mother and sisters – family support rarely given an Armenian with artistic talent. They had all fled Kharpert, Historic Armenia, during the Genocide after their husband/father was tortured and murdered. In 1921 they settled in Worcester, and Koren attended Worcester Art Museum School, where after a short time they told him he was such a natural they could teach him no more. During summers he went to live among artists in Provincetown on Cape Cod. Later in life, Koren was well known internationally as a sculptor. Here we see Koren in 1929. Photographer K. S. Melikian, with his artist's eye, seated him in a stylish chair ready to put finishing flourishes on his watercolors – sailboats, sand dune, and Cape Cod houses.

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The Erudite Master of the Poetic Line

Jean Carzou (Karnig Zouloumian) was a painter, a lithographer, an illustrator of books and newspapers, a stage and costume designer for opera and ballet, a thinker concerned about the mechanization of mankind, a devotee and defender of ancient relics, ruins, and palatial structures of the past. A master colorist, his work evolves from green to "Carzou blue" to orange to red, with hues of gray and sulfur. Carzou describes his style in his own words, "I don't have a style; it is the expression of my identity. My style is a simple piece of writing with an autobiographical base, natural as breathing, deeply felt, and expressive of an inner, and therefore of an external reality"(retrieved from Krikor Keusseyan's book *Carzou*, 1982).

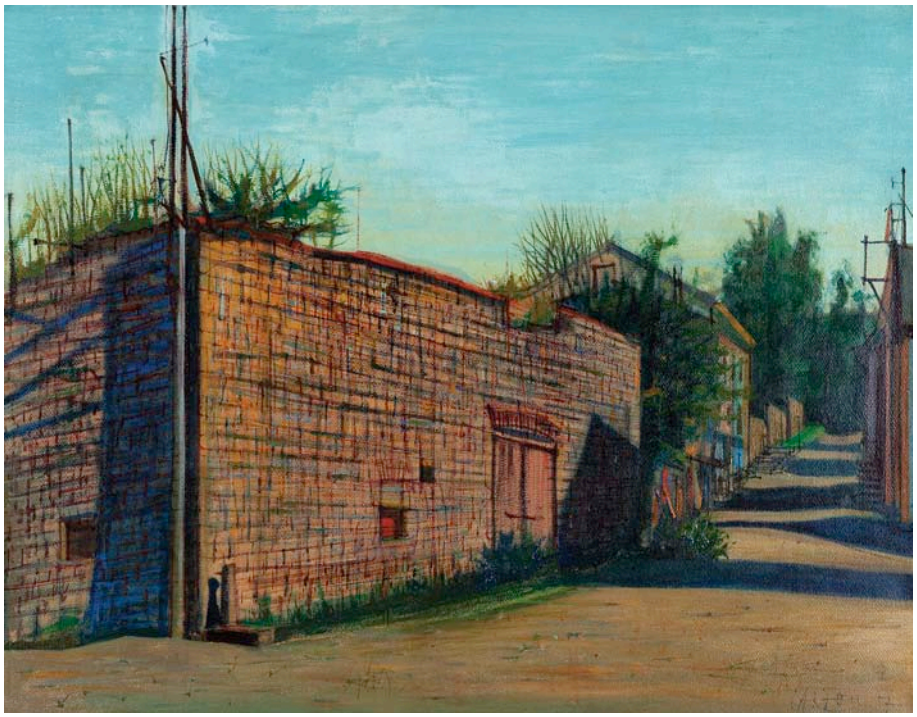
Text **Nare Garibyan**



"Ouistreham",
1957, oil on canvas,
20x26 inches

Kazarian Family Collection/Recently sold at Stephanie's Gallery

La Dame a la Rose (1963) stands with regal posture; her body comprised of vertical, metal lines without the defined shape of the human form, her legs and feet, her arms and hands are extensions of the iron clad wardrobe. Yet, within this architectural grid, there is life in this woman as she gives off a reddish hue, holding a red rose at arm's length; the rose also contains metal accents. Even though she wears a uniquely ornate crown, La Dame a la Rose stands alone in a barren room with no material items except for an arched doorway rendered in the same metallic lines. The door opens to a seascape with a single sailboat at a dock; a male figure standing near that resembles a bundle of wires strung together. In the background there is the faint silhouette of a possible temple, situated on an island. The walls of the room, the blue ocean, and the male persona give a sense of temporariness, as "La Dame a la Rose" remains an emblem of hope within a mechanized society. This painting seems to reflect the inner and external reality of mankind during Carzou's lifetime, a time of steel and desolation as an aftermath of war, with some hope of a colorful future.



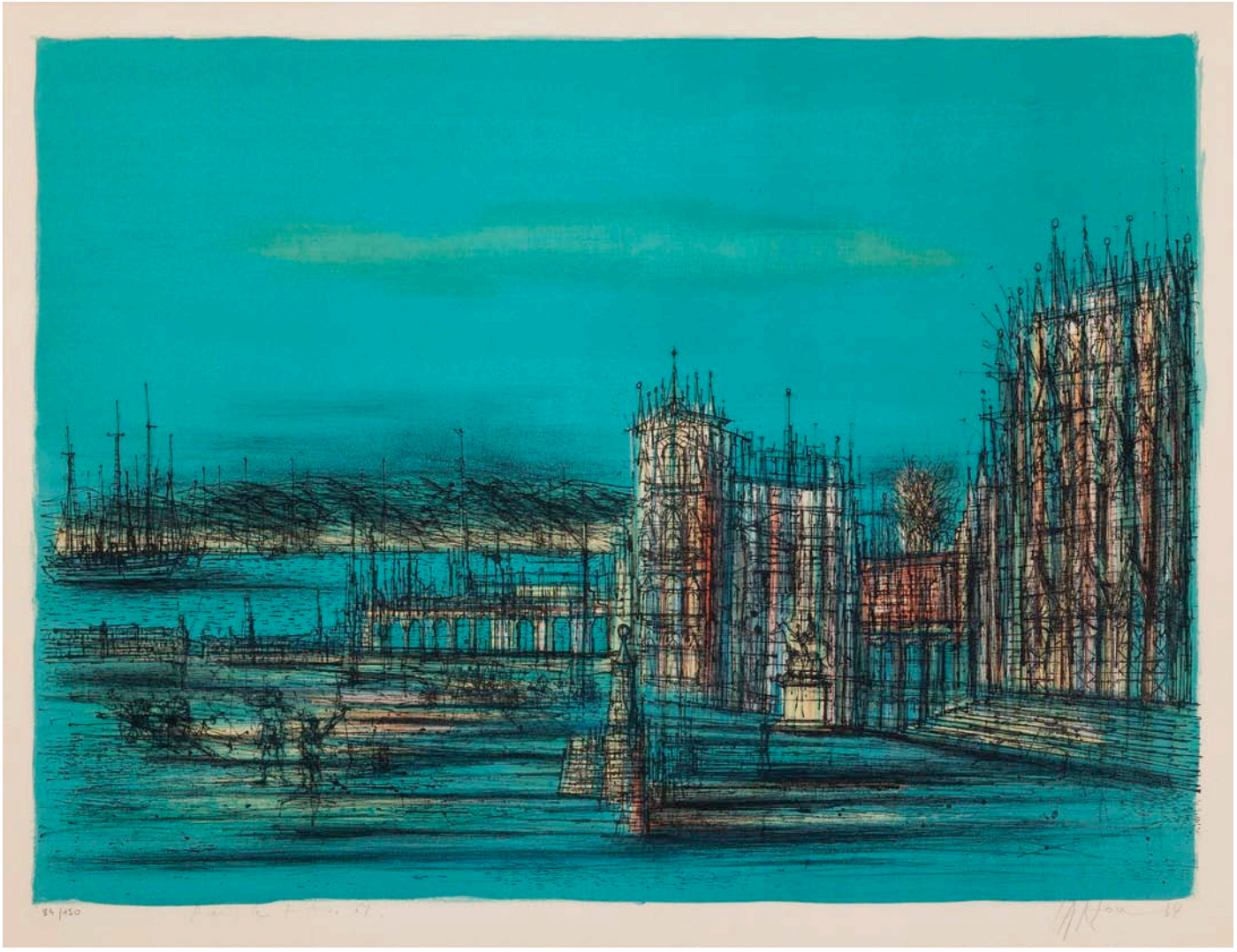
↑ "Le Mur de la propriete", 1957, oil on canvas, 20x25½ inches

↓ "Paysage", 1960, watercolor on paper, 19x25½ inches

→ "Le Palais Sur La Mer", 1964, lithograph, 22x27 inches



In another piece, "Chim`ere" (1978), which means illusion in French, a woman with light blue pupils stares steadfastly ahead, calm and reserved, her steady breathing can almost be felt. Her hair exploding from her scalp in red and yellow shades, she is a "warrior woman," her chest lifted, bracing for something. This figure is in a room again, but the walls are even more elusive. Similarly as in the previous painting, an ornate archway opens to a yellow landscape with a blue sky, a subtle white mountain in the background. "Chim`ere" differs from the first piece because the room contains two additional thematic elements: a jumbled mess of what looks like a canon rolled into a farmer's cart formed by steel beams, and near the woman, a knight with his spear, perhaps a figure who is part of her army. From this painting, it can be inferred that this is a portrayal of the intrusion of the machine and war into human life. Nature



"I don't have a style; it is the expression of my identity. My style is a simple piece of writing with an autobiographical base, natural as breathing, deeply felt, and expressive of an inner, and therefore of an external reality."

guides this woman; the only figure in the composition encircled by the same yellow that is visible through the doorway. As is evident by these two pieces, the woman is a significant theme in Carzou's work. Keusseyan says that since 1935, "the Carzou woman is a presence, sensual as much as angelical, femininely corporeal as much as immaterial, earthly, as much as magical, far from our reach, but illuminating with her presence and herself everything – the surroundings, nature, the atmosphere."

