

# MODERN PAINTING BY ALBANIANS IN THE BALKANS AFTER THE 1990S

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**ABSTRACT:** With the collapse of the communist system and the return of the pluralistic political system in Albania, after 1991, visual arts began their journey without the tutoring of a uniform art tendency, as it was during the past 50 years of socialist realism in this country.

It is certain that the development of Albanian art and painting in the past twenty-five years represents a development stage full of unexpected and sudden problems and paradoxes, but with individual cases and creativity that deserve special attention and, above all, should be treated as the current artistic established profile that seeks the necessary attention.

Despite the social circumstances that preoccupied Kosovo because of repression of the population, Kosovo artists did not stop their creative work at any moment. With the stabilization of the political situation in Kosovo after 1999, the contemporary art of Kosovo has been again activated and got its institutional frameworks.

Painting by artists in Macedonia consists of different stages, styles and trends initiated by the historical development of European fine art, and they have been carried out with a certain symbiosis of the successful imagination of artists. By the very opening of *the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tetovo* in 1994, Albanian artists have become more active and present on the art scene in Macedonia, building their special style and creating certain new standard tendencies, all the way to postmodern art styles.

**Keywords:** Painting, styles, Albanian artists, society, political system, traditional elements,

With the collapse of the communist system and the return of the pluralistic political system in Albania, after 1991, visual arts have begun their journey without the tutoring of a uniform art tendency, as it was during the past 50 years of socialist realism in this country. More than in other fields of art, in the field of painting one can note a diverse and large creative context. A large number of individual exhibitions have been opened where works that belong to various contemporary art tendencies were shown. Although at this stage in Albania, authors can be found that still paint as in the years and time of socialist realism, nevertheless tone to contemporary painting is given by Albanian painters who strive for a more modern stylistic expression. Albanian artists, recently isolated within their own country, now face the world in order to assess themselves, and their work, in particular.

Albanian artists are now organized in various art associations, but surely according to their affinities and talent, and in context of another platform that is adapted to contemporary and global

art trends. It is certain that the development of Albanian art and painting in the past twenty-five years represents a development stage full of unexpected and sudden problems and paradoxes, but with individual cases and creativity that deserve special attention and, above all, should be treated as the current artistic established profile that seeks the necessary attention.

There is a long list of Albanian painters who have contributed to the development of contemporary painting. In this context, one should consider the creative transformation of painter *Hasan Nallbani* who, as an artist, was the best among six students of the first generation, graduated from the High Institute of Art in Tirana. Hasan Nallbani belongs to a line of excellent colorists with consolidated individuality within figuration and with exceptional expressionist preferences.

His works of the 1990s are mostly works by which the social situation is shown through expressionist figuration and monumental symbolism.

One of the most important cycles by Nallbani executed in the recent period is the issue of the *Exodus*, the dramatic situation of Albania after the 1990s, as well as the cycle *Unknown Times* connected with the original form of the current tradition of European expressionism, rich in existential pressures that transform colors and the form of reality in expressing the subjective emotions of the artist.

With regard to the cycle of the art work *Movement and Escape*, made in the period from 2002 to 2005, art critic Francesco Pollini, among other things, emphasizes that these works are opposed to any form of official rhetoric of realism; it is a cycle that develops in context of genuine traces of the value of human freedom, including passions, emotions, and hopes of a better future. This artist conveys not only the individual vision of husband and wife with the help of figures of anonymous characters of people, but above all social dimension, common destiny, epic aspects of a glorious drama.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, Nallbani has been engaged in a cycle of works called *Women* where, in figurative manner, he closely associates the ideas of the author with the phenomenon of women in Albanian society. It can be said that the works by Nallbani are evidence of a given reality, filled with the emotions of the artist, and with deep contradictions.

Upon change of the political system in Albania in the 1990s, Ali Oseku became an important artist promoting the colored field in the visual arts of Albania. Oseku, in his first works, shows his abstractness by which he wants to challenge complex associations from the simplest visual impulses. His works are characterized by light as such; at times, the quiet, monochrome projections by the painter are broken up by sudden strokes sometimes vertically and sometimes horizontally. The essential characteristic of these

works is the dominance of a solemn light and a silence of a coloristic tonality. Similar to Mark Rothko, he is engaged in that type of painting where - by means of a pure sensuality of colored surfaces, dimensions, and a feeling of endless expanding - the observer is immersed into the total experience of color.

