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THE ROLE OF ALAKBAR RZAGULIYEV IN THE GRAPHIC ART OF AZERBAIJAN IN THE XX CENTURY

*Article dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the birth of
Honored artist Alakbar Rzaguliyev (1903–1974)*

Abstract. The article is dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the birth of Honored artist Alakbar Rzaguliyev (1903–1974), a prominent representative of 20th-century Azerbaijani graphic art. A. Rzaguliyev is one of the artists who enriched our national cultural heritage. Numerous graphic works of the artist, which have a high artistic and aesthetic value and reflect the features of ancient national miniature traditions, are a clear indication of this. The merits we have highlighted are in his works on various topics, including “Old Baku”, “Our children”, “Our favorite writers”, “Azerbaijani fishermen”, “Azerbaijani tobacco growers”, “Azerbaijani cotton growers”, “Azerbaijani carpet makers”, “Students”, etc. can be observed on the plates in the series of linocuts named.

Key words: Azerbaijan, fine art, graphics, Alakbar Rzaguliyev, “Old Baku”.

Introduction. One of the most memorable pages of the development stage of our graphic art, which coincided with the middle of the 20th century, is related to the work of the outstanding graphic artist, Honored Artist of the Republic Alakbar Rzaguliyev (1903–1974). A. Rzaguliyev, who was destined to live a fate unlike any other among Azerbaijani artists, confirmed

his creative “I” in the art world in a very short time, despite the contradictions he faced, is a quality that can arouse sympathy in others.

The interpretation of the main material. A. Rzaguliyev, who, despite being exposed to various spiritual and psychological pressures among young artists of that time, persisted in finding ancient traditions in his work and trying to update them, despite his continuous life in prison and exile, with his creativity that did not take long after his acquittal, tradition, and modernity in the field of easel graphics achieved an artistic solution to the problem.

At the time, he creatively developed the traditions of the People’s Artist Azim Azimzade and gained wide fame as a talented graphic artist with his realistic works. “It should be noted that like A. Azimzadeh, A. Rzaguliyev also created his works referring to his memory, and in them, he accurately “restored” the type, clothing, traditions, and customs of old Baku. However, if in Azimzade’s work, the main elements of the pictorial line were grotesque, bitter irony, Rzaguliyev’s works are more nostalgic for the old city, its inhabitants, disappearing narrow streets and huts, a special atmosphere that cannot be preserved in a city that is rapidly developing and changing its face with new buildings. belongs” [3, p. 45-46].

The naturalness of the artist’s works belonging to the early creative period, the reflection of the national traditions of the ancient city, the characteristic types of old Baku, and the artistic image of their everyday life are the main characteristics of the works that will bring him fame later. All these artistic merits can be observed in his paintings “White oil seller”, “Fish seller”, “Boot wiper” and “Musicians” drawn by him in 1927 with black ink. These works are of great importance in terms of the interest of the young generation of artists who have just started to form in Azerbaijan. It should be recalled that in the 20s and 30s, the desire of young Azerbaijani artists (G. Khalikov, A. Gaziyeu, S. Salamzade, R. Mustafayev, A. Rzaguliyev, etc.) to breathe new life into the ancient national artistic traditions worried the Kremlin ideologues. therefore, efforts were made to dissuade them from this path with the repulsions carried out...

Being away from the world of art for a long time and dealing with alternating family concerns could not extinguish his love for creation. He confirmed this with the “Old Baku” series of linocuts he created after returning to Baku. This series, created with love for the ancient city and its people, literally brought the artist great and rightful fame.



Fig. 1. A.Rzaguliyev. "Musicians". 1927.

In his numerous works, the artist, who exhibits an extraordinary love for the distant past of his people, expresses his guidance to history and national ethnography at a high level, so these works can be called "the artistic encyclopedia of ancient Baku". For this very reason, A. Rzaguliyev, who was called an "old artist" by his art friends because his works brought to life the distant past in a unique capacity, actually looked very fresh from an artistic point of view and had a youthful spirit in all his works.

Indeed, from the mid - 1950s until the end of his life, the artist, who tirelessly created a series of interesting and attractive linocuts, quickly became known as a graphic artist with a unique set of lines.

