

**RE-LEGITIMISING PAINTING IN TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN  
AFTER THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION (1991-2004)**

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With the Soviet Union's fall, the overarching Soviet institution, the Union of Artists of the USSR, also collapsed. This institution had been solely responsible for the production, consumption and circulation of arts, and for regulating subordinate Republican Unions of Arts. Each national Union was now independent; later, these too, were supplanted by several different institutions and social domains that affected the production and consumption of painting in the post-Soviet era. The newly diffuse means of validating painting provokes the central questions of this dissertation: what are the new criteria for the economic, moral, and social valuation of artists and their work in different contexts, and what do these changes tell us about broader social changes in the city?

In order to explore the changed environment in which artists now work, I present five ethnographic case-studies of post-Soviet arts in Tashkent (1991-2004) that illustrate changing understandings and practices of authority, state legitimisation, labour, production and consumption of arts, and gender. Each case study examines an institution or social domain that has re-emerged in slightly changed form or content after 1991. These five new social 'configurations' are: the independent state's commissioning system, the illegal art market conducted in foreign currency, the traditional *mahalla* neighbourhoods of Tashkent, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Besh-Agach mosque.

With the Union of Artists' authority ended, I examine the process of developing legitimisation in each of the emerging social configurations using the insights from Weber's typology of authority. I emphasise the importance of arts to legitimise both the Soviet and the post-Soviet states. I consider the effect of the commodification of paintings on the idea in the Soviet period that an artist was a living embodiment of his work's moral, economic and social values – and how in some areas this connection between the person of the painter and the value of the product endures in different forms.

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## Glossary 1: Uzbek language

<i>abr</i>	1) cloudy 2) an ikat-patterned textile
<i>aivan</i>	veranda
<i>aksakal</i>	1) elder (lit. 'white beard') 2) in the post-Soviet period, a voluntary representative of the committee of elders elected by the mahalla community
<i>ambarhona</i>	storage space
<i>buylik</i>	greatness
<i>chachvan</i>	a veil covering the face
<i>Eski Shakar</i>	Old City, the part of Tashkent built prior to Russian conquest in 1865
<i>ganch</i>	carved dry plaster
<i>hauz</i>	water storage
<i>hidzhat</i>	lavatory
<i>hona</i>	chamber
<i>ichkari</i>	1) the part of a domestic space designated for women; 2) the women's designated part of the house; in the pre-Soviet past, the part of the house barred to all men except relations.
<i>jadids</i>	revolutionary clerics who sided with the communists during the early Soviet period
<i>katak</i>	poultry shed
<i>khanatlas</i>	satin with ikat pattern
<i>mahalla</i>	neighbourhood
<i>mehmonhona</i>	guestroom
<i>molhona</i>	cow shed
<i>Mustakilik</i>	Independence (the stated ideology of the post-Soviet regime in Uzbekistan)
<i>oshhona</i>	kitchen
<i>parandja</i>	the body cover worn by urban Muslim women
<i>rassom</i>	artist
<i>sharia</i>	Islamic Law

<i>san 'at</i>	1) art 2) title of an Uzbek arts magazine
<i>tandoor</i>	bread-making oven
<i>tashkari</i>	in the pre-Soviet period, the part of the house designated for male family members
<i>Yuangi Shakar</i>	1) New City 2) the part of Tashkent built under Russian colonial rule 1965-1917

## Glossary 2: Russian language

<i>artel'</i>	the small state enterprise of workers
<i>Charepaka e Skripka</i>	'Turtle and Violin' the privately organised cultural events by Shelests in Tashkent
<i>communalka</i>	communal apartment
<i>osvyatit'</i>	sanctifying by a priest of artefact which turns the secular into religious artefacts
<i>Avrora</i>	an arts publishing house named after the Russian naval vessel
<i>dacha</i>	privately owned summer house
<i>dachi</i>	residence of state officials
<i>Dekorativnoe Isskusstvo</i>	'Applied Art', an arts magazine of the Soviet period
<i>dom upravlenie</i>	Housing Office
<i>domovaya kniga</i>	family registry
<i>Dvoryanskoe Gnezdo</i>	('Gentry Nest'), a housing development for the high bureaucracy
<i>ideinost</i>	presentation of correct ideology
<i>ikonopisets</i>	icon painter
<i>ikonostas</i>	iconostasis (the partition between the altar and the praying area)
<i>imennaya ikona</i>	icon with a namesake saint
<i>Isskusstvo</i>	'Art', an arts magazine of the Soviet period
<i>komandirovki</i>	assignments
<i>kooperativ</i>	a state-built apartment, bought from the state by an individual
<i>Koshelek</i>	'The Valet', title of a painting by Elena Lee
<i>kustar'</i>	craftsman
<i>khudozhnik</i>	artist (masculine gender)
<i>khudozhnitsa</i>	artist (feminine gender)
<i>kupola</i>	dome of a church building
<i>Lampochka Il'icha</i>	'Lenin's Electric Bulb', the title of a painting by Elena Kambina
<i>narodnost'</i>	accessibility to the people
<i>nomenklatura</i>	high officials

<i>Novyy Gorod</i>	the part of Tashkent built under Russian colonial rule 1965-1917
<i>Novogorodskie</i>	Uzbeks who moved from the Old city to the New City or crossed from the Uzbek to the Russian inhabited parts of Tashkent from 1930 to 1966 (the year of the earthquake)
<i>Ostorozhno Religia</i>	‘Careful Religion’, title of a post-Soviet arts exhibition in Moscow
<i>osvoenie</i>	conquering
<i>partiynost</i>	party loyalty
<i>Pod Svodom Vechnosti</i>	‘Under the Vault of Eternity’, title of a painting by Bakhodiy Jallalov
<i>Peredvizhniki</i>	‘Itinerants’, a politicised group of Russian artists in the second half of the 19th century
<i>prikhod</i>	parish
<i>prikhozhane</i>	parishioners
<i>proizvedenie iskusstva</i>	masterpiece
<i>propiska</i>	domicile registration
<i>rabochiy</i>	worker
<i>Repressii e Vostanie</i>	‘Repressions and Uprising’, title of a painting by Alikulov
<i>Risovyy Rynok</i>	‘Rice Market’, the part of the city given for building private houses on leased land for the Russian working class in 1925
<i>sovremennik</i>	an exemplifier of the ‘contemporary’
<i>samodeyatel’nyy khudozhnik</i>	‘self-made artist’, an amateur artist without a professional education
<i>Samokat</i>	‘Skateboard’, title of a painting by Kulagina
<i>Sadovoe Koltso</i>	(‘Garden Ring’), the central part of Moscow
<i>Staryy Gorod</i>	(‘Old City’), the part of Tashkent built prior to Russian conquest in 1865
<i>Starogorodskie</i>	1) the inhabitants of the Old City 2) natives of Tashkent
<i>spal’nyy rayon</i>	(‘sleepers districts’) people returned after work to sleep in their tiny flats in concrete apartment blocks

<i>Tcentr</i>	Center, a residential area built mainly for settling high bureaucracy and intelligentsia
<i>tekhnicheskoe obrazovanie</i>	the technical education undertaken in the arts college
<i>tematicheskie kompozitsii</i>	thematic compositions, a combination of human images, objects and symbols conveying an ideological message to the viewer
<i>Tvorchestvo</i>	‘Creativity’, an arts magazine of the Soviet period
<i>tupik</i>	dead-end street
<i>Vetshch</i>	‘The Thing’, an arts exhibition in Tashkent
<i>vykrest</i>	a Jewish convert to Christianity
<i>vychesyvat</i>	1) combing-out 2) the 1920-1930 policy of ridding Soviet society of undesirable political elements
<i>vyshee obrazovanie</i>	high education in the Arts Institute
<i>vyselennye pereselentsy</i>	forcibly relocated

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1. What is this thesis about?

The Soviet Union had a singular institution for determining the legitimacy and value of art. This institution was called the Union of Artists of the USSR, and had associated Unions in each Soviet republic. This thesis is about what happened to arts in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Union of Artists. After the fall of the Union of Artists, a number of institutions and social fields emerged to fill the void. Each had its own methods and practices for determining the economic, social and moral values of art. These methods were often contradictory, creating problems for individuals who had to negotiate different social domains. Some practices were borrowed or re-appropriated from the Soviet state, even by apparently opposing domains such as the Russian Orthodox Church.

The specific case study that I use to explore and analyse this fragmentation of singular authority into a multiplicity of systems is that of the production and consumption of paintings in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. At the core of the dissertation are two discussions: first, a discussion of the variety of ways in which paintings came to have different values attached to them, and secondly, what the post-Soviet emergence of competing value systems tells us about the wider disintegration of socio-economic unity into a variety of overlapping but distinct social, economic and political domains.

The case of Tashkent is particularly illuminating: clearly linked to the Soviet hierarchy that placed Moscow at the center of institutional legitimacy, it also had a quite discrete identity as the center of Central Asian education and culture.

This dissertation therefore starts with a discussion of the validation of painting. At this point, it is important to distinguish between the different types of (often related) values attached to painting. What this dissertation shows is that first, during the Soviet period the various ways of determining the worth of an object were intimately linked; secondly, these different determinants often became disengaged from each other after 1991, so that, for example, the monetary price of a painting no longer necessarily reflected its ideological, or 'social' message; and thirdly, different institutional and social domains practiced different methods of ascertaining the merit of painter and

painting. A third sub-theme, the changing ideas of labour, producer and art object, therefore also runs through this dissertation.

Three broad areas of value may be described. First there is social value, which values painting from a religious, ideological and national standpoint (Gell 1992, 1998). Social value establishes painting's position within the framework of society; change in the society therefore brings re-evaluation of the value of painting. The second is moral value (Pinney 1995), which is based on the perceived capacity of painting to educate society and society's capacity to appreciate the intellectual and technical aesthetic of painting as an individual endeavor. Moral value gives artists a reason to persevere in creating a painting. The third, is economic value (Sullivan 1995; Solkin 1996, 2001), which estimates price depending on authorship, artistic style or school, historical period, and art market trends. Although market value is the most obvious meaning of valuing of painting, nevertheless because of its links to fluctuating money markets and fashions it is the most subjective form of valuation. Moreover, since in the Soviet period there was no open market for trading paintings, we have to look elsewhere to find and understand the economic consequences of producing particular kinds of painting.

All those different values have to have recognition by institutions with the authority to distinguish the different types of value of each painting and, by that authority, give recognition to the author of a painting (Danto 1964; Dickie 1969, 1974; Becker 1982; Bundgaard 1987; Perkins 2000). In the case of the destruction of institutions, such as after the fall of the Soviet Union, the validation system is destroyed together with them. It takes time to replace old institutions with new ones, and it takes even more time for those freshly established institutions to gain authority for their validation practices. Needless to say, there is a dramatic period in between, after one system goes and while another takes shape. What goes on in this period became the focus of my research, which is a case study of the disappearance of Soviet forms of validating painting and the emergence in Uzbekistan of a number of post-Soviet validation systems.

My argument is that the new validation of post-Soviet painting is based on the fact that arts production and consumption is not only without the former monopoly of state control, but also is increasingly affected by a whole set of economic and political conditions which emerged in the new successor states. As result of those conditions, the validation process becomes increasingly fractured, because it is now carried out by various institutions and private individuals as opposed to just the state.



To support my argument, I chose to do my research using a particular case study as an example of validating painting in the city of Tashkent, the capital of independent Uzbekistan. I chose Uzbekistan for two reasons. First, Uzbekistan had the largest Union of Artists in the Central Asian region during the Soviet era. Secondly, before I started my fieldwork I had some experience in that country, which I discuss further below. By choosing Uzbekistan I aimed to examine how economic and political fragmentation in Uzbekistan, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, has been reflected in the division of a previously unitary arts sphere from 1991 to 2004. Previously a single institution, the Union of Artists of the USSR, had both overseen the production of the state-commissioned art works and assessed their value in all three senses: social, moral and economic<sup>1</sup>. After the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, in all successor states, including Uzbekistan, both production and consumption of art fractured into a number of spheres.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three parts that provide the necessary backdrop for subsequent chapters. In the first part, I describe the economic and political conditions in independent Uzbekistan, particularly during the time of my fieldwork. The second part provides background on the key commissioners and valuers of painting in the 1990s: the state, the Russian Orthodox Church, the *mahalla* (neighbourhoods) and private individuals. These effects of these actors and institutions on the production and consumption of paintings after 1991 is discussed in Chapter 3-7. The final part of this introductory chapter outlines the fieldwork I carried out in Tashkent.

## **1.2. Economic conditions in independent Uzbekistan**

Economic conditions in independent Uzbekistan were defined by the introduction of market economy reform based on industrial restructuring and mass privatization (Humphrey & Mandel 2002). Arts, like all state enterprises, went through market reform. This section examines these two characteristics, industrial restructuring and mass privatization, as they, or equivalent processes, apply to the arts. Arguably, the

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<sup>1</sup> Art historians (Kornetchuk 1982; Darewych 1990; Bown, Taylor, Lodder, Clark, Holz and Sidorov 1993) mentioned three institutions: the Union of Artists of the USSR, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Cultural Affairs Office. However, the Academy of Fine Arts was an institution responsible for giving honours and the Cultural Affairs Office handled the promotion of Soviet arts abroad. Unlike these two institutions, the Union of Artists was directly involved with arts appraisal. Moreover, these two institutions had little significance in national republics, since there were few members of the Academy from national republics and there was very little opportunity to publicise arts from national republics abroad. Therefore it is justifiable to discuss the Union of Artists of the USSR as the only institution.

fragmentation of the state enterprise that was the Union of the Artists of the USSR can be likened to a restructuring. Mass privatization can be seen in the increasing domestication of arts, characterized by the movement of arts from public to private domains. The features of the arts trade during this period reinforced these two characteristics, and this assessment demonstrates how the market economy shaped the arts field in the post-Soviet period.

I start with Russian case studies of how the arts fared during the early days of the market economy. I do this for three reasons. First, during the Soviet period the arts sphere, as with any industry, was highly institutionalised, centralized and bureaucratized. Because of the close connection within the arts institution between center and periphery I could grasp how the post-Soviet fragmentation of the previously united arts world took place. Secondly, market economy reforms began first in Russia, in 1992, and were followed afterwards in all successor states. Therefore the first effects of the dissolution of state industrialization can be observed in Russia. Thirdly, Russian case studies are better known than any other former republic's arts, whether within the former Soviet Union or in Western scholarship. Moreover, the Russian case findings are crucial because the early dissolution of state industrialization in Russia indicated how the process might turn out in other post-Soviet states. Yet the pattern of each particular country's arts fragmentation combined with restructuring, depended on how economic reform were actually implemented.

In the Russian case, the first effects of economic reform in the arts sphere were shown in the trade in arts in foreign currency, the fragmentation of the Union of Artists of the USSR, and the following rapid domestication of arts in the capital of the Russian Federation, Moscow. I will examine three aspects of the market economy's emergence in the arts sphere and will show that they are connected but also independent from each other.

I would like to start by examining the trade in arts using foreign currency. It is important to investigate this type of trade because it helps to answer the question of whether or not there was a unified market practice prior to 1992. By acknowledging that different types of currencies were used, we could actually challenge existing claims within the former Soviet Union and abroad that there was no private consumption of art under the Soviet state (Bown 1987; Groys 1995). The presence of an art trade operating in currencies besides the Soviet rouble suggests that there was a coexistence of both private and state orientated practices in the arts sphere, and that those private practices

were also controlled and sanctioned by the Soviet state. These unusual facets of the Soviet state reveal that trade in Russian or Soviet arts for private individuals never ceased under the Soviet state.

The existence of this art trade in foreign currency is due to the fact that the Soviet state sanctioned and controlled the trade in American dollars, and that the Soviet arts sphere has always been partly Western-oriented. However, there was an uneasy history of the art trade in foreign currency, because the Soviet art trade moved from abroad back to Russia during the 1920s and again during the late 1980s. According to Robert Chadwell Williams (1980) and Susan Buck-Morss (2000) in their books concerning arts and foreign trade conducted by the Soviet state in the period 1920-1940 with the United States of America, this art trade existed because of the need for foreign currency to sponsor massive industrial projects under Stalin's government. For example, proceeds from the sale of a single Raphael from the Hermitage paid for the building of half the city of Magnitogorsk. Further, with the coming of the liberalization process under Gorbachev, the Perestroika period (1985-1991), the arts trade was permitted within the territory of the Soviet Union; in 1989 for the first time, the Western auction house Sotheby's opened a branch in Moscow (Kovalev 1995). Those renewed trading practices of the late 1980s were only a demonstration of a strengthening of the earlier pattern, introduced prior to the Second World War, of orientation towards the Western art market and trading in American dollars (Reid 1999; Pyne 2000; Davis Pyne 2001; Swanson 2002). The dissolution of the USSR three years later encouraged the art trade to operate in American dollars.

It was recognised by Russian art historians (Morozov 1990; Levshina 1990) that the dissolution of Soviet cultural institutions meant the end of the state monopoly on art production and consumption, and led to the splintering of the former Soviet arts field (Morozov 1991, 1999, 2000). However, art historians did not predict how far and how deep that fragmentation would go. By looking at the painful twofold process of fragmentation of the Union of Artists of the USSR, I can establish the pattern which repeated itself in every Soviet successor state. The first stage of the process was due to the dissolution of the USSR, and the second was owing to the emergence of market economy reforms. The fall of the Union of Artists of the USSR in 1991 was followed by a rapid splitting of the Union into 15 national republican Unions. After the completion of the first stage, the process continued within each national Union. As one of the fifteen new Unions, the Russian Federation branch fell apart into several cultural

institutions including the Union of Artists of Russia, represented by 96 regional artists' associations, the Moscow Union of Artists and the Union of Graphics. While greater in number, the newly emerged cultural institutions were too poor to function under reduced state funding.

The decrease in funding resulted in a massive exodus of Russian artists to the West. Many were already in the West, since the 1970s-1990s, and they attempted to become incorporated within the Western circuit of artistic production and consumption (Shalin 1995). Thus economic reform fragmented the Russian arts field not only internally by a multiplication of cultural institutions but also externally by reinforcing the division between Russian arts abroad and at home (Dyogot 1995, Degot 1998, 2000; Hopkins 2000)<sup>2</sup>.

The domestication of arts was begun by the fragmentation of the post-Soviet Russian arts institutions in Russia, most prominently in the capital, Moscow, where market practices began in the Soviet period and were further developed in the post-Soviet period. Nancy Condee and Vladimir Padunov (1995) in their article *The ABC of Russian Consumer Culture* examined the domestication of arts which took place in Moscow in 1992-1993 by connecting privatization of domestic property with the moving of paintings from public places into new domestic premises. Condee and Padunov emphasised that the move of painting flourished in a specific area of Moscow, where privatised property was at the highest price. The area which the authors specified was the central part of the capital, encircled by Sadovoe Koltso ('Garden Ring'). In the 19th century, gardens marked the division between bourgeoisie- and proletariat-inhabited parts of the city of Moscow. In the following Soviet period, Sadovoe Koltso was turned into a ring road encircling the central part of the city. The significance of the encirclement of Sadovoe Koltso is that the inner area embodies the historical and cultural core of Moscow as the capital of the Russian state. The authors suggested that possession of property and paintings within Sadovoe Koltso became an expression of a claim for a historical past. Paraphrasing Condee and Padunov (1995: 145), the new owners of property and paintings claimed that they were connecting different pasts within Russian history, continuing the tradition of pre-Soviet merchant capitalist patronage of arts called, in Russian, *metststvo*.

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<sup>2</sup> I am not going to discuss in depth Russian art abroad because Russian art functioning within the Western arts institutional system has little to do with my focus of studies. Studying foreign arts within the Western arts system should be undertaken separately.

Contrasting Russian case findings with those of Uzbekistan shows the difference between both cases and the uniqueness of the Uzbek case. The new economic reforms in Uzbekistan emerged slowly compared with the rest of the successor states, and it differed even from neighbouring states in the Central Asian region. In 1995, under the leadership of Uzbek president Islam Karimov, the so-called ‘gradual economic reform’ was introduced, defined by five principles. These principles were:

- 1) Priority for economic aspects over political reform
- 2) Tight control by the state over economic development
- 3) Creation of a law simplifying economic reform
- 4) Protection by the state of the vulnerable
- 5) Gradual introduction of economic reforms

Most authors (Kaizer 1998; Kandiyoti and Mandel 1998; Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998; Ilkhamov 2001; Rasanayagam 2002) emphasised the before and after difference of the new economy, omitting the gradual character of the reform. Unlike in their studies, the introduction of ‘step-by-step’ economic reform became a main aspect of my thesis. The first step towards economic reform in Uzbekistan started from 1995 up to January 2004, and was characterised by restrictions on the use of foreign currency.

Martin Spechler (2003), suggested that in practice, the ‘gradual economic reform’ was specifically based on the restricted use of foreign currency. He carefully investigated what happened prior to 1995. He acknowledged that the late introduction of economic reform might be rooted in the dissolution of the single-currency Soviet ruble zone, which resulted in the move of the inflated mass of the old Soviet currency from all former Soviet successor states to Uzbekistan. These roubles flooded Uzbekistan because there was a differentiation in the times of the introduction of national currencies in successor states. Over four years time, as other states adopted their new national currencies, the existing black markets moved all the devalued roubles from those countries to Uzbekistan. Amassed inflated roubles put the local economy on the verge of collapse. Spechler pointed out that at the time, it was highly unlikely that the state would further rock the fragile local economy by introducing a convertible national currency. In order to solve this critical situation, the state decided to simultaneously introduce a local currency, the Som, and restrict the use of foreign currency. The restriction on foreign currency meant that only state enterprises could do currency-convertible transactions whereas private individuals would be penalised for participation in foreign currency transactions. Spechler came to the conclusion that the

restricted use of foreign currency led to the creation of a parallel market. He estimated the volume of black market transactions using American dollars at \$458 million annually.

In the art field, the prohibition of foreign currency use by private individuals meant outlawing the pre-existing market practice of using foreign currency to buy and sell art. Moreover, the presence of two different money markets, the legal one, using the Som and the illegal one, using foreign currency, led to difficulties in researching economic aspects of the Uzbek arts field since the independence period (1995-2004). Researchers were able to assess culture only within the legitimate system using the official currency (Kholmatova 1997; Doi 1997, 2002; Abdurakhimov 1998; Shodiev 1999; Bell 1999; Adams 2000(a), 2000(b)) because this was the only system that was clearly visible. As a result, much of the research either lacked a study of non-state market practices or underestimated the consequences of decreased funding to the arts institutions. In the two following sections, on political conditions and arts institutions, I will highlight how reduced funding affected arts within the state-controlled field.

### **1.3. Political conditions in independent Uzbekistan**

This section examines the emergence of a new ideology after the dissolution of the USSR, and its application to the cultural field in Uzbekistan. This section continues the previous section's argument that there was not a simple transfer of the Soviet culture to post-Soviet Uzbekistan. By investigating the volume and the content of the state-controlled culture, I demonstrate that post-Soviet Uzbek culture serves not to reinforce the notion of statehood but to strengthen the current political regime.

The fragmentation of the USSR created new political conditions which dramatically changed the realm of ideology after 1991 (Khazanov 1995). Political conditions in the new states brought first an ideological vacuum, and then a rapid invention of new ideologies to fill that vacuum. Uzbekistan was among those new states, which attempted to fill an ideological vacuum with a completely new ideology.

The new ideology was called '*Mustakilik*' ('Independence'). Beneath this broad ideology lay another concept, the revival of '*buylik*' ('greatness' in Uzbek). In 1990, when this 'Independence ideology' was introduced, no researchers, Western or local, could give a clear definition of the vague term. With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, researchers came to the conclusion that *Mustakilik* is not an ideology in a pure sense but is rather a combination of ideological concepts taken together for a

reaffirmation of the state (Yalcin 2002). Since the previous state was promoted by Soviet culture within a Soviet ideological framework, it was assumed that the new state of Uzbekistan would stick to the promotion of an ideology of statehood elaborated by old Soviet culture. Although in both cases Soviet culture was defined by an intersection of politics and arts, it did not necessarily mean that the central power in Moscow would directly affect a republic's culture. Therefore, Soviet Uzbekistan's culture lacked direct experience in dealing with state power.

I suggest that Uzbekistan presented a special case within Soviet cultural studies. Despite Uzbekistan's inheritance of the highly institutionalised Soviet culture, there was a significant difference between mainstream Russian Soviet and republican Soviet cultures. Although in both cases Soviet culture was defined by an intersection of politics and arts, it did not necessarily mean that the central power in Moscow would directly affect a republic's culture. Therefore, Soviet Uzbekistan culture lacked direct experience in dealing with state power.

Western scholarship played down the specificity of culture under the Soviet period, and there was confusion over how to study and portray culture in Uzbekistan (Carrère d'Encausse 1980, 1982; Bacon 1980). Western scholarship was marked by a very selective approach to the case of culture during the Soviet period. Soviet culture was represented by an institutionalised Russian Soviet high culture, as opposed to traditional, often religious-oriented, popular culture. Moreover, some researchers believed that at the start of the Soviet period, there was a violent replacement of one culture by the other: of the traditional culture by the Soviet (Shahrani 1993). But, the value of this approach was questioned with the emergence of Uzbekistan as an independent state after 1991 (Roy 1995), when Russian Soviet institutionalised high culture became involved in the creative process of introducing new symbols of the new state such as the anthem, flag, coat of arms and new national holidays (Adams 1999; Doi 2002).

James Bell (1999) immersed himself in the cultural study of Uzbekistan. He located Soviet culture within the city of Tashkent by mapping the Soviet sculptural monuments built into the capital's landscape. He demonstrated that the post-Soviet culture became reduced to a few street blocks in the Central part of the Soviet-built section of Tashkent. Bell examined the significance of those spatial patterns within the ideological framework of the new statehood, by demonstrating that even in such limited presence,

culture still matters. However, what was missing from his discussion were the questions, for whom were these cultural projects important and who was behind them?