In 1930, Jean Carzou graduated from the Ecole Speciale d' Architecture in Paris right at the cusp of an economic downturn when it was difficult to sustain life as a painter. Thus he began to illustrate advertisements and caricatures for various newspapers in France, first publishing his work in the literary magazine, *Comedia*. At the start of World War II, Carzou lived in the countryside and devoted himself to painting. He approached his art with exhaustive energy and deeply set emotions. In his 1979 acceptance speech to the French Academy of Fine Arts, Carzou expressed what it means to be an artist. "Of course there is little common ground between [Jean] Bouchaud's painting and mine, but there is the essential; it is the belief that we share toward an art to which we gave, on the same basis, everything of ourselves. I like, therefore, in him the humility that effaces the man in front of his profession; the simplicity that keeps him perpetually in admiration of the beauty of nature; the resolute modesty of the craftsman who works according to

the rules of his art" (retrieved from Krikor Keusseyan's *Carzou*, 1982).
Carzou's work has an evolutionary quality because he was not afraid to experiment with the various art movements that sprang up during his lifetime. He was inspired by abstract art, especially Kandinsky and Malevich; in addition he explored cubism and surrealism. He met Picasso, Salvador Dali and Chagall, among other artists and intellectuals. Throughout the years, Jean Carzou refined his poetic line and created unique images. The Carzou line is clearly visible in his lithographs, "La Gare de Triage" (1974, "The Sorting Station") and "La Cité Oubliée" (1977, "The City Oubliée"). In the former, the train tracks are in harmony with the electrical wires that shoot off faint yellow stands into the sky. In the latter, the black gates of the city with their spiked tips sustain an etherealness suggesting transparency, as if the viewer can simply walk through the gates into the city. The long, slender lines continue as an extension of the city, the buildings are expressed in orange, textured like embroidered lace. Each element within the lithograph maintains a singular shape within Carzou's delicate, essential line.
Karnig Zouloumian (the name Carzou combines the letters of his first and last name) was born in 1907 in Aleppo, Syria. Karnig's parents, mother Hayganoush Tashjian and father Harotune Zouloumian, eloped to Aleppo from Dikranagerd (present-day Diyarbakir), thus they were not forced to march through the desert like many of their countrymen during the Genocide. However,

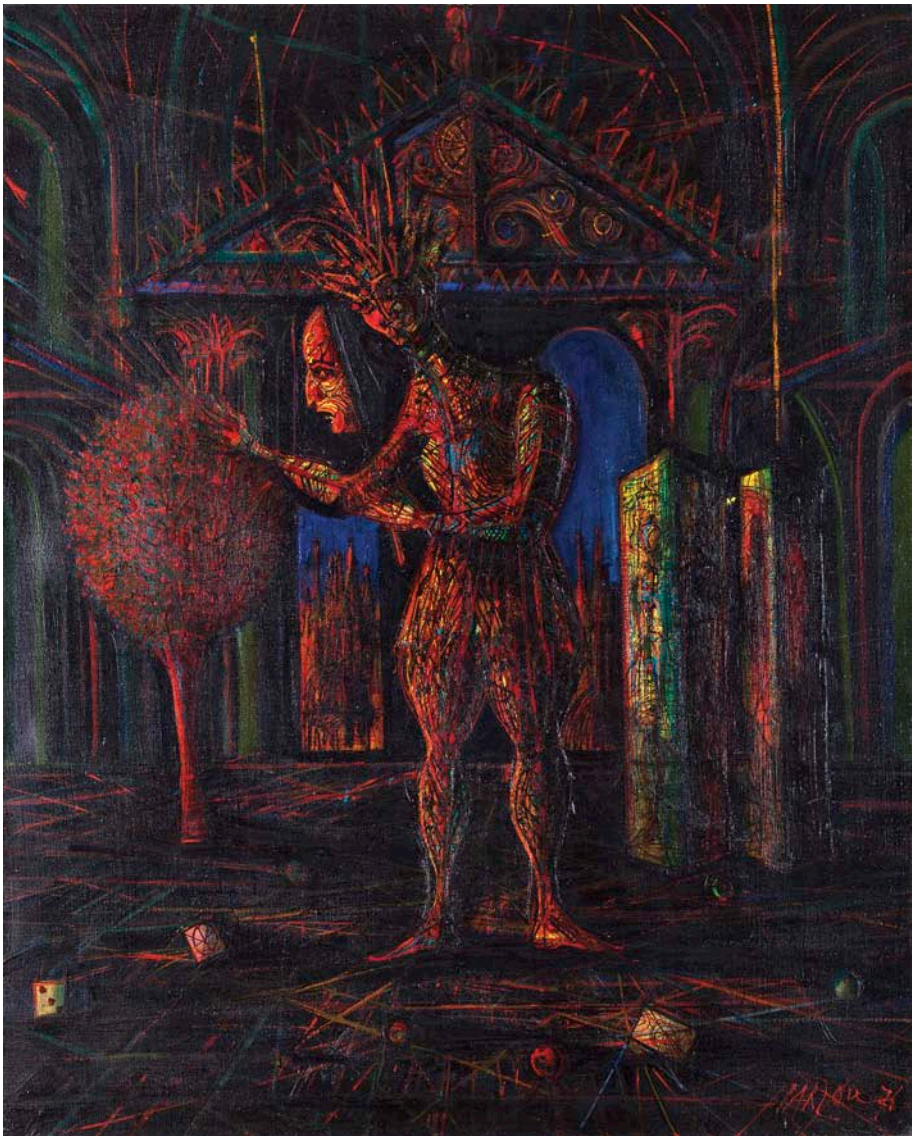
Carzou's work has an evolutionary quality because he was not afraid to experiment with the various art movements that sprang up during his lifetime. He was inspired by abstract art especially Kandinsky and Malevich.



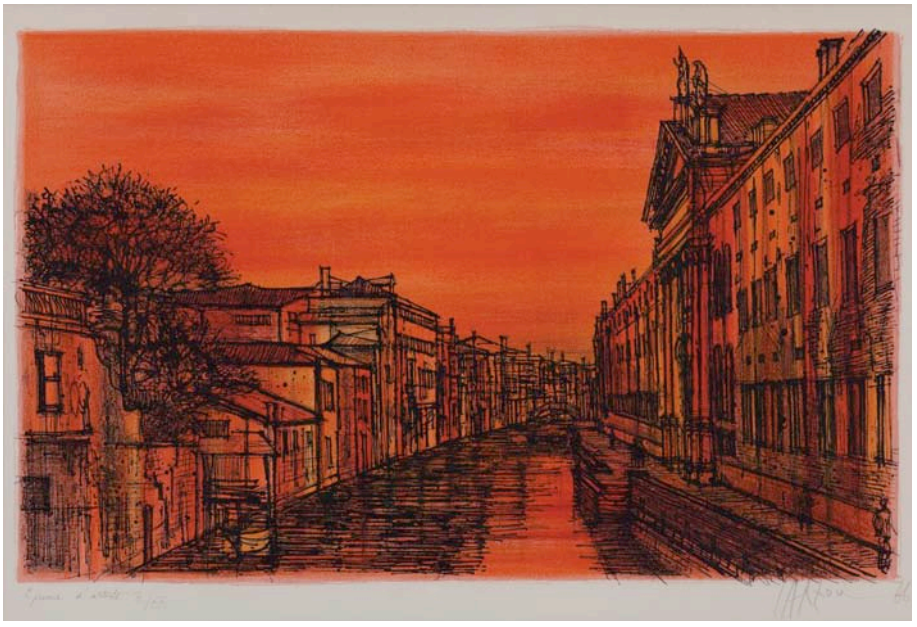
→
"Illusioniste",
1976, oil on canvas,
30x23½ inches

→
"Le Grand Canal,
Venice",
1966, lithograph,
19½x12 inches

←
"La Bateaux",
1975, black ink on
paper,
19x25½ inches



Kazarian Family Collection/Recently sold at Stephanie's Gallery



Exhibitions in France
First Solo Exhibit, 1939
Venice, 1953
The Apocalypse, 1957
Terrestrial Paradise, 1959
Provence, 1960
Summer Light, 1963
Ritual Figures, 1968
Graphic, 1973

Awards
Saint Francois d'Assisi Prize, 1938
Contemporary Painting Second Prize, 1949
Hallmark International Art Award, Fourth Prize, 1949, 1952
Hallmark International Art Award, Third Prize, 1955
Grand Prize of Japan's National Ministry of Education, 1955
Officer of the Order of Art and Letters, 1958
Officer of the Legion of Honor, 1971
Saint Gregory the Illuminator decoration, First Order of the Catholicosate of All Armenians, 1979
Martiros Saryan Medal- first recipient, 1980

Karnig and his parents witnessed the caravans of Armenians who had survived the forced deportations through Der Zor; they entered Aleppo in dire condition, unclothed, diseased, thirsty, malnourished and fatigued. This had a lasting impression on Carzou. Before the Genocide, Harotune had established a photography business, where he exposed his son to the art of the camera, a foreshadowing that he would continue on the path of artistic expression. Unfortunately, when Karnig was nine, his father died of typhoid fever. Hayganoush took over the business with her son in tow; she traveled to villages and captured wedding photos. She was a strong and confident woman, perhaps the first catalyst of inspiration of the future Carzou woman who appeared in his paintings. In 1919, Karnig, his mother and sister moved to Cairo, Egypt to live with his uncles where he attended the Kaloustian National School. At 17, he received a scholarship from the Yeghiayan Fund to attend the Ecole Speciale d' Architecture in Paris, not a surprise since his maternal grandfather was an architect in Dikranagerd. However, his original request to study painting was denied by the fund. It didn't stop Karnig from painting; he often missed his classes at the architecture school to attend the La Grande Chaumière studio where he worked on his true craft. ▸



↓
"La Gloriette",
1991, watercolor or paper,
19½x25½ inches

The fundamental elements of architecture are apparent in Carzou's art, especially in his stage and costume designs for opera and ballet. He dexterously brought order and a sense of refinement to a space or garment. In 1952, he designed his first sets and costumes for Jean Philippe Rameau's "Les Indes Galantes" ("The Gallant Incas") opera-ballet at the Paris Opera. Carzou's work was received with great acclaim. After this debut on stage, other projects followed until the late 1960s when he created seven opera-ballet worlds including "The Wolf" (1953), which was also performed in Italy, "Giselle" (1954), which he worked on for six months, and "After Eden" (1965-66), created for the American Harkness Ballet Company. In addition to his stage designs, Carzou also illustrated and engraved books from Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Albert Camus' *Carnets*, Edgar Allan Poe's, *Murders In the Rue Morgue*, Jules Verne's *De la Terre a la Lune*, and many

He met Picasso, Salvador Dali and Chagall, among other artists and intellectuals. Throughout the years, Jean Carzou refined his poetic line and created unique images.

other books. He also illustrated a children's book, *The Overturned City*, written by his wife Nane Blanc, which was translated into Armenian with the original illustrations. The tale chronicles the life of a city named Imagination made of streets constructed out of fragrant flowers. In this colorful and artistic environment, Jean's and Nane's son, Jean-Marie Carzou was born.

At the end, Carzou decided to solely focus on painting. At this juncture, he created two different series of work: one a mural in Manosque, France and the other paintings of the interior walls and the spacious outdoor grounds at the Palace of Versailles. In 1991, Carzou adorned the chapel of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Presentation of Our Lady with a mural, "Apocalypse." The panoramic mural stretches along the walls at 670 meters, including depictions of humanity at its most vicious – war, the dark eras of Hitler and Stalin, the Armenian Genocide – adjacent to scenes of hope and love. One of the last sections features a woman, representing a tree in full bloom with the mechanized world behind her. Presently this space is known as the Carzou Foundation. In the "Palace of Versailles" series, which he worked on from 1971-1994, his color palette takes center stage with a new sense of sophistication. Carzou painted Versailles at sunset in vibrant red and energetic orange, the late afternoon in "Carzou blue," he also meticulously portrayed the exact lines of the palace and the surrounding landscape, almost giving the compositions a photo-like quality. His depictions even give life to the numerous statues found on the palatial grounds. For example, in "Le Bassin de Cérès," mixed with red and blue hues, the viewer can almost converse with the statue lying in the middle of the pool on her pedestal of marble, more like an illusion of a soft cushion in Carzou's version.