The great success of the artist's first individual creative exhibition called "Old Baku" organized in the Central Exhibition Hall of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic in 1963 confirmed the correctness of his artistic practice and creative pursuits. This exhibition is dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the artist's birth. More than 200 works of the famous graphic artist were displayed at the exhibition. At the opening ceremony of the exhibition, Baba Aliyev, the deputy chairman of the Union of Artists of

Azerbaijan, Ali Ismayilov, the head of the Art Department of the Ministry of Culture of the republic, and Khoja Mahammadov, the director of the State Art Museum of Turkmenistan, congratulated the jubilee.

“A. Rzaguliyev made a speech and thanked from the bottom of his heart for the sincere congratulations and stated that he will serve Soviet art with all his strength” [5].

“Old Baku” continued to bring fame to the artist and he was awarded the honorary title of “Honored Artist of the Azerbaijan SSR” in 1964 for his service in the development of Azerbaijani graphic art.

Very quickly, the fame of the artist exceeded the borders of Azerbaijan. In this sense, it is appropriate to mention the high value given to his creativity in the press of foreign countries. The article dedicated to A. Rzaguliyev’s creativity in the 9th issue of 1964 of the “BildendeKunst” (“Fine Art”) magazine published in Germany says: “Rzaguliyev’s artistry is very bright. The artist understands life as it is, sees, feels, and creates its diversity even in the simplest things. It is impossible to look at the linocuts hanging in his workshop without smiling...” [6]. At the same time, in the article, the analysis of several graphic plates from the “Old Baku” graphic series of the artist, especially the work “Hoofing a bull” is given a lot of space.



Fig. 2. A.Rzaguliyev. “Hoofing a bull”. 1963.

In 1965, by the order of the Dutch company “Mulenhof”, linocuts belonging to the artist’s “Old Baku” graphic series “Hoofing a bull”, “Water seller”, “Handing over the wool” and “Jugs” were bought and sent to the Netherlands. One of the facts confirming the international reputation of A. Rzaguliyev’s work is that his works were exhibited on five continents. “His “Cizbizkhana” and “Oxen in the water” works from the “Old Baku” series have been exhibited in 19 countries, including Australia, Hungary, Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, France, Japan, the United States, and the “Soviet Stamp” exhibition in Togo” [5].

When A. Rzaguliyev wrote down what he observed at the beginning of our century, he looked at such events with the eyes of today. He touched on topics that could make the audience think, worry, and interest. More precisely, old themes were re-modernized by the artist’s imagination. Thus, watching his interesting linocuts, the viewer encounters interesting, memorable, individual characters in those works, and witnesses a great love for some ancient traditions of our nation, its simple, ordinary people. These works are remembered for their clarity, simplicity, deep meaning, dynamism, and nationalism which is noticeable at first glance.

Let’s also note that “many of the engravings, which reflect the old Baku types, show the strong influence of two creative trends in the works of A. Rzaguliyev: the original style of the “MollaNasreddin” literary school in Azerbaijani Soviet graphic art and the powerful realist traditions of the Russo-Soviet artist. The positive result of these two trends is expressed in the artist’s works uniquely. Therefore, A. Rzaguliyev’s linocuts are far from mannerism, schematism that leads to artificial and lifeless molding” [2].

If we have to compare the creative features of the masters of easel graphics (Nadir Akhundov, RasimBabayev, BayimHajiyeva, Altay Hajiyev, Jamil Mufidzade) who worked in the sixties, which was the heyday of A. Rzaguliyev’s creativity, we will notice that there are certain similarities and differences in their search for artistic expression. So, if in the plates of N. Akhundov, A. Hajiyev, and J. Mufidzade, the intensity of detail and animation is prominent, on the contrary, in the works of R. Babayev, B. Hajiyeva and A. Rzaguliyev, the wide use of white surface and expressive silhouette of details is preferred. A. Rzaguliyev’s uniquely expressive silhouettes are precisely the characteristics that come from national and moral values and artistic principles.

A. Rzaguliyev’s series of linocuts (1967) depicting the north of Russia, the country where the artist had to live for many years, and brought many



Fig. 3. A.Rzaguliyev. "Cizbizkhana". 1964.

sketches and pictures (1967) is unique and somewhat different. He was interested in everything: the lively life of the big port, the harsh poetry of the northern nature, and especially the unfading beauty of ancient Russian architecture, later all these impressions and sketches became the material for several beautiful engravings depicting the view of the Solevetsky Monastery. The artist is looking for more effective artistic methods to express his ideas. Creative searches and persistent daily work led to the success of A. Rzaguliyev's engravings not only in our country but also abroad.