Andrew March (2002, 2003) pointed out that those projects were important for the regime of president Karimov. He connected the *Mustakilik* ideology with cultural projects by exploring the new ideology in all its complexity. In order to analyse this, he reviewed the whole body of primary sources written by Karimov and his ‘court ideologists’, which were published during the Independence period. March brought forward the issue of ‘court ideologists.’ As we remember, the Soviet period had very few ideologists whose names were spelt out and whose deeds were accounted for. From March’s article it remained unclear who these ‘court ideologists’ were. But their importance in the new regime is obvious, as is their power over cultural institutions. It is still unclear if they are a single group of people, or differing groups of people chosen at random each time from specialists in different fields of political science, gathered together for short-term projects reflecting the current needs of the regime. Are these groups more important as individuals than the formal institutions? By introducing these ‘court ideologists’, March did not touch on cultural institutions; he was more interested in how ideology was propagated than in how state arts commissions were selected, monitored, evaluated and delivered. (These aspects will be discussed in Chapter 3)

To understand these political conditions as they apply to the arts, it is necessary to examine how local Uzbek arts institutions compared to mainstream Soviet arts institutions from a historical perspective, and to examine what happened with an arts institution responsible for validation of painting during Independence period. I will address those questions in the following sections which examine the main commissioners and consumers of paintings in Tashkent.

#### **1.4. From the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic to the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan**

In this section I am going to assess the Soviet arts institution that was primarily responsible for the validation of paintings and artists during the Soviet period: the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. I have to start with the Russian case study because what happened in the main Russian Union of Artists determined the fate of the dependent associations in other Soviet Republics. For this reason I will start by considering the Russian Union of Artists before moving on to the Uzbek Union of Artists in the Soviet period and the forms it took later. I will also approach the Uzbek



case from a third direction, that of the theory of socialist realism and its practical application through arts education and membership of artists in the arts institution. This discussion will explain how the arts institution in Uzbekistan dissolved, and how the official remnants of the institution evolved into the less influential Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan.

My assessment of the socialist realism movement is necessitated by three factors. First of all, socialist realism had a place of paramount importance in the Soviet era. Secondly, it was, and still remains, the main educational tool in the arts field. Thirdly, socialist realism has relevance to Uzbekistan case studies, because Soviet Uzbek art functioned only within the state institutional framework, and this style is still taught in Uzbek arts education institutions.

Without exception, the immense amount of literary sources covering Soviet art, regardless of institutional affiliations, Western or Russian, conflates the history of institutions and the theory of socialist realism (Golomshtok 1990; Darewych 1990; Bown and Taylor 1993; Chang, Falchikov, McDougall and McPherson 1996; Bown 1992; 1998; Prokhorov 1995; Groys 1995; Tupitsyn 1994, 1998; Lahusen and Dobrenko 1997; Balina, Condee and Dobrenko 1999). It is widely recognised by all these authors that socialist realism as a theory was borrowed from the literary sources of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, implemented by Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) during Stalin's regime (1928-1953) (Zhdanov 2000 [1934] : 409). In addition to the underlying theory of socialist realism the style of socialist realism was guided by three principles: *partiinost*, or party loyalty; *narodnost*, or accessibility to the people; and *ideynost*, presentation of correct ideology.<sup>3</sup>

The application of socialist realism theory was curtailed by the death of Stalin in 1953. The denunciation of the cult of personality by the XX Congress of the Communist Party in 1957 directly affected the arts field. This was followed by the XIII Congress of Artists in Tbilisi in 1958, which condemned the 'falsehood of Stalinist-era arts' and revised the Stalinist version of the socialist realism theory (Salimov 1982 : 89;

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<sup>3</sup> Darewych (1990:66) adds a fourth principle, which was missed by most of art historians: '*klassovost*' or 'classness'. She emphasised the importance of *klassovost*, because 'it reflects the moral-political unity of the people building Communism under the guidance of the Communist Party. As Soviet society is monolithic the "*narodnost*" and "*klassovost*" of Soviet art coincide and find expression in the "*partiinost*" of art.' I mention Darewych, here as I show in the following paragraphs that the significance and application of some of these principles varied during different decades of the Soviet regime. For more on the principles of Socialist Realism, see the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party '*Decree on the Reconstruction of Literary and Artistic Organisations*' , 1932 (2000 : 400).

Akhmedova 1999, 2000(a), 2000(b)). Meanwhile, the Union of Artists of the USSR continued to function from 1932 up to 1991.

However, inertia within the educational system preserved socialist realism as the educational basis for teaching arts. Socialist realism continued to be taught even during the late Soviet period. In the post-Soviet era, socialist realist art proved to be the most commercially valued by both Western and local markets (Bown 1991; Reid 1999; Pyne 2000; Davis Pyne 2001; Swanson 2001). As a result of such strong commercial viability, the socialist realist style of painting continued to thrive as the most widely taught style in post-Soviet art schools. The style's versatility helped it to lose its shameful political birthmarks and to be preserved within the educational system of all post-Soviet countries. Moreover, the style was reclaimed by the new art commissioners, both private and institutional (see Church section).

The decline of the theory of socialist realism within the Union of Artists arts (1958-1991) brought to light the importance of the institution itself. Matthew Cullerne Bown devoted two of his books (1987 and 1998) to the history of the institution. Bown described the Union of Artists as a voluntary organisation, providing its members with state commissions and responsible for delivering those commissions (1987). The institution was also subdivided into 15 associated Unions representing the 15 Soviet republics. In his second book he extended his studies to the 15 national Unions (1998). However, Bown played down specification of the republican arts institutions within the Union of Artists of the USSR. Bown's omission of local specifications on a republican level resulted in unexplained differences between earlier and later years in the institutional validation practices in non-Russian Unions. Following an analysis of particular Unions such as the Uzbek one, Bown did not clarify some major issues between the earlier and later periods: what happened to Russian artists who worked in the socialist realist style in the 1930s; why there was a coexistence of the styles of socialist realism and miniature painting in the 1980s; and what brought the replacement of Russian artists by Uzbek artists as the leading force within the local Union during the same decade. The unexplained replacement of the styles, and the related changes in ethnic representation within one of the Unions, also questioned the variable assessment of artistic practices within different Unions.

Such questions about why the validation practices in Russia and in non-Russian republics differed from each other, and when the differences became apparent, can be clarified by an analysis of the institutional practice through which socialist realism was

disseminated in particular Unions. Examination of the art theory on a practical level can be done through dynamics of the history of education and membership in the Unions. Studying each of the Unions can be based on local sources of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Uzbekistan has the biggest share of all literary sources concerning arts compared with the other Central Asian states. By ‘local sources’ I mean Russian publications commissioned on behalf of the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic through Russian art magazines such as *Isskusstvo*, *Tvorchestvo*, and *Dekorativnoe Isskusstvo*, (*Art*, *Creativity*, and *Decorative Art*); the art publishers *Avrora* and *Sovetskiy Khudozhnik* or (*Aurora* and *Soviet Artist*): and Uzbek publications released during the Soviet and independence periods. Local art historians (Pugachenkova 1957; Taktash 1978, 1981, 1985; Myunts 1988; Rempel 1992;) of various ethnic origin<sup>4</sup> emphasised that their institution was different from the Russian Union because it had two goals rather than one. The first was to establish validation practices according to the guidelines of socialist realism. This goal was the same in the Russian Union. But the second goal of the Uzbek Union was to provide representation for a titular nation of artists and art historians — a pressing issue for all the Central Asian republics. The term ‘titular nation’, coined in the Soviet era, refers to the ethnic group after which a republic was named: for example, Uzbeks in Uzbekistan (Connor 1986). As the ethnic group representing the national Soviet republic, this particular group had advantageous conditions for education and social promotion compared to the other groups residing in the same republic.

Art historians have claimed that the emergence of the Union of Artists in Tashkent took place at a difficult historical time (1934-1938), and that the application of socialist realism theory weakened the newborn institution because of the destruction of the small artistic community during these decisive years (Kovtun, Lebedeva and Babanazarova 1989). The difficulties of these formative four years were indeed aggravated by the handover of Tashkent from Kazakhstan to Uzbekistan as a result of the land delimitation in Central Asia and further by the great purges, a massive wave of political repression. The smallness of the artistic groups was another strong point. According to information I gathered from art historians, who were members of different republican

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<sup>4</sup> Researchers in Tashkent are of multiethnic origin, reflecting Tashkent’s multiethnic population (see Fieldwork, Domestication subsection). However, there is a difference between the older and younger generations of art historians. Older art specialists had education and professional experience in Russia whereas researchers who are younger than 30 mainly have experience in NGO’s set up by the West.

Unions, concerning membership numbers in the earlier period of the Unions, the total number of members did not exceed 20 per Central Asian branch before the 1950s. Art historians came to the conclusion that the bigger Unions coped better than the smaller ones with the onslaught of socialist realism. This makes the fate of the Uzbekistan Union understandable. The Union was represented by a tiny number of European-descended painters whose style, social origin, and educational background (Tsarist or Western European), could hardly be qualified as politically correct by the party officials within the local Union itself (Krukovskaya 1932; Golender 2001; Nikiforov 1967). Unfortunately, institutional critique led to further punitive actions by the state (Krukovskaya 1951; Sheverdin 1957; Lebedeva, Kovtun and Babananarova 1989). No artist went unscarred by the *vychesyvat*, or combing-out (Rempel 1991). One example was a Hungarian artist Lasio Mesarosh, who was imprisoned for alleged pan-Turkic sympathies because he painted human images of the local nomads. This political correcting of artists made the institution incapable of functioning until the situation was improved by the arrival of Russian evacuees, researchers and artists, who salvaged the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan during the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) (Myasina 1973).

S. Krukovskaya wrote her first two books (1932, 1951) concerning early Soviet period painting in Uzbekistan. These books were never published and were only kept in the Arts Institute library. Here she suggested that the providing of titular nation specialists in Uzbekistan was hindered by the total absence of Uzbek specialists. She pointed out that the local Union was not meant to be directly concerned with educational and research purposes, but instead with the selection of specialists for the arts field. Moreover, she was uncertain when a local artistic intelligentsia and arts education institutions would be established. Nonetheless, an arts history section was added to the Arts Institute in 1943, helped by the Russian evacuees (Rakhmatullaeva 1999: 6). Massive funding to educate the national intelligentsia took place only in the second half of the 1950s (*Sovetskaya Intellegentsia Uzbekistana* 1979; Selnick 1984). Because of that, it took far longer to build up arts education institutions. Soviet arts education functioned in a two-tiered system. There were two levels: the technical or *tekhnicheskoe*, undertaken in the arts college; and the high or *vysshie*, in the Arts Institute. The art colleges in the cities Samarkand, Tashkent and Bukhara were established between the 1930s and the 1950s (Rakhmatulaeva 1999) whereas the department of painting at the educational Arts Institute was opened only in 1963

(Myunts 1976). Thus, the titular nation specialists technically skilled in the style of socialist realism only appeared by the 1970s-1980s, when the validity of socialist realism was being widely questioned (Taktash 1985).

The 1970s-1995 improvement and enlargement of the institution changed its ethnic balance. The branch increased to 100 members, 60 of whom were painters. The branch became multiethnic, represented by two major groups of artists: Russian or Russian-speaking, and Uzbek. The changes in ethnic representation coincided with the decline of the theory of socialist realism. The combination of both allowed Uzbek artists to choose selectively the best principles of socialist realism. Uzbek artists omitted the first principle, *partiynost*, in favour of the two others, *narodnost* and *ideynost*. Application of these principles can be seen in how validation of artistic creativity has changed from the early to the late Soviet periods.

If we look closer at local arts we shall see that at the beginning of the establishment of the institution, there was Russian high art in a Russian part of Tashkent produced by Russian artists in the non-Russian republic of Uzbekistan (see Fieldwork subsection on Domestication of Arts in Tashkent, 1.8.2.). The institution developed within the parameters of the Russian part of the city during the Soviet period. The growth of the number of Uzbek artists coincided with the increase of the commissions and the expansion of the Russian section of Tashkent. Their commissions were linked to the construction and decoration of public buildings and complexes such as underground stations, terminals, hospitals, factories, public monuments and cultural institutions such as theatre, concert halls, and many others, all located in the Russian part of the city. Furthermore, the bigger the Russian part of Tashkent became the more Uzbek artists became members of the Union of Artists. By the end of the Soviet era, the Russian style of painting still remained in the Russian part of the city, but was increasingly represented in Uzbekistan by Uzbek artists.

The expansion of Uzbek artists in the Russian section of Tashkent dramatically changed the validation of artistic practice. Unlike the earlier period (1938-1953), which defined the status and reputation of an artist depending on the political correctness of the artist and his product, the later period (1970-1995) introduced validation depending directly on the impact of the commission on the urban environment and the accessibility of the project to city residents. The increase in public-works commissions made artists known and appreciated not only within the institution but also in the general urban

population. Institutional validation followed the Soviet slogan ‘Arts for the People’ which in turn broadened moral and social validation of artistic creativity in Tashkent.

After the eventual dissolution of the Union of Artists of the USSR in 1992, the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was left in a condition of disarray. There were no resources to run the institution on the previous scale after the economic reform of 1995 (see Economic Conditions, 1.2.), and in 1997 the new state made a decision on behalf of the artists. By a decree from Uzbek president Karimov, the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic became the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan. Three *San’at* articles (*Iskusstvo Novogo Uzbekistana*, Art of New Uzbekistan 1999; Akhmedova 2001: 29 and ‘Navrikon Uzbekiston’ 2002: 22) state that the reformed institution was able to preserve what had been painstakingly built during the Soviet period: an institutionalised arts education system. The articles explain that the responsibilities of the new Academy included taking direct charge over education and research. The new institution consolidated all arts educational institutions, both ‘technical’ and ‘high’, and incorporated the research institute responsible for quarterly publication of the arts magazine *San’at*. The articles further claimed that the success of the institution was based on the preservation of the two-tier educational system without connecting education to membership structure.

Rakhim Akhmedov, the former head of the Union of Artists (1960-1985) and the founder of high arts education in Uzbekistan, argued against *San’at*’s claims. He pointed out to me that the new membership policies lowered the educational standards for entrance. He believed that the resulting degraded membership would continue to affect the institution. Akhmedov’s argument had a strong point. Membership during the period 1997-2004 rocketed up to 11 times that of late Soviet period (1970-1995), bringing the total to 1100 members. One indication of lower entrance standards was the condition in which records of membership were kept. I found that the newer records of members were hand written on scraps of paper. The records consisted of only first and family names, without such details such as gender, date of birth, education and address. My artist friends told me that the records’ conditions had not improved even by 2004. The Academy’s historians defended their lack of interest in record-keeping. According to them, there were three main reasons. Artists’ affiliation by creative sections is largely artificial, they claimed, since artists often do not work according their educational specialisation; artists often move in and out of Uzbekistan and care less about their affiliation with the institution; and they often do not have a permanent home address.

*San'at* publications from this period (1999-2004) demonstrate that structurally, membership changed as well. These publications contradicted the 1970s-1990s stereotypical characteristics of an Uzbekistan artist. Members of the Union of Artists were male, well in their forties and predominantly Uzbeks. To become a member meant studying for 14 years and struggling for years to get into the institution. Indeed, in 1986, I did not meet a single surviving female painter: all the members were men, whose age varied from 40 to 60 years old. *San'at* had several articles concerning artists in their late twenties ('New Names' introduces readers to the Artists Zaur Mansurov and Abdujabbor Nazilov. 2002: 30) and the emergence of female painters (*Iskusstvo Novogo Uzbekistana*. Art of the New Uzbekistan, 1999:45; Tashpulatova 2001: 44; Gyul 2003: 34). Guided by those articles, I found the following information. The younger age of artists was due to the harsh economic conditions, which forced painters to begin exhibiting and selling their works before completing the two-tier education. These artists either could not afford to complete their formal education, or started to work immediately after the completion of the Arts College in order to survive. For them to establish themselves as painters was more important than to be fully educated or to be officially registered as artists. The real-world validation of their practice already took place before they become members of the Academy of Fine Arts.

The emergence of female artists is more complex, because there were two groups of these artists: the older, Soviet-educated women, and the younger ones educated in the Independence period. Most of the Soviet-era female artists were known because of their family connections in artistic circles. Many were the daughters of artists or were married to artists. Therefore, within the arts field there was a highly gendered perception of them as mothers, wives, mistresses and daughters of male artists, despite most of them having a full two-tier arts education equal to that of their male family members. They could not achieve membership in the Union of Artists, but their membership in the new Academy facilitated their creative practice during the Independence period. Unlike them, the younger female artists had no family connections in the arts field. These women were known for their own creative practice, managing their exhibitions even before they joined the Academy. Although compared to their older female colleagues, younger painters did not have a very good arts education – they finished only arts college or graduated from non-arts-specific educational institutions such as the Pedagogical Institute with specialisation in graphics. These age and gender aspects need to be studied because they are actively changing the

institutional validation practices of the art field in Uzbekistan. I will examine these aspects in Chapters 2 and 4.

Although the arts institution escaped fragmentation, it lost its main function, which was the validation of artists and arts. The current members are validated by the other institutions and private individuals, which I will discuss in the following section. These post-Soviet institutions responsible for the valuing of painting and artists will be introduced in three sections: the Russian Orthodox Church, the *mahalla*, and private individuals.

### **1.5. The Russian Orthodox Church**

I begin with the Russian Orthodox Church, which has become the biggest commissioner of arts in post-Soviet states. This new prominence in the arts scene came as a result of the Church's attempts to fill the ideological vacuum created by the demise of the USSR (Carrère d'Encausse 1995; Lewis 2000). The rise of the Church introduced a new type of validation of arts in a largely secular society.

From the beginning I would like to clarify why I am dealing with the Christian Church instead of Islam. There are two major reasons. First, Islamic religious institutions traditionally commissioned architectural projects, not paintings. Secondly, none of the religious boards responsible for Islamic worship in the post-Soviet states provided clear guidance concerning architectural projects. Such negligence resulted mosques being indistinguishable from churches with the only difference being a crescent instead of a cross at the top of the building's crowning dome. Despite the Orthodox Church's 13-century-long history of arts patronage, its role as patron of the arts has not been sufficiently studied. Regardless of historical era or academic affiliation, Western or Russian, Tsarist and Soviet, researchers played down the Church's role in arts validation. Research concerning religious painting, or on religious themes in secular painting, analysed changes in historical trends, emphasised specifications of the national or regional schools and occasionally touched on authorship (Blankoff 1963; Alpatov 1974; Lazarev 1976, 1980; Lazarev and Pobedova 1977; Briusova 1995; Obolensky 2000 [1971]; Tarasov 2002). The Church's participation was seldom mentioned apart from stating when a project was commissioned or when it failed to be completed (Sarabianov 1981). Furthermore, the absence of an assessment of the Church validation practices in the past does not help in



the contemporary situation, in which the old institution has been thrown back into the irreversibly changed arts scene.

Few art historians expected the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), after becoming the biggest commissioner in the arts field, to extend its power even further in the field of secular arts. In the same way as the state controlled the validation process in the Soviet arts world, the Church now validates all art containing spiritual connotations, regardless of whether it was intended for secular or religious purposes.

The Church showed an example of its validation process of arts in January 2003, after the opening of a controversial exhibition entitled '*Ostorozhno Religia*' or 'Careful Religion', at the Sakharov Centre in Moscow (Myers 2005). The exhibition included works such as a sculpture of a church building made out of vodka bottles, reflecting the right granted by the state for the church to produce and sell vodka on an unlicensed basis, and many other no less provocative works. The exhibition was vandalised by Orthodox Christian believers from a nearby parish, who then filed a legal suit against the centre on the grounds of 'inciting religious hatred and promoting indecent images'. The suit was settled in 2005. The director and the curator were given prison sentences, later replaced by fines equivalent to \$3,600 each. Those art objects which survived the assault were returned to the artists instead of being destroyed. The lengthy legal process divided Russian society into two camps, supporting either the artists or the Church.

The ROC accused the Sakharov Centre of blasphemy and ridiculing the Church. So what does 'blasphemy' mean for the arts field and what are the wider implications of this legal process? Prior to 1917, any art objects containing religious symbols or dealing with religious themes, and not falling within rigid guidelines set by the Synod, would be recognised as blasphemous. Blasphemy was a criminal offence, and a person accused could receive capital punishment. But after 72 years under an atheist state, religion went through a process of domestication which made blasphemy the norm rather than the exception. Various scholars (Dragadze 1995; Akhmed 1995) explained the consequences of domestication caused by the impossibility of conducting religious institutional practice during the Soviet period: the notion of the religious canon was diluted, and there arose quite unexpected responses to religious practice. Weeding out non-canonical interpretation of religious practices became a focus of the Church in the post-Soviet period, and makes its efforts increasingly militant. The failure of the Sakharov Centre to win the legal battle means that the Church is ready to go so far as to erase the separation between the state and religion in order to achieve a return to the

purity of the faith. This highly charged confrontation between the arts field and the Russian Orthodox Church still makes the Russian case relevant to Uzbekistan. Fragmentation of the Church did not touch Uzbekistan. Unlike the Slavic successor states, where Orthodox dioceses were separate from the main Russian Office, the Church structure remained intact in the Central Asian region. Moreover, Uzbekistan remained the host of the Central Asian region dioceses of the Church. The Tashkent office completely depends on its head office in the Russian city of Sergiev Pasad. In other words, what is relevant for spiritual affairs for Russia has significance for Uzbekistan.

However, the ROC in Uzbekistan represents the head office of the Central Asian dioceses and therefore has to be fully accountable for its actions in the state in Uzbekistan and in the other independent states in Central Asia. The Church is in a very vulnerable position, because it does not have the same moral authority over Uzbek officials as it has enjoyed in Russia. The Uzbek authorities' policy in general might be described as cautious towards any religion. The modest position occupied by the ROC in Tashkent might be a reason for the merely chilly, rather than atrocious, relationship between artists and the Church.

Nonetheless, the Uzbekistan case study has its own specific focus in relation to the Church. This was due to the Church's validation of how religious Russian identity was expressed in the arts. In the shrinking Russian culture in urban Uzbekistan, the Russian population clung to the ROC. For them, the Church is the embodiment of Russian cultural and spiritual life, which is expressed through annual visits to the Russian cemetery and celebration of Easter in Tashkent's three churches. This communal devotion defines the ethnic Russian community from the other so-called 'Russian-speaking' communities in the urban Tashkent environment. Under the Russian-speaking category fall various ethnic groups such as Koreans or Ashkenazi Jews, neither of whom follow the Orthodox Christian faith. Artists' devotion to this religious Russian identity was tested through severe validation practices installed by the Church. If an artist or his work was not accepted, the Church could reject sanctifying an artefact for a sale or even bar the artist from holy communion. The complexity of the validation process by the Church in Tashkent's Trinity Church Convent will be examined in my chapter concerning Christian themes.

In the Uzbek case Christian culture is more important than Muslim culture in the arts education and production process. For example, Uzbek miniature painting was

based on the Orthodox Christian painting tradition. I devote a chapter to discussion of miniature painting's origin in Russian lacquer icon painting. Despite the closeness to the Russian tradition, miniature painting was validated by Tashkent's *mahalla* to which I will turn in the following section.

### 1.6. *Mahalla*

The word *mahalla* from the Arabic, means a neighbourhood with a single mosque (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985). In the Uzbek case, all authors defined Uzbekistan's *mahalla* neighbourhoods as local institutions which perform institutional policies concerning the residents of the neighbourhoods (Abramzon 1998; Rasuli 2000; Geiss 2001).

However, unlike the above-mentioned authors, who studied *mahalla* neighbourhood quarter as a purely Uzbek institution, I have a rather different view of *mahalla* districts. These authors discussed the institutional policies without a full assessment of the means by which the *mahalla* implemented them. My analysis of pre-Soviet literary sources, supported by my own fieldwork, indicated that those powers were acquired by *mahalla* only in the 1980s and were strongly reinforced after the introduction of economic reforms in 1995. My argument is that those recent acquisitions of new administrative responsibilities by *mahalla* make this institution more powerful as well as uniquely Uzbek, contradicting the previous claim that *mahalla* survived intact through the colonial and Soviet periods.

I mentioned in the previous section on economic conditions that the *mahalla* began to emerge as a key factor affecting the arts field after 1995, when domestic property privatisation was followed by domestication of painting. I emphasise the importance of the emergence of the *mahalla* institution because previously, Soviet culture was studied from its position in Russian or Soviet-built Tashkent. The extension of *mahalla* institutions all over the city of Tashkent defies studying Russian and Soviet culture in the Russian built city and effectively clashes together two different cultures: Russian high culture and Uzbek popular religious culture. Inevitably, validation of painting and artistic practices irreversibly changes under the influence of the *mahalla*. However, to make clearer how these neighbourhood quarters could actually influence validation practices, I shall start by tracing the revival of the *mahalla* over the last 25-30 years. This historical retrospective will contribute to an understanding what kind of mechanisms the *mahalla* use to influence the arts field. As a local institution, the

*mahalla* has a complex history which shaped its meanings. I stress that *mahalla* are not only a geographic neighbourhoods but also communities, administrations and groups of people. Such variability in the meaning of the term shows that the *mahalla* was itself changed over time. In order to support my argument I will assess Tashkent's *mahalla* history.

Prior to the Soviet period, Tashkent's *mahalla* were urban neighbourhood quarters which had a representative of the religious institution within its geographical area. Each *mahalla* had an elected group of influential residents responsible for delivering taxation to the city administration, maintaining social order within the neighbourhood and supporting the disadvantaged inhabitants of their neighbourhood through almsgiving. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was an Indian neighbourhood where merchants from India resided, and there was a Sephardic Jewish neighbourhood with its own synagogue. As we can see, Tashkent's *mahalla* neighbourhood quarters represented communities which were subdivided along religious, ethnic, occupational and social lines (Nilsen 1988). Those communities existed in neighbourhoods which had a distinctive architectural character. The neighbourhoods were built into a maze of winding, narrow dead-end streets, which united into wider streets, which came finally to a large open cross road street lined with shops. Depending on the size of the neighbourhood and the number of the residents in each *mahalla*, *mahalla* neighbourhoods either shared or had their own cemeteries. Because of the lack of social mobility in pre-Soviet Tashkent, the life of an individual was bound from birth to death within the same community. Despite the enormous social, political and economic changes which took place over the last 150 years, the people from those neighbourhoods had a strong sense of community. The demolition projects of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, which were intended to improve facilities for residents, destroyed much of the pre-Russian part of Tashkent. The old *mahalla* neighbourhoods, which were not considered of architectural significance for the city, fell under this improvement scheme. Their residents were resettled to state-owned tower blocks in suburbs of Tashkent. What survive of those communities in their old neighbourhoods is squeezed into a mere 4 square kilometers.

