

Kirill Zdanevich Way of Orchestra Life

Салами арцивебс

Салами футуризм

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The Polish-Georgian family of Mikhail Zdanevich, the heir of a Polish officer having rebelled against the Russian Empire and Valentina Gamkrelidze, the daughter of an impoverished nobleman Rostom Gamkrelidze lived in Aguri (Brick) Street, Tiflis. Valentina Gamkrelidze trained her sons, Kirill and Ilia, to keep diaries from their childhood. It developed into a life-long habit, and today it is those diaries that we learn Kirill's life history from.

In the summer of 1907, 15-year old Kirill, together with his cousin Valodia Mrozovsky, wrote ingenuous, boyish stories about a tin soldier having got from a toy factory in a Tiflis store where he met with a thrilling adventure (this was a story that completely differed from the tale of H.C. Andersen) and illustrated the story with his own drawings. The notebook with a blue cover and the rarest notebook-like books will re-appear in Kirill Zdanevich's life some ten years later and become one of the determinants of his work and, generally, of the uniqueness of Tiflis Avant-garde. The desire to learn drawing prevailed over his ardor for literature. From the age of 8 Kirill attended N. Sklifosofsky's School of Painting and Drawing. He used to repeatedly process figures and details reverting again and again to one and the same motif. His ardor with Impressionism was the result of the influence of the artists – Fogel and Sklifosofsky; the painting tendencies used to reach Georgia as well as the entire Empire from the West when they were already coming to their end there. As for the Impressionism, it was an initial phase of art, and it was in conflict therewith that the avant-garde art came into being. Painting was not just a passion for Kirill. His early diaries were full of the notes about the diversity of building compositions by means of colors and he was developing as a thinking artist. Such unity in literature or painting characteristic to both brothers in later date means the existing of a solid structure of system beyond the seeming spontaneity. Kirill already used to apply interpretation in the aspects of plot and image. His florid compositions were built according to the plot. There was almost nothing accidental. A sketch made on a notebook page was supplemented with a written record of color palette, and the final version of the composition on the canvas would be built according to the above record. In 1909 Kirill wrote down in his diary: "The idea concerning

¹ Салами арцивебс/ Салами футуризм- А роет from Vasily Kamensky's book: "His-my Biography of a Great Futurist. М., 1918. p. 182. V. Kamensky's Futuristic poetic experiment: Georgian text with Russian letters. Салами арцивебс/ Салами футуризм/ Greetings to eagles/ Greetings to Futurism/Привет орлам/Привет футуризм.

the technique thought out at night. To paint in a mosaic manner so as no tone would be same. And, then, the contrast between the steel-greys and the yellows. The themes: from Georgian life. For instance, King Erekle with the suite and a sketch on a contemporary life. The correctness of proportion, the simplification of color stains. The main thing in a picture (of whatever content) is the matching of color stains.”²

The pulsation of stormy revolutionary era was already sensed in Tiflis, and the expectation of something progressive, a bit romantic, not fully clear yet very new and different under the slogan “Fraternity, Unity, Freedom” enraptured Kirill, a hereditary rebel, filling him with sympathy: “One should read Pisarev, Dobrolyubov, Chernishevsky, Herzen, Tolstoy, pamphlets about Marx, about art and contemporary life. In winter I will give all my free time to reading.”³