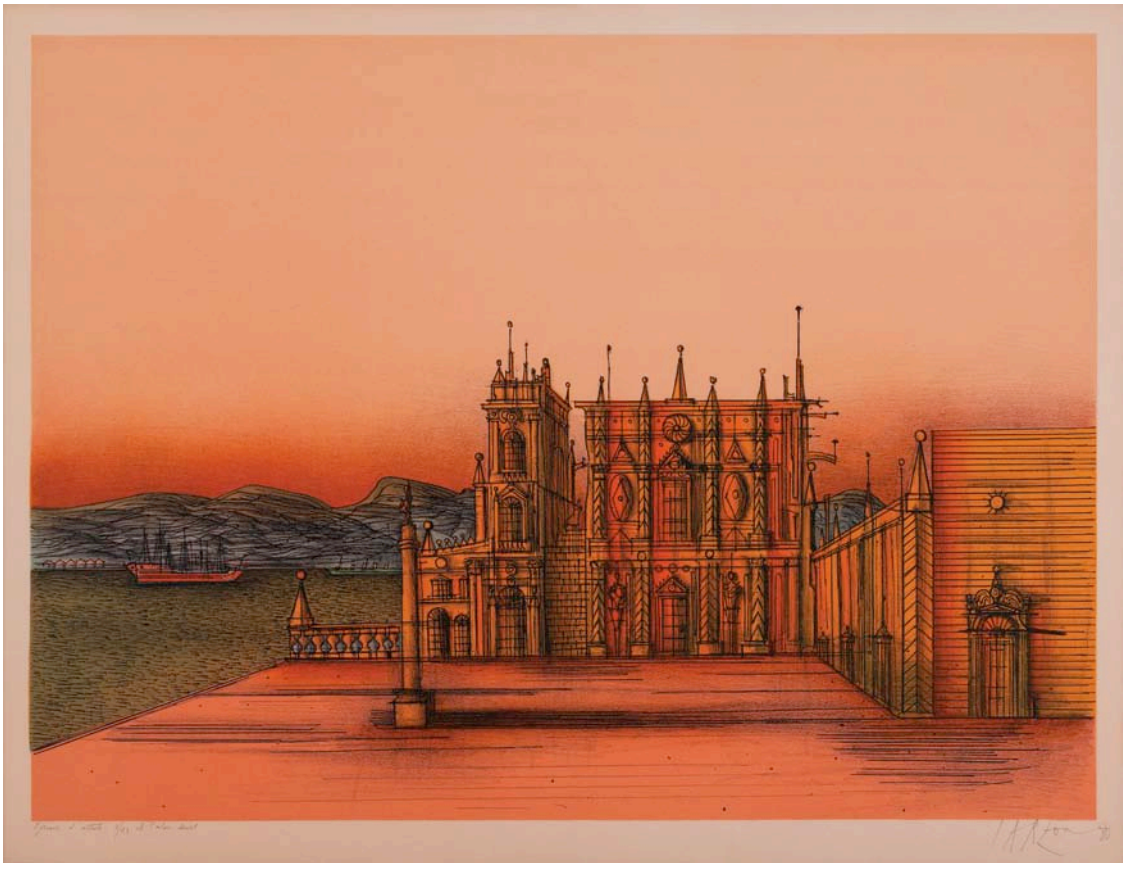
Throughout his career, Jean Carzou often exhibited his work in France, but he also traveled extensively, spreading his unfaltering enthusiasm toward his art and his humanistic themes. In the span from the 1950s to the late 1970s, he visited Egypt, Lebanon and England, where he exhibited his paintings, along with the cities of Geneva, Casablanca and Montreal. He journeyed to Venice which inspired a series of work solely of the enchanted city on the water. Soon thereafter, his watercolors



Carzou Stamp
In 1976, Jean Carzou was commissioned to design an image for the French postage stamp. The Carzou woman was featured on the stamp, in his signature green color. This was the first time that the French Ministry of Posts printed a stamp with the work of a living artist.

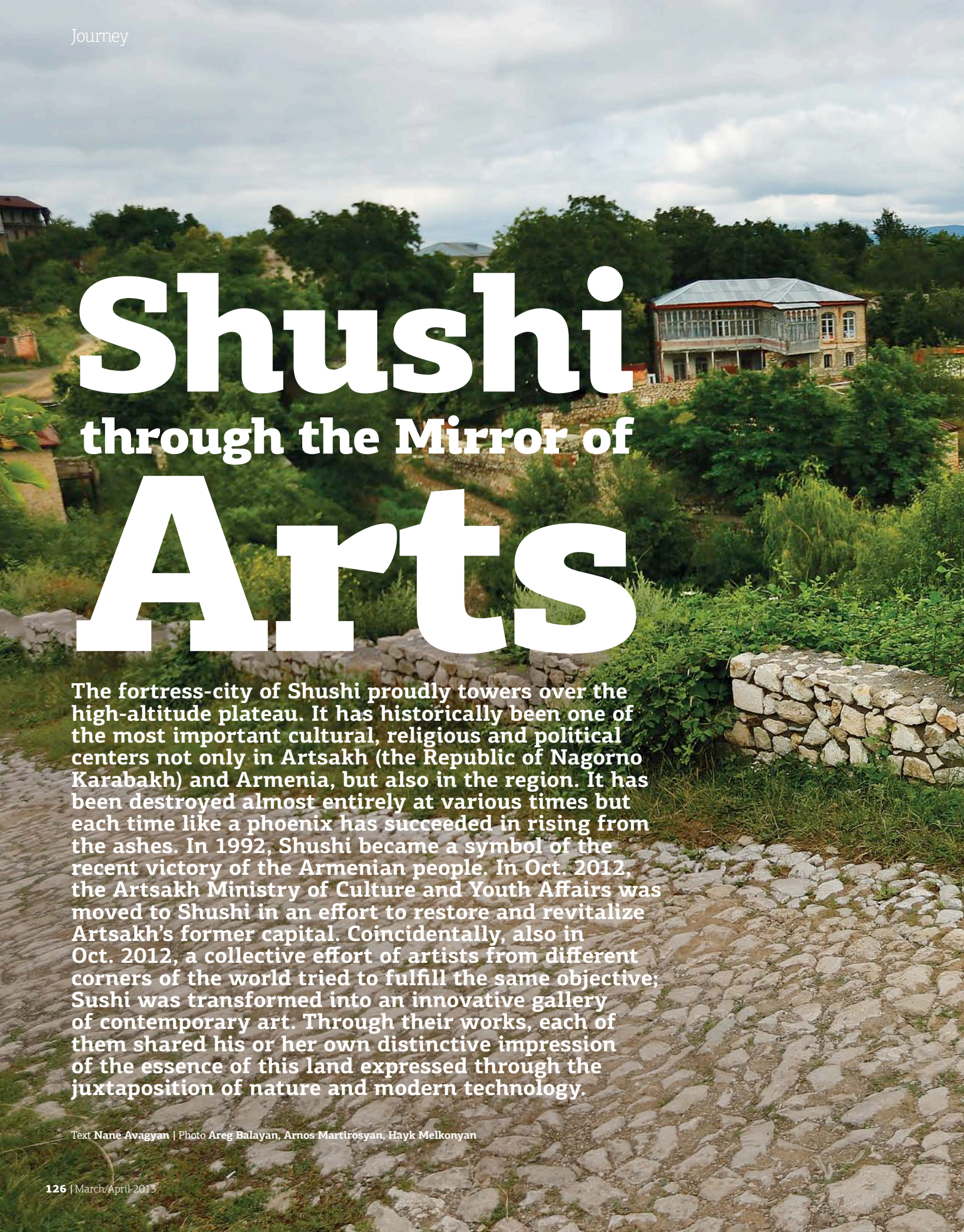


↑ "La Baie deserte", 1984, lithograph, 22x27 inches



← "La Palais desirt", 1980, lithograph, 22x27 inches

were shown in Germany, with his first exhibition in New York. This was followed by trips to Spain, Greece and the South of France. Similar to Venice, the beauty of Provence with the Mediterranean Sea in the horizon was a catalyst for another series of paintings. He first arrived in Armenia in 1966, and during his exhibit opening he stated, "As a painter I belong to French Art, but in all my work, I remain an Armenian" (retrieved from Shane Khachaturyan's *French-Armenian Art*, 1991). He gifted 150 lithographs and books of illustrations to the National Art Gallery in Armenia. Even though Carzou lived in France most of his life, he always remained connected to his roots and fondly remembered his birthplace Syria, which he visited with recollections of his life as Karnig Zouloumian.
Jean Carzou was a philosopher-painter, who believed that painting must be visible in order to function as a means of communication. In his 1979 acceptance speech, Carzou added "the painter was functional, just like the baker, the shoemaker or the mason. People looked at his pictures and appreciated the artist according to the degree of exactness by which he was able to present the scenes and events he had witnessed." ■



Shushi through the Mirror of Arts

The fortress-city of Shushi proudly towers over the high-altitude plateau. It has historically been one of the most important cultural, religious and political centers not only in Artsakh (the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh) and Armenia, but also in the region. It has been destroyed almost entirely at various times but each time like a phoenix has succeeded in rising from the ashes. In 1992, Shushi became a symbol of the recent victory of the Armenian people. In Oct. 2012, the Artsakh Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs was moved to Shushi in an effort to restore and revitalize Artsakh's former capital. Coincidentally, also in Oct. 2012, a collective effort of artists from different corners of the world tried to fulfill the same objective; Sushi was transformed into an innovative gallery of contemporary art. Through their works, each of them shared his or her own distinctive impression of the essence of this land expressed through the juxtaposition of nature and modern technology.

Text **Nane Avagyan** | Photo **Areg Balayan, Arnos Martirosyan, Hayk Melkonyan**



In collaboration with the organizers of the Shushi Art Project

The airplane was only several minutes away from landing in Zvartnots airport. A group of Armenian artists was arriving in their homeland with a special mission. At the moment, they were looking down through the plane windows trying to compare their maps with the patches of color and geometric shapes of the landscape below. The program of activities of the Shushi Art Project was sealed in an envelope and kept confidential: details were known only to several members who worked for long months in Los Angeles organizing this festival. The initiator, manager and brainpower behind the project was Harry Vorperian. The project involved 20 conceptual artists from the USA, Europe and Armenia whose goal was to express themselves using new tools of contemporary art within the framework of the Land and Technology exhibition. The program included conventional as well as completely new art genres aimed to reinvigorate the cultural life of Shushi. In addition to art exhibitions, it included outdoor performances, land art, video art, and various installations.