The revival of *mahalla* neighbourhoods took place in the 1970s-1980s with the increase in private housing (see Fieldwork subsection on arts domestication in Tashkent). According to *Entsyklopedia Tashkenta* or the Encyclopedia of Tashkent (1983: 194), '*mahalla*' was defined as a privately owned domestic residence within neighbourhood quarters with voluntary administrative functions such as solving

neighbourhood and family disputes. The Encyclopedia indicates that in the 1980s Tashkent contained 301 *mahalla* neighbourhoods, which were subdivided in two types. The first were located in an ethnically homogenous private housing area from the Tsarist period, whereas the second were multi-ethnic suburbs developed under a private housing scheme as part of the city's regeneration project after the 1966 earthquake (discussions will be continued in the section concerning fieldwork).

In the independence period, the *mahalla* went through further development, characterised by an increase of their functions. The *mahalla* appropriated functions formerly carried out by Soviet administrative institutions such as the *Dom Upravlenie*, or Housing Office. The Housing Office dealt with various domicile-related affairs including property transactions, permission for rebuilding dwellings, collecting payments for water, electricity and gas from residents, and delivery of pensions and benefit payments for the children of unemployed parents. After the fall of the Soviet Union, *mahalla* neighbourhoods within the whole city undertook these functions. The *mahalla* turned from voluntary to state-funded institutions – with considerable local administrative functions and authority.

By 2004 the whole of Tashkent became subdivided into *mahalla* neighbourhoods, including the Russian-built section of the Tsarist and Soviet periods. It was not always a success story: there were difficult cases, such as the installment of *mahalla* institutions within the recently privatised Soviet tower blocks, and in the old Tsarist-era, Russian-populated parts of the city. In those parts of the city, *mahalla* neighbourhoods do not mould residents into a community but remain a collection of individuals who reluctantly have to deal with this new type of city administration.

Despite the shortcomings of rapid *mahalla* administration installment in post-Soviet Tashkent, some contemporary ideologists hailed the *mahalla* neighbourhood quarter as an ideal Uzbek community model (Askarov 2003: 16). From Askarov's perspective there was no other *mahalla* neighbourhood quarter apart from the ethnically Uzbek ones, which retained their original purity from any outside influences. With his and others' tireless efforts to promote a new ideological concept, the year 2003 was proclaimed by the government as the 'year of the *mahalla*'. Moreover, with their help the history of the *mahalla* has been reinvented. It is now portrayed as an institution that vigorously resisted the Soviet regime and was able to reemerge in the following post-Soviet period in a pristine, unchanged condition. In this reinvented anti-Soviet version of *mahalla* history, anything that came during the Soviet period provokes a cautious

reaction. Painting was a great pride of Soviet culture, one that needed to find a way to reestablish itself in *mahalla*-administered Tashkent.

*Mahalla* neighbourhoods could easily destroy contemporary artistic practice because everybody lives or works in the city's *mahalla* neighbourhoods. As institutions, *mahalla* can employ repressive measures. They can exert moral authority, administrative pressure or physical force to settle scores with 'undesirable' inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Mechanisms of influence vary from one *mahalla* to another. One common technique is reporting to the National Security Service (SNB) the alleged promotion of anti-state ideas by artists. Some of my respondents went through interrogations after being denounced by their local *mahalla*. Another method is providing information to the Tax Collection Office concerning the selling or buying of paintings in foreign currency, a crime which can lead to lengthy prison terms for the participants. Or it could be simple bullying of women by the council of elders, or *aksakals* (Mandel 2002: 290-291). Many of my respondents, especially single women artists, complained that *mahalla* neighbourhoods vilified them with accusations ranging from indecency to perversion as I describe in Chapter 6.

But most significantly, the *mahalla* could devalue the Soviet-introduced art of painting, which contradicts to the origin of the institution originating in its immortal past. This is done by discouraging young Uzbek residents of the neighbourhoods from becoming artists. Uzbek *mahalla* neighbourhoods in the Tsarist and Soviet sections of Tashkent, where community spirit is at its strongest, often exert their pressure on the families of aspiring artists. *Mahalla* can easily convince those families that the artistic profession has no moral or social value within the *mahalla* neighbourhood, and most importantly that the painter's profession, owing to its lengthy two-tier education, does not bring immediate economic benefits to the family. This pressure by mahalla institution will be assessed in Chapter 3.

Both state and non-state controlled arts, in order to exist, have to be recognised according to the *mahalla* neighbourhood's lofty self image as the 'ideal neighbourhood quarter'. Since those characteristics of an ideal *mahalla* neighbourhood quarter are not explicitly written only through time will we be able to find out what they actually are. While the domestication of painting and the rise of *mahalla* go together, these two unlikely spheres, arts and *mahalla*, have to find communication between each other. The failure of artists, art dealers and their clientele in coping with this institution could mean a slow death for painting in the city of Tashkent.

It became one of the most challenging parts of my thesis to find how and when positive validation of painting could take place in *mahalla*-run Tashkent? What artistic creativity, and what kind of genres of painting, might be acceptable from a *mahalla* perspective? This will be an ongoing theme through all the chapters of my thesis.

### **1.7. Private commissioners**

Uzbekistan lacked a history of painting acquisitions by private individuals who were outside the boundaries of artistic society. As previously mentioned, studies of arts consumption were undermined by foreign currency restrictions in place from 1995 to 2004. Hopefully the 2004 legalisation of foreign currency use will dramatically change arts trade studies in Uzbekistan. But since it is outside the time frame of my thesis, I could only rely on artists' classification of arts buyers.

Artists defined their buyers according to income, occupation, ability to avoid taxation and willingness to engage in the risky usage of foreign currency. As I mentioned in the earlier section on economics, conducting private transactions in foreign currency brought the risk of a prison term. Artists divided their clientele into three types.

First were those who had a regulated income taxed at the time of receiving it, such as high state officials. Officially at least, these bureaucrats did not have access to foreign currency. Second were foreigners who were neither taxed nor restricted in the use of foreign currency. The third were various types of business people whose income and taxation was difficult for the state to catch up with, and whose often shady lives allowed them to become familiar with illegal foreign currency transactions.

Out of those three categories, the bureaucracy was considered the worst from a commercial point of view because of their shortage of foreign currency. Also, the bureaucrats lived mainly in state residences instead of privatised apartments, and were often reluctant to publicise their extra income by spending on expensive painting.

Foreigners were regarded as a better target. They did not jeopardise their position by parting with their foreign currency. But the number of art-buying foreigners was small. Most worked for various foreign organisations and a few companies, and to have access to them there was a need to learn the English language.

Shady businessmen were the preferred category of buyers. Businessmen were not cautious about purchasing paintings, and artists told me that there was an absence of humiliating haggling over the price of their paintings when dealing with these buyers.

The trade with private clientele brought far more serious concerns than artists expected after the 1998 market crash in Russia. The fall of the Russian money market affected pricing of former Soviet painting in Tashkent. The low prices paid by foreigners, prices which often fell below the actual cost of the materials used in production of a painting, led to the main question, ‘What is the market value?’ Artists realised the profound difference in how both parties, artists and foreign buyers, value painting. Slowly it became apparent to artists that their painting possessed not just monetary value but other values as well. Previously, artists said, they had never paid attention to this range of values such as social and moral values. But these became the values most appreciated by them in the wake of the market collapse. From that period on, artists’ main stimulus became to build up the social and moral value of painting through private commissions, which provided artists with affirmation and recognition of their importance.

### **1.8.1. Fieldwork**

The fieldwork section is subdivided into three subsections. The first discusses the city of Tashkent as the site of my fieldwork research. The second subsection draws attention to various difficulties it was necessary to overcome in order to conduct the fieldwork. Because of certain constraints, some fieldwork methods were impossible to carry out. The third subsection concerns the chosen methodology with regard to the emergence of the complex post-Soviet systems of arts production, consumption and circulation, as well as the multi-sited fieldwork within Tashkent. The fourth subsection directly discusses how the methods varied depending on the different configurations of the post-Soviet arts field.

### **1.8.2. Fieldwork: Tashkent as research site**

In this subsection I assess the city of Tashkent as the site of my fieldwork study on the domestication of painting. The move of painting from public to domestic sites requires a clarification of the types of public spaces and domestic premises involved. In the opening section of this chapter, I explained that during the Soviet period, public spaces in Tashkent were associated with the Russian presence, because titular national arts were concentrated in the Russian parts of the city, colonial and Soviet. Titular national arts were Western in medium and existed in a Western-style institutional framework. Educational and professional establishments and exhibiting spaces such as museums



and galleries were located within the Russian part of the city. Further, I stated that after the emergence of the independent Uzbek state, Soviet public spaces associated with the Russian presence shrank to just a few streets. Domestic spaces were absorbed by *mahalla* neighbourhoods, regardless of their pre-Independence origin. The change of public and domestic spaces from Russian to Uzbek necessitates an assessment of the capital's history in relation to various patterns of domestic residences. After a classification of the domestic dwellings of the late Soviet period, I explain where exactly the move toward domestication took place in Tashkent within the first phase of Uzbekistan's gradual economic reform (1995-2004).

Unlike other capitals, which came to prominence as a result of the fall of the USSR and acquiring statehood, Tashkent stood out long before independence was proclaimed in 1991 (see Maps 1, 2 and 3, pp.41-43). Tashkent was not just a capital of one of the national republics in the USSR; it was the fourth largest city in the Soviet Union, after Moscow, Leningrad and Kiev. The city had a higher status than any of the capitals of the neighbouring republics. The city's population was 3,000,000 inhabitants, and with suburbs and small townships included, 5,000,000. This figure dwarfed the entire populations of neighbouring republics such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. As a result of high population density, the city incorporated several types of urban settlements. Such urban complexity required a more complex transportation network, and working ahead of its time in urban planning through the general architectural schemes of 1924, 1940, 1959 and 1968. Finally, to connect all those parts of the city an underground system was built in 1973. By 1990 the area of Tashkent had already reached 400 square kilometers.

Tashkent was also different from any of the neighbouring capitals in the Central Asian region. First of all Tashkent, which means 'stony city' or 'cut grass' in Uzbek, has 2000 years of history (Kadyrov 1983). Secondly, Tashkent did not develop out of a Russian military station or railway link, like the neighbouring capitals Ashgabat, Bishkek or Astana and Alma-Ata did (Koroteyeva and Perepelkin 1990). Those cities began as Russian cities, which initially incorporated other ethnic groups in the Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Despite all those historical changes, these Central Asian capitals retained their early Russian features combined with later Soviet characteristics such as city planning grids. Unlike them, Tashkent only joined the Russian part of the city to the existing city after 1865. Thirdly, Tashkent's population included over 46% titular nation representation, much higher than other Central Asian capitals (Arutunyan

1996). Therefore the city contained different types of residences implying different lifestyles.

1. Map of the USSR

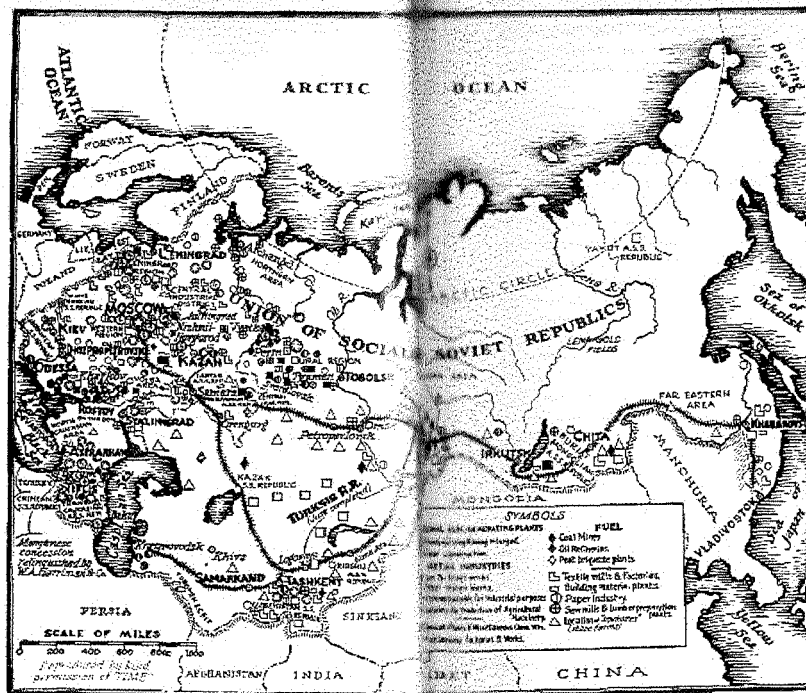


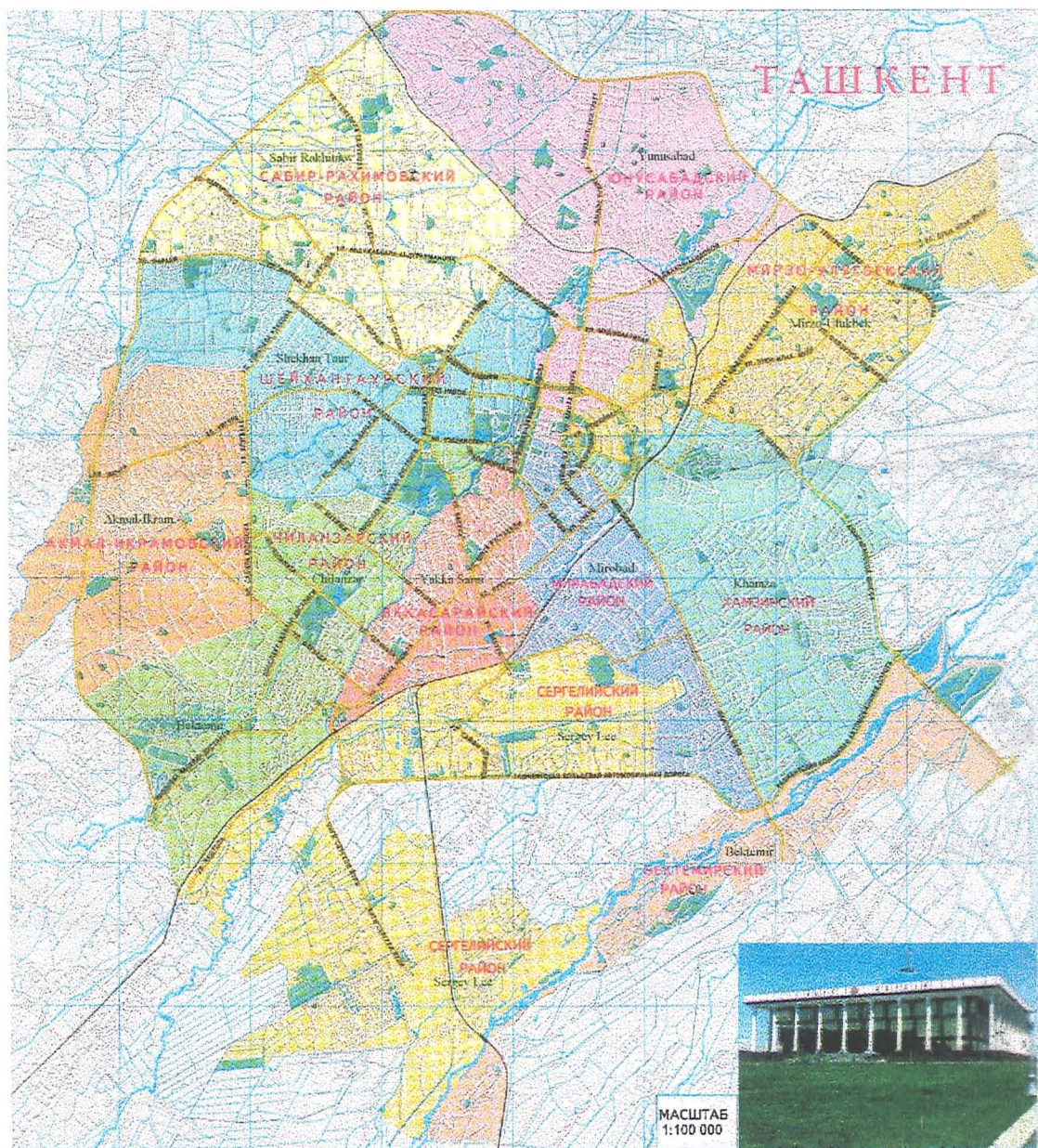
Figure 10. Map of the Soviet Union in 1941. From M. J. in, *New Russia Review*. The map is based on the 1941 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

2. Map of Uzbekistan: regional boundaries



Figure 15. Uzbekistan: Administrative Divisions, 1996

## 3. Map of Tashkent: district divisions



The core of Tashkent was made up of two cities: in Uzbek Eski Shakar and Yuangi Shakar, in Russian Novyy Gorod and Staryy Gorod, and in English the Old City and the New City. The Old City refers to the part of the city that predated Russian colonization and was predominantly occupied by a Muslim and Uzbek population, whereas the New City was for the Russian, European, Christian population (see Fig.1, p.45). The surviving Russian houses are whitewashed one-story buildings with large windows, covered with pointed high roofs and with flowerbeds in front. The Uzbek houses are two stories due to land shortage, built from mud bricks, covered with a flat roof, with no outside windows (see Fig.2, p.46) The Old City houses always had an inner courtyard containing a pool and vineyard. The two Cities preserved their ethnic homogeneity until the Independence period, and the division between the City inhabitants survives to this day.<sup>5</sup>

The Great Earthquake of 1966 affected the city in three ways. First of all the earthquake dramatically reduced the part of the city built under the Stalinist period. In Tashkent mainly public buildings of that period were preserved after the earthquake, and those surviving buildings were overshadowed by later Soviet architecture. This creates a deceiving impression of the Tsarist period being immediately replaced by the late Socialist period. Secondly, there were no traces left of the movement of the Uzbek population from the Old City to the New City, which was owing to their upgrade in status from an ethnic minority to representatives of a titular nation in 1924. Before 1930, Tashkent was a city in Kazakhstan inhabited by two ethnic minorities, Russians and Uzbeks residing in two different parts of the city within the republic where the majority were Kazakhs. After 1930, Uzbeks became upgraded to titular nation status, which resulted in their crossing the ethnic divisions within the city. Those who could relocate themselves were mostly bureaucrats and professionals.<sup>6</sup> The capital from then time developed following the big regeneration scheme of 1968, which included projects

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<sup>5</sup> The Old City remains Uzbek, and what was not demolished is becoming highly valued by Uzbeks. The wealthier residents have clustered there since the 15th century, because in the midst of the *mahallas* were located the main mosques and the main cemetery for religious figures. On the edges of the neighbourhoods are the main cultural attractions the Uzbek theatre of Drama called after Mukimi and nearby is the one of the oldest markets, the Chor-Suu, where Uzbek locals find jobs.

<sup>6</sup> Native Tashkent Uzbeks themselves identified themselves in two groups, on *Starogodskie* (inhabitants of the Old City) and *Novogorodskie* (from the New City). As my Tashkent Uzbek respondents explained to me, being *Novogorodskie* meant for Uzbeks not only moving to the Russian part of the City but following Russian ways of life; accepting mixed gender socializing, recognising women's equal right to education, permitting children to have leisure activities), wearing Russian clothing and eating Russian food. Because of their embrace of Russian culture, the Uzbek *Novogorodskie* starkly stood out of the rest of Uzbeks between 1930 and 1966, as do their descendants in the independent period.

aiming 20–30 years ahead. The outcomes of that scheme made the city stratified on social rather than on ethnic terms. Parts of the city were created for privileged bureaucracy and top intelligentsia.

Fig.1 Tyazakovka, New City, 1999.



Fig.2 Khadra *mahalla*, Old City, 1999.

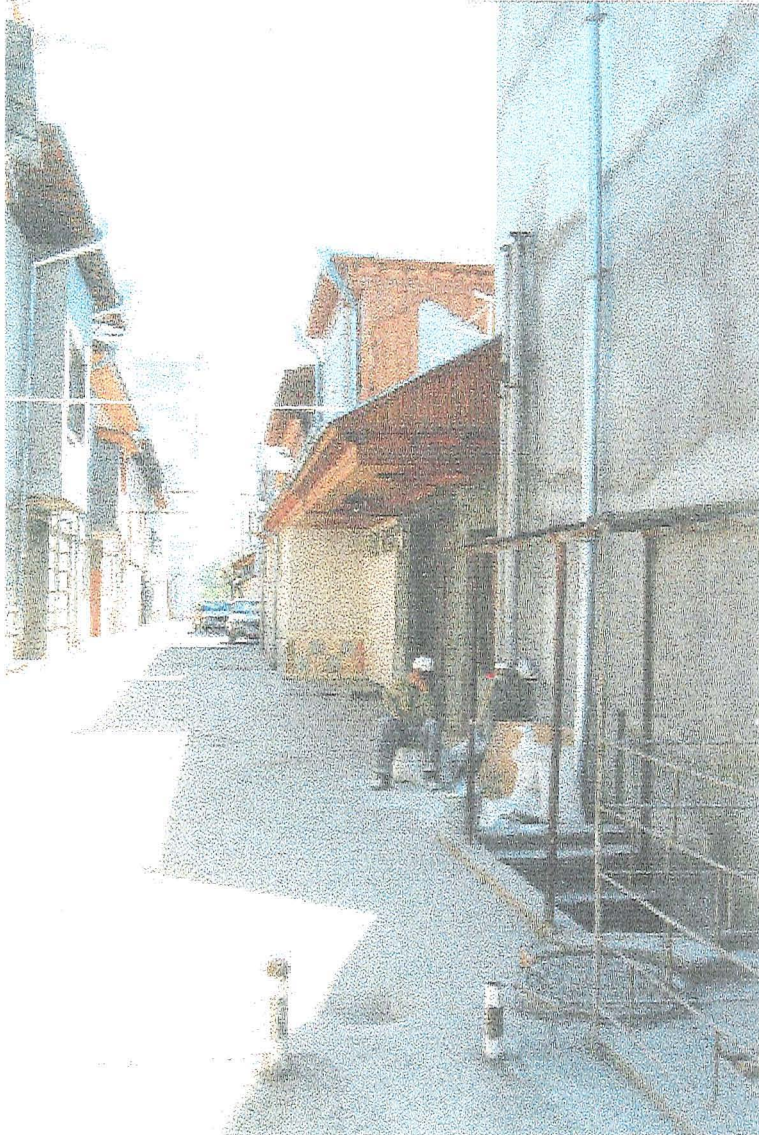


Fig.3 The Sergey Lee suburb, 1999. Sergey Lee epitomised the Soviet suburbs known as *spal'nyy rayon* (sleepers' districts), where people returned after work to sleep in tiny flats in concrete apartment blocks. During the Soviet period, this was the only district of Tashkent lacking privately owned housing, which made it the poorest district in the independent period.





Fig.4 Club Khimik, a chemical industry workers' club, Chirchik, 2001. Chirchik is a typical example of Stalinist-period city planning.



No capital in Central Asia had such a huge area just for settling high bureaucracy and privileged intelligentsia. In other cities there were a few city blocks and some summer residencies called *dachi*, carefully tucked away outside the capital. In Tashkent there were 25 areas, each large enough to cover one postcode. These areas were called Centers or *Tcentr*. The Centers were built by Russian builders from Moscow as a gift to the citizens of Tashkent. The domestic residences in Centers were tidy multifloored brick houses with boxy rooms inside. The best of the Centers was Dvoryanskoe Gnezdo ('Gentry Nest'), built for high bureaucracy in 1968. These officials lived in the Gentry Nest and in the state *dachi*, which were located in the central part of Tashkent.<sup>7</sup> The lifestyle of the privileged in Tashkent was always highly urban, convenient, exposed for observation but utterly uninspiring.

The better off<sup>8</sup> lived in private houses in *mahallas* neighbourhoods and apartment blocks called *kooperativ*, built on leased land. Private housing was evenly dispersed within six districts of the city. Acquiring this type of dwelling required some resources. It was highly regarded by Tashkenties, regardless of their ethnic origin. Private housing development schemes encouraged the creation of new *mahalla* neighbourhoods (see section on *mahalla*). Those 1970-1980s *mahallas* were cheerful multiethnic neighbourhoods with running water, electricity, gas and phones. Residence in the *mahalla* signified affluence, safety and a community spirit. *Kooperativ* apartments were less valued and much smaller than houses.

Depressing concrete tower blocks, under complete state ownership, were located in the suburbs. Those suburbs have a rather nondescript Soviet look without any pretense to deep history or cultural presence. The epitome of those sad suburbs is the Sergey Lee district (see Fig.3, p. 47). The Sergey Lee district grew up on top of the former penal settlement. According the local legend, in the 1930s forcefully relocated Koreans were left on the plains where Kazakh nomads had previously tended cattle. The district was named after one of those Koreans. However, as soon as Koreans were cleared of the

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<sup>7</sup> *Dachi* for state officials in Tashkent are not stand-alone summer houses, as in Russia, but are residential complexes with attached services such as canteens, laundries, swimming pool and sports complexes. Russian officials' *dachi* were always built outside of Moscow and Leningrad, but Uzbek *dachi* are in the midst of the city.