In addition to the high artistic merits that we have highlighted above, in the works of the outstanding graphic artist, above all, the level of professionalism, craftsmanship, closeness to life, subtle humor, solving the subject at the level of the high requirements of the linocut technique are the main characteristic features that attract attention.

A. Rzaguliyev's happiness was that he never lost his love for life and faith in the future. Maybe that's why he was chosen and loved among Azerbaijani artists during his short-term creative period. He left behind a rich legacy. The most important thing is that the artist was able to preserve the freshness

of the first impression he received from the historical events until the end. Although the traditional old Baku theme in his work of the 60s changed due to one reason or another in those years, the artist still managed to demonstrate his loyalty to his artistic means of expression. In some cases, these merits can even be said to enrich A.Rzaguliyev's handwriting in the series "Azerbaijani Fishermen", "Azerbaijani tobacco growers", "Azerbaijani cotton growers", "Students", "Azerbaijani carpet makers" and "North".

After the artist's death, individual exhibitions were held in Baku in 1983, 2003, 2018, in Tbilisi in 2005, and in Scotland in 2010.

Conclusion. As a result, let's note that A. Rzaguliyev is one of the outstanding artists who enriched Azerbaijani easel graphics with national artistic traditions in the 20th century. Most of his works were created from memory. What he understood was that he worked on them in a modern graphic style. In his works based on memories, he switched to retrospective style and stylization. These nuances we have mentioned are among the factors determining the uniqueness of A. Rzaguliyev. A. Rzaguliyev was invaluable in giving a new artistic and aesthetic attitude to the plots and motifs that were common or unattractive in the eyes of many. His use of the whiteness of the page as an impressive tool to achieve the attractiveness of the large and small details of the composition was not only novel but also the result of his creative use of national spiritual resources. That is why the artist's linocuts, distinguished by their style of expression, the seriousness and simplicity of the artistic solution form, found in national artistic sources, were successfully exhibited not only in our country but at the same time in several international exhibitions and were accepted as worthy contributions to fine art.

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Aslan Xəlilov (Azərbaycan)

XX ƏSR AZƏRBAYCAN QRAFİKA SƏNƏTİNDƏ ƏLƏKBƏR RZAQULİYEVİN ROLU

Məqalə XX əsr Azərbaycan qrafika sənətinin görkəmli nümayəndəsi Əməkdar rəssam Ələkbər Rzaquliyev (1903–1974) anadan olmasının 120 illiyinə həsr olunur. Ə.Rzaquliyev milli mədəni irsimizi zənginləşdirən sənətkarlardandır. Rəssamın yüksək bədii-estetik dəyərə malik olan və özündə qədim milli miniatür ənənələrinin cizgilərini əks etdirən çoxsaylı qrafika əsərləri bunun əyani göstəricisidir. Vurğuladığımız məziyyətləri onun müxtəlif mövzulu əsərlərində, o cümlədən “Köhnə Bakı”, “Bizim uşaqlar”, “Bizim sevimli yazıçılar”, “Azərbaycan balıqçıları”, “Azərbaycan tütüncüləri”, “Azərbaycan pambıqçıları”, “Azərbaycan xalçaçıları”, “Tələbələr” və s. adlı linoqravürlər silsiləsindəki lövhələrdə müşahidə etmək mümkündür.

Açar sözlər: Azərbaycan, təsviri sənət, qrafika, Ələkbər Rzaquliyev, “Köhnə Bakı”.

Аслан Халилов (Азербайджан)

РОЛЬ АЛЕКПЕРА РЗАГУЛИЕВА В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСКОЙ ГРАФИКЕ XX ВЕКА

Статья посвящена 120-летию со дня рождения заслуженного художника Алекпера Рзагулиева (1903-1974), выдающегося представителя азербайджанской графики XX века. А. Рзагулиев – один из художников, обогативших наше национальное культурное наследие. Ярким показателем этого являются многочисленные графические произведения художника, имеющие высокую художественную и эстетическую ценность и отражающие особенности древних национальных миниатюрных традиций. Выделенные нами заслуги заключаются в его произведениях на различные темы, в том числе “Старый Баку”, “Наши дети”, “Наши любимые писатели”, “Азербайджанские рыбаки”, “Азербайджанские табачники”, “Азербайджанские хлопкоробы”, “Азербайджанский ковроткачи”, “Студенты” и т.д. можно наблюдать на пластинах из серии линогравюр под названием

Ключевые слова: Азербайджан, изобразительное искусство, графика, Алекпер Рзагулиев, «Старый Баку».