"Through this initiative, we wanted to make our own contribution to the task of restoring Shushi which prides itself on rich cultural traditions and has always served as a cultural center for Armenians. Shushi is like a blank canvas for artists. When discussing the themes to feature, we realized that the main component of the link between us and Artsakh is the land, and technology has become an inalienable part of our daily lives, so we decided that each work has to incorporate these two components," Vorperian updated me succinctly. Participants were assigned to produce art on the sites of famous historic buildings of Shushi as well as directly on the ground. In fact, the creative process was to be the key factor and had to involve the local residents. The project was an opportunity to bring together renowned Armenian artists from different countries of the world and to set up new trends in contemporary Armenian art. A cultural storm was about to hit Artsakh, heralding the revival of Shushi through a harmonious contrast of the traditional and the modern.

Jdrdouz: A Self-Portrait

My reflection in the enormous mirrors placed atop the Jdrdouz plateau, one of the most mysterious and symbolic parts of Shushi, seemed unusual – there was a peculiar sparkle in my eyes, an expression of indescribable power and self-confidence. I had conquered the meandering path leading up from Hunot Canyon and reached the summit where, for a moment, I felt my breath taken away by the panoramic view unfolding before me and the sense of boundlessness. It is difficult to describe this place where the earth and heaven part from each other, and the past and the present come together. It is not by chance that Jdrdouz, the axis of the protective system of the fortress-city – its caves stretching through masses of rock from the canyon to the hill – has played a vital role for Artsakh at various crucial periods of history. In 1726, it was here that Commander Avan with his small group of soldiers for eight days fought against and prevailed over a 40 thousand-strong Ottoman army. And it was from Jdrdouz in 1992 that the Armenian freedom fighters started the sudden attack operation to liberate the most invincible city of Artsakh, catching the adversary by surprise and securing a victory in a battle that seemed impossible to win. Harry Vorperian deliberately chose this place for the realization of his installation called "Self-Portrait." "In the mirrors, you invariably see your own reflection

Contemporary art plays a vital role and has great significance today. It is provocative, has a political context, sometimes incomprehensible, it is beyond the traditional.





↑
Jdrdouz

against the background of nature irrespective of the direction you are looking, with your feet firmly planted on this land, and you feel you belong here. It is as though one engages anew in a rediscovery, redefinition and accomplishment of one's identity," explains Vorperian, offering to gaze into his artistic mirrors to achieve all these objectives.

Ghazanchetsots Street: Repopulation

Ghazanchetsots Street, which runs along Ghazanchetsots Cathedral of Christ the Holy Savior, the pride of Shushi, is the main entrance to the city. This part of Shushi, however, is strewn with demolished and uninhabited historical buildings. American-Armenian photographer Ara Oshagan has been paying frequent visits to Shushi since 1998. "There is something mystical in this city; there is a duality, there is life and, immediately by its side, ruins. One feels the difficulties caused by war, but at the same time one sees hope in the eyes of the people, a desire and will to build their future, to restore the bygone splendor of Shush," recounts Oshagan. He decided to make his own contribution to the development of the city and thus put together his photo-installation, "The Repopulation." "The empty windows of the white building in Ghazanchetsots Street would look at me with their large eyes, like death. And I wanted so very much to fill up those eyes with life," relates Ara. "Then something interesting occurred to me. I entered the Ghazanchetsots Church and saw full-length images of the apostles. This was a like a message for me, and I decided to display the residents of Shushi in the same manner."

In the framework of his "mission" for the Land and Technology project, the artist repopulated the building by hanging huge photo portraits of Shushi residents in the empty frames of doors and windows. "Repopulating a single building with Shushi residents is symbolic, and this idea is pertinent to the pressing national problem of re-populating many other regions of Artsakh. Re-population restores the link to the land. If you are not going to live on this land, how can you say the land is yours? And thus one should live on this land so as to be able to say one belongs to this land," the artist firmly stated his opinion. "Our initiative is about conceptual art, and it's that art form that speaks about the future," Oshagan noted. His work was appreciated with great enthusiasm by Shushi residents; the building turned into an open-air gallery with many visitors.

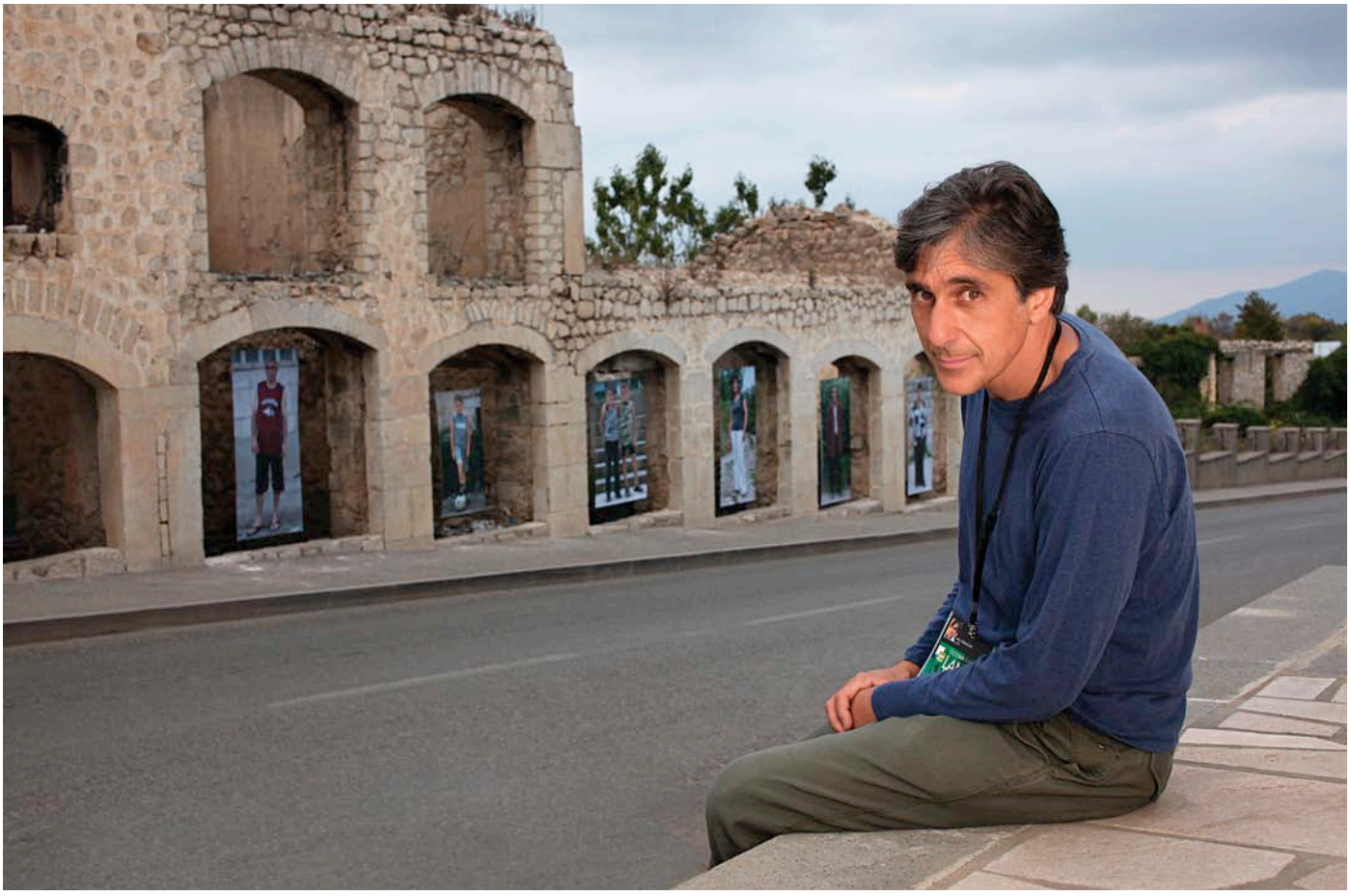
"The reaction has been fantastic," said Harry Vorperian. "Once, during the days of the show, I was walking past the building toward the hotel and saw a man kneeling down in front of one of the photos. He was trying to fix one of the ropes which held the photo, untied by the wind. This gesture of the old man demonstrated the full moral support we have received in Shushi," Vorperian said. ▸

←
The Self-Portraits at the Jdrdouz plateau.



←
Ghazanchetsots Cathedral of Christ the Holy Savior, the pride of Shushi

↓
Ara Oshagan with the photo-installation "The Repopulation" in the background.





↑
Sculptor Charlie Khachaturian



↓
Sahak Poghosyan and his mined fields

The soul of Shushi's land was spherical, and when it was sent into "flight" to transport it to the gallery, the baffled art viewers mixed up for a moment the real and the imaginary.

Soul of the Land

Tombs scattered across the plateau and the environs of the city that date back to the first and second millennia B.C. bear witness to the early settlements in Shushi. The name "Shosh" was mentioned for the first time in late medieval sources. "Land has a historical memory that forms the environment of the territory," relates Armenian-American sculptor and lab artist Charlie Khachaturian, who displayed the soul of Shushi's land through his works of art. For seven days he dug a pit, unearthing a mass of soil weighing several tons in the process. "I am digging up a hole and then using plaster, wax or concrete to mold the mass of the unearthed soil into a shape. Once it has consolidated, I remove this object from the pit and move it to a display area as a transitional object." He is an artist who reverses the technology of sculpting. "I am taking it back to its beginnings, when the material, the studio and platform were the soil and the action performed by man on land, i.e. a prayer." Charlie Khachaturian considers the publicity of his creative process to be the most important aspect: "This is not a sculpture, this is soil, a material that dictates, and it is very important that the audience sees the object in some special spaces." The soul of Shushi's land was spherical, and when it was sent into "flight" to transport it to the gallery, the baffled art viewers mixed up for a moment the real and the imaginary.

Shushi Castle Mined Fields, Fortune Cookies

In 1750-1752, Shushi Castle was rebuilt to reinforce the impregnability of the city and became the only possible entrance to the city. In his hand-written manuscript entitled History of Artsakh Province, Deacon Hakob Shushetsi described the castle: "... the fortress with its 50 towers and fortifications extended over 2.5 km and was seven to eight meters high." The walls enclosing the castle stretch out from the high cliffs of the plateau, hemming in the fortress-city from the west and then dropping down and lunging into the protruding rocks. The opposite southern side of Shushi in its entirety and its eastern and western flanks are partially enclosed by massive natural barriers. The castle had four entrance gates; however the Jraberd-Gyanja and Yerevan gates played the most vital role in the town's life. The secret rock-hewn passage led down from the Yerevan gate opening into the deep canyon through which Karin brook flowed. Artist Sahak Poghosyan created a field of gypsum mines and fortune cookies in this place in front of the wall of the castle. The significance of the "mined fields,

fortune cookies" installation, according to the author, alludes to extreme conditions, the possibility and impossibility to manage our fate. "War is a disaster that can abruptly change a man's life. He either steps into a mine or manages to escape with his precious life. This is why two symbolic objects – mines, which are very problematic in Artsakh as there are still unmapped mined areas here that can be fatal for anybody at any given moment, and so the fortune cookies predict the fate that awaits any man."