<sup>8</sup> I have to explain why I presumed that the population in the newer *mahallas* was better off financially. People who built private housing needed the material resources to do so. This wealth can be connected to the fact that the population in these *mahallas* was better educated, and as a result of that had more opportunities to get higher-paying jobs. My data on schoolchildren from the Chilanzar suburb *mahallas* demonstrated that the parents of those children were indeed well educated and occupied respectable jobs. All the fathers, and two-thirds of the mothers, had completed higher education. Both parents working full time, and a smaller number of children, indicated that the families were better off.

accusation of treason which had led to the relocation, they made all efforts to move out of the district. The contemporary Sergey Lee district is the most multiethnic of suburbs. The district earned notorious fame amongst Tashkenties for poverty, crime and the drug trade.

Compared to the Sergey Lee district, Chirchik town is situated much closer to the city of Tashkent. Chirchik was built in the early Soviet period as a part of Stalinist industrial scheme (1932-1936). Stalinist architecture and urban planning, which Tashkent now lacks, can be seen in Chirchik (see Fig.4, p.48). Those Stalinist-era architectural ensembles include leafy streets with big squares, sculptured fountains, buildings with classic porticos and columns and massive bridges over the rivers. Ironically, domestic residencies built for Russian industrial specialists under Stalin were far better than the flats in Gentry Nest, owing to their spaciousness and airiness. With the later exodus of the Russian population, the city was left in a time warp of a vanished era.

Tashkent lost its importance within the Central Asian region after the proclamation of independence. It became just a capital of one of former Soviet successor state. Uzbekistan's economic reforms brought privatization of property and the ascendance of a new social group, the New Rich (a term applied to those people enriched after the fall of the Soviet Union and the introduction of the market economy). The price value of property became dependent on the area in which it was situated. The market value of property in the Independence period fell within the same social stratifications of the Soviet period. However, this housing market did not provide luxury accommodation: as previously mentioned, high state officials lived in small, boxy 1970s flats. The growth of the wealth of the New Rich required the building of luxury accommodation. The question arose: where was it possible to build this type of accommodation?

There was a land shortage caused by the high population density of the megalopolis. Additionally, there were the 1999 antiterrorist measures, which included checkpoints surrounding Tashkent which inspected any vehicle moving in and out of the capital. The problem of dealing with checkpoints discouraged potential house buyers from investing in property outside of Tashkent. The city could not grow outwards, which meant it would have to grow inwards. Russian emigration out of Uzbekistan continued to empty the housing sector of the New City. Because of that, the New City became the only area in Tashkent where the New Rich could move. The New City, administered by *mahalla*, became a setting where the domestication of painting in Tashkent would take place

under the decisive intervention of artists, art traders, private commissioners and *mahalla*. The implications of this domestication will be explored in Chapter 5.

### 1.8.3. Fieldwork: constraints

In the above section I mentioned some of the difficulties which locals endured, and I too experienced many of those constraints in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan had, and still has, an extremely authoritarian regime which uses intimidation, torture and imprisonment of its political opponents. Because of the repressive atmosphere, most Tashkenties are hesitant to discuss the current cultural, social or political conditions. During the time of my fieldwork, the Uzbek arts field was dangerous for all involved, whether in the state or non-state controlled sectors. The nature of my research involved the discussion of sensitive political issues such as the use of arts for the legitimization of the regime. In addition, with my focus on market validation, collecting data became difficult due to the foreign currency restrictions. Proven holding of foreign currency by a private individual brought a prison sentence of up to seven years. Following ASA ethics guidelines, I have not used any type of information, visual or printed, in my dissertation which could identify or harm any of my respondents.

The Uzbek government's antiterrorist measures dramatically affected my fieldwork in the country. These measures were a response to the February 1999 attack in central Tashkent (Rashid 2000, 2002; Zanka 2000, 2004).<sup>9</sup> In this attack, simultaneous bombing killed 13 people and damaged several buildings. Among those buildings was one which was important for my research, the Historical Museum (this will be discussed in Chapter 3). The government's security measures were further toughened after the winter 2000 attack in the suburbs of Tashkent, and again with alerts brought by American advancement in the Middle East after the 9/11 attack in New York. Life had to be adjusted around the antiterrorist measures, which brought restrictions on

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<sup>9</sup> The rise of domestic terrorism is viewed from different angles in Uzbekistan. From one angle, Rashid (2000, 2002) pointed at the two main religious political movements: the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Party of Islamic Liberation, both seeking to overthrow secular Central Asian states and replace them with religious state governed by *sharia* (Islamic law). Rashid continued that the current Karimov regime used the suppression of these political movements, as part of the 'fight against global terrorism', for its own gain to crush any domestic dissent. From the other view, Zanka (2000, 2004) explained the breeding grounds of terrorism through the growth of youth rebellion, owing to the high percentage of unemployed and socially disaffected young men, and general public opposition to the monolithic Uzbek political system. These two authors, by explaining terrorism as a response to a repressive regime and economic hardships, miss that there are few Muslim-majority states who successfully harness their Islamic religious parties, and those, such as Turkey, are not blameless in their chosen methods.

movements within the country,<sup>10</sup> the perimeter of the city and within the part of the city where I intended to carry out fieldwork.

On top of that, the *mahalla* administrations provided information concerning residents' arrival, socializing and departures to the local police station and other state institutions. This practice led to difficulties for me: after one interview, the painter with whom I had met was interrogated at the National Security Office headquarters. The artist blamed me, although our meeting concerned his origin (from Kyrgyzstan) and was essentially an innocent discussion of the differences in teaching painting between Art colleges in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The artist was traumatised by the experience and I realised I would have to restrict my interviews and conversations as far as possible to public settings.

Under the antiterrorist measures, Tashkent was surrounded with checkpoints, at night there were patrols, and in the daytime the center of the city and spaces like the underground system were flooded with police. City life becomes absolutely dysfunctional for the three months prior to the major public holidays, Nawruz (22 March) and Independence Day (29 August). The two large areas in the central part of the city where the state holiday celebrations took place became inaccessible without a special pass. For my research it meant that access to the University Library, the research Arts Institute, the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan and the Besh Agach Mosque (which will be discussed in Chapters 3 and 7) were inaccessible for a considerable part of the year. People had to carry at all times identification documents stating their residence and papers stating their present employment.<sup>11</sup> Being caught without the proper documents would lead to indefinite detention at a police station.

The active police presence in Tashkent limited my use of audio recording and photography. The large number of police deployed in the city led to casual abuse by policemen towards ordinary citizens. Humiliating searches were the rule rather than the exception. It was absolutely forbidden to photograph any public architectural complexes in Tashkent. Any police discovery of my camera led to the destruction of the film

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<sup>10</sup> The restriction on free movement in Uzbekistan forbids staying in any place more than three days without registration at a local police station.

<sup>11</sup> The police were particularly suspicious of unemployed men, who were often suspected of having dissatisfaction with the regime. For male painters, it was of paramount importance to have some kind of papers stating that they were currently working professionally. For one of the artists whom I discuss in Chapter 5, a Tajik refugee named Umarov, a written statement signed by an art dealer and gallery owner was the only thing saving him from deportation.

inside. By luck, I managed to never be caught with my tape recorder, but I still used less recording than I would have preferred, with only 25 tapes in total. Nonetheless, the main problem was getting my visual materials and tape-recorded interviews out of the country after each of my stays in Uzbekistan. I eventually managed to use diplomatic contacts for taking abroad my written, photographic and recorded materials. From here I move to how I conducted my research.

#### **1.8.4.1. Fieldwork: methods**

My research concerns the replacement of the singular Soviet institutionalised art world by multiple post-Soviet configurations. I prefer to use term configurations to cover a number of social domains that are quite different in terms of organisation and effect on painters. Some are institutions, some are social contexts. Some are independent, and others borrow symbols and practices from one another. I will use this term to cover different domains for the sake of convenience while recognising and exploring the differences in the ethnographic Chapters 3-7. The five configurations I will examine are:

- 1) the remnants of the state commission system;
- 2) the illegal art market;
- 3) the *mahalla*;
- 4) the Russian Orthodox Church
- 5) the Besh Agach Mosque site, where miniature painters worked.

These multiple configurations required application of different methods. Since each of these post-Soviet configurations differed from each other in size, context and content, I discuss the methods applied in each case separately. Before going in depth in each case, I have to acknowledge why I have excluded two subjects from my thesis: street art and Uzbek arts in the West. This exclusion was necessary in order to keep my argumentation cohesive. Without doubting that study of these two areas would add to an understanding of Uzbek arts, they do not necessarily help us to understand the process of break-up undergone by Soviet institutionalised arts.

Additionally, my personal involvement with the Soviet art world through my own professional experience, and the family ties which allowed me to visit post-Soviet Uzbekistan, require some clarification.

From the beginning of this chapter I stated that my interest in arts owed to my art history background. Some of my previous research as an art historian will be used here

from an anthropological perspective in order to test aspects of change and continuity in the Uzbek art field. I started my research in 1985, while in Moscow completing my master's degree in arts history. I continued research as a curator in the painting department of the Frunze (now Bishkek) Fine Arts Museum in Kyrgyzstan, carrying out research in museums in Central Asian republics from 1986 to 1991. From 1991 to 1994, I was only able to work in Kyrgyzstan after the collapse of the Soviet institutionalised art world.

My use of family connections helped my introduction to fieldwork in Tashkent.<sup>12</sup> Other women researchers (Adams 1999; Doi 2002) have pointed out that researchers coming to Uzbekistan had to be aware that while they classify their respondents, their respondents at the same time define and treat them according to their professional affiliations, ethnic, social and racial background, gender and age. I must take into account issues like my own mixed ethnic background (Kyrgyz/Japanese), my family's religious background (Buddhist, Christian and Muslim), my family's professional affiliations with various Soviet and world cultural institutions, and my upbringing in three cities (Moscow, Frunze and Kamakura). Without these factors, it would have been unlikely that I would get a foothold in some of the post-Soviet arts configurations. For example, in the field of state-controlled arts, I was accepted as the stepdaughter of the honorary head of the Cultural Association of Central Asian Writers and Poets; in the Russian Orthodox Church, I was accepted due to my father's Japanese Christian background; and so on.

My fieldwork was also dependent on the use of traditional methods such as long observation and participation. In addition, in my fieldwork I applied the triangulation method, discussed by Pauline Luong in her studies of high bureaucracy in Kazakhstan (2002). She applied the principle of triangulation, which was based on interviewing officials and later weighing the validity of their responses through written sources and comparisons with interviews from the other respondents. In the same way I triangulated my methods on the case study of the state commission discussed in Chapter 3, by first interviewing artists involved directly in the commission, secondly comparing my interviewees' information to published sources in Soviet and post-Soviet publications in Uzbekistan and the West, and thirdly reassessing the previous data with another set of interviewees, the museum administration and some of the commissioners.

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<sup>12</sup> My stepfather, father, mother and other relations involved in cultural fields (literature, arts, film and academia) attempted to help me begin my work in Uzbekistan.

Interviewing methods varied depending on the characteristics of each configuration and each site. Successful interviewing has been described by Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe (2003: 215), who studied second-hand consumption in England. Both researchers assessed different stages of interviewing: recording of interviews, transcription of those interviews, comparison of those transcriptions with close observation of the interview location, and finally the incorporation of the interviewing materials with the other field notes. I was in a different situation because I needed to introduce myself to many people who, for reasons previously mentioned, were reluctant to cooperate with me. In order not to intimidate prospective respondents, I always proposed a short questionnaire with simple questions. If the situation proved promising and trust had been established, I went ahead to more complex and structured questionnaires, after which I moved on to in-depth interviewing. However, there were many interviews in which I did not earn the subject's trust, so they were not continued. I wrote field notes after each interview, regardless of its length or effectiveness. Writing in private, not in front of the interviewee, was better because for in-depth interviews it was important to keep the subject relaxed. Because I was asking questions on topics like market value, business practices, and state patronage - issues potentially damaging for respondents - it was more reassuring for them that their interviews were not recorded although they were all aware of the purpose of the interviews.

After conducting an interview, I compared it with published sources and to other interviews. Owing to the specifics of research in the arts field, I added visual materials such as photography, when possible. Photographs are an important part of arts research. Normally a photo of a painting in the body of a thesis includes the measurement, technique and present location; this information is included because it connoted to the changing the nature of the display of paintings from public to domestic spheres.

Due to the constraints mentioned above, I relied largely on my respondents to provide me with photos of their works. Accepting artists' generosity meant I had to meet several conditions. It was not always possible for them to give me exact measurements of their paintings. There could also be uncertainty about the location of a work after its sale to a foreigner or through a private dealer. Therefore, mentioning the size of the work and its current location will be done only in cases when they are definite, such as the frescoes in the Historical Museum, whereas a canvas sold to a tourist in a gallery will be identified only by authorship, technique and title.



Internet sources proved useful in my case studies, because many artists attempted to publicise their works on websites. Although the validity of Internet sources is often called into question, nevertheless these sources proved useful to me in tracking artists after I left Uzbekistan. Websites in post-Soviet states are mainly state-sponsored and often censored. As result of such state control, artists' activities on websites brought them neither immediate sale of their works nor any increased recognition beyond Uzbekistan. But their websites helped me to see my data in progression long after I had concluded my fieldwork.

#### **1.8.4.2. Fieldwork: Methods selected in post-Soviet configurations**

**1) The remnants of the state controlled arts sector:** As I pointed out above, my introduction to the state arts sector was aided by family connections. I was provided with an introduction to the institution's current head, Tursunali Kuziev, and its former heads, Rakhim Akhmedov and Bakhodiy Jallalov. But none of these men were capable of knowing all 1100 members of the Academy of Fine Arts.

The institution's archives faced an uncertain future because of the Uzbek state's intention to change the alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin, and the process of discarding Soviet-period documentation in Cyrillic had already begun. The bulk of my work involving published and non-published materials of the Soviet period was done in the Arts Institute library.

Much of my fieldwork took place in exhibition sites. There are three reasons why exhibition premises became important after the first phase of economic reforms (1995-2004).

First, during this period, an artist's specialisation became defined by his/her participation in exhibitions, rather than by educational qualification or affiliation with the Academy of Fine Arts. In independent Uzbekistan, artists' educational qualification and membership in the arts institution did not necessarily imply their actual profession. During the Soviet period, an artist was educated as, registered as and worked as, for example, a painter. In the independent period, an artist could be educated as a drawing teacher, be affiliated with the institution's graphic design section, and work as a painter. Therefore exhibitions, rather than official records in the Academy of Fine Arts, became a clear marker of artistic specialisation. Secondly, many illicit commercial deals took

place between buyers and artists during exhibitions of their works. Any artists who wished to survive financially had to take part in the exhibition circuit year-round.

Thirdly, Tashkent has a large number of locations where exhibitions could take place. Although the cultural status of those exhibition sites do vary enormously from theatres, embassies, churches down to private medical centers, nonetheless their quantity allows artists to be free in choosing what they want to show. The more traditional trading premises are the established arts studios and galleries. Art historians mentioned the use of art studios during the Soviet period as places where art buyers and artists met, and where artists were able to compete for the attention of the wealthy and influential people of Tashkent.

Exhibition premises provided me with open access to the artists who were members of the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan. Under the period 1997-2004 there were 1100 members of the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan, representing all artists regardless of specialisation or residence in any city of Uzbekistan or abroad. I needed to sift through these members to identify the painters who actually lived and worked in Tashkent. In order to do so I used a simple questionnaire. As result of that I was able to identify 358 painters and 84 miniature painting painters; out of the 452 total were 91 female painters. The painters' age varied from 23 to 80 years old. Only 60 painters belonged to the Soviet generation, being over 50 years old (see Tables 1 and 2, p.58). These statistics show that the majority of painters were either educated or became professional during the independence period.

For selecting themes in painting, I applied close observation and interviewing of artists in exhibition premises. Being present every week at up to five exhibitions, in various places in the city of Tashkent, allowed me to select themes during the whole stay in Tashkent. Art historians and artists themselves validated those themes as interesting ones. All artists working in the selected theme were interviewed in depth. In my final stage, I was led by the artist's capacity to define what kind of values his/her creative work consists of; the skill to convince the art buyer to purchase art in a selected theme; the ability to mediate personal valuation with the existing validation practices of different institutions; and the ability to keep in touch after leaving Tashkent.

Table N.1. Ethnic composite of 452 male artists in Tashkent under respective period (1998-2004)

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Uzbeks	149
Slavonic extraction	172
Uighurs	52
Tajiks	18
Koreans	32
Armenians	3
Tatars	2
Mixed origin	24

Table N.2. Ethnic composite of 91 women artists in Tashkent under respective period (1998-2004)

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Uzbeks	9
Russians	45
Tatars	5
Tajiks	3
Kazakhs	2
Koreans	18
Mixed origin	9

**2) The illegal art market:** In the non-state illegal art market I continued my interviewing, observation and participation methods, supported by photography. Art historians focused on arts studios because they were convenient for meeting artists and buyers, and because artists could demonstrate the incorporation of paintings in interiors (Reid 1999). However, limiting their research to the art studios meant studying only Soviet-period artists, who were aged from 50 to 80 and who traded their works abroad or with foreigners. Therefore, I mainly assessed art galleries.

Galleries were either private or joint ventures (the galleries will be discussed in the Chapters 4 and 5). There, I conducted in-depth interviews with art dealers and staff. Seven art dealers - six women and one man - whose ages ranged from late 30s to mid 40s ran the entire art trade in Tashkent. The art dealers helped me arrange interviews

with art buyers in their business offices, or on some occasions in their galleries. The gallery trade in Tashkent is a very competitive business and relies on a small number of buyers, access to whom is scrupulously guarded by artists and art dealers. It brought up on my behalf ethical issues such as ensuring anonymity in relation to the art buyers and art dealers. This was an issue for two reasons: first, the foreign currency prohibition, and second, the competition between art dealers over their relatively small art-buying clientele. I could not identify by name 15 art buyers whom I interviewed, whose ages varied between 30s and early 50s.

**3) The *mahalla*:** The *mahalla* as an institution become difficult to tackle in Tashkent between 1999 and 2001. On the one hand, the entire city falls into the hands of *mahalla*, but on the other hand no *mahalla* has a specific organisational body responsible for arts. There was no authority on *mahalla* in the arts field and there was no single *mahalla* noted for its art appreciation.

I started by interviewing artists who were residents of the already established pre-Soviet and Soviet *mahalla* neighbourhoods and they provided me with their firsthand experience. I interviewed in depth 35 artists of both genders and various ethnic origins. Artists preferred to discuss how and why the *mahalla* rated them as members of the community and inhabitants of their neighbourhood. They were pleased to tell me why a buyer from the *mahalla* bought a work from them. However, they would not identify their clients from their *mahalla* neighbourhood. They also flatly rejected my requests to accompany them to their *mahalla* neighbourhoods. Artists' assessments revealed their perception of *mahalla*, but not what the *mahallas* thought about arts and about them. To understand the impact of the *mahalla* I needed to find out what the inhabitants of different types of *mahalla* neighbourhoods such as the Old City and the suburbs, thought about arts.

Finally a friend of my parents, a literary critic, took me into the Sebzar *mahalla* and also suggested I visit two schools located in the Chilanzar district, which contains 1970s *mahalla* neighbourhoods. However, the Sebzar *mahalla* was included by the city administration in the demolition area, so by my second visit to Tashkent there was nothing left of Sebzar apart from a pile of rubble. Nevertheless, working in Sebzar helped me to understand the perception of the arts by the *mahalla* inhabitants in relation to various aspects concerning interior contents and artifacts validation. In addition the research carried out in the school helped me to learn what teenagers (ages 15-17) thought about calendars with models dressed up in Uzbek ikat, discussed in Chapter 4.

**4) The Russian Orthodox Church:** The Russian Orthodox Church had its own views on how participation and observation should be carried out. Inside Church premises, it meant following and observing the religious rituals of Orthodox Christianity. Under the atheist Soviet state, art historians doing research in Christian art were required to have a knowledge of art history, proficiency in the Old Russian language used in Church services and an understanding of the Orthodox Christian faith. In the post-Soviet period, the requirements for conducting research by art historians increased. And now, the Church has the right to reject a researcher who would disagree with its requirements.

I went to the convent of the Holy Trinity Church near the Rice Market in the New City because it was undergoing a reconstruction process that required the commissioning of artists. Permission to carry out research required an agreement with the Mother Superior, asking for a blessing from the priests, being attired properly for religious services (headscarf, no make-up and no trousers), weekly attendance of the six-hour service weekly, fasting, confessing regularly to one of the priests and keeping him aware of what I was doing outside my research. All aspects concerning my research will be continued in the chapter devoted to Christian themes in painting. Interviewing priests and nuns enhanced my understanding of the complex relationship between artists and the Church, and the validation practices of both religious painting and secular painting involving Christian themes. I interviewed seven nuns, four priests and 21 artists working with Christian themes.

**5) The Besh Agach mosque site:** Finally, the mosque in Besh Agach was not a functioning religious institution but a trading place for miniature painting artists. There was no manager, just a group of artists supporting each other, when I went numerous times during both my stays (this subject will be continued in Chapter 7). Participation and observation were invaluable in the Besh Agach mosque case, allowing me to understand the differences between the trades in oil painting and miniature painting. For example, in the case of oil painting, through participation I learned the role of art dealers in legalising arts for export. But with miniature painting, smuggling was simple due to the small size of the art objects. My in-depth interviews at the site did not reveal such aspects of the trade as participation and observation did.

### 1.9. Thesis: scope

After the introductory chapter, the main body of this thesis is divided into six chapters. One chapter grounds the thesis within anthropological literature, and the following five are based on ethnography.

Chapter 2 connects anthropological literature to my case study, and focuses on how the ‘authority’ of arts validation was established after the dissolution of the Union of Artists of the USSR, through application of Weber’s empirical studies on domination. The core of each ethnographic chapter is based on analysis of two to seven artists’ creative practice. I examine how the various institutions, private individuals, art dealers and fellow artists assessed the examined artists and their works, and I also account for the artists’ own perceptions of how their creative practice was appraised.

Chapter 3 introduces the state commission system in independent Uzbekistan. This chapter demonstrates how the advisors to President Islam Karimov changed the commission system, and also how the educational system and the *mahalla* expectations influenced artists’ wish to continue working for the state. Chapter 4 turns to the parallel non-state art market involving trade in illegal foreign currency, a market in which women art dealers and artists came to ascendance. This chapter acknowledges the complexity of gender aspects in Uzbek arts. Chapter 5 continues from Chapter 4, moving from the foreign-buyers art market to the local-buyers market. In this chapter I assess the influence of the *mahalla* over domestication of painting in Tashkent. Chapter 6 also deals with the local art market, but it concerns the special case of religious arts, and contains an exploration of the Russian Orthodox Church’s sanctification of artworks. Chapters 6 and 7 are closely linked together because they both deal with religious themes, and art validation by the Russian Orthodox Church and the *mahalla*. Chapter 7 concerns the Uzbek tradition of miniature painting as practiced by a group of artists in the Besh Agach mosque.

These six chapters will give an understanding of how, under the first step of Uzbekistan’s gradual market reform and the emergence of the *Mustakilik* ideology, the new arts institution the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan was decreased in its capacity to value artists and their works. It will also demonstrate how post-Soviet configurations such as the *mahalla*, the Russian Orthodox Church, and various groups of artists and individual art dealers were able to do so.

### 1.10. Language Policy

Russian has been transliterated from Cyrillic to Latin letters according to Library of Congress conventions. However, in the cases of citations, I have followed the version proposed by the authors: for example, in the case of Figes and Kolonitskii (1999: 6), *rabochii* instead of *rabochiy*. I have also tried to follow original name spellings, which can become altered over time or depending on the place of publication; for example, Dyogot and Degot. I could not always use the same transliteration for Uzbek as for Russian, because the Uzbek language uses three systems of transliteration: French, English and Latin-alphabet Uzbek. French is used by the Foreign Office whereas English is for trade and other purposes. The independent state of Uzbekistan intended to replace Cyrillic with the Latin alphabet by 2002. However, this version of transliteration is not yet clarified and is used in a confusing manner; for example, the phoneme *sh* is transliterated as *x*. Therefore very often in different Uzbek publications in foreign languages, the same name, geographical location or term has different spellings depending on the organisation that sponsored the publication. An example of such variation is the Uzbek word for traditional urban neighborhoods, variously transliterated as '*makhallya*', '*mahallah*' and '*mahalla*'. Without discussing which one of them is most accurate, I preferred to use the version most common in current publications: *mahalla*. I use Library of Congress transliteration in the majority of Uzbek cases, apart from in open citations, in which I follow the version used in the original publication.

## Chapter 2

### Key Themes: Art World, Legitimacy, Labour and Gender

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter concerns the theories and themes upon which my thesis is built and to which it can contribute. In Chapter 1, I laid out the subject of my enquiry: contemporary Uzbek painting created between 1991 and 2004. In the previous chapter I explained that there was a change in Uzbek arts from the Soviet to the post-Soviet periods which was characterised by the break-down and subsequent fragmentation of the Union of Artists of the USSR, which had been solely responsible for production, circulation and consumption of arts. In addition it included the whole social universe for arts specialists such as art historians, artists and curators. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was renamed the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan, but the new post-Soviet institution was cut off from the state commission system, losing both its authority and its resources. In the place of this singular arts institution there emerged several post-Soviet configurations which carried out, and extended, the former institution's functions. As described in Chapter 1, these post-Soviet configurations include the remnants of the state commission system; the illegal art market; the Russian Orthodox Church; the *mahalla*; and the Besh-Agach mosque site, home of miniature-painters.

Some of those post-Soviet configurations emerged after the dissolution of the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Others, such as the Church and *mahalla*, had a much longer history. The *mahalla*, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 5, is disproportionately larger and more complex than the other configurations. The *mahalla*, as an institution, contained many overlapping and often contradictory components and characteristics. As administrative bodies, the *mahalla* worked in concert with the state, providing assistance to residents, but also carrying out surveillance of the regime's opponents. The *mahalla* elders, as elected representatives of the community, voluntarily helped the *mahalla* administration to channel state aid to the community. The *mahalla* residents themselves were of various ethnic backgrounds, residing in Uzbek-style residential neighbourhoods all over the city, including the Russian colonial and Soviet-built sections of Tashkent.