The art creation of Gazmend Leka is interesting, who before the 1990s executed art print techniques, was engaged with India ink in the field of cartoons, while after the 1990s he started painting on wood, by using different materials in the execution of these pictures.

Leka is an artist who is preoccupied with mystery, alchemy, theology, astrology, symbolism, philosophical theories, motifs and legends, as well as the magic of color. By using art graphic techniques on paper, he has been preoccupied with the mythology and all the phenomena of his people. His art creations are presented in the book covers by multiple illustrations devoted to the works by the great Albanian writers such as Ismail Kadare and Dritero Agolli, in context of his efforts in the field of illustrations of the Albanian book.

The history of the disintegrated countries, injustices from the past and present, as well as the chaos of transition in Albania, are strongly embedded in the awareness of painter Leka. Leka is restrained harmoniously in the colorful treatment of his works. He is directed to extreme graphicity; from time to time, he creates graphic images dominated by a black color with delicate "stroke" applications with white and red color.<sup>2</sup>

His next cycle of pictures is called *Nostradamus* where he sets conceptual communication and installation as part of his orientation, pressuring the observer to become part of his creativity. The content and effect of light in the active presentation of "black" were selected because the artist wanted to come closer to his past experiments.

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<sup>1</sup>Introduction to the catalog about Hasan Nallbani - Francesco Polli, *Levizje dhe ikje (2002-2005)*, Tirana, 2006.

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<sup>2</sup><http://mezuraj.museum/paintings.al.html#stop>

While in 2015, he created a cycle called *Apple* inspired by the history of myths and legends originating from his immediate environment. The artist himself says he has never met a fruit spoken of like apples. Gratifying good and evil. In this cycle, Gazmend Leka interprets the agreement and disagreement about "fruits" not only to direct the glimpse into the depth of the dark goal of human history where constellations shine, but also to make us reflect on the ambiguity of the symbols of various circumstances of a certain time.<sup>3</sup> In the body of work produced by Leka, evidently there is an effort to interweave elements into single context that denotes the universality and mystical character that is continuously treated by the painter.

Edi Hila is one of these painters, who, although having lived and worked according to the socialist-realism method, managed to discover more individual arts loaded with values and ideas, fresh and sincere, which come to the fore in a very important part of his life, igniting several sparks of light in the dark of societies of Albanian art.

Edi Hilla called his individual exhibition *Penthouse* that he opened in Paris, and where he was able to show his notions of the current truth of his Albania. Edi Hila dealt with this "wild construction" to bring on a canvas a being that shows social issues that are felt in the towns all these years. His paintings note the entire chaos of a long cultural transition and social policy.

French critic Ardenne was able to understand the philosophy of this exhibition. He pointed out that "an isolated house is a favorite motif of Hila; he suggests that such bunker houses in northern Albania, a country where there is bloodshed between generations, is another wound we encounter in Albania." The exhibition called *Penthouse* by Edi Hila in Paris implied a metaphor of the situation of a social degradation, a phenomenon that goes beyond the Balkan territory, where people make an effort to isolate themselves

from fear and misery and do not share their love one with another.<sup>4</sup>

Art critic Paul Ardenne pointed out: "Hila shows primarily a sociopolitical reality degraded in today's Albania, a place of great differences and great contrasts..."<sup>5</sup> It means Hila presented the vision of Albania during the transition period.

One of the efforts in finding relations between certain traditional Albanian elements and their treatment by the painting language that seeks to execute coherence with contemporary European painting is seen in the pictures made by painters Bashkim Ahmeti and Artan Shabani. They support an interpretative sense of traditional signs that bind the artists to their place by transposing it through artistic language; this language appears as a transformed reflection in cohesion with ambience and environment and other realities.

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In spite of the economic situation of the country in the 1990s, contemporary European and global artistic trends were coming on large scale to Kosovo. Although they do not have European characteristics, Albanian artists from Kosovo have been able to estheticize their works with content of the new time. Freedom in expression has become a reality that penetrates deeply into the arts spheres; it has created conditions for the implementation of concepts, methods, and artistic experiences in the production of good works of art. The freedom of expression and the legacy of Western culture, as well as every body of artistic institutions on which art is based, suggest an extension in the new development of artistic productions of many authors.