A Map of Artsakh
The Armenian Nationwide Blanket

The schematic map of Artsakh complete with color-coded towns and villages was a creative guide for the Shushi Art Project participants. It was depicted on Samvel Saghatelian's renowned "Nationwide Blanket." "In my work, a number of conceptual components simultaneously came together, ranging from strictly personal to socio-political and social. The exaggerated dimensions of the blanket were certainly employed to carry it over to the artistic domain. The concept of the blanket was interesting specifically in its temporal sense, as it seems to be a phenomenon based on quintessentially national, family-oriented origins that was turned into an object of contemporary art. There arises another fundamental question – can national heritage become material for contemporary art or not? I think it can. Besides this, I slightly politicized the blanket by painting a map over it, which also symbolized

"Repopulating a single building with Shushi residents is symbolic, and this idea is pertinent to the pressing national problem of re-populating many other regions of Artsakh," says Oshagan.

the protective and warmth-keeping qualities of the blanket. In its concept, Karabakh is the blanket that brings forth the willingness in us to protect ourselves," explains Saghatelian. The blanket was made using the time-tested traditional technologies: with the help of Artsakh women, Samvel whipped wool to then sew up the blanket. According to the artist, blanket sewing involves investing impulses in the blanket and requires significant energy, hence all details are important and especially the blanket sewer has to be a positive person.

Sacrifice

Sunset is spectacularly beautiful from Jdrdouz. The mysterious wild silence was only disrupted by the big bonfire flaming up in the center of the megalithic formation. Ashot Avagyan's performance entitled "Sacrifice" was reminiscent of the sacrificial ceremony of the old times, rendering the place even more mysterious. "The Shushi Art Project coincided with the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Shushi, and I decided to make a sacrifice dedicated to this milestone and to the memory of my fellow soldiers who died in the war, to whom I owe much. For this performance, I brought twenty stones weighing 600-700 kg, which symbolized the twentieth





← Samvel Saghatelian's Armenian "Nationwide Blanket."

↓ Sev's (Henrik Khachatryan's) "Decollage."





↑ Kiki (Grigor Mikayelyan)

← Ashot Avagyan's performance entitled Sacrifice

anniversary of Shushi's liberation, and put them up in Jdrdouz, whence the liberation was launched," recounts Avagyan. To this artist who fought in the Karabakh War, sacrifice is also a means of liberating oneself from the personal memories of the war. Avagyan sacrifices one of his paintings in memory of his deceased student. He was joined by fellow artists, who threw into the blaze everything that was connected to land, war and memories. This ceremony, resembling an old pagan ritual, seemed to be attended by the spirits of their ancestors and an inexplicable round dance of the old and the new whirling atop the victorious hill. Jdrdouz has powerful energy to break through borderline conditions, and in this case the momentum was building up for purification to take place, for charges received from the native land to lead to a rediscovered identity and a return to the ancestral round dance.

Shushi Art Gallery

The works of art created as a result of the open-air performances in various parts of Shushi were later displayed in the Shushi Art Gallery, the opening of which coincided with the Shushi Art Project. This building, damaged during the Artsakh war, used to be one of the first printing houses in the Transcaucasus in the 19th century and was established by the Swiss. The building was designated as a historical and cultural monument was restored and turned into a gallery by philanthropist Karo Sargsyan. The first exhibits were works by representatives of conceptual and avant-garde art. photographer German Avagyan presented the past and future of Artsakh in his photo-series entitled "Those Born after Death," where the pictures of fathers who died in the Artsakh War were shown next to the photographs of their children.

At the same time in the framework of the Shushi Art Project, at various random spots around the city, Azat



Sargsyan's "Monitoring Video Cameras," were placed to remind people about the interconnectedness of freedom and security and their mutually exclusive duality. Noteworthy were Alexey Manukyan's "Ten Meters" composition, in which he embossed a lump of Shushi's soil on paper; Kiki's (Grigor Mikayelyan) painting of a movement that was composed under the gaze of the viewers; as well as Sev's (Henrik Khachatryan's) object "Decollage." From chamber art works, we took note of the Apple by Gevorg and Eva Sargsyans, Hamlet Hovsepyan's "Untitled" performance, Gagik Ghazanchyan's "0 Point," Mary Moon's "City," Harutyun Zulumyan's "Melancholy" sculpture compositions, and Vachag Ter-Sargsyan's installation "Return" were all composed or assembled on the spot by engaging the artistic atmosphere, situation, audience of viewers and the public. During the festival, renowned documentary film director Suzanne Khardalian, based in Sweden, held master classes for local students. Her film, *Grandma's Tattoos* was shown in Narekatsi Art Center. The works of art created in the course of the Shushi Art Project were presented through video and photo materials as well as through some exhibits at the Tumo Center.

Mission Accomplished
January 2013, Los Angeles

Harry, Samvel, Sev, Charlie and Ara are discussing the significance of contemporary art, and I am trying to take it all in, as in this case the discussion revolves around conceptual art.

Contemporary art plays a vital role and has great significance today. It is provocative, has a political context, sometimes incomprehensible, it is beyond the traditional. It doesn't matter whether it involves a canvas or a creation, the important thing is the message it imparts. It may very well be that not all the ideas will be understood, and not all objects will be perceived to be beautiful, but they will have an impact. Conceptual art is successful to the extent of the immediacy of its impact. The success of contemporary art hinges on the sincerity of the artist; when the inner impulse is sincere, the society grasps and appreciates this on the basis of merit. The artist should disturb the comfort of reality, and this is not deliberate. There are many concepts concealed in national thinking and traditions that need to be studied and discovered through modern language. Contemporary art, especially from the political point of view, has a powerful significance in the world today, and the consolidation and affirmation of this art in such places as Artsakh translates, to some degree, into a political affirmation of this region. It is in pursuit of this aim that the founder and participants of the Shushi Art Project pledge to make this festival a recurring event. ■

"The success of contemporary art hinges on the sincerity of the artist; when the inner impulse is sincere, the society grasps and appreciates this on the basis of merit," says Saghatelian.

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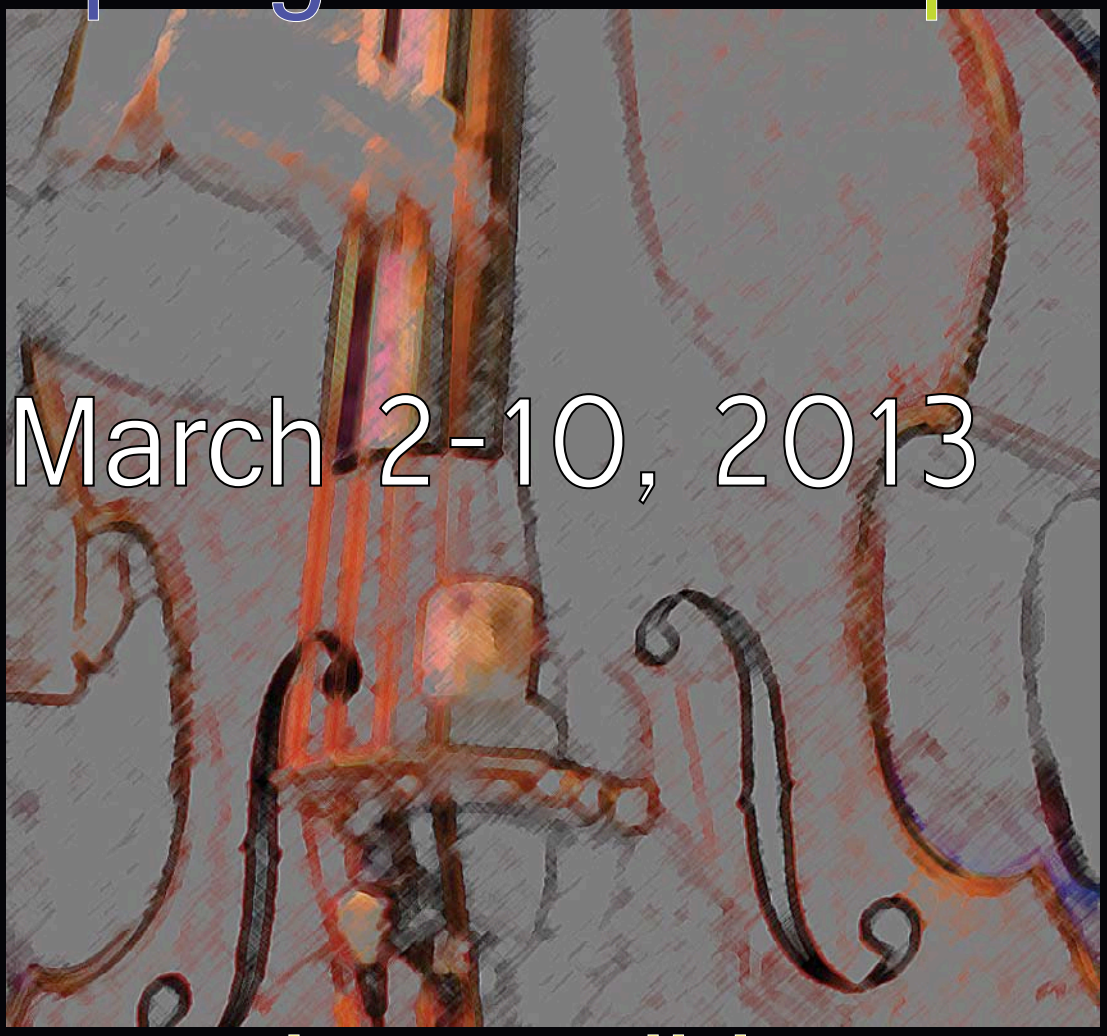