Tashkent's *mahalla* institutions were a complex maze of intertwining bodies, components, and interests. The administrative *mahalla* and the more traditional *mahallas* did not always cover the same area: the administrative ones are larger but are regulated by the number of households, and the more traditional ones predate the establishment of city administration. The state regime used the *mahalla* to carry out its interests through the influence of the *mahalla* administration and its elected representatives; the community mobilised its efforts against social diversification under the new system; and residents competed to succeed under the market economy instead of being forced into post-Soviet mass poverty. This intricate mosaic of competing interests formed a complex social field in which artists, art dealers and art buyers became involved through their professional activities and their daily life as *mahalla* residents.

In this chapter, I introduce five themes through their relation to Uzbek arts:

- 1) The 'art world'
- 2) Authority
- 3) Legitimisation through display
- 4) The changes in the nature of production and consumption of artworks
- 5) Gender

I begin with a discussion of the application of the term 'art world', which leads to an examination of why 'authority' is needed for an arts institution to function. From there I move on to an analysis of the idea of 'authority', applying Weber's concepts of 'ideal types' of authority to the production and circulation of arts in the different configurations of the post-Soviet Uzbek arts field. After an assessment of how and why the different configurations claimed their authority, I explore how the state claimed legitimacy through public arts display during both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The fourth section concerns changes in the nature of arts production and consumption through a reassessment of Marxist concepts of alienation of labour, and of how the emergence of the market economy led to commodification of artistic labour and arts. Additionally in this section, I emphasise that under socialism, labour had been essential to ideas of social personhood. The fifth and final section is devoted to gender in relation to the arts since, in the post-Soviet context, arts have moved from state/public to private/domestic/family spheres. The role of gender in post-Soviet, non-state spheres challenges the Soviet gendered perceptions of labour division which had led to male domination of arts. Revealing the gendered perceptions of what constitutes men's and

women's work in post-Soviet arts, with the resurgence of the Russian Orthodox Church and the *mahalla*, highlights the question: does turning art objects into consumer goods alienate labour from its producer?

The Soviet state's use of 'culture', particularly material culture, in identifying ethnic groups and creating new ethnic policies has been acknowledged by many Western authors (Allworth 1973; Connor 1986; Smith 1986; Gellner 1980, 1988). The emergence of the new post-Soviet states renewed an interest in culture (Akbarzadeh 1996; Holmes 1997; Sengupta 1997, 2000; Sorkin 2000). With the post-Soviet rise in status from national republics to independent states, arts suddenly came to prominence because of their role in creating the new states' symbolism (Gleason 1997; Roy 1998). Suddenly a plethora of national symbols became visible: newly independent Uzbekistan, like other post-Soviet republics, was flooded with new flags, monuments, dances, celebration of national holidays and others (Adams 1999, 2000; Bell 1999; Doi 1997, 2002). Earlier anthropological and cultural studies emphasised that Soviet arts and Soviet institutions had varying aesthetics. (Kettering 1995; Swanson 2002). Further acknowledgement of different aesthetics within Soviet arts coexisting during the Soviet was revealed in post-Soviet arts case studies; for example, the post-Soviet public monuments in Moscow by the Georgian artist Zurab Tsereteli (Grant 2001; Groys 2003). Those new case studies urged a reassessment of arts within state-controlled spheres, taking into account Soviet influences in the post-Soviet context.

Trends in postsocialist consumption led to a reassessment of such key issues within social anthropology as family and kinship relationships, communities, networks and gender (Humphrey 1995; Perrotta 1995; Lancauscas 2002; Watts 2002). Postsocialist consumption involved the acquisition of newly available goods of high economic and status value within post-Soviet society. Arts objects, instead of being for exclusive state-run consumption, became 'goods' available for private consumption. Arts were 'privatised' and turned into highly contentious luxury items available to very few in the post-Soviet period, instead of to all of society as during the Soviet period. Acquisition of luxury goods is one defining characteristic of a new social group which emerged in the post-Soviet states: the New Rich. Pierre Bourdieu defined 'class' according to different social groups' access to material culture such as arts, architecture and theatre (1984). With regard to that, the New Rich as a social group appeared in a very short time after the fall of the Soviet Union, and their often ostentatious acquisition of luxury goods affected their nuclear family and kinship relationships, as well as their

communities. The acquisition of any goods of high economic and status value was bound to provoke reactions ranging from envy and contempt, to open threats to ruin this new social group (Humphrey 2002). The strong feelings of the rest of society towards New Rich consumption provoked the action of local institutions' network systems, together with communities, either to suppress or facilitate the production, consumption and circulation of luxury items (Kandiyoti & Azimova 2004). In addition, consumption shaped gendered responses and gendered perceptions while also revealing 'class'. Women, according to anthropologists (Kay 1997; Kemp 2005), could be on either side, either wholeheartedly embracing new opportunities or fighting against new consumerist trends depending on their position in the new society. Men were increasingly judged on their capacities to provide those desirable goods (Shreeves 2002). In other words, private arts consumption not only tells a very different story from state-controlled arts consumption, but also leads to a discovery of art's influence beyond the framework of arts institutions so that relations express and in turn shape a range of consumption to production of social meaning.

So what makes contemporary Uzbek painting an interesting case for studying from an arts anthropology perspective? The anthropology of arts stems from studies of arts in 'non-Western' societies, usually involving tribes or tribal people (Forge 1973; Layton 1981; Coote and Shelton 1992; Coote 1992). The theoretical groundwork for studies of 'non-Western' societies became based upon the study of the style and the meaning of indigenous arts (Morphy 1994; Thomas 2002:5) created by Australian aborigines and by professional artists inspired by the images, symbols and colour palette of those tribal arts.

This choice of studying arts from non-Western societies as the subject of art anthropology derives from Nelson Graburn's claim (1974: 6) that indigenous arts done in Western mediums and disseminated by Western-style institutions in non-Western locations would become 'assimilated' by extreme Western cultural domination. Graburn's claim was disputed by Nicholas Thomas as 'untenable' (1997: 264). Thomas demonstrated, in a number of his works (1997, 1999) devoted to contemporary Australian and New Zealand arts, his concerns with the term 'professional arts'. He stressed that the Western/non-Western distinction is confusing since there are native artists educated in Western institutions and trained to work in Western mediums, and there are non-native artists inspired by the imagery and concepts of native arts. Both types of arts, as Thomas emphasised, are institutionalised locally through market and

exhibiting activities. He further proposes a comparison of national and global art markets, leading to the possibility of discovering more about how the context of arts changes depending on the move of artworks from one market to the other. This is especially pertinent to the Uzbek case, as Uzbek arts do not have direct access to the West, and Western influences are readjusted locally.

However, the terms ‘non-Western’, ‘indigenous’ and ‘aboriginal’, and ‘tourist’ and ‘ethno’ arts, play a significant role in the ways anthropologists conceptualise their theoretical approach. I begin with a definition of Uzbek arts. Uzbek arts are done in Western mediums, are promoted within Western-style arts institutions but exist in a non-Western location.<sup>13</sup> So, in this case, what are ‘Uzbek arts’ from an arts anthropology viewpoint? If they are not ‘indigenous’ but ‘titular nation’, how are they defined in terms of meaning and style? Here I cite the main reasons why titular nation arts could be difficult to study from the well-trodden path of preservation of ‘authenticity’ in indigenous arts, the possibilities of Western cultural domination through relationships between local and global art markets, and the validation of art objects and artists (Clifford 1988; Steiner 1993).

First, we cannot study Uzbek arts as non-Western ‘indigenous’ arts. Uzbek arts are ‘titular nation’ Western arts, existing in a sophisticated Western arts institutional framework with Western arts education, Western-style professional associations, publication houses, galleries and museums. The term ‘indigenous’ implies that there were indigenous people prior to the arrival of the European population. Titular nation arts are the arts of the ethnic group given preferential treatment by the Soviet state for territorial and cultural integrity (Connor 1986; Allworth 1973). Because titular nation arts were legally controlled by the state, it was up to the state to decide who would be the producers of such arts. As I will show in Chapters 3, 4 and 7, the preference for producers’ ethnicity can vary depending on the historical context. Producers could be of European descent such as Slavs, titular nation representatives (ethnic Uzbeks), come

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<sup>13</sup> My terming of Uzbek arts as ‘Western’ arts in the characteristics of medium and institutional framework is due to two factors. First, Uzbek arts had been considered ‘Russian’ prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. Soviet arts perceived Russian arts politically, highlighting as predecessors of socialist realism an artistic group called the *Predvizhniki*, or itinerants. Itinerants made their arts accessible to broad sways of Russian society by showing traveling exhibitions with socio-political themes. Secondly, Russian arts in turn were introduced as Western secular arts in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As Michalski (1998: 123) and Mojenok (2003: 9) pointed out, the Russian fine arts institutional framework, with its educational and patronage system, emulated the 17<sup>th</sup> century French fine arts establishments introduced by Charles Le Brun under the rule of Louis XIV. Owing to these factors, Uzbek arts can be defined as ‘Russian’ or as ‘Western’ arts.

from non-titular nation ethnic groups like Kazakhs in Uzbekistan, or displaced ethnic minorities such as Koreans or Greeks.

Aesthetics, in the case of 'indigenous' arts, means preservation of authenticity regardless of the presence of settlers or other external influences (Morphy 1995; Thomas 1999). The aesthetics of titular nation arts became based not upon how these aesthetics are 'authentic', but upon how successful selective borrowing from a broad range of sources was arranged within state-controlled institutions to champion the cause of the titular nation. As I will demonstrate in Chapters 3 and 7, there was a diverse variety of sources: Hellenic, Russian Orthodox Christian, Russian classical, Medieval Islamic, Turkic nomadic and so on. The purpose of the selection is the ultimate show of aesthetics, symbolising the power of the state (Michalski 1998; Clark 1997). But what will become of such titular nation aesthetics when they are released from rigid state control? I attempt to answer this question in Chapters 5 and 6.

Secondly, although Uzbek arts were Western in medium and in institutional characteristics, they were never affected by Western cultural domination. Uzbek arts are a volatile part of the international art market. I use the word volatile because there are many local and global reasons why Uzbek arts come in and out of global trade. The relationships between the local and global art markets are complex. The reasons for such complications include the foreign currency restrictions (1995-2004) which diminished the freedom of movement of goods in and out of the country, the global economic crisis of 1998, the local resurgence of militant Islam after 1999, and the threat of global terrorism since 2001. Yet, as I will show in Chapters 4 and 7, globalisation had various ways of affecting local arts production and consumption but could not overwhelm, or even define, local art markets.

Thirdly, we cannot make a direct anthropological comparison between Western and post-socialist Uzbek institutionalised arts aesthetics, because in order to do so accurately, both arts institutions would have to be in stable condition. The Uzbek Soviet arts institutional framework collapsed in 1991 with the fall of the Soviet state, and the Soviet institutions then fragmented and dissolved during (1991-2004) as I explore in Chapters 3 and 4. It is highly debatable whether any of the current post-Soviet configurations, in their present condition and considering some of their non-arts origins, can be included in any serious theoretical debate as representatives of local aesthetics. I will show that in the Uzbek case, the presence of strong local non-arts institutions such

as the Russian Orthodox Church and the *mahalla* define the place of arts within local society.

## 2.2. Art worlds

In this opening section I discuss how the post-Soviet fragmentation of Uzbek arts applies to the term ‘art world’.

The term ‘art world’ was coined by Arthur Danto (1964). Danto’s ideas were extended into the sociological field by George Dickie (1969, 1974). Dickie defined an ‘art world’ as a group of specialists including art dealers, artists, collectors and critics. These experts, according to Dickie, qualify through consensus whether an object can be defined and circulated as a work of art. Howard Becker (1982) further extended Dickie’s ideas by exploring social organisational analysis. Becker argued that among the wide variety of experts involved in an ‘art world’, some are more entitled to speak on behalf of others (1982: 48). Becker pointed out that this entitlement is due to the institutional authority which provides the weight behind specialists’ concepts.

The anthropologists Fred Myers (1994) and Christopher B. Steiner (1993) applied studies of ‘art worlds’ to explore the validity of the Western institutional determining criteria for non-Western arts. As Myers and Steiner explained, Western art experts’ definition of ‘good’ art was not always accepted as valid by local art dealers and artists involved in African and Australian aboriginal arts. The theoretical discourse was further revitalised through exploration of the legitimisation of authority among several groups within the same institutional framework or between two institutions in non-Western case studies.

Helle Bundgaard (1998) discussed claims of authority within the same institutional framework, using the case study of Indian *patta chitra* painting. Bundgaard pointed out the existing hierarchical institutional framework, positioning various Indian arts within those hierarchies which are affirmed by literati Indian art historians. The established hierarchies put pressure on village producers to be framed within those hierarchical perceptions, and to choose different tactics. For example, to claim recognition of their belonging within the higher levels of the Indian art hierarchy, village artists include Sanskrit text in their works, without knowledge of Sanskrit.

Morgan Perkins (2002) assessed claims of authority by different institutional systems.<sup>14</sup> Perkins acknowledged competition between Western and Chinese institutional systems over authority on Chinese arts, and showed the contradictions in those theories caused by the existence within Chinese arts of a division between mainstream Chinese arts and the arts of hundreds of Chinese ethnic minorities (2002: 185). The same Chinese art historians who argued against the West's inequalities when viewing Chinese arts applied the same hierarchy to the arts of their own nation's ethnic minorities.

Without going in depth into various anthropological case studies, I stress that that those studies were undertaken when the relevant institutions were in stable condition, and never when the institutions collapsed. The Soviet art world's single authority was represented by the Union of Artists of the USSR. This institution's authority was widely recognised by Soviet and Western arts specialists alike. The fall of the Soviet state precipitated the collapse of all Soviet institutions, including the Union of Artists. So what happens with defining arts criteria if an institution such as the Union of Artists, serving as an umbrella for arts specialists, collapses and splits into many fragments lacking clear authority?

After the Union of Artists of the USSR split into 15 national Unions, each was supposed to carry on in the same way as before, managing production, consumption and circulation of arts and validating artistic practices. However, the associated Unions themselves were dissolved. What emerged after the fall of the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic includes the remnants of the state commission system; the illegal art market, with its various groups; the Russian Orthodox Church; the *mahalla*; and the Besh-Agach mosque site, home of miniature-painters.

Each of these post-Soviet configurations attempts to act as a separate entity with its own model of production, consumption and circulation, setting its own criteria for circulating art objects and artists. Moreover, some of these post-Soviet configurations overlap, causing artists, dealers and buyers difficulties in manoeuvring between different criteria and types of validation. Further, rather than seeking recognition, the majority of these post-Soviet configurations prefer to remain in obscurity for safety reasons. There is no single way of how authority is established within each of the post-Soviet configurations, nor do any of the configurations engage in debates over claiming

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<sup>14</sup> I use the term 'systems' here because Western countries have various arts institutions within them, so the term 'institutional systems' is more justifiable than simply 'institutions'.

authority over the others. So at present, there is no hierarchical structure between the post-Soviet configurations, and the likelihood of such a structure appearing is remote. Thus the term ‘art world’ cannot be applied to the post-Soviet Uzbek case for two reasons. First, the Soviet notion of the validity of arts institutional authority did not transfer to all those post-Soviet configurations. Second, two of the institutions involved in the validation of artists and circulation of art, the Orthodox Church and the *mahalla*, can not be classified as ‘arts institutions’.

Professional artists and art historians in Uzbekistan were accustomed to claiming authority on behalf of a single institution, the Union of Artists, which they represented and which in the recent past had provided them with much-needed authority. But because of the institutional collapse and fragmentation, those professionals suddenly lost their authority. Surely it is not within my rights to deprive these professionals (among whom I should be counted as a former art historian) from their rightful belonging in the ‘art world’ just because that world happened to fragment. However, I cannot apply the above-mentioned researchers’ definitions of ‘art world’. My use of the term in other sections does not pretend to indicate any recognised authority behind those professionals, but simply indicates their occupation.

The post-Soviet situation elucidates a case in which the notion of recognised authority in the ‘art world’ was taken for granted. The question of ‘how authority is made’ arises because any group of people or institution, in order to exist and function, has to have authority over its own members. Why and how authority is established within groups or institutions was proposed by Weber, whose concepts I will apply to the Uzbek case study.

### **2.3.1. Weber: Authority**

Weber’s ideas on authority attempt to explain why groups of people accept domination as being legitimate. Weber specifies three ‘ideal types’ of authority: legal, traditional and charismatic. He clarifies that these ideal types are not necessarily ‘pure’ types, as they can have ‘combined characteristics’. Application of Weber’s three types of authority is crucial to my case study for two reasons.

The first is due to the replacement of single state institutions discussed by Gernot Grabher and David Stark (1998: 54); in the post-socialist period, one socialist institution was replaced by many institutions, both state and non-state, whose economic and social efficiency was unproven. In the case of Soviet arts, a single Union of Artists



was replaced by many configurations, representing various institutions, bodies and groups. A paramount issue for all these configurations was their ability to earn the authority needed in order to function. However, their ways of claiming authority varied. I study how and why authority was established through the moral, social and economic valuing of artefacts and their producers within each of those fragments. An assessment of each fragment's valuing criteria enables me to elucidate the common features and the differences between each of these fragments.

The second reason concerns 'combined characteristics'. Two of the institutions which will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 predate the Soviet state: the Russian Orthodox Church and the *mahalla*. Looking backwards in time, the Soviet period can seem homogeneous. But I stress the need for precision regarding periods, especially in discussions about these two institutions. The Soviet state was neither consistent nor straightforward in dealing with these institutions. Approaching these two institutions is difficult because their existence was precarious during the period 1922-1970, and only during the last decade have they been fully legalised and socially accepted. In the newly independent post-Soviet states, they enjoyed a remarkable resurgence: the ROC gained influence in both the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, and the *mahalla* became fully integrated into the Uzbek state's administrative structure. Weber's notion of combined characteristics is useful here: these two institutions were unable to shake off Soviet state influences, and were bound to possess 'combined characteristics' (the Soviet state and the ROC, or the Soviet state and the *mahalla*). To demonstrate how and why those 'combined characteristics' emerged, I go back to the early years of the Soviet state. The Union of Artists achieved some of its authority by borrowing practices from the Church (1917-1922), but later the Church borrowed from the Union of Artists (1932-1985). An acknowledgement of this back-and-forth borrowing of symbols, practices and arts valuing techniques in the Soviet era is helpful for demonstrating why this type of borrowing occurred in the post-Soviet period, when the independent state's commission system borrowed from its Soviet predecessor the ways how symbols of state power were conceptualised.

In the following three subsections, I relate Weber's three 'ideal types' to the ways authority was established in each case, and how it affected the validation of artworks and artists in Uzbekistan. In the Uzbek case, some of the social and cultural worlds reflect each other (Church and state, for example), while others have inimical

values. As well as discussing the ‘pure types’, I also assess the ‘combined characteristics’.

### **2.3.2. Legal-rational authority**

Reinhard Bendix (1962) wrote of Weber’s ‘legal type’ of authority: ‘In Weber’s terms a system of legal domination exists only where the rules of a legal order are implemented and obeyed in the belief that they are legitimate because they conform with the statutes of a government that monopolises their enactment and the legitimate use of physical force.’ (Bendix 1962: 390; Weber 131). Igor Shaitanov (1995), in the chapter devoted to the Soviet cultural institution the Union of Writers, characterised the Union in the later decades of the Soviet state as an institution bound to the ‘collective contract’.<sup>15</sup> By ‘collective contract’, Shaitanov referred to the writers’ affiliations with organisations providing guaranteed facilities for creative work. He emphasised that the ‘collective contract’ system made the atmosphere in Soviet cultural institutions ‘relaxed’. Shaitanov (1995: 49) depicted social behaviour under the contract system: ‘Those in power pretended that they could fully trust the writers, who gratefully returned the pretence, claiming absolute sincerity. And both parties were aware of the rules which had to be observed and the appearances which were to be kept up.’ Writers’ recognition of and obedience to the state institutional rules typified Weber’s ‘ideal type’ of legal authority. Although Shaitanov was discussing Soviet literary circles, in Chapters 3 and 4, I find that his ideas are applicable to the world of fine arts.

The Weberian characteristics (qualifications, recognition and promotion) of the legal system also applied to the contract system in Soviet arts. The requirements to be a Union member included completion of two-tier education. Recognition was done through election of membership: being elected meant being recognised as part of the Soviet art world. Promotion was done through the election of an artistic bureaucracy based upon its technical merits as members of the Arts Council. The bureaucratic system provided a framework in which artists voluntarily participated. Artists accepted that, depending on the quantity and type of their completed commissions, their social position would be established and their pensions would be calculated.

That contract system was also used to enable particular ethnic groups, as representatives of their ‘titular nation’, to rise to the top of the institutional system in

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<sup>15</sup> Shaitanov defined the ‘later decades’ as the years starting from Brezhnev’s rule.

Soviet republics. The contract system enabled titular nation artists to control the associated Unions in their national republics. This control was exerted through the education system. The two-tier educational system was introduced in Uzbekistan by artists of the titular nation such as Rakhim Akhmedov (see Chapters 1 and 4) in order to facilitate access for fellow ethnic members of the titular nation. By controlling the education through which artistic skills were formed, it was easy for ethnic Uzbeks to dominate membership in the Union of Artists, and subsequently in the Arts Council. The emergence of titular nation artists helped to forge a unique Uzbek cultural identity, which would be revealed in arts starting in the 1980s and continue through the first decade of the post-Soviet period.

The dominance of titular nation artists caused other ethnic groups to be marginalised. Significant artists of non-titular nation ethnicity rarely emerged in local Unions after the 1960s. This was especially true for the many displaced minorities who had been relocated by Stalin to Central Asia. As examples, I will discuss Yannis Salpinkidi, an ethnic Greek, in Chapter 5 and Vladimir Ann, an ethnic Korean, in Chapter 7. Salpinkidi got through the first tier of arts education but never managed to get through the second tier, and was able only to gain a degree in restoration. And even to graduate with this trainee degree, Salpinkidi needed to travel to Russia. Ann graduated from both tiers, but in Russia, not Uzbekistan.

By indicating the difficulties in the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Republic for artists who belonged to the displaced minorities, I am not in any way implying that the Uzbek Union was the only one which held selective ethnic policies. On the contrary, all fifteen associated Unions built their membership around the dominance of their own titular nation artists. In every republic, there were marginalised ethnic groups and representatives of those ethnic groups had very different views of the institution. I also point out that far from being scapegoats, ethnic minorities were often able to contribute to the forging of national arts. For example, Ann introduced miniature painting in Uzbekistan during the Gorbachev period.

Returning to the idea of 'combined characteristics', I note that from 1917 to 1932, the young Soviet state had no singular institution to champion visual propaganda. In the early Soviet period, there emerged various art organisations, arts educational

institutions, magazines and competing artistic groups.<sup>16</sup> As many researchers in Russian cultural studies, both from the West and Russia (Bown and Taylor 1993; Lane 1981; Figs and Kolonitskii 1999) emphasised, in the early stages of the Soviet Union, the state borrowed recognisable symbols from previous institutions such as the Orthodox Church. Amongst those diverse symbols were flags, emblems, songs, rituals, language and others. Researchers stressed that those symbols were used because they were recognisable by the whole population, despite the change of context. Furthermore those symbols, and the growth of new cultural institutions, helped to legitimise the new Soviet state. With time, standardised rules according to which Soviet cultural institutions functioned were established.

### **2.3.3. Charismatic authority**

According to Weber, the charismatic type of authority is installed by the unique qualities of self-imposed leaders, often emerging at times of crisis. Bendix, in relation to Weber's definition, wrote: 'The power of command may be exercised by a leader – whether he is a prophet, hero, or demagogue – who can prove that he possesses charisma by virtue of magical powers, revelations, heroism or other extraordinary gifts. The persons who obey such a leader are disciples or followers who believe in his extraordinary qualities rather than stipulated rules or in the dignity of a position sanctified by tradition.' (Bendix 1962: 295). This is relevant for my case study because for seven years following the collapse of the Soviet art world's institutional framework, there was no single arts institution in existence. When the Academy of Fine Arts finally emerged, it was cut off from the state's arts commissions by the President's advisers. Uzbek arts representatives needed to mobilise to act independently without institutional support.

The crisis in the Uzbek art field began with the fall of the Union of the Artists of the USSR in 1991, and was fuelled by the newly independent state's foreign currency ban, the global economic crisis of 1998, and the growth of global terrorism combined with the local rise of militant Islam since 2001. Arts experts were unable to deal capably

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<sup>16</sup> Margarita Tupitsyn (1999) mentioned some early Soviet educational institutions such as VKhUTEMAS (Higher State Artistic-Technical Workshops) and INKHUK (the Institute of Artistic Culture), artistic groups as OBMOKhU (the brothers Stenberg, Medunetsky, Ioganson, and others) and UNOVIS (Senkin, Klutis, Ermolaeva and others by Malevich and Lissitsky). There were also various artistic organizations such as Proletkult.

with the crisis, because as soon as they learned to cope with one set of problems another set of unexpected problems arose.

Male titular nation artists were unable to stand up to these multiple challenges because they were used to working under the very stable conditions of the Union of Artists of the USSR. Uzbek artists gave up their positions to new leaders. So who emerged to fill their places? This is going to be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Those leaders came from groups which had been marginalised during the Soviet period. As I previously mentioned, there existed ethnic minorities which had been sidelined by Uzbek and Russian artists. In addition, there were arts experts who were marginalised owing to their gender (I will discuss gender aspects in section 2.6 of this chapter). These two marginalised groups possessed very different skills from those of Uzbek male artists. Here I assess one of the two marginal groups, ethnic minorities who clustered around charismatic figures.

Returning to Salpinkidi, an ethnic Greek, what did he do when the Soviet arts institution collapsed? He built up a group of young disciples who, like him, were not educated in the two-tier system. They were of various ethnic backgrounds and many were women. He taught his disciples how to promote themselves without reliance on state support, since he himself was always the last person to receive help from the state arts system. Salpinkidi always tried earning on the side, which during the Perestroika period meant selling works to foreigners. His group's practices were different from those of Uzbek artists of the same generation. They were unlike the Uzbek artists who studied for 12 to 14 years to find out there was no state commission awaiting them, and slowly vanished from the surface of the arts field by becoming petty traders or quitting arts altogether. The members of Salpinkidi's group, though poorly educated, were able to sell their works and launch self-sponsored exhibits during the same 12 to 14 years.