Kirill writes in his memories that he met M. Larionov and N. Goncharova, the leading figures of Russian avant-garde in Moscow on his way from Tiflis to Petersburg, although according to the 1912 entry in his diary, which seems more trustworthy, Kirill made friends with Larionov in February 1912, through M. Le Dentu and V. Bart while preparing the “Ass Tail” (“Ослинный хвост”) exhibition. Larionov, having made big impression on Kirill, replaced his Petersburg impressionistic-and-fauvistic quests by the artistic principles of cubo-futurism and rayism/Лучизм (from the word “ray” – “луч” in Russian). Earlier, in the summer of 1911, having travelled in Tabriz, Persia, Kirill created “Scorching” “Tabriz”, one of his early paintings. While his attending the Incentive Art School at the Imperial Academy of Arts of Petersburg, Kirill was still consecutive in depicting or even indicating a real object. He preferred to choose a simple, serene manner of showing the motives to be represented, and “for him, synthesis meant serenity”.⁴ It was the time when he was carried away by intense, rich coloring, the floridity and ornamentality of Matisse, although there was one particular quality, characteristic of Kirill and, generally, to some extent, to Georgian modernistic art, that was already emphasized at that early period and gradually became more and more developed. Unlike a kind of figurative-and-formal “aggression” and the push characteristic of Russian avant-garde art, the quantitative-and-qualitative level of those features in Kirill’s works are more balanced. As far back as during the period of his attending the gymnasium, Kirill wrote down in his diary while his travel to Moscow: “I visited Shchukin. Van Gogh: almost nervously unpleasant impression. He is horribly “sharp”, tense and worn-out, real child of Paris with the craziness of the city and the horrors of modern man. Gauguin is also a child of city, yet having fled therefrom. So far I simply poorly

² Diary of Kirill Zdanevich (1909-1911). August 31, 1909. p. 2. Personal archive of Kirill Zdanevich. Case #4. GNM

³ Idem. September 2, 1909. p. 5.

⁴ Diary of Kirill Zdanevich (1909-1915). August 15, 1911. p. 27. Personal archive of Kirill Zdanevich. Case #4. GNM

understood him, but he is good, good.”⁵ Kirill believed his best work at the above stage was a sketch made in 1911 “where I managed to achieve immediacy and simple perception of an object, the restraint of tone, the expressiveness and character; written in *ala prima* in some 5 or 8 minutes. Beyond the technical dexterity there are naïve manner of means, easiness of perception, sharpness of image and objectness.”⁶ His friendship with the radical wing of Petersburg avant-garde – “Soyuz Molodyozhi” (“Союз молодежи”), Victor Bart and Evgeni Sagaidachni added boldness and freedom to his artistic quests. “Painting is no art of copying nature; art is to distribute colors on canvas in the most beautiful manner,”⁷ The compliments from one of the leaders of the left innovator artists, a “talented and clever” Le Dentu delighted Kirill, and he made a note in his diary: “I got acquainted with Le Dentu, a talented and clever fellow. He is young and rather good in painting. It will be good to become friends with him. Wonderful: he told me I will manage to paint.”⁸ It was Le Dentu that stirred up the interest to the primitive art in K. Zdanevich. Russian artists expressed their aspiration of the avant-garde art to the ancient cultures beyond civilization in their interest in the traditions of local folk school. In 1912 Kirill, having arrived in Tiflis during his vacations for a short while in order to look for the pieces of Georgian folk art, came across Pirosmeni’s works together with Le Dentu. Artistic and emotional features of the art of Pirosmeni – “the light and serenity for the minds, the pureness of emotional experiences... the simplicity and genius in painting”⁹ – were rightly assessed by young Kirill who faced a new task: to achieve more laconism and accuracy of descriptive language. Such quests naturally displeased Roerich, his professor in Petersburg. Kirill was in disagreement with the academic circles. He wrote reproachfully of Roerich’s “classic reasoning”: “how horrible to be locked within the restricted limits! I feel caged.”¹⁰ Larionov offered Kirill to take part in the exhibition. Kirill wrote in his diary: “Bart has dropped in, and my participation in the “Donkey’s Tail/ Ослиный хвост“ is already a settled matter. It is a circle of the elite and it is difficult to get there. Kuznetsov, Mashkov and even Konchalovski are taking part. Bart says there is the true understanding of art and the greatest number of artists there. The artists are so few they can be counted on one hand.”¹¹ The combinations of cubo-futuristic elements became the necessity for him at a point in order to develop a new artistic order. “Anything I have been doing up to now is nonsense. Just the immediate impression is not enough. Drawing? Composition and, generally, the tasks of the “Ass Tail”. I must work... Composition is needed but no accident. Completeness is required. Cubism?