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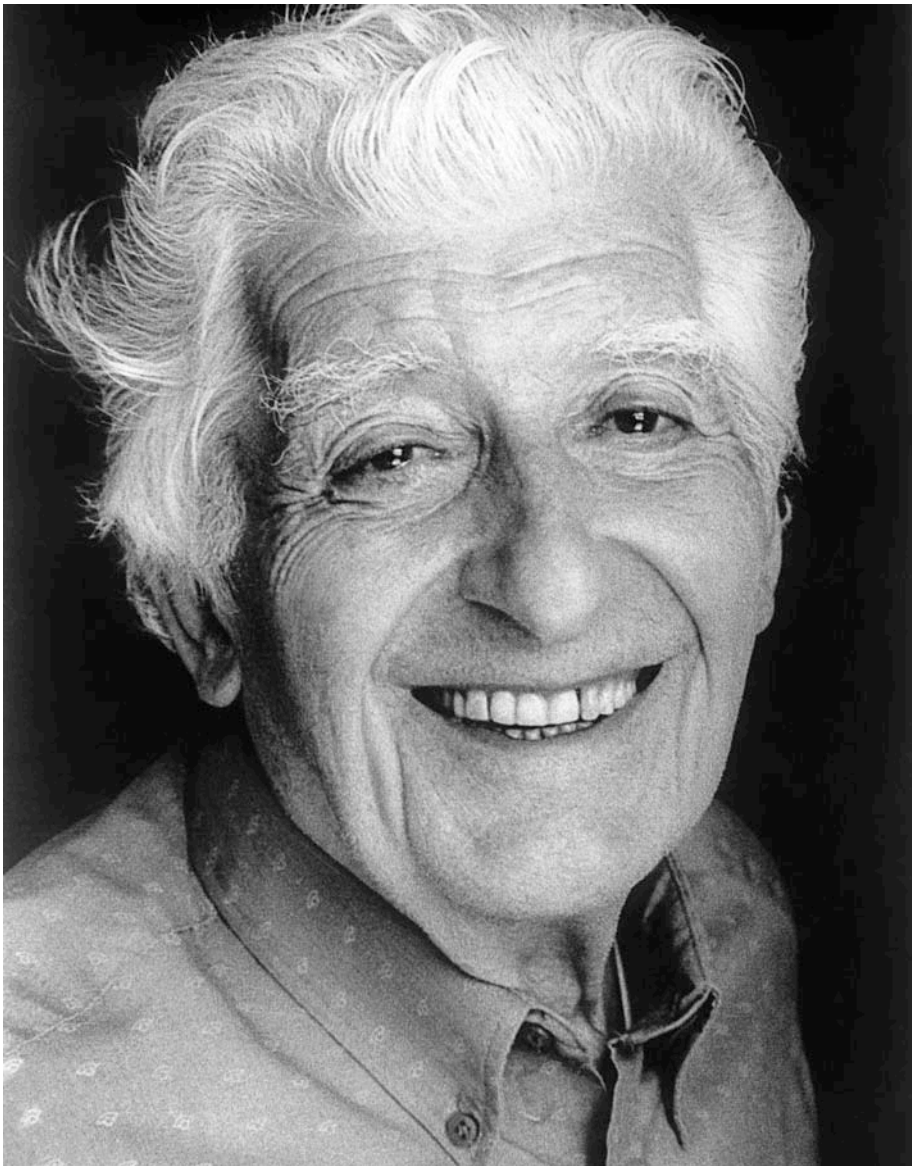


Synthesizing Emotions

Internationally renowned innovative composer Edvard Mirzoyan was a man of many talents and vocations. As the president of Composers' Union of Armenia, he created infrastructures, providing composers and musicians with housing and work facilities and was the driving force behind countless cultural and music events. As the president of the Peace Foundation of Armenia, he helped during difficult times after the earthquake. A talented teacher, Mirzoyan continued his teaching career in Yerevan Conservatory until the last days of his life. After his passing, many celebrated cultural figures appealed to the Armenian government and the Composers' Union to name the Composers Retreat in Dilijan after Edvard Mirzoyan. The decision is yet to be made.

Text **Lianna Zakharian, Lilit Yepremyan** | Photo **Mirzoyan family archives**

Edvard Mirzoyan's music is innovative, sensual and complex – a synthesis of many musical directions. Voluminous books are dedicated to the interpretation of his musical legacy, but its beauty and scale become apparent on the very first encounter of the listener with his music. One invariably perceives cosmic drama and tragic connotations in his compositions, but when the composer was asked about the meaning behind it, he always replied that it was never his intention to evoke cataclysmic events, social or natural disasters through his works, and that he was mostly interested in love and human emotions.

His talent was recognized early on in his life. Great composer Aram Khachaturian supported Mirzoyan from their very first encounter in 1938. "You are a great talent, and you should not undermine yourself. Each talent has its own specifics, the special trait of your talent is that it is very flavorful, very close to life, very democratic. Please take care of yourself, remember my mistakes and try not to repeat them," wrote Khachaturian in 1962.

The process of writing was never easy for Mirzoyan – uncertainty and dissatisfaction, typical for true artists, were always part of his creative process, even after his international recognition and awards. His first symphony was never put on paper. Having finished it in 1955, Mirzoyan constantly played it on the piano, but never wrote down a single note. The entire composition was in his head, the harmony, the character of orchestration, the form. When asked why it was not recorded, Mirzoyan explained, "I lost interest in it. One can lose interest in a woman or his own work. Also because when I started writing it down, I was constantly making changes, and it would become a different piece – something continuously dissatisfied me. In fact, I had many pieces like that – "Concert for a Trombone," "Sonatina" for piano."

Perhaps the same fate awaited Mirzoyan's famous "second" and only symphony. Once again, he kept playing and composing without writing it down. Eventually it was put on paper thanks to his student and loyal friend, composer Konstantin Orbelian, who quite audaciously sent an announcement to the *Soviet Music* magazine in Moscow stating that the premiere of Mirzoyan's new symphony would take place during the Composer's Convention. So Mirzoyan had no choice but to write down its final version in the course of a month. Needless to say, he did it in a state of hasty panic. Mirzoyan's "Symphony for Strings and Timpani" became a pinnacle of the 20th century and a new page in the history of Armenian music. It was celebrated and performed many times throughout the world, and its life goes on.

His lyricism and desire to convey human emotions through music was particularly evident in his numerous compositions for films. Among them the emotionally explosive score for the film adaptation of the classical novel *Chaos* is particularly popular, and the lyrical piece "Shushanik" became his signature card. Choreographer Mark Mnatsakanian wrote in his letter, "I have enjoyed your "Shushanik." What a divine music! A miracle! I don't know when you wrote it, but it's pure and exhilarating. It is national Armenian, but at the same time, universal. It would be understood and accepted everywhere. I am happy for you and for the fact that "Shushanik" exists. I am tempted to choreograph it."

Mirzoyan is equally renowned for his romances and piano works such as "Album for My Granddaughter" and "Poem," his "Cello Sonata," "String Quartet," "Epitaph for String Orchestra" in memory of Aram Khachatourian,

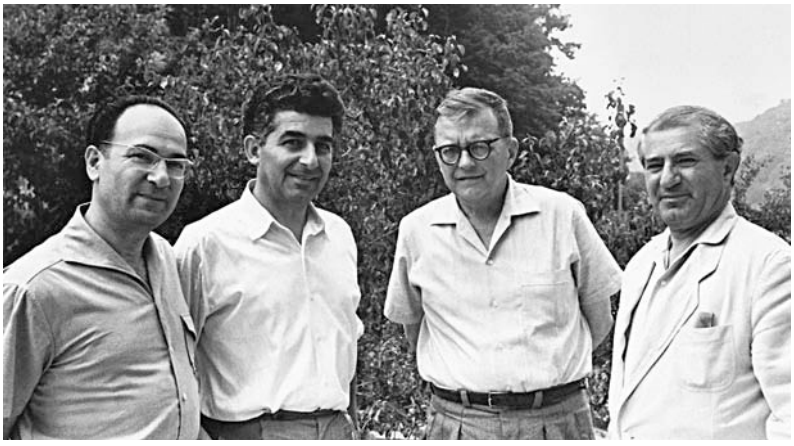
↓ Mirzoyan, Khachaturian, Shostakovich, Gurgen Janibekian and Kabalevsky

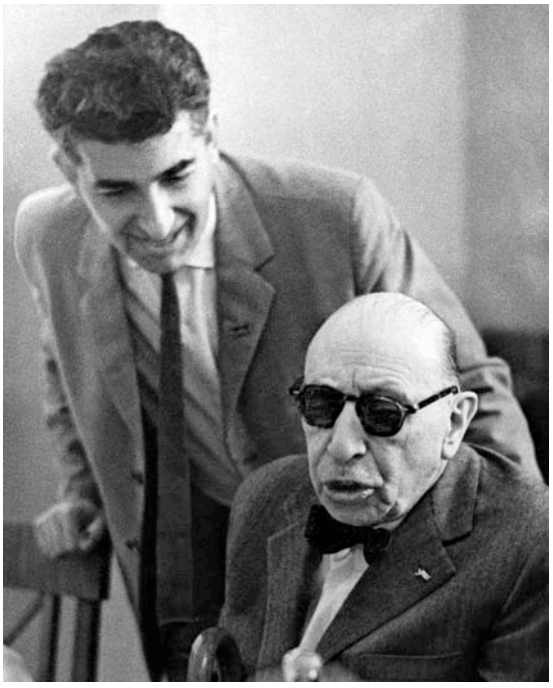


Aram Khachaturian supported Mirzoyan from their very first encounter in 1938. "...the special trait of your talent is that it is very flavorful, very close to life, very democratic," he wrote.



←
Edvard Mirzoyan, Martiros Saryan, Aram Khachaturian, Babken Sosyan

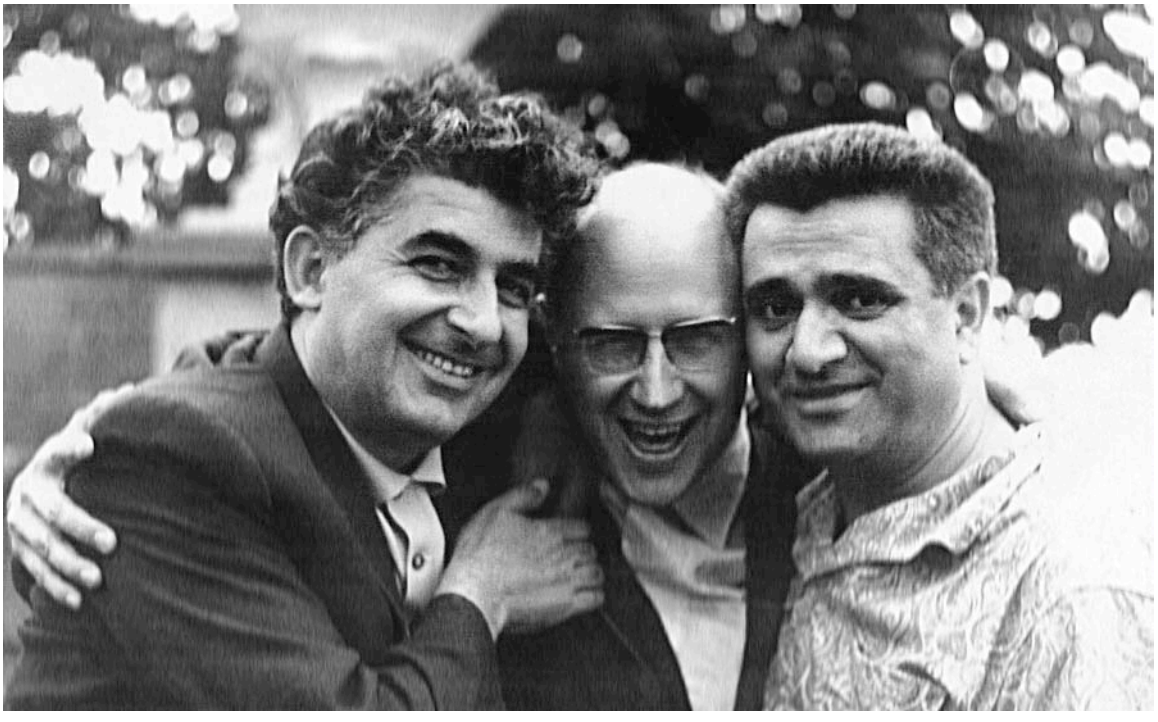




↑
Mirzoyan and Igor Stravinsky

↓
Mirzoyan, Mstislav Rostropovich, and Alexander Harutyunyan

↑
Lazar Saryan, Mirzoyan, Shostakovich, and Grikor Eghiazaryan





→ Mirzoyan, Peter Pearce, Benjamin Britten, and Mstislav Rostropovich

"Dance Suite," and the "Cantata for Choir and Orchestra."