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.shqiptarja.com/kulture/2730/edi-hila-ekspozon-ne-paris-deri-me-1-shkurt-193740.html#sthash.UMwmC1hm.dpuf>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.shqiptarja.com/kulture/2730/edi-hila-ekspozon-ne-paris-deri-me-1-shkurt-193740.html#sthash.UMwmC1hm.dpuf>

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.kultplus.com/?id=4&l=11577>

Also, after 1991, due to social circumstances, contemporary Kosovo art was developing in difficult conditions. Despite the social circumstances that preoccupied Kosovo because of repression of the population, Kosovo artists did not stop their creative work at any moment. Work conditions required many self-denials; the very organization of the exhibitions was almost impossible to carry out, so the exhibitions were held in unsuitable conditions, like in cafeterias and similar spaces, but not in the galleries as such. Comparatively, we can conclude that visual Kosovo art went one step backward compared to the "golden years" in the development of painting in the 1970s, when a large number of Kosovo artists appeared on the art scene, and today they are considered pioneers of Kosovo art. Some of the more famous artists of that time are: Mulliqi, Gjokaj, Ferri, Emra, Salihamidzic, Xhafa, and others. These artists were ready to do radical changes and reforms in fine arts after the first years of the liberation of Kosovo.

With the stabilization of the political situation in Kosovo after 1999, Kosovo's contemporary art was revived and got institutional frameworks as contemporary art galleries were opened in several towns in Kosovo.

Albanian artists from Kosovo belong to general and characteristic artistic movements: impressionism, expressionism, abstract expressionism, cubism, surrealism, art informel, geometrism, naive art, new figuration, conceptual art, and so on.

In this period, the third stage in the creation of Muslim Mulliqi could be singled out; it lasted from 1991 to 1994 and represented an extension of the previous stages, but it differed in the motifs and use of color. This period began with the eighth decade of the last century, years full of dramatic events and tough times in Kosovo. 1989 was the year of the culmination of a difficult situation that affected the soul of the artist. He felt color as a

passion and a living dynamic, and as a symbol of human destiny.

A major shift in Mulliqi's creation was made in the eighth decade of the 20th century. At that time, he produced works such as: *Head I, Head II, Longing, Before the Storm*. Figures with psychological characteristics, shown earlier, were then transformed on the surface, and only acted to their extent.<sup>6</sup> That is why he devoted a lot of attention to the landscape. Instead of a quiet space, he created a landscape with powerful brushstrokes and gestures as a dramatic disturbing space. In his works of that time, red is dominant, followed by yellow and green, and sometimes by warm-blue and white. The figures were originated from the boundless travels in the hard land, and later they became the fortress of the resistance in this territory.

Until 1996, there were nine cycles in the art production of Engjëll Berisha. Some of them were: *Traces, Associations, Dugagjini Roots, Prizren Medallions, Bitterness*. These cycles connected the phenomena of the nature of his country, depicting them in portraits, landscapes, still life, and so on.

In the works of Gjelosh Gjokaj, especially in the second phase, there are elements characteristic of poetic surrealism, more precisely in the period between 1980-1990. At this stage, he tried to present a man from his hometown and with his authentic characteristics: shepherds, flutes, and sheep. The third stage of his work was from 1990 to 2000. In this stage, Gjelosh Gjokaj was able to attain the culmination of freedom in art creation. There are no concrete elements on the canvases painted at this stage, no real figure, but abstract forms. The color is dominant, that is, the harmony of colors is unified in the logical whole. If we observe in particular his entire creative work, we will notice that his works explain human traumas from the wartime, experienced traumas that would leave psychological burdens.

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<sup>6</sup>Muharremi Hivzi, *Maestro Mulliqi*, Milenium, Tetovo, 2008.