⁵ Diary of Kirill Zdanevich (1909-1911). February 27, 1911. p.91. Personal archive of Kirill Zdanevich. Case #4. GNM

⁶ Diary of Kirill Zdanevich (1909-1915). 1911. p. 91. Personal archive of Kirill Zdanevich. Case #4. GNM

⁷ Idem. March 14, 1912. p. 56

⁸ Idem. January 26, 1912. p.p. 45-46.E

⁹ Idem. January 26, 1912. p.p. 45-46. Personal archive of Kirill Zdanevich. Case #3. GNM

¹⁰ Idem. August 27, 1911. p. 13.E

¹¹ Idem. September 28. 1911. p. 32

Yes, one should keep pace with the century. Cézanne. Nothing accidental. Moving from triangles and rectangles. No more sketches. Only pictures. Picture is no copy of reality! Picture is a wall-decorating art. Down with the sculpturity! One should act on the premise that a picture is no copy of a model... One should emphasize everything one sees, exaggerate everything and blur it out. Bigger canvases are required. Fogelism should be forgotten once and forever.”¹² During 1912-1914 Kirill Zdanevich took part in the exhibitions as follows: “Ass Tail/Ослинный хвост”, “Target/Мишень” and #4. Futurists, Luchists, Primitive/№4. Футуристы, Лучисты, Примитив~¹³. Real forms in Kirill’s works gradually dividing into geometrical forms and united by the dynamic rhythm of separate segments become located by layers on the surface. The “sdvig” of Russian “Zaumnik-Budetlianists” or the shifting of syllables in words appears in Kirill’s works as the surface-organizing unity by means of the breakup of a single structure into parts and layering thereof as well as with the aid of visual “sdvig” and futuristic dynamism. Fine arts and Zaum poetry, developing under one and the same principle, tried to express the radical political-economic or social-cultural changes of modernity, the accelerated rate and dynamism of world development through establishing the new “chaotic” order and the logicity of “alogisms”.

Between 1913 and 1917 Kirill managed to sign the manifesto of the artistic trend “Rayism/лучизм” set up by Larionov, to travel and study in France, to marry and even to participate in World War I, and, having been wounded, contused and awarded with Imperial orders, returned back in Tiflis in the January of the revolution year.

Tiflis was a strange city indeed.

It was the multinational and multicultural character of Tiflis that determined the lifestyle and the particular coloring of the urban landscape. A rather big administrative and financial center of the region managed, like other cities standing on the junction of civilizations and religions, to combine the oriental and the occidental, the sensual and the rational principles. Due to its oriental, patriarchal everyday life and its aspiration to European modernization, the city, having acquired a rather original image, offered a kind of theatrical world to its citizens and guests to live in and presented itself as an artifact of peculiar expressiveness. “This is the city where various interesting things are quite possible

¹²Idem. January 29-february 8. 1912. p. 4-52.

¹³ Exhibition Ass Tail/Ослинный хвост: Moscow, Exhibition Hall of School of Painting Sculpture and Architecture (21 Myasnitski St.); 1912. March-april. Exhibition «Target »/Мишень – Moscow, Art Gallery of K. Mikhailova (11, Bolshaya Dimitrovka) 1913, March 24-April 7; #4 Futurists, Luchists, Primitive/№4 Футуристы, Лучисты, Примитив – Moscow, Levinson House (Bolshaya Dimitrovka). 1914. Spring.

and even inevitable. This was a kind of magic and merry sensation, and the dull excitement it evoked was sometimes becoming stronger and other times weaker at heart”.¹⁴