He continued creating and participating in cultural life until the end of his life. Just ten days before his death on Sept. 26, 2012, he attended the Grand Hall of Philharmonia for the last time, where the world-famous Borodin Quartet was performing his "Quartet." His final composition, solo for Yuri Bashmet, remained unfinished.

Edvard Mirzoyan's ability to combine his artistic and creative life with other fields of his work was fascinating. Whether it was one at the expense of the other, or the inexhaustible, all-encompassing nature of his character is hard to distinguish now.

Mentor and Teacher

Mirzoyan had hundreds of students in his lifetime. He was a teacher with an extraordinary talent, one who provided guidance in a subtle way, without moralizing or lecturing. Add to this his personal charm and immense wisdom. The composer's daughter, Zara Mirzoyan, recalls, "Recently, I met one of his last conservatory students who wrote a piece for a chamber ensemble. He showed it to Father, and this young man was wise enough to consider his mentor's suggestions and write an entirely new composition, instead of correcting the first one. That new composition later won the first prize in major international composers' competitions."

The Dean of the Composition Department of Yerevan State Conservatory, composer Vardan Ajemian, stated, "The organization and funding of many projects of the Department of Composition at the Yerevan State Conservatory was done thanks to the indisputable authority and personal involvement of Edvard Mirzoyan, who was – and that was an unwritten law – the honorary head of all our contests and competitions. I consider Mirzoyan's contribution in the cultural and political life of Armenia his most important achievement."

Among these many contests and competitions were the Aram Khachaturian Competition of Young Composers, the Lazar Saryan Contest, the Benjamin Britten Competition, and the Competition of Choral Compositions. Mirzoyan was always present at each of them, ensuring their high artistic and organizational level.

To get close to him during intermissions of his concerts was difficult because he was always surrounded by a crowd of young musicians and fans who formed a line to approach him. To this day, during the concerts of his music, people continue bringing flowers to his wife, Yelena, to show how much he is missed.

Many musical masterpieces were created in Dilijan by Armenian and Soviet, as well as by internationally renowned composers. Composer Benjamin Britten created his famous Pushkin cycle of romances.

Creating Infrastructures

As the president of the Composers' Union of Armenia, Mirzoyan invested many years of his life creating the infrastructures for the Union. He initiated the construction of the Composers' Retreat in Dilijan, the Composers' Union in Yerevan with administrative offices, a concert hall and residential quarters, as well as the adjacent nine-story residential building for composers, demonstrating both organizational talent and architectural vision. The land of the CU was on a hill, and the architect showed him the blueprint of the building. Mirzoyan recognized that the square-shaped building would look crooked from the street view, and as a result the general appearance of the building would be wrong. So he suggested making the facade round, and that's the way it was eventually built as a great illustration of his amazing architectural vision.

The residential building for the members of the Composers' Union was essential because many members of the Union did not have apartments. When it was constructed, the apartments were distributed to the members who needed housing. The first organ in Armenia was installed in the concert hall of the Composers' Union. The Union became the center of an artistic community driven by endless cultural events – concerts, recitals, festivals, international and all-union forums and conferences.

In fact, because of the wide interest in the music, one of the smallest republics in the USSR by population, Armenia, was one of the leaders by its significance in the USSR Composers' Union. ▸



↑ Marshall Bagramian and Edvard Mirzoyan



← Edvard Mirzoyan and Sergey Parajanov

Edvard Mirzoyan adored Aram Khachaturian both as a composer and a mentor. The House Museum of Khachaturian in Yerevan was built thanks to Mirzoyan and is functioning in full force to this day. His music tribute to Aram Khachaturian was the "Poem Epitaph" in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Khachaturian's death.

There were of course many obstacles and hardships to overcome. There was resistance, jealousy, intrigue, and pressure from the Communist government – such were the times. But Mirzoyan did not like to talk about the hardships. For him, whining and complaining were unacceptable. He was a politician and diplomat by nature – he managed to find unbelievable solutions to various problems to accomplish what he considered important. Anton Kochinyan, the head of the Communist Party of the Central Committee of Armenia, would say, "Artists come and ask for something they are entitled to, and I decline; the writers ask, and I refuse. But when Edvard comes, I say 'yes' to everything, even to things that composers are not entitled to. How he does it, I can't understand."

Dilijan Composers' Retreat

What Kochinyan said also pertained to the land for the Dilijan Retreat. When the idea of the retreat came up, Kochinyan showed Mirzoyan various locations around Armenia. Mirzoyan did not like them and kept stubbornly declining the offered lots. Finally, Kochinyan ran out of options and said, "There is a place in Dilijan that I am keeping for another project. Take a look if you want." Once Edvard saw Dilijan, he fell under the spell of its charm. The location was perfect – mild climate, wonderful landscape of green hills and an abandoned old collective farm orchard. The place was beautiful in all seasons. He immediately agreed, and Kochinyan reluctantly gave his approval.

Mirzoyan put his entire energy into this construction. He had hundreds of pine trees planted in place of the orchard. At first, it was planned to build 12 cottages; then Mirzoyan expanded the project to 25. All cottages were equipped with grand pianos from Czechoslovakia. Once a year he would invite expert tuners from Czechoslovakia who would come to tune the pianos and to train the local tuners, showing them how to tune these instruments properly.

But Mirzoyan's plans would not stop there. He dreamed of building a concert hall in the Dilijan Composers' Retreat for concerts and international music festivals. The idea was innovative for a country behind the Iron Curtain, and there were no funds allocated for the concert hall in the original plan. For the central administration of the USSR Composers' Union, it was enough that small Armenia managed to build the retreat with funding allocated by the central government. Although the funds were allocated for construction of a gymnasium – three cement walls, a glass wall and a roof, Mirzoyan would not give up his plan to transform this gym into a concert hall. He decided to take his chances and during the Composers' Forum in Moscow announced that a concert hall was being built in Dilijan to be named after Beethoven in celebration of Beethoven's anniversary. The forum exploded in applause. Tikhon Khrennikov, the head of the USSR Composers' Union was stunned – he had no idea of such plans, but at that moment he had no other choice but to approve and allocate the funds.

The transformation of the gym into a high-class concert hall was not an easy task. Anyone who understands acoustics knows that the cement and glass cannot result in good acoustics. Mirzoyan invited the best acoustics expert in Russia. The man entered the hall, looked at the space and somberly shook his head. "I can't help you – nothing can be done here to create good acoustics." They had dinner and continued discussing possible solutions to the problem. The next morning, Mirzoyan

↓
Mirzoyan at his summer residence



Blitz Interview

Your credo?
To give as much as I can.
What is the meaning of life?
In creativity.
What is happiness?
The realization and awareness of possessing what you value most.
Are you a happy man?
I can't deny that.
What could be stronger than your willpower?
Nothing.
What can't you forgive?
Intentional lies and betrayal.
Where do you seek consolation?
In integrity of solutions where, it seems, there could be no fairness anymore.
The biggest mystery foryou?
The universe. And a woman.
Who is the authority in an Armenian family?
The one who is stronger in crucial, decisive moments.
Do you love solitude?
When I work. But it seldom happens.
What is your opinion on immigration?
It's a form of genocide.
The most serious trial in your life?
It lasted many years and was resolved fairly recently: doubts in my calling.
Your favorite toast?
"Սաղ ըլնենք, լավ ըլնենք, հայ ըլնենք, մարդ ըլնենք." ("Live, be well, be an Armenian, and a human.")

Edvard Mirzoyan's music was known well beyond the Iron Curtain. He toured in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, South and North America with various groups of musicians.

took the expert to the nearby Haghardzin and Goshavank Churches for an excursion. They entered the church and hearing the wonderful acoustics of the church, the expert exclaimed, "What were we even thinking about – the solution is right here!" Later, he recreated the domes of the Armenian churches, designing the ceiling of the hall with dome-like cells which created the desired sound effect. Soon, the ceiling and flooring of the concert hall were ready, the spectators' chairs were ordered from Italy and the finest instrument delivered from Czechoslovakia.

At the opening of Beethoven Hall, composer Tikhon Khrennikov played his Piano Concert, and Valery Gergiev played Beethoven's Symphony No 9. It became apparent from that very first concert – the hall had phenomenal acoustics.
Over the years, Armenian composers and cultural figures, as well as numerous famous artists, musicians and composers visited the Composers' Retreat in Dilijan. Internationally renowned names – prima ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, Aram Khachatourian, Mstislav Rostropovich and the legendary French mime, Marcel Marceau were some of the celebrity visitors at the Retreat. Friendly recitals, hiking trips, excursions to Goshavank and Haghardzin, fresh air and excellent service – the entire atmosphere was conducive for creativity. Many musical masterpieces were created here by Armenian and Soviet as well as by internationally renowned composers. British composer Benjamin Britten created his famous Pushkin cycle of romances. Dmitry Shostakovich came every year. He loved the green hills and the misty rain of Dilijan, and many of his famous compositions were born there. These were

extraordinary people, many of whom would not visit Armenia in other circumstances.

The Circle of Friends and Family

It is impossible to write about Mirzoyan without talking about the people who surrounded him and were the focus of his life.

"He was the head of our family, the man, but not in a dominant way. He had no need to set strict rules, it was granted. Mom adored Father; she dedicated and built her life around and for him. The feeling was mutual. When he was home, his presence was apparent. I felt responsible to live up to his expectations my entire life," recalls Zara Mirzoyan. Touring in the U.S., he would often write letters to his children and wife, Yelena. In the postscript of one of his letters he added, "Aren't you surprised that I am writing so many letters? I am surprised myself."