The cycle called *Diary from Rome* is a ten-collage cycle that connects the past, present and future through real elements and visions. The works created in this latter period relate to the contemporary atmosphere that dominates Europe, to the works of today's European contemporary art, but still have a far-reaching connection with the environment where the author's childhood was experienced. He presented that childhood environment in a marginal way in his works.<sup>7</sup>

A very interesting example is the compositions made by Xhefdet Xhafa, where the collage and contrast of different materials are used, involving the two-dimensional development of surface and linear drawings, and where traditional Albanian sleeveless embroidered jackets (clothes) are clearly seen. His cycle is named as *Autobiography*, framed with technical elements in the service of a certain inner world, with the tendency of introducing a fictitious enclosure from the psychology of the author's own character, by which the author wants to analyze it aesthetically by his own image. In the works made by Xhafa, like in those by his art professor Gabrijel Stupica, there is no interruption in the continuity of painting comprehension, or the sense of objectively interpreting the object from the tradition. They are conveyed in the spirit of the fantastic with the scenes of the symbolic, in order to unite in the same temperament of art and attitude towards the world.<sup>8</sup>

The works of Rexhep Ferri in the eighth and ninth decade presented as the main idea an existential philosophy, which was widespread at a time when Ferri formed himself as a person and as an artist. We can say that Ferri came to this world with an idea. Out of nowhere, as a being deserted, alienated from one's own people, an individual

rejected by this world, the world seems to him as a cage of a limited ambiance.<sup>9</sup>

The wall in the works by Ferri has a deeper significance, because it connects with the great drama of his life. The members of his family after the Second World War lived separately. When the borders between Albania and Yugoslavia became closed, Ferri's father remained in Albania, while Rexhep and his mother remained in Kosovo. After many years, this historical and fatal ideological wall that becomes part of the Ferri's tragedy is something the author cannot talk about. This motif in his works - the fatal wall separating the family - has also been a paradigm for the Albanian people, so Ferri depicted it in his cycle called *My Country is a Torso* created in the late 1990s.<sup>10</sup> In this cycle, a huge metaphor is broken down into the minimalism of art expression.

In his works, Tahir Emra presents figures in the interior and the dramatic landscape, which have the spirit of the mind. All these artistic solutions have a rich texture of the coloristic playfulness of the horizontal and the vertical lines. Color dominates his paintings especially black color through which, in a specific way, he interrupts the silence that occurs in his works, where tragedy and existential moments of time and space are predominant. According to art critic Zoran Pavlovic, the impulses taken from the world surrounding the artist, are rendered by the artist in a refined figurative language. He uses contemporary art language with very broad artist's phrases, which are never worn-out and artificial expressions.<sup>11</sup> The entire creative production of Tahir Emra is based on art informel, figurative expressionism, and geometric abstraction.

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<sup>7</sup>Gashi Gani, "S'kemi shumë arsye të vrapojmë pas të tërëve ", interview with Gjokaj, as quoted from the manual of works. Foniqi Shaqir, *Unë për të tjerët të tjerët për mua*, Tirana, 2003, p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Čelebonović Aleksa, *Contemporary painting in Yugoslavia*, Publishing Company • Yugoslavia •, Belgrade, 1965, p. 34.

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<sup>9</sup> Maliqi Shkelzen, art catalog introduction, *Opusi Piktural, i Rexhep Ferri*, Akademia Shkencave dhe e Arteve Kosoves, Prishtine, 2007, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Pavlovic Zoran, *Tahir Emra, Grafički kolektiv*, Belgrade, 10.IV.1971. Quoted from a group of authors, *Artistet Akademike*, Akademia e Shkencave dhe e Arteve e Kosoves, Prishtine, 2002, p.81.

The main cycles of Zake Prelvukaj's creation are: *X-talks*, *No Comment*, *Ghetto in the Balkans*, *Childhood without Childhood*, *My Body with a Brush*. The first inspirations in her work are related to her native Montenegro. Inspired by the lakes of her birthplace, she executed an entire cycle of works depicting local fishermen with nets and their lives. Zake Prelvukaj uses symbols in her artistic articulations, by executing the cycle of works *X-talks*, where she explores people identified as "unknown x." This implies those people who have lost their own identity and turned into numbers or unknown signs. This topic is also shown in other her works, such as, in *Art of Resistance* and *No Comment*.

Artist Zake Prelvukaj is known for her body-art style performance, where she introduced a cycle called *My Body with a Brush*. She produces painting performances of the most diverse forms by her painted body; it involves an executive process of transforming ideas and matter.

