

Fire Bird - works by Zurab Nijaradze

It is a difficult time in Georgia and only people who are highly organised and highly intellectual are able to go on with their work, remaining at their easels, wrapped in warm shawls, keeping their personalities untouched.

This is Zurab Nijaradze, a versatile artist, an intellectual. His works are like small glasses in a magic pipe – they mix and shine as the surface of the sea, as the blue sky, as reddish mountains covered with autumn woods.

Circus” –playfulness, lightness, glitter of colours; his nudes are on the surface of the canvas as a memory, as an anticipation, or love. Pictures – kaleidoscopes, pictures – treasures, pictures – endless as life. God bless Zurab and give him strength to work and overcome obstacles.

Natasha Nesterova, Artist

One of Georgia's most famous and exciting artist **Zurab Nijaradze** - will be exhibiting his recent works at **The Air Gallery in Mayfair**, London from October 5th - 10th 2009.

A Painter with decades of experience, he is also Professor of the Tbilisi Academy of Arts, where he originally graduated, and is an Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Arts.

Born in 1928 and now in his eighties, he is visiting London for the first time since the late 1960's. When, although an undisputed great artist, Zurab was a Soviet artist and lecturer at the Tbilisi Academy of Arts; it was then deemed impossible to even dream of exhibiting in London.

It was however, a dream that forty years later has finally come to fruition. Organised by the English Speaking Union of Georgia and curated by Marina Tsitsishvili and George Laliashvili, this exhibition, titled 'Firebird' will be open daily from 11am - 6pm at the Air Gallery, www.airgallery.co.uk. Included will be thirty canvasses from his most recent works. The exhibition is being officially opened by the Ambassador of Georgia to Great Britain Mr. Giorgi Badridze, who will introduce the exhibition to an audience of international diplomats and international art collectors, critics and dealers.

Zurab's energy, ideas and enthusiasm continues to flow and shows no signs of slowing down. His studio is full of finished and part finish canvasses, where he continues to work every day after his daily game of tennis. He relaxes by listening to classical music and by playing chess.

His life and career has spanned over many years of constant changes and he has faced and adapted to many economical and political challenges in Georgia. His relentless energy and enthusiasm that has remained consistent has often left him searching for himself. What gives Zurab his defiant energy is his love of life, people and the desire to translate his ideals in the art that he creates.

In the 1960's he was one of the artists who openly opposed Socialist Realism. He was expelled twice from the Academy of Arts for Formalism. He introducing a different, new artistic reality, a new direction and new way of thinking into the construction of his work; he was regarded then as being one of life's true innovators.

His unique style, ideas and taste has conquered viewers. The series of portraits and genre paintings are impressed with an unusual spiritual depth and lavishness of colour. These pictures have become a great source of inspiration for the artists, admirers and collectors in the former Soviet Union. From his popularity it was impossible for the authorities to ignore this fact and gradually they admitted it by officially recognising his talent in honouring him the prestigious title of the **Peoples' Artist of Georgia**.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the restrictions eased and the borders became more open. This new situation now allowed an international audience to appreciate and admire the works of all the great Georgian artists – including Zurab.

Zurab has painted the pictures especially for this exhibition. It is really amazing that at eighty the artist is as productive as in his young days, reminiscence of Lucian Freud. They have one thing in common – nudes. Though Zurab's approach and interpretation of the task is evidently different and unique. His nudes reflect the rich, refined inner world of the artist and evoke deeper thought from the unassuming viewer.

George Laliashvili



Art Expert 2009

Influenced by the works and symbology of ancient statues, Velasquez, Goya, the Impressionists, Pirosmanni and Picasso. He found inspiration from the very authors whose books he illustrated and found passion and energy from Russian literature, Shakespeare, Rustaveli, Vaja-Pshavela and Baratashvili's poem Merani, all of which have always impressed him. This energy and above influence can be subtly identified within his work.

I don't know anything better for expressiveness than energy. The main feature of any work of art is - energy. It is not possible to gain victory forever. One has to win it every day, in every picture.

Zurab Nijardze – July 2009.

The main essence of art is and always has been, to create emotion and invigorate strength. Due to exactly these features, Zurab's paintings in this exhibition show extraordinary value and charm. In every piece of his work he remains an exquisite aesthetic by meticulously constructing his paintings that when being admired, release the most amazing energy. They become living art which, with its inner charge and high infectious moods make you fall in love with life, beauty and mankind.

Zurab's work details an astonishing poet of colours. In his landscapes which are at the same time physical and metaphysical objects, lose their flesh and continue their existence in a spiritual domain. Breathtakingly beautiful with glittering colours in an artistic manner of painting, inner pulsation of colours, exquisite tonal tradition, make Nijardze's works unforgettable; so much warmth and sunlight comes from within his pictures - nudes and landscapes always full of surreal beauty.

Zurab's painting revolve around Biblical themes and ancient art with a sense of material and level of generalisation for the desire to achieve an ideal by (in the artists own words) consciously avoiding vulgarity.

People need ideals in every epoch. Painting is a successful attempt to reach an ideal. It doesn't matter that it is the era of computers and that you can split colour and sound yet nothing can be copied, soul - least of all.

Zurab 2009.

Zurab's solo exhibitions have all received positive reviews; winning critical acclaim. He has exhibited in Tbilisi, Moscow, Vienna, Prague, Germany, Greece, Austria, the former Yugoslavia, Sweden and Paris. He has also regularly participated in Republican, All-Union and International joint Exhibitions throughout his career.

His awards such as National Award of Georgia (2009) and the Rustaveli Award (1983) are examples of his high achievements and success within the world of art.

Zurab's work can be found in public collections such as the State Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Theatre and Cinema in Tbilisi, The State Tretyakov Gallery and Museum of Eastern Peoples, Moscow, The National Gallery of Rio de Janeiro and the Museum of Modern Art, Aachen, Germany.

His paintings also form important additions to many private art collections such as those by Pope Paul II, Madeleine Albright (former US State Secretary), Gerhard Schröder (former German Chancellor) Genscher (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany) and so on.

When I think of Zurab Nijardze, time as if goes back to the atmosphere in which Zurab was growing up..... Here, in this cultural triangle, in this atmosphere Zurab Nijardze develops as a painter. The painter who is extremely demanding to himself. The painter whose exhibitions are always a source of pleasure and excitement.

Rezo Gabriadze

Writer, Theatre-Director

Zurab Nijardze lives and works in Tbilisi. He has a wife and two daughters: Nina and Anna. They too graduated from the Tbilisi Academy of Arts. Julie Badrick
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