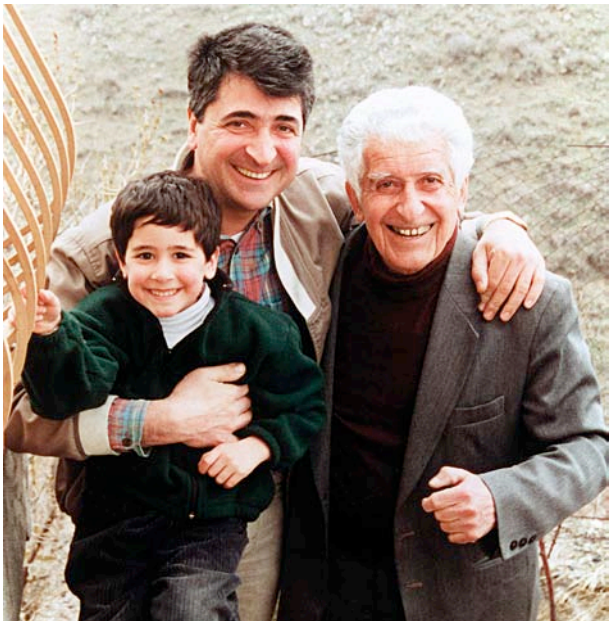
Mirzoyan carried his friendship with five of his close friends and conservatory classmates throughout his life. One of them was the son of the great artist Martiros Saryan, Lazar Saryan, who was the longest-serving rector of Yerevan State Conservatory. Also the talented and celebrated composer Arno Babajanian, who would visit Armenia every year and would say jokingly, "I reside in Moscow, but I live in Yerevan." Since childhood, Mirzoyan and composer Alexander Haroutunian were best friends and remained the

→ Mirzoyan with his daughter Zara, and conductor Valery Gergiev



↓ Spring in the orchard with wife, Yelena





↑ Three generations of Mirzoyans, Edvard with son Arshak, and grandson Shant.

→ Mirzoyan's concert at Komitas Hall

Edvard Mirzoyan

▸ Born May 12, 1921 in Gori, Georgia.
▸ **1925** Moves to Yerevan. In 1928, he enters the children's group at Yerevan State Conservatory (YSC).
▸ **1936** Accepted to the Composition Department of YSC, studies in the classes of professors Barkhudarian and Talian.
▸ **1941** Graduates from the YSC.
▸ **1946** Studies in Moscow.
▸ **1949** Professor of the Composition Department of YSC. Educates several generations of prominent Armenian composers.
▸ **1965** Dean of the Composition Department of YSC.
▸ **1977** Chairman of the Peace Fund of Armenia.
▸ **1956-1991** Elected president of the Armenian Composers' Union. Mirzoyan was the recipient of all major orders and awards of the USSR and Armenia.
▸ Passed away on Oct. 5, 2012

Major Works

1945 – "Dance Suite"
1947 – "String Quartet"
1948 – "Cantata Hayastan"
1954-1957 – "Introduction and Perpetuum Mobile" for violin and orchestra
1962 – "Symphony for Strings and Timpani"
1967 – "Sonata" for cello
1971 – "Poem" for piano
1984 – "Album for My Granddaughter"
1988 – "Poem-Epitaph" for string orchestra written in memory of Aram Khachatourian
2006 – "Seasons of the Year"
1936–2006 Songs and vocal romances
2009 – "Ode to Heaven and Its Blessings" – Choir Acapella

last surviving members of their circle holding on to each other until the end. The fifth friend was the outgoing and sociable composer Adam Khudoyan. Arno Babajanian would say about him, "Adik is so active, it is hard to exist next to him, but it is impossible to live without him."

Mstislav Rostropovich regularly visited Armenia for performances and to meet his friends. Once he asked Mirzoyan to write a sonata for cello. When the Sonata was ready, it was performed for the first time by the author and Rostropovich at the Tchaikovsky Hall in Moscow.

Mirzoyan's legacy lives through his musical heritage, the lives of all those whom he loved, inspired and taught, and the imprints that he left in the hearts of his listeners and on the culture of Armenia.



PanArmenian PHOTO

Mirzoyan's music was known well beyond the Iron Curtain. He toured with various groups of musicians who performed his music.

In 1963, just several months after the Cuban missile crisis, Mirzoyan toured 35 cities of the U.S. with the Komitas Quartet. After the recital at the State Department, the musicians were invited to the White House where they met President John F. Kennedy, who presented them with personalized tie pins and asked the musicians to deliver a message about the goodwill of the American people – that they want to live in peace with the people of the USSR.

While in Los Angeles, Mirzoyan visited Stravinsky. They instantly befriended him and spent the entire night drinking White Horse whiskey, talking about music and life. Later, they met on several occasions in Russia. He had close personal relationships with many world-renowned classical performers – violinist Yury Bashmet, conductor Valery Gergiev and classical concert pianist Alexander Toradze. They frequently performed his compositions and were his devoted friends.

Edvard Mirzoyan's legacy lives through his musical heritage, the lives of all those whom he loved, inspired and taught, and the imprints that he left in the hearts of his listeners and on the culture of Armenia.

Once Mirzoyan was invited to a TV show on Women's Day, and everyone was saying that love should be this or that, half-seriously, half-jokingly, but when they asked Mirzoyan, he said, "Love should be inexhaustible."

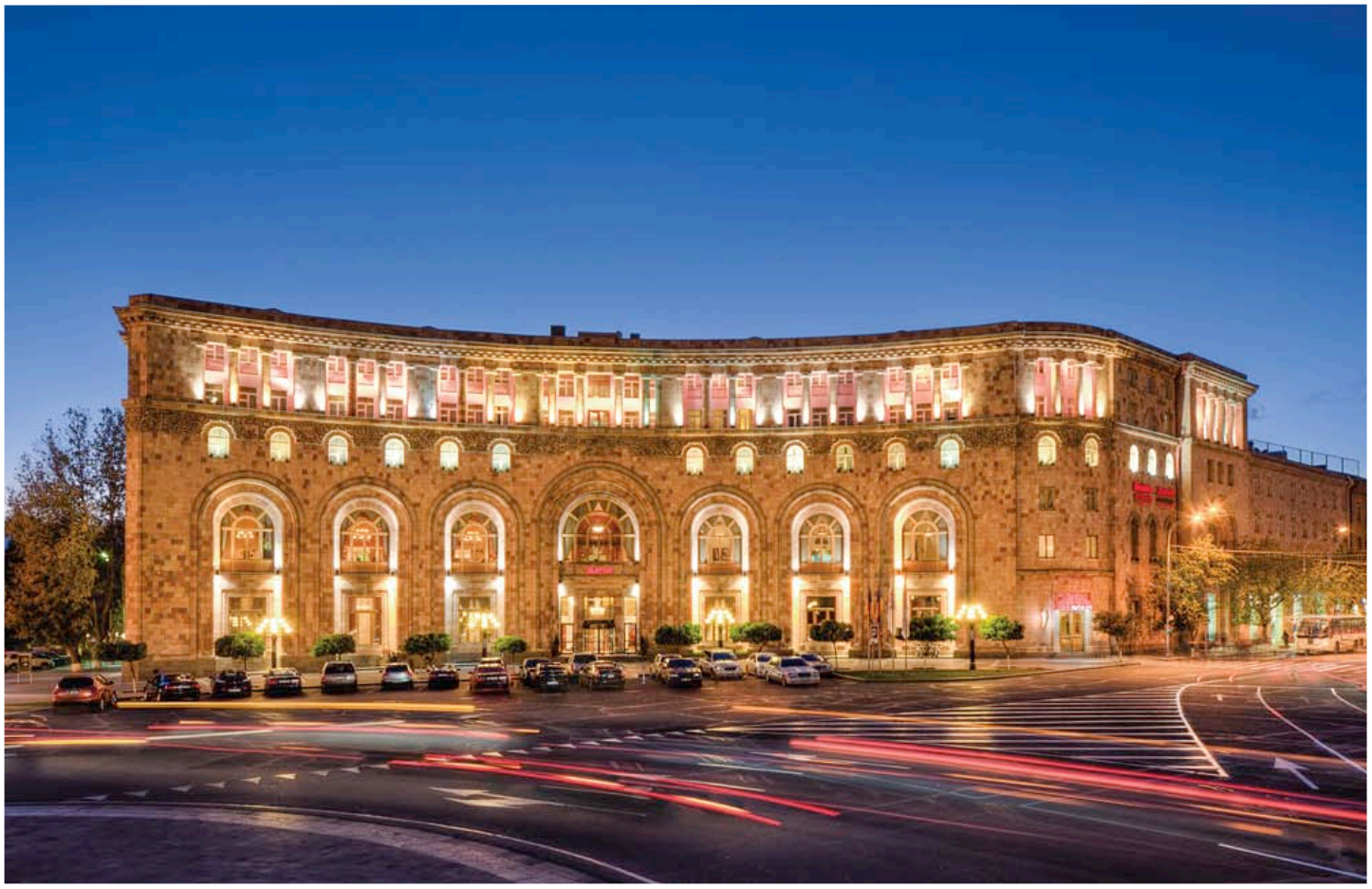
That was the attitude toward life of a unique man – one who never uttered banalities or clichés. ■



Vernissage

Suren Manvelyan

Vernissage in Yerevan is the complete opposite of the classical derivation "vernissage," which is a private viewing of paintings before public exhibition. Armenia's "Vernissage" can be best described as the country's premiere outdoor flea market, a place where natives make a living and tourists take home mementos. The open-air art bazaar features an assortment of souvenirs for customers every weekend. Vendors are usually the artists and makers behind the products they sell, which include hand-carved backgammon and chess sets, miniature copies of *khachkars* and other wooden carvings, oil paintings, and cotton dolls. There are also traditional souvenirs like T-shirts, key chains, flags and other neat keepsakes that are sold at wholesale prices. With similarly stocked vendors always jockeying for sales, the buyer has the leveraging power of bargaining. There are vendors who are more laid back as they play backgammon, chew sunflower seeds, and drink coffee. But don't be hesitant to approach them. They'll give you a better price than the booth beside them, and if you'd like, an even better story behind the piece of art you're buying.



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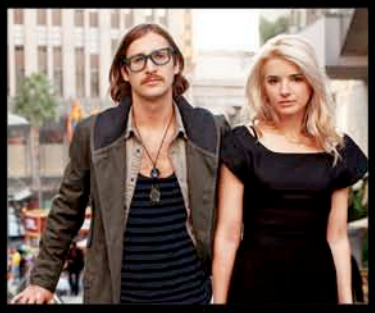


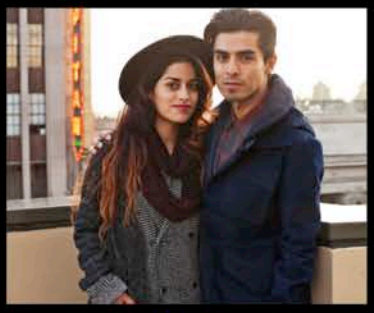




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