In the cultural and artistic life of Kosovo, activity had ceased only in a decade, but the development process and the creation of works of art has never been in the phase of decline, decadence, or stagnation. In 2003, many treatises and controversies in Kosovo art have been published about the position and role of traditional concepts, modern and postmodern tendencies. Young artists started showing interest in conceptual content and themes that were presented through installation, performance, and video projection. These were artists who were thinking differently about life, art, and challenges of today. Though there were negative reactions, conceptual art, in recent times, has been treated with great intensity by many artists, as art discipline offering greater figurative opportunities, greater speed, and fast and starting communication of Albanian social relations. Albanian artists have begun to travel overseas to all continents and thus meet the demands of their time.

In those years, the avant-garde understanding of art has been initiated after several years of modernist efforts; hence, artists have presented their creativity and works in the world through the experience of exhibiting at major international art shows, attracting the interest of art critics and art lovers.

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Painting by artists in Macedonia consisted of different stages, styles, and trends initiated by the historical development of European fine arts; hence, they have been done by a specific symbiosis of the successful imagination of artists and the specification of certain artists who prefer their own artistic tendency, thus wanting to create their own art identity. The process of modernization has led to new ways of artistic expression, since a large number of art tendencies from the Yugoslav and European art centers have been accepted, thus overcoming the boundaries between art disciplines and the desire for a new art approach.

One could say that the conditions and opportunities for the artistic creation of Albanian artists in Macedonia in the last years of the twentieth century were not identical. Macedonia easily survived the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. Because there was no military conflict in the first years of Macedonian independence, cultural and art institutions that had been established in the previous Yugoslav Federation, upon Macedonian independence, continued their autonomous work in this country. Macedonia's independence period allowed artists to present themselves outside of the country as well. Up to 1994, it cannot be said that it was time full of art events in the Republic of Macedonia; the exception consisted of several presentations within group or individual exhibitions of lower intensity. By the very opening of *the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tetovo* in 1994, Albanian artists have become more active and present on the art scene in Macedonia, building their special style and creating certain new standard tendencies, all the way to postmodern art styles.

In the late 80's and early 90's, visual arts focused on different issues and topics. Significant feature of this era also was a phenomenon of quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement of forms and means of irrational aggression. The alternative would be one of the keywords of the hybrid language of young artists in the last decades of the twentieth century. An alternative signifies the essence presented in the denial of the value system. Therefore, the basic content of the alternative is a symmetrical antithesis of the existing systems of creation of parallel worlds.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, they began to treat new conceptions that connect the sensitive layers of the artists and their outer world.

In the production of artist *Adem Kastrati* - one of the most important authors in Macedonia's fine arts after the Second World War - a series of pictures is noted where the naive approach in the profiling of solid robust figures is seen, as related to the primitive art. The deep mental state in the depicted figures is presented in everyday life, by motifs of pictures that are related to the artist's place of birth.

In his works, Adem Kastrati primarily uses earth colors as a metaphor of the modesty of his people, as well as an artistic element of unparalleled gratitude.

Omer Kaleshi is one of the artists whose main interest is portrait, or a human face that shows pain, sorrow, joy, and other emotions. His paintings depict shepherds, dervishes, women, children who sell various fruits to the passengers at the railway stations. Very rarely, the faces of his protagonists are happy, because they represent human surviving sorrow, the drama of life, so that their foreheads are depicted with a gray powder or black mud that refers to their suffering. He depicts the man who is connected to his country and his cultural background.

The portraits made by Kaleshi remind us of Baudelaire's text about the 1859 art show of which he would write: *A good portrait looks like a dramatic biography, or rather as a right belonging to everyone.*<sup>13</sup>

In his other paintings, Omer Kaleshi presents the dervish figures, in the period of 1982-1983, where he tries to show their pain through black cloaks. Later, his portraits resemble "cut-off heads" and he decided to dress "those heads," but not in the clothing of an ordinary man, but in the clothes of a dervish or shepherd. Unlike his depiction of children, the dervish figures are happy, often presented in some posture of wonder. They are somehow similar, living in a special world of their own. Sometimes the artist presents them with a red cap, sometimes with extended arms, but always firmly standing on their feet, tired of the long journey through vast fields.

Omer Kaleshi produced a cycle called *Balkan Drama* in 1993 where he shows a group of scared children behind the wall. This wall represents a separation between human beings and the other world. When it comes to speaking about Kaleshi's body of work, we can say that it is characterized by white, red, and black. The work of Omer Kaleshi is connected with a given cultural field, but still belongs to the history of European painting and represents a categorical determination of his artistic creativity.