However, the main problem of charismatic authority is one of succession: in the Soviet case, charismatic leaders could not transfer their charisma because that charisma had to be 'routinised' by bureaucracy. In the case of Lenin, there was a whole state apparatus employed in the routinisation of the leader's charisma with the help of many state institutions, including the Union of Artists. This routinisation of Lenin's charisma began with the building of his mausoleum in Red Square, with guards and queues of citizens making pilgrimages to view his embalmed body. This was followed by the construction of Lenin Museums all over the Soviet Union, the erection of Lenin monuments in every town, and the naming of cities' most prominent streets and squares

after Lenin. The visualisation of Lenin's importance was an important artistic task, and I discuss the Lenin Museum further in section 2.6.2 and in Chapter 3.

Salpinkidi, lacking this type of structure to support his charisma, was unable to successfully keep up his self-promotion. The duration of his leadership was limited by the instalment of foreign currency restrictions. His group only could succeed with foreigners wishing to buy their works using inflated foreign currency. I am going to show that the business relationships between artists and foreign buyers were further corroded by the economic crisis of 1998, which led to the exit of 'Soviet arts' from the Western art market. Salpinkidi's disciples, finally feeling the growing irrelevance of his ideas, were forced to adapt to other 'ideal types', represented by the state, the church and the *mahalla*. My study of the Salpinkidi group ended at a time when the group was on the brink of splitting.

#### **2.3.4. Traditional authority**

According to Weber, traditional authority is based on the legitimacy of a belief that 'has always existed'. Bendix points out that 'commands are legitimate in the sense that they are in accord with custom, but they possess the prerogative of free personal decision, so that conformity with custom and personal arbitrariness are both characteristic of such rule. The persons subject to the commands of the master are followers or subjects in the literal sense - they obey out of personal loyalty to the master or a pious regard for his time-honoured status' (Bendix 1962: 295). In other words, the relationships between superiors and followers are 'fatherly', and neither bound to 'rules' as in the legal type nor in the belief in the charismatic capacities of self-imposed leaders.

In the Uzbek case, there are three institutions which can be said to exert the traditional type of authority: the state, the Russian Orthodox Church and the *mahalla*. All these institutions existed by virtue of tradition and history. In the post-Soviet period, notions of Uzbek statehood were shaped by previous ideas of the Soviet state (Allworth 1967, 1989, 1990, 1994; Carrère d'Encausse 1980, 1982, 1993; Roy 1998). The term '*mahalla*', with its Arabic origin, signifies the spread of Islam in Central Asia (Eickelman 1993, 1998). The ascendance of the Russian Orthodox Church is strongly connected to the recognition of the Russian state in the early medieval period and the later expansion of the Russian empire in Central Asia. So how does traditional authority affect the validation of artists and their work? Here I give three examples which will be further discussed in Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the independent Uzbek state's commission system, which typifies the traditional authority exerted by the state. The commissioners are appointed by President Islam Karimov's advisers, and are made up of bureaucrats, various scholars of social and political science and clerics of both the Russian Orthodox and Sunni Muslim creeds. In Chapter 3, I examine their role in overseeing the creation of the state's new ideological showpiece, the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan. The museum's exhibits were to include examples of painting, but none of the commissioners had any awareness of Soviet arts theoretical concepts. Moreover, none of them were familiar with the rules according to which artists and their works were validated in the legal/contract system. Weber defined 'patriarchal authority' as particularly based on personalised relationships. Validation of all five artists' projects became dependent on the artists' capacities to 'personalise' relationships with their commissioners. One of the artists, Alisher Alikulov, defined these relationships as 'negotiation'. He negotiated over a proposed image of Tamerlane by suggesting a younger, more energetic portrayal of the ruler than historical sources suggested (historically, Tamerlane lived to his late seventies and had significant physical disabilities). This type of negotiation would have been unlikely under the Soviet legal/contract system or under charismatic leadership. The Soviet Arts Council commissioners would have been acquainted with the routinised aesthetics associated with iconic images of rulers: physical might, military prowess showed by a horse and armour, flags, emblems and many others. Under charismatic leadership everybody would accept the visionary interpretation of the image.

The other two institutions, the Church and the *mahalla*, have set patterns of relationships between superiors and followers similar to the state. The relationships between commissioned artists and the Church are not based upon aesthetics of the arts. The relationships are 'fatherly', built upon the clerics' acceptance of the artist as an individual believer from a parish, and not as a secular professional. The *mahalla* view artists primarily as community members and not as state employees or professionals. Acceptance of artists by these institutions is based on how they 'negotiate' their way through the institutions' systems.

To some extent these negotiations should not be seen as something entirely alien to either the former atheists returning to the bosom of the Church or to non-Uzbek residents of the *mahalla*. Both institutions have 'combined' characteristics, owing to their previously precarious situations: the Church was illegal between 1922 and 1942, and the *mahalla* were not officially recognized until the 1970s. Such fragility made

these two institutions, in order to strengthen themselves, borrow some practices from the state. In the following paragraphs I focus more on the Church than the *mahalla*, because the *mahalla* as a non-Russian institution had less influence on public spheres during the Soviet period.

It is useful to note Vadim Volkov's (2002) work concerning violent entrepreneurship in Russian capitalism, in which he notes that the Russian criminal underworld has borrowed structural characteristics from state institutions. One example he provides is that of membership rules in the criminal underworld (2002: 59). A candidate has to be recommended by three well-established criminals. (An 'established criminal' is one whose entire professional life was focused on crime or being imprisoned). Mikhail Heller (1988) specified that the same membership rule was required by the Communist Party. Volkov's example demonstrates that the criminal underworld borrowed practices from the state.

This trinitarian principle was also applied to all Soviet cultural institutions, including the Union of Artists (I discuss this in Chapter 3). The same rule was applied not only to each member of the Union but also to his/her art projects. The Arts Council could not approve a project unless it had at least three Council superiors monitoring it. Without these three signatures it was impossible to complete a project. By applying this trinitarian principle, the Soviet institution did not separate an artist from his product. An artwork approved by the Arts Council became an embodiment of the artists' purity of ideological belief, class consciousness and ethnicity.<sup>17</sup>

Oleg Kharkhordin (1999) gave clues that there was massive borrowing of Russian Orthodox Church practices by the Soviet state. Kharkhordin draws parallels between Church confession and the Soviet practice of self-criticism. But in Chapter 6, I emphasise that the borrowing went not only one way, from Church to State, but also went from State to Church. After the ROC was legalised during the Second World War, and the first commissions for re-consecrating church buildings were being given, the Church's criteria for hiring artists mirrored those of the state sector. By assessing Alexei Rassol's commissioning by the local diocese, I trace how such back and forth borrowing affected the validation of artists and their works in Soviet and post-Soviet

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<sup>17</sup> In Soviet studies it is widely recognised that ethnicities were shaped by Soviet ethnographers who classified all Soviet people according to their material culture (Sengupta 1997, 2000). However, there were also studies by Soviet physical anthropologists such as Oshanin (1964) whom I mention in Chapter 3 who classified the physical characteristics supposedly possessed by each ethnic group: height, complexion, nasal bridge, cranial characteristics, shape of eyes and many others. Such findings were important because Uzbeks were classified as the Ferghana-European race.



periods. By stressing the ROC's borrowing practices, I attempt as other researchers have done in Russia and the West, such as Alexander Verkhovsky (2004) and Zoe Knox (2005), to connect these practices to the ROC's attempt to push society towards a more fundamentalist way of life.

In the next section I discuss legitimisation through display. The context of the display of art is very important in the Soviet case. Soviet art was public art, intended mainly for public display, and there is a need here to clarify the significance and intentions of such display.

#### **2.4. Legitimisation through display**

Art historians in Russia and the West (Makhmudov 1975; Bazazyants 1975; Shostko 1977; Azizova 1977; Taktash 1978; Babadzhanova and Valiulina 1978; Lakovskaya 1981; Kahakimov 1983; Podkladkin 1983; Khashimova 1983; Kuskov 1983; Repnikova 1987; Golomshtok 1990; Groys 1992, 1995; Bown and Taylor 1993; Bown 1987, 1991, 1992, 1998; Yushkova 1994; Clark 1997; Michalski 1998; Gerchuk 2000; Kettering 2000) defined the purpose of display in the Soviet Union as a legitimisation of the Soviet state emphasising the public context of the display. Soviet citizens did not need to visit art galleries or museums to view art. In fact, it was practically unavoidable. Citizens faced art everywhere: in the streets and squares; on public transport such as undergrounds, train terminals, and airports; and at work, because even factories were often decorated with Soviet arts. Ubiquitous public art was a way for the Soviet state to strengthen citizens' belief in its legitimacy.

The fall of different state regimes has always been accompanied by the removal of their public monuments, acts which provide a symbolic gesture of the change. Removal of public monuments occurred during the French and Russian revolutions and during the fall of the Soviet Union. In all cases, the construction of new public monuments was expected to speedily affirm the new regime's power.

Bruce Grant (2001) and Boris Groys (2003) assessed Zurab Tsereteli's controversial post-Soviet public art projects in Russia, projects which the researchers found difficult to decipher. Groys and Grant recognised that Tsereteli's capacity to form aesthetics was different from what had previously observed in mainstream Soviet arts. The researchers attempted to discover what made this artist stand out from his fellow artists. Grant scrutinised Tsereteli's family background, his wife's inheritance from France, the artist's friendship with Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov, and many other

interesting details. But Grant misses that Tsereteli's network connections came from the Soviet period. On top of that, Tsereteli came from the titular nation arts institution of the Republic of Georgia, which taught artists to forge national identity. In mainstream Soviet arts, represented by Moscow and Leningrad, such capacities were not promoted. But in the post-Soviet world, Tsereteli rose within the arts hierarchies because of these skills. Unlike many Russian artists, Tsereteli, as a representative of titular nation arts, was able to forge Russian national identity in post-Soviet state controlled arts as he previously did on behalf of the Georgian Soviet Republic. Public art projects like Tsereteli's in post-Soviet Moscow had already been seen in all fifteen capitals during the last decades of the Soviet state. So what does the re-establishing of public display in the post-Soviet context mean in the former Soviet republics?

In Chapter 3, I discuss the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, an example which demonstrates not only how authority over the circulation of artworks was used, but also how the public display of art was used to legitimise the state in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The case is beneficial for this comparison because the museum building was built during the Soviet period as a memorial to Lenin, and in the post-Soviet period was remade into the History Museum. In the Soviet case, the Lenin Museum had more clarity of purpose, with the existence of the state based upon ideology. The new museum's purpose was less clear, with the state associated not with ideology but with the present regime personified by its head of state. The eminence of President Islam Karimov was one issue which caused the postponing of the opening of the museum from 1991 until 2004. During those 13 years, the museum administration and commissioners agonised over whether Karimov's image should grace the staircase, or if his image should be removed due to the unstable political climate. As the legitimacy of Karimov's regime has decreased, detracting from the legitimacy of the state as a whole, the artistic conceptualisation of this legitimacy have become a heavy task.

From here, I move to a discussion of the production and consumption of arts. This order of assessment allows an understanding of what happens with arts validation as it moves from public to private spheres.

## **2.5. Production and consumption**

Reassessment of the Soviet patterns of arts production and consumption is necessary because it reveals the continuity and changes in post-Soviet arts. In this section I

connect art historians' assessments of Soviet arts to this chapter's previous subsections, concerning the creation of authority within the Soviet legal/contract system in the Union of Artists and the role of the display in the legitimisation of the state. I then move on to post-Soviet arts production and consumption.

Art history is based upon establishing the aesthetic worth of artefacts (Westerman 2005). As the discipline focuses on aesthetics, it rarely extends to assessments of institutional involvement in the formation of aesthetics through the process of production, circulation and consumption. However, all art historians (Western and Russian) unilaterally recognised that Soviet arts had one state system for the production, circulation and consumption of arts (Groys 1992, 1995; Golomstock 1990; Dyogot 1995; Degot 2002; Bown 1992, 1998; Bown, Taylor, Lodder, Clark, Holz, Sidorov 1993; Swanson 2002; Kovalev 1995; Efremov 1995; Tupitsyn 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999; Lahusen & Dobrenko. 1997; Balina, Condee, and Dobrenko 1999). Authors agree on the significance of the Soviet Union's single art institution, and perceived the institution's weight through the ideologised aesthetics of Soviet arts. Because of the ideologised nature of the institution, Soviet aesthetics were the main focus of arts history studies.

But researchers assumed that since everything was done within and by the singular institution, the validation of artists and their works was a matter of secondary importance. With the dissolution of the institution, new issues arise: what kind of institutional mechanisms were used to help materialisation of those Soviet aesthetics through production, circulation and consumption? Without a reassessment of Soviet institutional practices, it is impossible to approach the post-Soviet configurations.

So here I approach, from an anthropological perspective, this rather neglected area of Soviet arts studies. By connecting the economic theories of Classical Marxism, and their interpretation by successive Soviet leaders, to the application of those theories on institutional practices, I demonstrate the influence of economic concepts on the valuing of artefacts.

I intend to show, using Ken Morrison's commentary, that the validation of Soviet artists and their works was entrenched in Marxist theories. Marx, in his various works, focused on the alienability of labour from its producer, through division of labour, as the basis of human alienation and of the class-divided capitalist society. Marx perceived a complex series of alienations: alienation from the product, alienation from productive activity, alienation from species, and alienation from fellow humans. Marx

begins with alienation from product, which under feudal society led to producers' incapacity to identify their selves with their produce. Marx viewed labour as a moral extension of personhood. The alienation of the labourer from productive activity broke the 'connection human beings have to themselves', which led to the labourer's incapacity to self-realisation (Morisson 1995: 95). Alienation from species, according to Marx, was turning human conscious life into mere physical existence. Finally, Marx attributed alienation from fellow human beings to one class becoming the recipients of products of labour - capitalists. Morisson commented on Marx's conclusion:

'If alienation can be described as the loss of the ability of laborers to realise themselves, objectification is the realisation of labor in that it refers to the capacity of human beings positively to 'duplicate' themselves in the world they create. This duplication in society through labor is the realisation of human aims. It is through this that human beings can 'contemplate' themselves 'in the world they have created.' By thus producing things, an individual necessarily becomes an object for others within structure of social relations. In this sense, the value of labor resides in the subjects' ability to produce values for others and, in this respect, confirm themselves. What is important is that social connection is between individuals – between human beings – not things or commodities. For Marx then, objectification is necessary if individuals are to humanize nature, to transform it into an expression having human qualities. In this respect, objectification is not synonymous with alienation in that it is possible realisation of labouring activity. By making the distinction between alienation and objectification, Marx grasped the historical character of labor and argued that the end of alienation will emancipate the species by rehumanizing labor. For Marx, the true 'object of labour is the objectification of the workers' species life. Hence in 'tearing away the object of their production,' alienated labor 'tears human being from their species life.'" (Morisson 1995: 97-98)

The Soviet system aimed to achieve the opposite of capitalism by freeing the labourer from exploitation. Under the Soviet state, art objects, according to Christina Kiaer's (2005) definition, became 'nobody's possessions', embodying the new socialist way of life. From my point of view, Soviet art was more than just 'nobody's possession'; mediated by the state, arts became everybody's possession by allowing every member of society to collectively approve the creative labourer, who self-consciously identified himself with his produce.<sup>18</sup> Soviet artistic practices made artworks, as products of the labour of artists, unalienable from their producers. Soviet artists and art objects are inseparable from each other. To support this claim, I go through the economic, moral and social valuing of the Soviet hierarchy of genres in Chapter 3. The pricing assessed by Yun Savitskiy (1973) clearly states why and how the genre hierarchy determined an

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<sup>18</sup> I use the male pronoun here because Soviet arts were largely male-dominated.

artwork's value based on economic expense, labour spent, and skill required, as well as the social impact of the product. Why is the etude at the bottom of the price list? An etude could be created using any materials which made its cost low. An etude does not require having a 'finish' as any other genre would require, so skills acquired through a two-tier education was not necessary. And an etude does not necessarily contain ideological content. On the other end of the genre hierarchy is the thematic composition.<sup>19</sup> Thematic compositions require the best materials, as well as sophisticated skills like knowledge of ideological concepts, anatomy, perspective, colours, and architecture, which were taught at the second tier only. Thematic compositions needed to be approved and supervised by the Arts Council. After their completion, thematic compositions were supposed to fulfil their social function, gracing public buildings such as railway stations, factories, theatres and many others. Artists working in thematic compositions enjoyed the highest social status and most lucrative salaries and pension packages.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I assess how labour was valued in the Soviet institution. Marxist principles were applied to all Soviet industries, including arts. One of the Marxist rules applied to all Soviet industry was the idea of 'quantity over quality'. In the 1920s, Stalin in his many of public speeches outlined his economic policies based upon his interpretation of Marxist-Leninist economic concepts (Stalin 1976: 431). Stalin's five-year plans were aimed towards speeding up production to freed the country from backwardness. Although Stalin's notions of speeding-up became outdated in the later decades of the Soviet state, the notion of contributing to the state's effort persisted.

In the case of thematic compositions, economic worth was calculated by square meters. Larger-sized thematic compositions were worth more. None of the thematic compositions I analyse in Chapter 3 measured less than one square meter. From the time of the introduction of the first thematic composition by Boris Benkov in 1940, sizes of thematic compositions steadily increased. Benkov's thematic composition was nearly two and a half by four meters, while Bakhodyr Jallalov's post-Soviet work was ten by eight meters. Benkov produced only one thematic composition whereas Jallalov had to work continuously in the genre. Over twenty years of his professional career, during both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, he completed ten thematic compositions. As time went on, the thematic composition moved from being a rarity in the early Soviet

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<sup>19</sup> Thematic compositions, or *tematicheskie kompozitsii* in Russian, are a combination of human images, objects and symbols conveying an ideological message to the viewer.

period to a convenient genre for formulating ideological agendas in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods.

In the section relating to art historians in Chapter 4, I detail the amount of time, effort and research needed for publishing art historians' works, regardless of quality. I conclude that standards of 'quantity' were set so high for Soviet art historians that they were practically unachievable. Those who managed to achieve the required amount of publications could only do so towards the end of their working careers. Overall, such validation practices resulted in small numbers of art historians in the Union and their incapacity to be elected and influence Arts Council decisions.

Under the state system, supply and demand were balanced. It was up to the state institution to decide how many works had to be commissioned. With the dissolution of the Union of Artists, supply and demand collapsed simultaneously. What survived was in a greatly reduced form, and circulation was no longer controlled by Union arts experts. Within the many new non-state configurations, supply and demand had to be recreated by the artists and art historians themselves, often acting as art dealers. This move from Soviet to post-Soviet production and consumption leads to the question of whether, through consumption, artworks become separated from their producers.

In the following Chapters 4-7, one of the most important questions of this thesis arises: how to calculate the price of artistic labour, and would this estimation result in the separation of the work from its producer? The issues in those chapters were not decided only by male artists but by women of various arts specialisations. Women art dealers took control of the illegal art trade. Additionally, they helped to move arts from public to domestic spaces. The changing emphasis of gendered values necessitates a discussion of gender issues.

### **2.6.1. Gender**

In this section, I discuss how in the fluidity and ambiguity of post-Soviet social formations, gender roles and relations were equally questioned in all spheres of life, including the arts field. The working practices in the fractured post-Soviet art world defined what arts specialists could or could not do according to gendered perceptions. To make explicit why and how gender matters in post-Soviet arts, I begin with art historians' assessments, because their works highlight the difficulty of discussing gender from a purely aesthetic perspective in Soviet arts. Art historians attempt to move from aesthetics to institutional practices (Baigell & Baigell 2001; Reid 1998; Simpson

1998) while underestimating gender conceptions and gendered divisions of labour within Soviet institutionalised practices. After an art historical assessment, a brief anthropological introduction serves as the bridge leading to post-socialist studies concerning gender. By finishing this section with regional anthropological literature, I draw out the importance of the case of post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

### **2.6.2. Gender from an art history perspective**

I begin with an art history assessment of other gender studies, leading to an anthropological study of gender in relation to post-socialist and regional case studies. Acknowledging the disparities between art historians' representation of gender and my own fieldwork research, I sketch out in this subsection three themes which I will explore with regard to the gender issue in the Soviet art field:

- 1) Painting genres were gendered.
- 2) There was unequal access to the artistic 'means of production' (education, studios, and lucrative and high-status commissions).
- 3) Gendered preconceptions exercised by the Union of Artists put immense pressure on both male and female artists.

Before a discussion of gender in arts, I have to explain how current gender studies in post-Soviet countries were conducted by local researchers. These studies mostly focused on NGO programmes and current sociological projects, and did not extend to exploring gender in the arts field. Because of the absence of gender studies within the arts field during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods by local researchers, all gender assessment of Soviet and post-Soviet arts was carried out by Western arts researchers. These Western researchers (Baigell & Baigell 2001; Reid 1998; Simpson 1998) followed feminist art historians (Pollock & Parker 1981; Miller 1986; Deepwell 1995; Perry 1999) who assessed women artists' creative practices, emphasising women's gendered inequality within male-dominated arts institutional frameworks. Further, these gender studies in the arts field mainly concerned Russian arts without acknowledging the specifics of the various associated Unions from other Soviet Republics. Since there were no other sources concerning gender in Soviet arts, I concentrate on the Russian case studies which have relevance for my regional ethnography.

For a closer look at how painting genres were gendered, I point out that all authors (Baigell & Baigell 2001; Reid 1998; Simpson 1998) acknowledged women's marginal presence in the Soviet arts institutional framework, owing to the hierarchy of

genres in painting. They stated that the hierarchy of genres forced women into less socially recognised, and technically less skilled, genres such as still lifes and portraits (these were typically regarded as ‘women’s genres’). Extending the finding of the aforementioned authors, I focus on the most valued genre within the Soviet painting hierarchy, the thematic composition, which was unavailable to women artists. By discussing in detail this genre as a mainly male domain, in Chapter 3, on the case of the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan (previously Tashkent’s Lenin Museum), I explore the combination of manual, mental and physical skills believed to be required from artists working in the thematic composition genre. By examining the production of thematic compositions through education and commissioning, I point out what prevented women from working in the genre. Through this assessment I come to my second point, that women artists experienced unequal access to the ‘means of production’. They were inhibited by educational restrictions, limiting their access to learning thematic compositions and further within the art institutional framework in their access to the art studios and to any serious state commissions. Coming to the third point, I explain why the arts institution pressured women artists to remain occupied with their family responsibilities more than their creative careers. All these points demonstrate why women painters were dissuaded from working in thematic compositions by the educational and arts institutions, owing to the existing preconception that the genre was unsuitable for women. In addition, titular nation arts institutions such as the Uzbek Union placed more emphasis on gender issues than their Russian counterpart.

The second reason which prevented women from working in thematic compositions relates to education. In Chapter 3, on the example of the state commissions for the Museum of History of Uzbekistan, I will illustrate that the idea of biological difference of women from men was used by male artists to prevent female painters from entering the two-tier system of education for painters, satisfying the requirements for membership in the Union of Artists and advancing themselves within the Arts Council. The creation of a large-scale thematic composition did require an incredible amount of physical stamina, including lifting heavy loads to high scaffolds, working in dirty and unhealthy conditions. Male artists believed that such requirements could affect women’s reproductive capacities. Of the artists involved in the creation of Tashkent’s Lenin Museum, there was not a single woman.



My third point is that commissions of thematic compositions required '*komandirovki*', or being sent for assignments for long periods away from home. Again, Tashkent's Lenin Museum provides a good example: artists were sent to Tashkent from Moscow and other cities for four years to complete the whole project. The Lenin Museum commissions demonstrated that the arts institution did not discourage men from spending years away from their families to complete important state commissions. But the same institution put immense social pressure on women to remain with their families and not take on long-term assignments away from home. The Lenin Museum commissions typified the Soviet arts institution's attitudes towards women, whom they saw primarily as child bearers with the social functions of raising children and nurturing their families.

Further, I stress here that in the case of the titular nation arts educational institutions, women had no chance of being accepted to the second tier. As I noted in the section on legal authority, and will discuss further in Chapters 3 and 4, access to the Arts Institute was granted only to male titular nation artists. Women, if they wanted to be artists, went to study to Russia (in Chapter 5 I give the example of Lola Babayeva, who studied at the Cineaste Institute in Moscow) or graduated from non-painting departments in Uzbekistan (in Chapter 6 I discuss Olga Kharitonova, who graduated from the graphic design department of the Arts Institute). The Soviet-period careers of these educated and capable professional women highlighted that it was not the skills that determined the value of their works, but their gender. Being women meant that within the titular national art field there was no place for them; by 1991, there was not a single women artist among the members of the Union of Artists of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

Because Western authors (Reid 1998; Simpson 1998; Baigell & Baigell 2001) largely ignored how gender was socially constructed within the Soviet arts institutional framework, they found it difficult to come to terms with post-Soviet deconstruction of gendered perceptions. This deconstruction was a result of the combined fall of the Soviet state and the ensuing fragmentation of its institutions. In Pat Simpson's (2004) move from Soviet to post-Soviet research on Russian arts, her focus on gendered inequalities of Soviet women shifted to the position of men in post-Soviet Russian culture. Simpson advises more attention be paid to Russian cultural specificities to understand men's fall from grace, instead of connecting the men's current position to the fragmentation of the Union of Artists. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, male

domination of arts was destroyed with the collapse of the institutional framework, as the state lost its authority to keep Soviet concepts of male and female work in the art field. From here I move from art history to anthropology.

