

About Temo Javakhi's (Javakhishvili) Art

Temo Javakhi is a distinguished figure in Georgian Art with his various experiments and constantly original artistic reactions related to current processes in the local context.

In his creative biography, there are: paintings, graphics, photography, artistic objects, word-objects, synthesis of a text and an image, performance, video art, installation and other...

However, his name is associated first of all with abstract objects of textured surfaces. These objects are artworks with a "picture" layout which develop on architectural surfaced motives, focusing on the texture of materials (cement, annealed ground, stone powder and other chemical pigments used for ground structuring) and surface treatment with relief "furrows". Character of artworks of such type triggers associations of naturally preserved "fingerprints" of prehistoric images and archetypal motives. Their determining focus is marked with a script and an alphabet theme.

In 1991 Temo Javakhi's first personal exhibition was based exactly on this concept and its title "Letrism" meant a relationship with the experience of a famous modernist direction and a peculiar understanding of this experience at the same time.

Signs carved on texture surfaces, separate letters of alphabet, figures, cartographic silhouettes and symbolic images create a visual system of a kind of cipher where (in most cases) specific contents does not matter, it is related to the general history, experience and knowledge codes. From artworks of this direction "Abraham's Descendants" and "The Main Prayer" built on the theme of Morse alphabet are noteworthy, where a text displayed with cipher on a neutral background changes into a symbolic image of both human history generally and cultural one as well.

In one of the famous artworks of Temo Javakhi ("Я") an artistic form of self-presentation is also related to the alphabet. The artist's stand manner showed on the self-portrait represents a graphic imitation of the Russian "Я" – with a black suit on a neutral white background. A succinct black and white image shows personally chosen solitude and one's own "irrelevance" in a social space at the same time, a kind of conflict with the existing system which moves into the introverted self-deepening. However, there are also included specific topics such as an existing bureaucratic system and its indifference to the artistic world.

Temo Javakhi's action "Bul-Bulioni" (National Gallery, 1991) from the series of Linguistic Games (In Georgian "Bulbuli" means a nightingale and "Bulioni" is broth) was connected exactly to ignoring art space and showed a communication problem by crossing absurd and irony: after reading experimental poetry, the author tore the texts into pieces and boiled them with vegetables in the broth. A communication problem is more aggravated in video "Silk Man" (1994) where existential drama of estrangement is shown with a sharp message on the background of system violence and psychological tension.

In Tbilisi History Museum Qarvasla, within the workshop held in 2003, this video became the topic of one of the main discussions. A video art explorer Keiko Sey called it the classics of Georgian Video Art: "It's something great! It is done technically and very well: the contents, the texture... and how the text is included in it. How it starts generally... with a completely mute animation and then how the text, the music and the sound join. I have a feeling as if it was an artwork of a twenty-year-old person. I do not mean the professional level of the art-work, I mean the strong emotional-sensitive side... And if I did not know the author, I would think that this video is made by a twenty-year-old young boy who is somewhat frustrated by Georgian political and generally lifetime matters. I would think that it is made by a person who tries to put his energy into something else." (Keiko Sey, 2009.4.4.)

Dramatic nature is especially strong in such a minimalist form as one of Temo Javakhi's important artworks – "Heavy", 1993. It is a granite sculpture – a case with a bronze handle, which is nearly impossible to move from its place. Quite a simple form defined with a heavy stone texture component shows extreme tension and hardness of a critical moment in the recent history of Georgia.

An interest to textures is deepened and developed in artworks that can be united in the environmental art category. For this artist transformation processes are important, no matter whether it is melting of an ice "pillow" or development of a plant from a seed. A motive of organic processes became a symbolic image of the existing world in the project "Astral Projection" which included an assemblage "XX Floor" (N Gallery, 1998), where on a large size canvas a false oat-grass was growing. In the cut fragment of the canvas there was a monitor installed with a video shot where steps going up the stairs continued endless possession of a human.

Here the field of a general context goes on a visual metaphor of the relationship between a human and the world. But problems of local context developed in other works are connected to the linguistic dimension again. An action-performance "Qartveli" ("Georgian") was held in the old gallery in 1998. The term "Qartveli" and "Qart Valley" (the field of winds) made by its division are related to the discourse defining the national identity where, because of the political-geographic location of the mentioned country, nationality is associated with permanent cataclysms and unpredictable historical changes.

Temo Javakhi's art is part of the processes in which transformation of Georgian visual art is going on, sharing of modern art experiences and their introduction in relation with one's own space are taking place. Temo Javakhi is one of the successful artists and in his artworks understanding of the international experience is harmonically connected to actual topics of modern Georgian art and current problems.

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2015