In 1917 “the revolution, after having stretched and kicked a little in the Caucasus, disappeared without a trace.”¹⁵ Tiflis, the capital of Georgia having gained the cherished independence, seemed to be an island of serenity and flourishing in the stormy sea of wars and revolutions, and besides, if it was so needed, Europe was pretty close. They said “the road from Maidan led directly to Europe”.¹⁶ Those having escaped from the Revolution found shelter in Tiflis. The traditional way of life of the city “was diversified by Russian bourgeois and aristocrats having got close to local circles and intending to create certain level of comfort in Georgia. The situation in Georgia became as follows: on the one side life was bursting forth with terrible speculation raging, foreign currencies circulating, with feverish importing, exporting, selling and buying, while on the other hand, the local population lived in poverty”¹⁷. Together with the bourgeois and aristocrats, the artists, poets, theatre workers and musicians rushed to the oasis of Tiflis. In the “Apollo”, “Piccadilly” and “Kinopalace” cinemas, the “Film” Society, instead of using the posters disfiguring the streets, invited “young Zyga Waliszewski to paint them; and the poster for the film “Death Waltz” placed in front of the “Apollo” is already attracting attention”.¹⁸ “La Traviata”, “Toska” and “The Barber of Seville” were sung at the Tiflis Opera House. Guest performances were offered by soloists Giorgi Baklanov and Fyodor Shalyapin and the prima ballerina of the Imperial Theatre Matylda Krzesińska. The café chantants and restaurants kept pace with the Opera. “The Anona” offered the Romanian orchestra, while since 1912 – the Vocal and Instrumental Group from Milan; Italian string orchestra was playing at the “Beau Monde” and German Chamber String Orchestra at the “Palace Hotel”. The Futurists from Moscow, the creators of “the art of future” were travelling from town to town of the Russian Empire with painted faces and wrapped up in brightly colored cloaks in order to propagandize a new art. In 1914 those “weird people” appeared in Tiflis. The “Tiflisi Leaflet/Тифлисский листок” paper wrote as follows: “On Tuesday the crowd of idlers were following three fellows dressed rather oddly, the first one being a gentleman in yellow blouse, the second one – wearing a strange headdress and the third one with a painted physiognomy. “Circus had arrived”, they said in the crowd, “the clowns are walking around

¹⁴ www. Litru.ru. Паустовский К. *Повесть о жизни. Бросок на Юг*. М., 1968. Paustovski K. A Story of Life. A Rush to the South. М, 1968.

¹⁵ Nikolo Mitsishvili. Georgian Chronicle since the Time of Revolution. Tb. 2006. p. 7

¹⁶ A line from “Тифлис” – а poem by a futurist poet Igor Terentyev “The road from Maidan leads directly to Europe” – из Майдана дорога идет прямо в Европу.

¹⁷ Nikolo Mitsishvili. Georgian Chronicle since the Time of Revolution. Tb. 2006.p. 22

¹⁸ Theatre. Art. Literature. The “Ponedelnik” paper. Septeber 29, 1919. #2. “Khronika”. p 4. *Театр. Искусство. Литература*. Газ. Понедельник. 29 сентября.1919. №2. Хроника. С .4.

to attract the audience.”¹⁹ Naturally, the people of Tiflis had no idea that those weirdly dressed fellows were the futurists. The public gave the cold shoulder to their *épatage*. And indeed, who would be surprised at the painted face in the city where an exotic kinto, bearing a tray full of fruit, walked in the narrow streets of Tiflis dancing and shouting, where the trading in the bazaars went on as a game, the feasts looked like a ritual and where the zurna “cried in a female voice”? However, futurism was not so much wonder for Tiflis. As far back as in 1910 Boris Lopatinsky, a young artist and a friend of the Zdanevichs, brought the futuristic manifesto of Marinetti in Tiflis. Ilia Zdanevich, the then student of the gymnasium, began to actively correspond with Marinetti and, a year later, left for Petersburg as an already mature futurist...