The artistic consideration of Miftar Memeti is concentrated on the character of local and global relations, where one can freely say that his creative work represents two categorical determinations of his poetics. The pictures clearly show the influence of the living, material, and mental environment of the past, which now, in the present, represents a beautiful impression of the dream.

Miftar Memeti has done a graceful portrait of Mother Teresa. The portrait itself consists of hundreds of small portraits rendering the whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Kalajić Dragoš, *The End of the World*, Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb, 1979, p. 26.

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<sup>13</sup> Rama Luan, *Omer, Strategy Ballkani*, Tirane, 2004, p.26.

The association of one hundred portraits means exactly one hundred years since the birth of the most famous humanist of the 20th century - Mother Teresa. The portrait itself is considered avant-garde in the painting of the Albanians. Through these hundreds of small portraits, the author depicts the images of different ages of Mother Teresa, from childhood to old age, with narrative and psychological premises inspired by the beauty that radiates from her, while the author idealizes her humanistic road.<sup>14</sup> With an active participation of the public, who becomes not only a part of the realization, but by being involved creates an action, a form of *action painting*. This is a very complex work in a stylistic sense; it is placed in the context of pop art, always starting from the fact that the work itself includes many elements that correspond to this artistic movement, appearing in the 1950s, while culminating in the 1960s.

Miftar Memeti in the same way created a hundred portraits to celebrate a hundred years of Albania's independence; these are portraits of Albanian patriots, the most important events, and Albanian national symbols. As the artist himself says, his goal was to create images where Skënderbeu would be located in the central part of cities, such as Tirana, Skopje, and Pristina, while the celestial firmament and flag symbolize the day of Albanian independence.

By means of structuralism, geometrism, and lyrical abstraction, the works of Reshat Ameti combine and create an artistic integrity that is constantly illuminated by the sunrays of the human soul.

Modern traditions in his works are not based on previous formulas; however, they are transmitted through the assimilation of certain elements of geometrism and lyrical abstraction, the symbolic art of intimism. In his works - says Professor Velichkovski - *the artist brings in a new endeavor,*

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<sup>14</sup> Pollozhani. Mixhait, „Portrete të koduara me gjuhën konceptuale”, *Almakos*, 16 December 2012.

*the desire to come out on a flat surface where he would reveal the expressive and tactile possibilities of the effects of the layered painting material by forming the canvas. It is evident that he creates images that are represented in a field of creative excitement, images that in their meaning have a renewable "utopia".*<sup>15</sup>

Avant-garde artists give a special place and meaning to a geometric form, such as Wassily Kandinsky, who was fascinated by a circle and square; for him, this was "the most objective form of an original surface"; in the touch of the circle and triangle, he saw the action of the surface of the highest order: in suprematist painting, the square is distinguished as the true source of every creativity.<sup>16</sup> He achieved great success by the physical appearance of the entire space within the canvas, so that his works get three-dimensionality.

Works produced by Reshat Ameti are full of vitality, colorful harmony and esthetic vibrations, artistic reflections of aesthetic ideas; so Croce says: "Those who are eager for art look for movement, warmth, and feeling. They are at the same time the most important criteria in distinguishing true artistic values from unsuccessful values. An artwork that lacks these values cannot save a high culture from deeper thinking."<sup>17</sup> One could say that, in a way, Reshat Ameti does not paint; he feels the transfer of an innovative idea into the concretization of the canvas.

Nehat Beqiri is an artist whose work in the past years adorns the domestic and European art scene. In his works, one sees diversity in interest and free eclectic artistic expression. The works that

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<sup>15</sup> Veličkovski Vladimir, *Geometric and lyrical sign of Reshat Ameti*, Cultural and Information Center, Skopje, 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Veličkovski Vladimir, *Geometrism in modern Macedonian art*, Epoha, 1997.

<sup>17</sup> Croce Benedetto, *Estetika si shkencë e shprehjes dhe e gjuhësisë së përgjithshme*, translated from Albanian by Zef Zorba, Apolonia, 1998, p. 67.



were created in the 1990's, his portraits, figural compositions, a series of images of fish, horses, bulls, clearly reflect *expressiveness* of his art rendition; he is virtuoso in lines that are easily transposed in figurative expressions, in human figures reduced in the body or head and wearing a strong existentialist connotation, in lines intensively drawn without the ultimate destination.