### **2.6.3. Gender in relation to anthropological literature**

I begin with Frances Pine's (2002(a)) historical assessment of gender theory, for three reasons. First, because the fall of the state arts institution, the Union of Artists of the USSR, resulted in the end of male domination of post-Soviet arts. Secondly, the uncertainty of men's position in the arts field necessitated a reassessment of the 1970s-1980s feminists' and anthropologists' views of women's positions, in relation to post-Soviet women artists and art dealers. Thirdly, because of the significance of the post-Soviet domestication of arts: the move of post-Soviet arts from 'public' spaces to 'private' spaces was unique because it was handled by women. There was no existing case of the study of this process of domestication of painting undertaken by women.

Pine (2002(a)) provided a summary of gender theory in which she described the shifts and debates in the field over time (Rosaldo 1974; Whitehead 1980; Strathern 1987; Collier and Yanagisako 1987). For example, during the 1970s and 1980s structuralists were replaced by poststructuralists, who led a shift away from emphasis on nature and culture towards emphasis on the roles of women and men. According to Pine, feminist and anthropological theories of the 1980s attempted to explain issues of women's inequality through an understanding of how the position of women is dependent on the division between public and domestic spheres. Starting in the 1990s, Pine stressed, the focus of many gender studies shifted from women to men. Gender studies became broadened because it became apparent that formations of the concepts of male/female were shaped by social and cultural constraints within the context of social and cultural changes. I now turn to aspects of gender theory in relation to the case of post-Soviet Uzbek arts.

As Sarah Ashwin showed in her book *Gender, State, Society in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia* (2000), after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the social position of men became threatened. As a result of the collapse of the state-run public and social-oriented spheres of life, men lost their self-esteem along with their jobs. Men went downhill, struggling with the new changes, while women, previously employed in less prestigious jobs, achieved higher salaries and social status because of new opportunities in the emerging capitalist economy. Coincidentally, the shift in gender studies coincided

with this shift in gender roles. Ashwin's findings are relevant to Chapters 3, 4 and 5 in relation to arts because of the changing gender composition of the post-Soviet Uzbek arts field. Post-Soviet arts followed the same pattern as other spheres of the fallen Soviet state. Soviet male domination of arts became distorted by the fragmentation of the arts institutional framework, as the newly emerged post-Soviet art domains had no authority to apply Soviet concepts of male and female work in the art field. I demonstrate, through the Uzbek arts case in Chapters 1, 3 and 4, that there were, in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, 60 Soviet-educated and professionally established male painters, all of whom became lost without their Soviet institutional framework. The social world of the male artists collapsed, dragging down also all criteria of how Soviet arts had been validated. Men's professional perceptions, of what they could do in arts better than women, also collapsed.

The post-Soviet Uzbek arts case became interesting because masculinity was tied to reproduction of public spheres, hierarchies of work and values of public-oriented genres of painting. The shift from social hierarchy to market demand was marked by the devaluation of men's skills and the rise of women to the centre stage of post-Soviet arts, at least in the non-state sector. The rise of women in the post-Soviet Tashkent arts field leads me to the 1970s-1980s gender studies by feminists and anthropologists (Rosaldo 1974; Whitehead 1980; Collier and Yanagisako 1987), which helped me to understand 13 years of the post-Soviet Uzbek arts field. As Harriet Whitehead (1980) suggested, close study of the establishment of male-run public domains enables a better exploration of how those public domains affect the private domains in which women and men exist.

Post-Soviet and post-socialist ethnographic case studies revealed that women's marginal economic position made it easier for them to integrate within new non-state economic sectors (Pine 1996, 1998, 2002 (b); Bridger 1996). The art field provides an example: women specialists rose to the top of the non-state art sector. I explore this in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, comparing two different sets of art specialists and generations. I demonstrate what made women underachievers under the Soviet state (see the above section 2.6.2), and what kind of Soviet-learned skills propelled them in the post-Soviet state. Using the examples of the art dealers Natalya Musina and Negora Akhmedova, who were educated and worked in the Soviet art world, I show that women had to be computer literate and foreign language fluent in order to exist even within the margins of the competitive Soviet art world. But in the post-Soviet context, these two

skills proved invaluable for women like Musina and Akhmedova, allowing them to excel in the non-state art market.

In Chapter 4, I also discuss how the emergence of women in the arts field not only affected gender roles, but also brought about a restructuring of the importance of painting genres. Women art dealers turned the genre hierarchy upside down along with the gender hierarchy: for example, female art dealers circulated male Uzbek painters' still lives, something that would have been unheard of in the Soviet period. Such new developments in post-Soviet Uzbek arts made me to turn to Marilyn Strathern's (1988) argument that Western concepts of 'oppression' were not applicable in Hagen, New Guinea. Strathern emphasised that Hagenese men and women did not attach Western distinctions to labour divisions, and as result of that women were not put in 'oppressive' situations. In the post-Soviet Uzbek case, I stress that such Western concepts were similarly inapplicable. Post-Soviet male artists became involved in genres such as the still life, which had been considered 'unmanly' during the Soviet period. Post-Soviet men's still lives were typically small in size, rarely exceeding one square meter, and did not involve the physical stamina required by large-scale thematic compositions. The new popularity of still lives also made redundant the Soviet men's capacity to work with political symbolism in their art. Unlike their Soviet-educated predecessors, newly emerging post-Soviet painters held no negative feelings regarding their work in 'unmanly' genres; nor did women art dealers gain any sense of liberation by doing the 'male' job of validating arts.

Thirdly, domestication of post-Soviet painting became a task for women with the breakdown of the public/private divide. Chapters 4 and 5 will demonstrate the domestication process came in gradual stages. The first stage took place between 1991 and 1999, while painting was being marketed to foreign buyers. The characteristics of domesticated painting were promoted by women art dealers and women artists: the small size of the works made for easier transportation and legal export. But these paintings were moving into foreign buyers' homes, and were not intended for display in local Uzbek homes. The second stage took place during the period 1999-2004, and revealed the difficulty of moving post-Soviet painting to post-Soviet private domestic spaces. The second stage revealed that women faced the historical outcomes of the Soviet and post-Soviet state policies shaping domestic private spaces. Women (art dealers and artists) moved in 'private' spaces shaped by family and kinship

relationships, and those family and kinship relationships were in turn affected by the new market economy.

From here I have to reapply the findings of Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako (1987) who suggested an extension of female dependence on the division between private/public, within a historical context and attached to the cultural meaning of women connected to private and men to public spaces. Yanagisako (1987) emphasised that the meanings of gender, kinship, family and state were not static but dependent on historical context and expressed through symbolic metaphors. Without an assessment of Soviet and post-Soviet gender and regional specifics, I would be unable to approach the gender influence in post-Soviet domestication of Uzbek painting. From here I move to a discussion of gender from the perspective of post-socialist and local regional studies.

#### **2.6.4. Gender within postsocialist studies**

Jane McDermid and Anna Hillyar (1999) in their work concerning female Bolsheviks and workers in 1917, highlighted the influence of female revolutionaries in shaping the Soviet state's policies towards women. McDermid and Hillyar pointed out that there were many women who actively participated in the revolutionary movement, including Lenin's family, his wife and his sisters (Krupskaya, Ul'ianova and Ul'ianova-Elizarova), his close friends (Armand) and his fellow comrades (Kollontai, Reisner, Tzetkin). Despite the differences in the women's social backgrounds (working class, intelligentsia, gentry) and the ways they contributed to the revolutionary movement and the later establishment of Soviet institutions (through working for youth organisations, publication houses and educational institutions), all of them expressed similar views on how women's position in the new society had to be changed.

Female Bolsheviks viewed the position of women in the patriarchal family as a symbol of general political tyranny. They stressed that women's position should be changed under the new state in a number of ways, aiming for economic, sexual and political equality with men. They believed that capitalist separation of labour from labourer occurred not only in the workplace but also in the home. They stressed that by achieving liberation at home, and by moving into the socialist workforce, women would be free from alienation from their labour and would gain a new social personhood.

As time went on, new social policies were applied by the Soviet state. As Stephen Kotkin (1994, 1997) indicated, in the 1930s women continued to work at home as well as at their jobs. Because of that, as Katherine Verdery pointed out, women still

had to cope with balancing their public and domestic spheres (1994: 232) and struggle with a 'double burden' under the socialist state. The idea of the 'double burden' leads gender studies in two directions. One concerns how this 'double burden' continued for the 72 years of the Soviet state (Bridger 1987, 1992; Rai, Pilkington and Phizacklea 1992). The second emphasises that gender conceptions were fluid and tended to change from one regime to another: for example, the ideas changed from the Stalin period to the Brezhnev and the Gorbachev periods (Bacon and Sandle 2002; Bridger 1992). The second is also connected to post-Soviet ethnographic works such as 'Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia', edited by Mary Buckley (1997). Buckley stresses that Soviet women were pressed into the work market because of the aspects of status, whereas in the post-Soviet context they would voluntarily stay at home if there were no financial pressure to engage in the market economy. Rebecca Kay (1997) attempts to define how the 'ideals' of femininity were expressed through the use of make-up, exploring what allows women to conceptualise themselves as women while working under the markedly 'unwomanly' conditions of the competitive, and often dangerous, emerging market economy.

Post-Soviet and post-socialist ethnographic case studies revealed that women's marginal economic position made it easier for them to integrate within new non-state economic sectors (Pine 1996, 1998, 2002(b); Bridger 1996, 1998). The post-Soviet Uzbek art field provides an example, which I pointed out in section 2.6.3: women rose to the top of the non-state art sector as art dealers and artists. The new generation of artists, represented by the painters Inna Kulagina, Elena Lee and Elena Kambina from the Salpinkidi group (mentioned above in the section concerning authority), tended to learn the same skills as the Soviet generation of women art historians had - foreign languages and computer literacy. I explore this in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, comparing two different sets of art specialists, how women artists questioned the validity of the women art dealers' combined Soviet and Western trading practices.

Women artists also brought forward the issue of price-setting. During the Soviet period, prices were fixed because there was a single institution managing everything from the provision of necessary materials to offering commissions. Rebellious against post-Soviet women art dealers' practice of keeping every Soviet-generation male artists' works at a fixed price, women artists set their own prices based on the cost of materials used and on their own interpretation of the value of their labour. Women artists and dealers demonstrated through their working practices that gendered conceptions of the

Soviet period were unsustainable without the Soviet institution to uphold them. Women, regardless of specialisation or generation, brought forward another question: should the products of their labour (art objects) become separated from their producers? On top of that, women pushed forward the necessity of the introduction of new hierarchies and interpretations of 'value' in its broad sense: economic, moral and social. Those ideas were heavily influenced by regional characteristics, which from my point of view sets the Uzbek case aside from generalised post-socialist cases.

#### **2.6.5. Gender specificities with regional post-Soviet studies**

Central Asian case studies, as researchers (Carrère d'Encausse & Stuart 1966; Roy 1994, 2000; Eickelman 1998) have pointed out, stand out within socialist and post-socialist studies, which are based on Marxism, and Middle Eastern studies, which focus on Islam. The study of gender in the Central Asian region is complicated by the competition between Marxism-Leninism and Islam. During the Soviet period the focus on gender became a lens through which to explore Soviet rule in Central Asia. Therefore, the Stalinist period was assessed through modernisation of titular nation women's lives by various Soviet state policies such as 'freeing women from bondage', eradication of illiteracy and ending polygamy (Massel 1974). In later periods from Brezhnev's rule onwards, researchers inquired how various social groups of titular nation women, from urban professionals to rural collective farmers, coped with the move from the domestic environment to the public sphere (Lubin 1982, 1984). And in the independent era, those gendered perceptions further broadened. There was an attempt to consider post-Socialist changes on one hand, and on the other hand to indicate the connection between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (Akiner 1996, 1997, 2002; Doi 1997; Keller 1998, 2005; Tadjbakch 1998; Kandiyoti 1991, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002; Saks 1995; Bridger 1998).

Rosamund Shreeves (2002) pointed out, in the case of post-Soviet Kazakh farming where there was not a single woman farmer, that shrinkage of 'public' state-controlled spheres combined with the increase of 'private' spheres led to the near-invisibility of women. Shreeves showed that women had to deal with men 'sitting at home' with the loss of work in the state sector, which was detrimental for men's perceptions of themselves as men. Women's view was that despite their own contribution as a farming workforce, they had to allow men to feel their significance in dealings outside the family domain such as keeping social networks, arranging

transactions in the local market and conducting farming issues requiring legal representation.

How do the clearly marked communal, ethnic and religious divisions in large cities such as Tashkent affect the economic survival strategies of men and women? What happens to women from various artistic professions (artists, art dealers and art historians) and of various ethnicities (Russians, Koreans and Uzbeks) and religious backgrounds (Muslims, Christians) when they have to propel themselves in domestically run businesses (women artists and art dealers very often work from home) and at the same time clearly manifest their traditional suitability as bearers of children and nurturers of families?

First, I will show that women's self-representation in the familiar roles of family supporters and nurturers could be a coping strategy to deal with the resurgence of fundamentalism in traditionalist institutions such as the *mahalla* and the Russian Orthodox Church. Those institutions were always regarded as closely tied to ethnicity. For example, Uzbek women were studied through their position within the *mahalla* community (Kandiyoti and Azimova 2004; Lubin 1984), while the ROC was studied only in relation to Slavs (Verkhovsky 2002; Knox 2005). My Chapters 5, 6 and 7 indicate that the resurgence of these institutions significantly changed what women and men had to do in order to gain social, economic and moral inclusion. These chapters will demonstrate that in the case of men, the requirements differed in each institution, whereas for women the requirements were generally the same, being related to their reproductive and family capacities and not to their skills.

Second, women's rise to prominence in the post-Soviet arts field reveals that those institutions involved in arts circulation, the Church and the *mahalla*, did not separate labour from its producer. For example, I discuss the icons sanctified by the priest Vladimir Lapyn in the Holy Trinity Church. For this priest, it is important not only that the icon act as a transmitter connecting the believer to God during prayer, but that it is done according to the religious canon. Further, the icon has to embody all the moral virtues of the icon-painter, a well-behaved and devout parishioner. Without the inseparability of artefact and producer, the artefact would be valued solely on aesthetics and commercial market price. The resurgence of institutional involvement in circulation of arts demonstrates why Soviet practices could have continuity in such unexpected configurations of the former Soviet art world.



In the following five chapters, I present ethnographic case studies of each of the social configurations I have selected which affected the production and consumption of post-Soviet Uzbek arts. My assessments will be based on the theory discussed in this chapter, as I explore the themes set out here. I will begin with a discussion of the state commission system, emphasising the significance of Soviet institutional validation of arts in all the post-Soviet configurations I analyse. Understanding the Soviet practices helps to accept that there was not an abrupt end with the fall of the Soviet state, but rather a continuity of Soviet practices, which remained as the criteria from which specialists involved in production, circulation and consumption perceived arts.

## Chapter 3

### The Decline of State Arts in Uzbekistan (1991-2004)

#### 3.1.1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, I examine the way state-commissioned arts, Soviet and post-Soviet, were and are valued. Specifically, I focus on the Soviet system's 'hierarchy of genres' by which paintings were classified and valued. Exploring the reasons why and how painting was valued, I explain the Marxist theory of value of labour as it was applied to Soviet arts. According to this theory, the genre of thematic compositions held the highest place as the most labour-intensive of all the recognised artistic genres. Thematic compositions, *or tematicheskie kompozitsii* in Russian, are a combination of human images, objects and symbols conveying an ideological message to the viewer. Of all the genres taught and practised during both periods, thematic compositions were the most highly regarded in terms of aesthetics, skill, and the recompense accorded to the painter.

In the next chapter I expand this reasoning, showing that and explaining why the whole system of the arts field, together with arts education and the arts institutional framework, which was built upon this genre hierarchy system, developed into a rigid monolith consisting exclusively of Uzbek men. In Chapter 4, I will examine an alternative art world, one not sanctioned by the state. I will introduce how Uzbekistan's art field, both state-controlled and illegal, changed with the emergence of women. The differences between the two markets, state and non-state, require me to ask: who defines the value of painting and what were the reasons behind their valuing practices?

My argument in Chapter 3 is that interwoven with the Soviet economy were moral values that influenced painting production and consumption, whereas in the post-Soviet state commission system, those Soviet moral values became eroded by the combination of various contradicting ideologies used to value painting.

To demonstrate this overall erosion of Soviet values, I assess the valuing of thematic compositions under the Karimov regime in independent Uzbekistan. My choice of thematic compositions was due to the fact that the state commissioned only three paintings for the Historical Museum between 1991 and 2004, and all three of those paintings were done in the genre of thematic compositions. Since the thematic composition was the only

genre selected by the state for conveying its ideological message, it is necessary to explain what made this genre so special, what happened to the state-commissioned paintings and how the completion of those thematic compositions affected the artists' perception of state valuation of painting.

To show the differences between Soviet and post-Soviet painting valuation, I start with a look at why, how, when and by whom this particular genre was valued during the Soviet period. This comparison helps us to understand that although Karimov's regime used thematic compositions as a part of ideological propaganda, their valuing of this genre of painting had nothing to do with Marxist theory of labour but with a mixture of ideological trends such as *Mustakilik*, Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam.

To illustrate the complexity of state art commissions under the Karimov regime I introduce the story of the transformation of Tashkent's Lenin Museum into the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan. An analysis of this conversion indicates the reasons for returning to the use of thematic compositions within the museum building during the period 1991 to 2004. After explaining the function of thematic compositions within public buildings, I give a detailed examination of each of those three paintings separately by looking at how each commission was conducted by the painter. Following this, an assessment of the delivery of the commissions by the different administrative bodies (the advisors to the President, the Arts Council and the Museum administration) clarifies how valuing thematic compositions changed from the Soviet to the post-Soviet period. Chapter 3 will conclude with an exploration of how post-Soviet validation of painting by the joint bodies of the state commission affected artists' standing and their perception of the moral, social and economic valuing of painting.

### **3.1.2. Why the Soviet state valued different genres of painting**

I start with the introduction of the first thematic composition in Uzbekistan, *Proclamation of the Creation of UzSSR* by the painter Pavel Benkov (1938). Benkov's thematic composition itself, and the valuation of the painting by art historians, serves as a bridge linking all the following sections devoted to Soviet and post-Soviet forms of valuation. With this painting, I explore why analyses of the worth of Soviet painting were based on

Marxist labour theory, which shaped the hierarchy of genres with thematic compositions at the top.

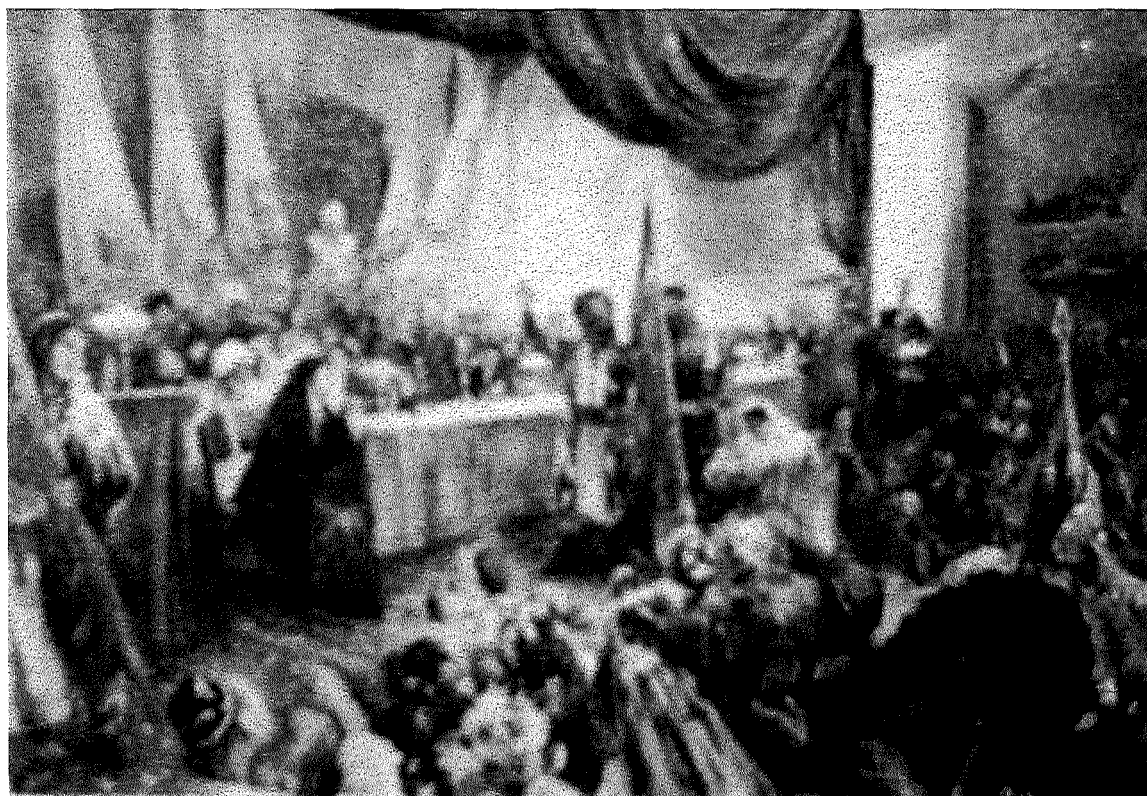
The genre hierarchy indicates first of all how the two-tiered arts educational system was structured. Students were taught in increments, learning technical skills in gradual stages combined with ideological advancement. This two-tier education resulted in artists capable of marrying ideological content with technical efficiency. Further, this teaching shows how a flawless capacity to produce durable thematic compositions took fourteen years of tireless effort in the local arts and educational institutions. The idea of durability was considered important in the Soviet context, because making a durable painting demonstrated an artist's ability to use quality materials to create a so-called '*proizvedenie iskusstva*', or 'masterpiece'. Soviet generation painters defined the term 'masterpiece' as a successful combination of aesthetic and conceptual ideas inseparable from technical finish. In other words, the painters stressed that a work with a good expression of ideas, but failing in technical ability, could not be called a masterpiece. According to them, technical finish was a supreme goal of a painter. The medium of oil painting is based on layering one coat of paint on top of another, and if chemically one of the pigment's components in the layer is aggressive to its neighbouring layers, the surface of the badly finished painting over time would crack, fade in colour, flake or even bubble. This emphasis on durability signified the hope for a lasting influence of the ideological message brought to the world by the 'masterpiece', and the strength of communist ideology. The two-tier arts education system, which led to an art field dominated by Uzbek males, was designed around the hierarchy of genres and this pursuit of durable perfection.

Next I will discuss the period of the time when the first thematic composition *Proclamation of the Creation of UzSSR*, (measuring 254x392 cm), was created by the painter Pavel Benkov (Fig. 5, p.100).<sup>20</sup> Benkov kept this painting for participation in the

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<sup>20</sup> There are two titles, *Proclamation of the Creation of UzSSR* and *Acceptance of the Constitution*, which are both misleading because national delimitation was announced in 1924 and the constitution was introduced in 1936. The actual event depicted, Kalinin's verification of the national delimitation in Central Asia, took place in 1925. It is difficult to guess what was original Benkov's project and what was his final decision over the title. For reasons of consistency, I prefer to use the first title.

Fig.5 Pavel Benkov's 1938 painting *Proclamation of the Creation of UzSSR*, (254 x 392 cm, oil on canvas). Its current location is unknown. Photo from *The History of Uzbekistan*. (1957)



first exhibition organised by the newly established Union of Artists in 1940. At that time, the institution had to demonstrate its members' capability of enacting their lessons in Soviet art after the memorably painful first congress of the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan in 1938. The first congress demanded that all artists either serve the new agenda of service to the Soviet state, or be banned from the arts field with ensuing political exile. For Union members, participation in the 1940 exhibition was compulsory. They were to be tested for their political loyalty. The requirement for participation in the exhibition was a creation of a contemporary theme, which conveyed an understandable visualised ideological message.

During the Stalinist period, two ways of presenting contemporary themes were established: by narrative and by allegory, with a strong inclusion of Soviet iconography (Prokhorov 1995; Reid 1998). Narrative meant following the 'truthful' historical reality behind the produced work whereas allegory was based on Soviet iconography, which searched for a 'cultural and political identity in which the nation collectively could believe' (Holz 1993: 74). Wolfgang Holz claims that allegory in Socialist painting was used for propaganda, which he summarised under five headings: 'illusion of progress', 'carnival of red colour', creation of 'socialist' and 'realist' icons, and 'dream theatre'. Unlike narrative, which gave a straightforward message, allegory was an entirely imagined reconstruction of a scene or historical event, which had to encompass a broad variety of ideological messages.

In his painting, Benkov portrayed the celebration in a theatrical fashion, presented as the realisation of a 'dream' by all participants - an allegoric interpretation (Lane 1981; Guldin & Southall 1993). To create a reenactment of the historical event, Benkov composed an entirely imagined theatrical scene, which allowed him to show his skill in depicting staged scenery populated by highly elated characters, both real and fictional.<sup>21</sup> To better stage different themes within one space, Benkov divided his composition from top to bottom in three parts in the following order. On the top was placed the main group of high-ranking officials together with Mikhail Kalinin and Youldash Akhundbabayev sitting behind the presidium. The backdrop for these high officials was theatrical curtains with symbols of the Soviet state such as a bust of Lenin, red flags, hanging slogans and various

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<sup>21</sup> Benkov, who had traveled to Bukhara in 1928, knew that Bukhara had no European-style theatre at the time, having been a theocratic Islamic state up to 1920.

other emblems. In the middle part of the composition was placed the delegate standing at center stage, pointing his right hand towards the presidium, where Kalinin and Akhundbabayev sit, and displaying with his left hand the new flag of Soviet Uzbekistan. In the lower part was painted a densely packed crowd of seated deputies, both men and women, dressed in national costumes.

There are three possible reasons Benkov chose allegory instead of narrative.

First and most importantly, Soviet arts institutions valued allegory higher than narrative. Allegory was an elaborate conceptualisation of the ideological message, not so much the result of an artist's capacity to oscillate within current ideological guidelines but an attempt to actually shape the guidelines themselves (Saidova 1974; Umetaileva 1984). At that time, all artists were under pressure to do their best to survive; Benkov improved his political credentials by producing the highest-valued genre of painting.