In 1917 Kirill Zdanevich arrived from Moscow in Tiflis. Soon he was joined by Vasiliy Kamensky, Ilia Zdanevich and Igor Terentiev and, as a result, Tiflis “became a fantastic place”. Great mystic philosopher, adherent of oriental occultism Giorgi Gurdjeff was also in the city having set up the “Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man” and the School for Collective Dancing, where Jeanne Matignon, the wife of Alexander Salzmanm, performed “sacral dances” and “sacral exercises”. Kirill Zdanevich used to attend those exercises. Thomas de Hartmann, the author of music to “The Yellow Sound”, the opera by Wasiliy Kandinsky, taught composition at the Tiflis Conservatoire led by Nikolay Cherepnin. The music for the “sacral dances” was also created by him. Wasiliy Kamensky, a futurist poet and an aviator, recited his poetry on horseback, dressed in the costume of Stenka Razin, at the Erikovsky circus.²⁰ Kirill Zdanevich, an artist, offered several guest performances at the State Theatre where he played the part of Mefistofeles.²¹ All of them as well as many others took part in the artistic life of Tiflis. Having sensed the charm of Tiflis, Georgian poets, “The Blue Horns”, left Kutaisi for the capital. The symbolistic-and-futuristic spirit of their thoughts responded to the cultural atmosphere of Tiflis. Hoping they “would be able to show the people devoid of dreams the way to the blue temple of the future”, at the same time they glorified “the beauty of destruction”.²² Aleksei Kruchonykh, one of the founders and theorists of the language and poetry of Zaum or “Abrundi” (“Quidfities”) according to Grigol Robakidze, having been mobilized to Caucasus, the Sarakamish town, spent the major part of his “most timid retreat in the Caucasus” in Tiflis.²³ In 1917 the collection “1918”, the example of the first avant-garde book in Tiflis, was published

¹⁹ Shakhnazarova A., Kyashenko V. The Futurists in Tiflis. The “Golovinski Prospect” paper. 2006. #6. Tiflis. P. 11. The Futurists mentioned in the paper note were D. Burluk, V. Mayakovsky and V. Kamenski. Шахназарова А., Ляшенко М. *Футуристы в Тифлисе*. Газ. *Головинский проспект*. 2006. № 6. Тифлис. с. 11.

²⁰ Kramensky V. His-my Biography of Great Futurist. M. 1918. p. 184 Каменский В. *Его-моя биография великого футуриста*. М., 1918. с. 184.

²¹ Khronika. “Iskusstvo” paper. October 27, 1919. #2. p. 3 (We were unable to find other sources that would confirm the fact). *Хроника*. Газ. *Искусство*. 27 октября, 1919. № 2. с. 3.

²² Literary Miscellany “The Blue Horns”. 1916. Kutaisi. almanaxi *cisferi yanwebi*. 1916. quTaisi.

²³ Kardeman, B. *Tiflis 1918–1920. Kirill Zdanevich and Kubo-Futurizm*. Rachel Adler Gallery. New York. 1987.

containing the visual “ferroconcrete poems”: “Tiflis” and “The Sun” by V. Kamensky, illustrated by Kirill Zdanevich as well as the Zaum poems and writings. Kirill Zdanevich, “an amazing master of dynamic drawings”²⁴, made four abstract compositions for the collection. The language experiments of the poet allowed Kirill Zdanevich to freely interpret the images. From conceptual and aesthetic point of view the book proved to be one of the prominent against the publications of the Russian-language futurist poetry. “We are publishing some books together with Kirill Zdanevich in Tiflis. Hurrah! Hurrah! “1918” has been issued! This is a whole exhibition, not just a book!” A. Kruchonykh wrote.²⁵ In 1917 in Tiflis, at the “First Party of Transmental Poetry” the “Syndicate of Futurists” was set up comprising Aleksei Kruchyonikh, brothers Kirill and Ilia Zdanevich, Kolau (Nikolai) Cherniavsky, Lado Gudiashvili and Kara Dervish (Hakob Gendjyan, the first Armenian futurist poet). In 1918 the “Company 41” was founded by Ilia Zdanevich, Al. Kruchonykh and Igor Terentyev. Kirill was also the member of the group, namely the artistic director. The Company published small-volume books with Zaum poems and cubo-futuristic illustrations. Kirill made the artistic design of those notebook-like books by Alexei Kruchonykh and Igor Terentyev that largely determined the global recognizability of Tiflis avant-garde. In October the same year Kirill Zdanevich held a personal exhibition of his drawings in the basement of “Blanc et Noir“, a well-known picture store in 10, Golovin Avenue, Tiflis, exhibiting 128 pieces made in Petersburg, Moscow and Paris between 1912-1917. It was the first major event in the avant-garde Tiflis. The diversity of styles and the innovative quests demonstrated the avant-garde aspirations of a young artist. The innovative interpretation of artistic language and the idea of a piece of art organically fit into the scope of the subject matters of the avant-garde art in general. A new artistic system, “Orchestral Painting“ developed by Kirill Zdanevich manifesting his conceptual-and-artistic visions, stood out against the works made by applying various styles and manners. Noteworthy is that, on the whole, no alteration of artistic styles well-defined by timeframe is observable in his works. The artist creates the pieces of art of various styles at the same time, working simultaneously, with equal zeal in realistic, primitivistinc, cubo-futuristic manner and finally uniting his quests into the “Orchestral Painting“ under the principle of “Everythingism/Всечество”. The “Everythingism”of Ilia Zdanevich and Mikhail Le Dentu rejected the time-and-space concordance among objects that existed in reality thus completely liberating the art from the dependence on time and space²⁶. “Orchestral Painting” was based on the