By the late 1990's, the human figure in his works disappeared. By means of a brushstroke, through a line of coloristic values or material used, a strong psychological expression is created. In his works that were created in 2003 and 2004, the author includes playing with lines, and in some works they are in the vertical, while in others in the horizontal context. In combination and crossing, they assume a strange form of x. On the one hand, they symbolize encounter, remembrance, existence in time, while on the other hand human agnosticism and ignorance of things that are visible.

Nevzat Bejtuli creates his works in an expressive manner. His artistic expression is based on the color value, especially in the use of an expressive, free, and wide brushstroke. His art production is mostly based on and treats the motif *Man and Horse* or *Man and His Horse*. These two figures have a reciprocal relationship in his works. In these figures, Nevzat Bejtuli-Kica emphasizes the prosperity of the cosmic aristocracy of man, who riding a horse is able to put under control the change and development in general. On the other hand, the same man, dressed in the clothes of the dervish, marks the metaphor of the mystical inner control of man.

The color in his works acts as a surface in several mesh strokes and the artist already builds a solid surface that connects to the canvas. In black and white contents, an association of volumes of living contrasts can be found, offering several spatial associations. Contrasts of bright and dark partitions dilute the color-shading gradation by a lyrical experience. Colors of black, white, ocher, blue, combinations and light-dark effects, contain

recognizable constant values. The drawing is pulled out and rounded up, so that is why differences are seen in the composition in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

In some works, which were made in 2008, there is an expression of gesture and sign, where detailed descriptions and previous symbols from earlier works are abandoned. The dominance of the gesture is in a concentrated direction that would create a clear sign in the context of the inspiration of the moment.<sup>19</sup> His expression and abstraction, as a mode of universal communication, is presented as a purified form and seems to be subordinate to the coloristic supremacy. With regard to the most important modern art legacy, Kica does not find himself and so looks for his artistic road in context of the continuity of the postmodern.

Lulzime Leka Mulaku is one of the few Albanian women who are actively engaged in painting activities. She explores a single topic, that is, a frequent preoccupation in the works of Albanian painters as motif: the Albanian woman in the role of mother, wife, and sister. Lulzime Leka Mulaku from one aspect is the successor of the Renaissance art school of Shkodra. Thus, in a perfect way, she renders the notion of the female figure, her mental ethics, physical beauty, the richness of traditional costumes, pride, and her social status.<sup>20</sup> And this very motif - with a longer

<sup>18</sup> Veličkovski Vladimir, *Poetics unexplained*, introduction to the catalog, Museum of the City of Skopje, Skopje, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Lazo Plavevski, *Relations and variations*, introduction to the catalog, Cultural Information Center, Skopje, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the presence of an Albanian woman as a motif is seen in the works by foreign artists as well. This motif is particularly prominent in the romantic period. As an illustration, we should mention some works that represent the Albanian woman with all of her characteristics that is unique in Europe and wider art. *Albanian Girl, Haideja*, by painter Corot; *Suliot Women*, by Dutch painter Scheffer; *Preparing the Albanian Bride, Girls with Çifteli*, by Croatian painter Jovanovic; *Women from Shkodra*, by English painter Lear; *Albanian Girl*, by Italian painter Oprandi; etc.

time development in the sense that it still represents a specification in aesthetic and ethical dimensions - stands out in the body of work of Lulzime Leka Mulaku. The Ballad of Doruntina, as a personification of the character of the Albanian woman, contains an emotional content extension throughout the entire Albanian history.

At the very beginning of her artist career, Leka could say that she fulfilled it with the visual presence of the heroes of her concept, while in her later works it has disappeared. Doruntina, Constantine and a horse as depicted in her initial works dominated by figuration - later have melted into abstraction.

The qualification of future painters and their rise in creative work is in constant growth, by the very formation of institutional infrastructure through the establishment of art associations in larger towns in the country, and the opening of new art schools. All this contributes to the progress of art as a cultural phenomenon in the further development process. Art - as a phenomenon and historical process, which takes place in the Republic of Macedonia - goes, it can be said, through an intensive phase; as a result of all this, positive artistic tendencies and art presentations in the major countries in the Balkans and in the world are noted.