

Works of Tamaz Varvaridze

Tamaz Varvaridze is the artist representing the group of clearly individual Georgian creative minds from the '70s of XX century. Known as the founder of Georgian contemporary graphic school, prominent master of poster art, organizer and a visionary, he has taught numerous graphic designers, fairly gaining the international recognition. Since the beginning of the '70s, Georgian Fine art had experienced the controversy towards the previous generation's intense painting line, the tendency of gradual separation from the canonized spectral painting and approaching the non-figurative art, whether it would be in collage, mixed techniques, or abstraction. Nevertheless, the history of Georgian Art of that decade is seemingly less memorable and therefore, it is difficult to convey the artistic forms. The epochal events, the specific characteristics of the so-called "Zastoi" period would be difficult to comprehend. The artists of this generation had nothing else remained but only to observe the intensive flow of events taking place beyond the "Iron Curtain" – watching but not able to engage in those immense cultural movements of epochal significance – the extreme liberalization of contemporary art, hippie movement, the sexual revolution and the rock'n'roll's new age, artists' struggle for human rights and freedom. The creative activity of Tamaz Varvaridze, as of an artist is absolutely different. It is more individualistic. It was difficult to come up with the reflexive form of the artistic comment on the existing reality, considering the fact that the entry of modern art practices and their re-evaluation on the local ground, usually, involved many obstacles. Nevertheless, the artist creates the pieces uncommon for the Soviet reality and out of the general ideological context, consistently pursuing this line, with his usual professionalism, till these days, as if his artistic personality has never even been touched by the totalitarian epoch. The primary principle the artist has been establishing, since the '70s, is the formal quests of conceptualism, characterized by the aesthetic organization of space in compositions. Despite the autonomy of details, he manages to unite them by means of abstract inter-connections. With the maximum economy of visual elements, the artist creates an internal system that determines the rational movement on an unreal, generalized, less colored surface built on the contrast of black and white. Restrained colors are characteristic to Tamaz varavaridze's works, even when he introduces an intense color for strengthening the concept. A simple expression of complex thought reveals the artist's authentic nature and laconic character. The artist masters the material, when the complex mixed techniques based on the improvisation, color austerity of watercolor compositions, acrylic lightness, oil difficulty or the ink elegance allows the viewer to associatively complete the image and perceive its subtext. Four decades later, there is already a history of acknowledged experience, the ability to perceive the years from the prospective suggesting us to contemplate on the eternal and the temporal. The clear examples for this would be the artist's extended graphic series – "Order", hand-made, stone like objects placed symmetrically - 1, 2, 3... Philosophical and mathematical modeling of real world, Mondrianesque neo-plasticism, aimed at creating sophisticated systems and "variations on Georgian alphabet"; the merge of graphic originality of Georgian alphabet and modernity, understanding of the tradition with philosophical categories, when the essence of a subject acquires a symbolic nature, at the same time, not losing its sound as an element or an object being represented in fine art. Tamaz Varvaridze is a thinking artist. His past life, work and art is one whole artistic gesture, playing a great role in understanding the contemporary Georgian culture.

Alexandra Gabunia Tbilisi, 2015