²⁴ Kramensly V. His-my Biography of Great Futurist. M. 1918. p. 186 Каменский В. *Его-моя биография великого футуриста*. М., 1918. с. 186

²⁵ The letters of Al. Kruchyonikh to Mikhail Matyushin and Vadim Shemshurin. The extracts from T. Nikolaskaya’s book: Nikolaskaya T. “Fantastic City”. M. 2000. p. 24. Никольская Т. *Фантастический город*. М., 2000.с. 24.

²⁶ Futurism and Vsiochestvo. 1914. Tiflis. *сФутуризм и всёчество*. 1914. Тифлис.

principles of Ilia Zdanevich's "Multiple Poetry". "Orchestral Painting", as the synonym of "Multiple Poetry", means the "aggregate of several themes" and is "a polyphonic, polythemic piece of art"²⁷. The same principle applies in the painting. Poly-stylistics propagated by Ilia Zdanevich in the teaching of "Multiple Poetry" presented itself in Kirill's visual experiments as united under the sign of various styles, motives, viewpoints and cubo-futuristic dynamism in one work. The artist seemed to create the visual image of the Zaum philosophy of his brother. Orchestral Painting "describes the purest artistic mastering. Here the viewer's eye, getting past the life, enters the sphere of artistic interference where pictures and only pictures, tightly packed, clear the colors enhancing the already enhanced texture. Simple matching of square pictures is being diversified by triangles and complicated by curved lines. A picture has an unusual fantastic character. One canvas may offer cubistic portrait, impressionistic landscape, futuristic still life and rayistic arrangement. The orchestra of several pictures combined by one composition is so intensive and multi-colored that a small-scale picture acquires the spatial strength of frescos, the solidity of architectural towers."²⁸ Here the principle of simultaneousness is outlined being the basis of the construction of the Zaum "Orchestral Poetry" and "Orchestral Painting" of Kirill Zdanevich. We also discern the beginnings of the post-modernistic art in the as if "broken" structure of the Orchestral Painting and the antithythesis of faceted elements thereof as well as in the "everythingness" of Ilia Zdanevich. Regretably, the major part of the "Orchestral Painting" is lost, yet the exact pieces of graphical works manifest an interesting vision with respect to the formal-and-figurative organization of surface. The exhibition at the "Blanc et Noir" was a success. The attendance was good and the press - active, offering many different views.

Naturally, Tiflis was not the only city of the 20th century where the cultural processes made such a vivacious progress. The coexistence of radically contradictory and loud ideas were generally characteristic of the cultural centers of the Europe of those days. The period itself was the most rapidly developing, dynamic and aggressive. In the megapolises such events were scattered across the vast space, while for the not too large scale of Tiflis everything was rather compressed within time and space: as soon as one event came to an end, another one commenced or even coexisted with the previous one; let us add that the noises of the city itself, and the Tiflis "orchestra" will become more tangible. The cultural oasis of Tiflis lasted for just four years. The Menshevik government, loyal towards cultural innovations, did not meddle actively in the matters of culture, yet tried to do its best to assist Georgian artists. If it weren't the Bolshevik aggression, Georgian fine art would proceed with

²⁷Krusanov A/V. *Russian Avant-garde: 1907-1932 (historical review)*. In 3 volumes. vol.III. K.2. Futuristic Revolution. 1917-1921. Крусанов А. В. *Русский авангард: 1907-1932 (Исторический обзор)*. В 3-х томах. т. III. К.2. Футуристическая революция. 1917-1921. St. Petersburg, 1996. p.303.СПб., 1996. с. 303.

²⁸ Kirill Zdanevich. *The Leftism. Painting in Russia*. The "Mnatobi" magazine. Tbilisi. 1924. #4. p. 228 .

its development in that direction and not lose touch with international cultural processes whose organic and logical component it was during those years.

In 1920 Kirill Zdanevich travelled in Europe. Having arrived in Paris again he spent several months with those who shared his interests – M. Laryonov and N. Goncharova and also met his friends from Tiflis : L. Gudiashvili and D. Kakabadze. On his way to the homeland he met Ilia in Constantinople. Ilia was waiting for his Paris visa. Kirill also wanted to return back to Europe but he had to leave Tiflis. Constantinople became a city-object with rather psychological-and-emotional impact on both brothers. Ilia dedicated many of his works to Constantinople and Aia-Sofia, while Kirill's graphical sketch that he later sent to his brother from Tifliti to Paris, offers the image of the florid city, the city of contrasts.

The “aesthetical revolution” of the Zdanevich brothers was proceeded by Ilia in Paris. M. Larionov acquainted him with Picasso, Robert Delaunay and the Dadaists. Ilia, having joined the life of Parisian bohem, became one of the major figures in the avant-garde literature and book design. As for Kirill, he stayed in his native country. In the Tiflis “altered”²⁹ upon the occupation by Bolsheviks as well as throuout the USSR, the Soviet ideogology and aesthetics, tolerating the avant-garde innovations for a certain period of time and using them for the benefit of Soviet order, soon set the culture and the entire living space within a single frame of imperial ideology thus “specifying” the everyday or creative content of human existence for long. Kirill also was forced to choose a compromise pictorial language. He commenced working actively in the field of scenography ever since. It was a sphere that during a ceratin period of time remained as the possibility for many artists to freely develop their art projects. In the late 1930es, upon official adoption of the doctrine of Socialist Realism, any manifestation of avant-garde art was called a fearful name: “Formalism” entailing the thitherto unheard-off repressions. The coexistence of all the trends of Russain avant-garde and the official art ended with the victory of “aesthetical conformists” in the 1930es. Lots of artists unable to submit to the existing reality were exposed to physical extermination, although many survived. Kirill Zdanevich, having avoided the first tide of mass repressions, in 1949 was exiled to Vorkuta, Mordivia for 15 years. Kirill returned back to Tbilisi in 1958. His art, naturally, underwent certain transformations: no more innovative spirit, unresrictedness and freedom of the Kirill Zdanevich who had been a questor of new artistic forms were visible. However his still lives and landscapes - florid, ornamental, sometimes possessing the transparent colorfulness of stained glass - were almost never uninteresting or plain or else loaded with ideological theatrics. And one more thing: sometimes, though not too frequently and mainly in his landscapes, the sensation of dramatic era would flicker. The landscape motives, (mainly those of split mountain slopes and houses or

²⁹ Nikolo Mithishvili. February/ The Cut Head of Haji Murat. Tbilisi,1910. p. 283. n.

churches surrounded by mountains) that seemed ordinary at the first glance, would, while rising to the symbolic degree, acquire absolutely different sounding and ascend from a simple motif to a monumental piece of art full of inner dramatism. Kirill Zdanevich would not be and never was a conformist. The mutinous spirit of the Zdanevichs would never submit silently. His wonderful metaphorical essay "Shindisi" alone counts for a lot! In fine arts Kirill has never painted human figures. It appears that men ceased to be trustworthy for him. Kirill was quiet, as if adjusted to the Soviet absurd, yet he had a lifelong dream to create a big, monumental picture with the leading themes of a way and a crowd: the way he had lost and the crowd he would never become a part of.

Nana Shervashidze

Kirill Zdanevich (1892-1969). Life and Art. Tbilisi, 2018