Secondly, allegory helped Benkov to delineate a politically convenient interpretation of Uzbek history. Kalinin's visit involved a celebration of the event by local deputies, which allowed Benkov to portray a straightforward transmission of power to the representatives of the new titular nation of Uzbeks (see Chapter 1, p.27) and to avoid the controversies of the recent early Soviet past such as the quick downfall of the short-lived Bukharan, Khorezmian, and Kokhan Soviet Republics, the elimination of rebellious non-Communist factions within the local political scene, and the elevation of one ethnic group at the expense of another (Uzbeks over Tajiks) (Akbarzadeh 1996; Folz 1996; Djalili, Grare and Akiner 1998).<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, the choice of allegory allowed Benkov to step from a simple depiction of the event to exploring a wide range of issues in which every element of the composition was selected through its symbolic importance in the creation of a single masterpiece (Morozov 1989: 175). To glorify the solemnity of the emergence of the new republic by demonstrating the unity with the Soviet state, represented by top ranked Soviet officials, Russian and Uzbek, and the people of Uzbekistan, Benkov carefully selected only those elements which could enhance movement towards a utopian future. Electrical light indicates enlightenment; the maximum use of the colour red shows the radiance of Soviet

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<sup>22</sup> See (Akbarzadeh 1996; Folz 1996; Djalili, Grare and Akiner 1998) on Tajik and Uzbek interethnic relationships under the Soviet state.

power, immersing the whole theatrical space with people dressed and sitting amongst objects coloured in different shades of red; national costume indicates the new Soviet titular nation, Uzbeks; and images of Uzbek women with uncovered heads signifies the stated Soviet policy of freeing Muslim women from bondage (Aminova 1977; Umarov 1981; Kettering 1998; Widdis 2003). I will not decipher each element of Benkov's painting in depth because I want to stress that Soviet painting valuation was based less on how a painting looked than on how it was created, something I will discuss in later paragraphs of this section. My assessment is done merely to convince a reader that producing a thematic composition was a complex undertaking which required time, skill and intensive labour.

After presenting *Proclamation of the Creation of UzSSR*, Benkov lived another nine years, dying in 1949. During this time his position within the Union of Artists radically changed from being a politically questionable artist to the most recognised artist from Uzbekistan. Benkov quickly attained the highest honours in Soviet arts, including being elected as a full member of the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR. Having performed once well in the most accepted genre, he was left free to work in less acceptable genres for the rest of his life and he was never pestered for his leanings toward the unacceptable (under the Stalinist period) style of Impressionism. After his death, the arts college in Tashkent was named after him and he was hailed as the founder of the Uzbek school of painting for the whole duration of the Soviet period.

Art historians' assessment of institutional policies of the 1940 exhibition and the validation of the top genre in painting was postponed due to several reasons, including the onset of the Second World War, the XXth Congress of the Communist Party which was highly critical of Stalinism, the building up of the Arts research institute and establishment of local arts educational institutions capable of providing the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan with Uzbek painters. This postponement later allowed art historians to see more clearly why there was a need to venerate the hierarchy of genres with thematic compositions on top. The art historians Marinella Myunts and Boris Nikiforov, doing contract work for the local Academia, wrote not as influential participants in the exhibition but as outside observers of the event. The importance of this painting by Benkov was such that it occupied alone a considerable part of the chapter of the first book concerning the



history of arts in Soviet Uzbekistan by Myunts (1957) and one of the first monographs highlighting artists from Uzbekistan, on Benkov's life, by Nikiforov (1967).

Nikiforov and Myunts disagreed over Benkov's work's merit. But their discussion was not acknowledgement of a career made successful by creating politically correct painting under very rough institutional conditions, but a debate over what makes a painting worthy. The main argument arose over whether Benkov's thematic composition was finished or unfinished. The whole discussion was about the merit of the work: was it, as Myunts claimed, a true thematic composition? Or was it still merely a study?

The question of 'finish' of painting again reflected the Soviet hierarchy of genres. In the hierarchy, the top genre was occupied by thematic composition whereas the bottom was the sketch or etude. To understand this method of valuing painting, we have to highlight how the worth of a painting was established. According to Marxist theory, the value of any product, including art, was measured according to the amount of work undertaken to produce it. This rule, when applied to painting, was reflected in the hierarchy of genres. Each painting was assessed through a calculation of how long the artist worked on it, how skillful he was and how he was able to use his tools and materials in order to produce durable masterpieces. It is important to understand that the Union of Artists of the USSR was set up to monitor, conduct and value state-commissioned art works, including painting. Its rules were disseminated through guiding sourcebooks used for inner circulation in the Union of Artists.

### **3.1.3. How, when, and by whom painting was valued in Uzbekistan**

After explaining why art historians elevated thematic compositions within the hierarchy of genres, I focus on how, when and by whom the valuing of these thematic compositions in Uzbekistan was done. I combine an analysis of an influential 1973 book by Yun Savitskiy, who was a specialist on economic and managerial institutional practices, with my experiences as a curator, art history teacher at the art college and researcher during the period 1985-1992) in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and as a fieldwork researcher in post-Soviet Uzbekistan (1999-2001). This examination intends to show that from the 1970s onward, the valuing of paintings based on the principles of genre hierarchy led to the local arts field becoming dominated by Uzbek male artists.

Yun Savitskiy (1973) in his sourcebook, which was called '*Organizatsiya e Oplata Truda Khudozhnikov*' or 'Management and Payment of Artists Works' gave economic valuations for different genres of painting. Savitskiy produced a table, which introduced the hierarchy of genres according to price which connoted how much was paid by the state to a painter. As previously mentioned, at the top of the hierarchy were thematic compositions and at the bottom were sketches or etudes. Savitskiy's price range started from the cheapest etude up to the most expensive thematic composition. Savitskiy explained that price depended on the complexity of the genre, the required intensity of labour for production, and the manual dexterity needed to complete the painting.

Table 3: Savitskiy gave the price in roubles of different genres.

Thematic compositions-----	1000-5000
Group portrait-----	1000-3500
Portrait-----	600-1800
Landscape-----	500-1500
Still life-----	200-750
Interior-----	250-750
Etude-----	150-400

Savitskiy's table classified the unfinished painting or study as the lowest genre. He makes several interesting points such as the definition of a finished work, complexity of composition and ideological purposefulness. Savitskiy's ideas are close to those of Richard R. Brettell (2000) who, in his book concerning impressionists, clarified how to distinguish a sketch from a finished painting. Since impressionist paintings often appear to have been done quickly, Brettell's goal was to define what makes the works 'finished' despite their appearance of visual spontaneity. The use of Brettell's definitions of unfinished surface could be justifiable in the case of Soviet painting. Brettell's main point is that a sketch was usually directly started on the surface of the canvas without any preparations undertaken in advance. Very often the sketch was finished in one sitting; therefore, some of the surface of the canvas would be left without a single layer of paint. The sketch was supposed to lead to more complex works in future. All these factors indicated that a sketch required practically

no preparatory work, quick production and less intellectual effort compared to a finished painting. The sketch was the least labour-intensive genre, requiring less time and skill. In addition, it could be done on various materials starting from a scrap of paper up to piece of unstretched canvas, making it often more perishable than a finished painting. Given these factors, it was not surprising that the etude ranked lowest in the hierarchy of genres.

Contrary to the etude, the thematic composition demanded a painter be technically proficient in all genres such as interior, landscape, still life and group portrait. To produce thematic compositions, artists needed to study varying disciplines such as anatomy, perspective, and art history, combined with many years of practical exercises, and to learn theories of colour and applicability of pigments in order to produce a durable painting. Those skills could not be acquired in a short time, and they had to be formally taught in educational institutions (Swanson 2002). This education was split into two tiers: Arts College and Arts Institute. Only half of the Arts College's four-year course covered oil painting, and introduced students to only the very basics of the medium of painting with limited knowledge of how to work in even the easiest of genres. Arts Institute education was where students were taught in-depth theory, practice and skill in mastering each of the genres in stages. In fact, the graduation project for students of the Arts Institute was the presentation of a large scale thematic composition painting. The effectiveness of the two-tier education had to be demonstrated by this project. The ability to create a thematic composition was a mark of being fit to be a painter.

So for artists, technical ability provided ways to fulfill their moral duty as Soviet citizens, serving the state by visualising ideological propaganda based on the hierarchy of genres. The ideological propaganda was managed by the state institution, the Union of Artists, which in turn assessed the moral and economic values of artistic labour to advance the artist's career. In order to implement combined validation of painting and painters, the Union of Artists appointed the Art Council, which oversaw the state commission system.

Further, Savitskiy (1973: 77-79) defined how a state commission should be conducted. He outlined the Arts Council's structure, procedures and responsibilities. The head of the Arts Council was personally responsible for the correctness of the ideological content of the commission, the economic cost of production and the estimation of a financial honorarium for the artist. The Arts Council was obliged to keep the same three

members on the Council until the project was finalised. In case of the absence of more than one member for any reason, the Council could not proceed. The positive conclusion of the project, in the case of a grand project required no less than two thirds of the Arts Council to vote whereas for a smaller project all three members had to come to a unanimous decision.

The special role for the Arts Council was to oversee thematic compositions within architectural complexes. The artist would sign a contract for a monthly salary payment for the entire duration of the project. After the completion of the project, the artist earned his honorarium. The honorarium for a finished project was calculated depending on the size of finished work. The larger the painting, the higher the price of the finished work. The price of one square meter of painting varied from the equivalent of two monthly salaries up to 20 monthly salaries. The artist's pension was later calculated based on the number of commissions undertaken during his membership in the Union of Artists. Overall, by the end of the Soviet era, this institutional valuing of painting formed artists' perceptions of their own creativity as defined by moral, economic and social valuing of their labour.

#### **3.1.4. Why painting was produced and valued by Uzbek male artists**

In this section I explain why valuing according to genre hierarchy in Uzbekistan led to an arts field dominated by Uzbek males. The reason for the emergence of the Uzbek male hegemony was rooted in the rigid selection of students for the two-tier arts educational system, which affected artists' chances of membership in the Union of Artists and their further advancement through the ranks of the Arts Council.

In my own memory of the Uzbek arts education system, teaching staff in both the College and the Institute, regardless of their gender and ethnicity, regarded women as physically unfit to be painters. The teachers' reasoning was based on the professional requirements for being a painter, specifically the production of thematic compositions. From the 1970s onwards, thematic compositions were incorporated into large architectural complexes and indeed demanded enormous physical stamina from a painter. It was a job which, according to the teachers, would hinder women's reproductive functions. Among the job requirements cited were climbing scaffoldings, lifting heavy boxes with paints, and

working in cold, dirty building sites.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, within the arts educational system, women would be only allowed to get through the first tier, the Arts College, because there they were taught technically easier (and therefore less valued) genres. Inevitably women would be stopped from entering the second tier, the Arts Institute. Their ‘physical inferiority’ barred them from completion of the two-tier education, thus preventing them from entering the Union of Artists. Women were therefore invisible in the Uzbek arts field.

In the building of a national school of painting, preferential treatment was given to Uzbeks as representatives of the titular nation. There was a shortage of places for students. The Arts Institute’s painting department had only ten placements, out of which half were allocated for students from the other Central Asian republics and the other half for Uzbeks.<sup>24</sup> It was not surprising that with creation of the two-tier system in 1962, all professional artists entering the Union of Artists of Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic were male and Uzbek. If members of the local Union were mainly Uzbek males, it is logical that the Arts Council administering the state commission system would consist of Uzbek males who would perpetuate this hegemony.

In the following section, by introducing the background of the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, I will show that the return of thematic compositions in the post-Soviet period became possible because of their capacity to visualize and promote new ideological concepts for viewers. This explains why the new post-Soviet state commission system’s re-creation and re-addressing of Soviet interpretations of the past required a new interpretation of thematic compositions.

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<sup>23</sup> Teachers were quite explicit in showing their concern regarding this type of work’s perceived effects on the health of women painters, but they conveniently closed their eyes to another, more real health risk to their female students during the educational period. All Soviet educational institutions required students to make compulsory annual trips to do agricultural work on collective farms. In the Central Asian case, this meant extremely difficult harvesting work on cotton plantations. Regardless of the gender of students, the daily picking quota was 60 kg of cotton. In most cases, female students’ body weight was far below the weight of cotton which they were required to pick and to lift in bags. Apart from lifting heavy loads of cotton, female students were physically exposed to severely polluted agricultural sites (a result of the unmeasured use of chemicals to boost cotton harvests). Because of this, one can see that in arts education, women’s physical weakness was more a convenient excuse for preventing women to propel themselves in challenging professional occupations, rather than an actual source of concern regarding their health in physically strenuous work.

<sup>24</sup> After graduation those students from the other republics would return home and not remain in Uzbekistan.

### **3.2.1. The Museum of the History of Uzbekistan**

One aspect of the new *Mustakilik* ideology was a revival of the deeper past, which meant a rejection of the immediate past (associated with the Russian-connected, Tsarist and Soviet periods). It began with the replacement of the old Soviet monuments and institutions by new ones, which were packaged as a part of a new ideological discourse. The epitome of such state projects became the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan. Its task was to obliterate the Russian past of the new state, as well as to destroy the ideological imprints of Marxism-Leninism. To achieve this goal, the former Lenin museum was chosen to be transformed into a new historical museum. This overt political statement overlooked the insuitability of the Lenin Museum building for such an important political project.

### **3.2.2. The Tashkent Lenin museum**

The Lenin Museum opened in 1970 to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of Vladimir Lenin's birth (Mosidova 1979). Every major Soviet city or capital of a national republic was required to have a Lenin museum. Tashkent's large Lenin museum was a mark of the status and importance of the city. The Lenin museum faithfully reproduced Russian museum displays of all 20 of Lenin's rooms, with their contents. Among those contents were a reproduction of Lenin's coat with bullet holes (Sadykova 1975: 195-196). The Museum's veneration of Lenin's life and his mass-produced relics hardly brought any intellectual value to Tashkent. All Lenin museums were required to conduct research into Lenin's life and writing, but the Tashkent museum failed to do so because its director was an accountant appointed for his political connections rather than his scholarly pursuits.

However, this particular Lenin museum was specially acclaimed for its artistic merit in the book devoted to the best projects of the Soviet arts and crafts of the 1970s (*Sovetskoe Dekorativnoe-Isskusstvo [1945-1975]* 1989). The museum's creation took four years and the best Soviet architects, sculptor, artists and craftsmen were invited to contribute. Two prominent Russian architects, E. Rozanov and V. Shestopalov designed the project. The museum was a white cube shape, consisting of two floors. The core of the building had a central staircase with a statue of Lenin in front of a mosaic devoted to the establishment of Soviet power in Uzbekistan. The acclaimed Russian sculptor I. Tomskii, who specialized in erecting Lenin statues all over the USSR, created the six-meter tall statue. The eight by ten

meters mosaic, depicting the multiethnic revolutionaries of Uzbekistan, was made by the artists V. Zamkov and V. Ionin. Two of the best Uzbek craftsmen, M. Usmanov and K. Haidarov, decorated the interior of the building. They worked in carving dry plaster (*ganch* in Uzbek) and wood. The Lenin Museum was incorporated into the city's existing architectural ensemble of the Concert Hall, the Theatre of Ballet and Opera, the Hotel Tashkent and others.

Transforming the Lenin Museum into the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan was a daunting task. To begin the process, there was a massive clearance of all artefacts regardless of their historical or artistic merit. The statue of Lenin was removed. The mosaic was taken down and plastered over. All that remained were the Uzbek craftsmen's plaster carvings on the ceiling, leaving below an empty shell which urgently needed to be filled. 70 other museums were required to share their collections to help to build up the displays in the new museum. Based on the wealth of those artefacts collected from all over Uzbekistan, the museum was to present a new version of national history: that of the independent nation state of Uzbekistan.

It was never questioned how the building layout would affect the narration of history. The two-floor division brought a new display which became divided into two parts. The first floor covered history from the Stone Age until Russian colonisation, and the second floor included Russian Tsarist colonial history followed immediately by the independent period - completely skipping over the Soviet period. These two floors were massive open spaces which had been arranged to facilitate the faithful reproduction of the 20 Lenin rooms and nothing else. Since each floor was a single enormous space, historical periods became very mixed up, which provoked agonising decisions in the Arts Council over each of the artefacts' placement. There were political and cultural problems as well. For example, some clerics objected to a display about the Stone Age that made reference to evolution. Owing to the uncertainty towards some historical periods, white boards were placed separating viewers from the unwanted parts of the display in every floor. These massive boards detracted attention from the main display, and the overall impression of the new museum exhibition was one of chaos.

With increasing discontent over the content of the museum by all decision-making bodies (which will be discussed in section 3.5) and artists, it became necessary to redefine

the whole concept of the exhibition. To this end, the President's advisers decided to return to the use of thematic compositions. As in the Soviet period, new post-Soviet compositions were not there for merely decorative purposes: they were supposed to clarify what the displays could not achieve and to simplify a visual explanation of the nation-state's history according to the ideology of 'Independence'. The thematic compositions had to provide cohesiveness to the narration of the glorious history of Uzbekistan. Each of the compositions had a precise goal depending on its location. The first, a fresco located on the wall of the staircase, was supposed to introduce visitors to the glory of the ancient state of Uzbekistan. The other two, stretched oil paintings on the first and second floors, were to emphasise important events of the ensuing historical periods, from the medieval and Tsarist periods to independence. An understanding of the complexity of the interpretation of Uzbekistan's history and nation building in the Museum of History could be helped by an assessment of commissions of paintings for the museum, which I am going to look at in the two following sections. In those sections I examine what kind of thematic compositions were proposed by the artists Bakhodir Jallalov<sup>25</sup> and Alisher Alikulov.

### 3.3. Bakhodir Jallalov

In 1993, Bakhodir Jallalov was commissioned to create a very conspicuous fresco, measuring eight by ten meters, for the central stairs of the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan (Fig.6, p.112). Jallalov's fresco was supposed to fill the empty space previously occupied by the Soviet-era mosaic by Zamkov and Ionin. By time Jallalov was ready to start his commission, there was a blank wall and a hole in the floor left after the removal of Lenin's statue. (The hole was later covered with a large concrete circle containing artificial plants.) Jallalov intended to show the most glorious moments in Uzbek history united in a single fresco entitled *Under the Vault of Eternity*. Unintentionally, he followed principles laid out by Benkov: incorporation of iconography based on state symbols, and composition

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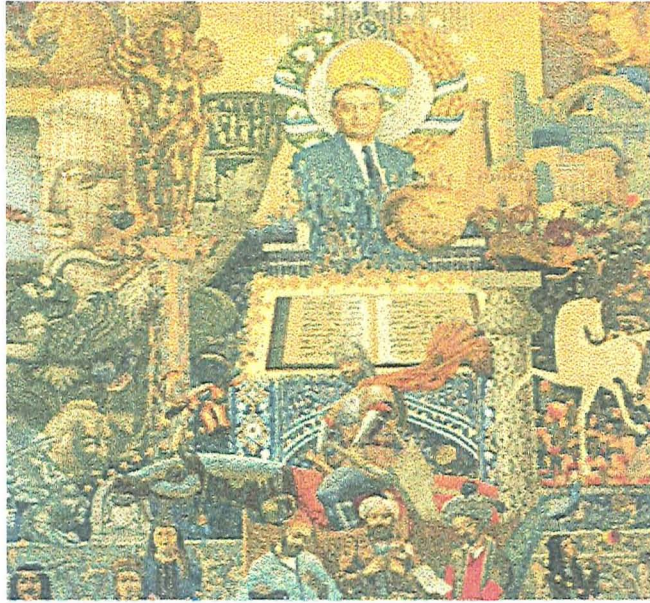
<sup>25</sup> Jallalov, during the Independence period, started signing his name as Jalol. Under Soviet rule, all citizens were supposed to have a family name, which was not the case prior to the Soviet period for Muslims, who were known either by the name of their clan, tribe or location in addition to their first names. The Russian ending '-ov' is patronymic, and these names given to Central Asians were their first names turned into a patronymic. However, under the current nationalistic mood, there has been a return to original names. With Russian-style patronymic endings cut from family names. Jallalov was inconsistent about this, however: depending on circumstances, he either used the Russified Jallalov or his ancestral Muslim name Jalol. For consistency, I use Jallalov throughout this thesis.



Fig.6 Bakhodyr Jallalov's mural titled *Under the Vault of Eternity* (8000 x 10000 cm), for the central staircase of the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan (1993-2001). Photo taken by myself in 2001.



Fig.7 *Under the Vault of Eternity* (detail). President Karimov's portrait was changed after 2001. Jallalov covered both hands in the same way as the media covers undesirable images, with small dots. Photo taken by myself in 2001.



divided into three parts. The composition develops from floor up to ceiling. The lowest level represents the great medieval past of the Timurid period - the rider Tamerlane looks down on the fruitful results of his own rule and on his descendants.<sup>26</sup> In the middle is the contemporary Independence period, with a huge portrait of President Karimov placed between medieval Islamic architecture and Hellenistic monuments of the pre-Islamic period. Behind the President is the Uzbekistan coat of arms, with branches of cotton and wheat wrapped in the flag's tricolor bands (blue, symbolizing water resources; white, for cotton; and green, representing Islamic heritage). On the highest level of the fresco are the celestial signs of the twelve months, symbolising an auspicious future for the independent state of Uzbekistan.

*Under the Vault of Eternity* was a quintessential thematic composition, one which emphasised new post-Soviet ideology by stressing the continuity of Uzbekistan's state from Tamerlane to Karimov. History progressed immediately from the glorious medieval past directly to the jubilant independent present. It is not surprising that a link is made between Tamerlane and Karimov, but the images that keep them together are somewhat confusing. Jallalov has placed an open Koran between the medieval and contemporary heads of state.<sup>27</sup> The fresco was painted in 1995 when all Central Asian states were experiencing religious freedom and had high expectations of future economic prosperity. By 2001, the situation had changed; a terrorist campaign by religious extremists had begun in 1999 and an economic slowdown was taking place. Back in 1995, though, it was possible to represent the President in a royal pose, pointing one hand towards the Koran and in the other holding a golden globe as a symbol of power. The globe has two hidden meanings: one points to the replacement of the statue of Lenin in the main square of Tashkent by a globe (Bell 1999) and the second refers to the replacement of Marxism-Leninism by the new national ideology of Independence, as the globe shows only one country: Uzbekistan. But in 2001 Uzbekistan, it was unsuitable to demonstrate religious fervour, to assert geopolitical and

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<sup>26</sup> The Timurid period lasted from the 14th to 16th centuries. The period was named after the founder of the dynasty, Timur, or as he was known in Europe, Tamerlane. Tamerlane was born in 1336 in the village Khodja Elgar, which was located in the territory of contemporary Uzbekistan. He died in 1405 and was buried in Samarkand. During his lifetime Tamerlane made the city of Samarkand the capital of his empire, which included much of modern-day Central Asia, the Caucasus, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and Northern India.

<sup>27</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> century Koran of Osman, depicted in the fresco, was the holy book for Central Asian Muslims; the Koran was annexed at the time of the Russian colonial conquest and returned after 1992 by the Russian Federation.

ideological superiority or even to claim political stability. As a result of this change in the political scene, the fresco was promptly changed in a number of ways.

In 2001, Jallalov immediately covered both hands of the President in the same way as the media covers undesirable images, with small dots (Fig.7, p.113). Those dots, joked another artist Vladimir Shevtsov, who participated in creating the museum's exhibition, would not hide 'either that abrupt movement towards and from religion of the state, or great expectations to be noticed on the geographical map'.<sup>28</sup> For me, what was noticeable in that fresco in 2001 was not the sense of shame of using Islam as a political tool (the religion, once regarded as the pillar of traditional Uzbek society, had become marginalised by religious extremists opposed to Karimov's rule), but the attempt to forget the Russian presence established during the Tsarist and the Soviet periods.

By 2002, improved relations between Russia and Uzbekistan led to further problems with the content of the fresco. With the new turn in foreign affairs between the two states, the Museum could no longer keep the fresco on display without any reference to a Russian presence in Uzbekistan's past. The museum received an unusual order from the President's advisers to remove Jallalov's work. The Museum administration could not simply destroy the fresco and leave a colossal empty space above the central stairs, but could only replace one fresco with another. The administration attempted to find an artist who would volunteer to cover up Jallalov's fresco. However, nobody agreed to do such a commission out of principle: artists were unwilling to destroy a fellow artist's work. So the administration had no choice other than to approach Jallalov himself. An agreement was reached, and Jallalov's fresco was painted over.

The same year, Akmal'djan Ikramdjanov (b.1952) was commissioned to fill the blank space left after Jallalov painted over his fresco. Ikramdjanov proposed a project which was promptly accepted by all interested parties, the advisors of the President, the Arts Council and the Museum administration. However, Ikramdjanov was highly reluctant to complete his own commission alone, because he was not confident that his work would not be destroyed as Jallalov's was. In order to go ahead it became necessary to invite another artist, and Azod Khabibulin (b. 1957) agreed to finish Ikramdjanov's project. Finally a merely decorative tableau emerged. It was divided into three levels representing

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<sup>28</sup> Vladimir Shevtsov, interview 12 August 2001.

Uzbekistan's landscape - the lowest line portrayed flowering tulips, in the middle were apricot blossoms and on the top level were mountains under a blue sky. Despite the work's lack of either political or aesthetic value, the Museum administration was satisfied. The administration was hopeful that this work would last longer than its predecessor, but if it too had to be destroyed, at least it would be a work of questionable merit.

#### **3.4. Alisher Alikulov**

Alisher Alikulov was commissioned to produce a fresco concerning the Medieval period on the first floor of the museum. Alikulov proposed a three-part composition concerning the Timurid period, named '*Timur*' and measuring six by ten meters. Viewers could see the composition itself on the wall, as well as a reproduced architectural plan of the famous square of Registan in the city of Samarkand, built under Tamerlane's rule and declared by UNESCO a site of world heritage. This viewing of the painting and the square was meant to enhance the connotation of the ruler's contribution to contemporary Uzbekistan (Fig. 8, p.118).

In his first project Alikulov proposed the following themes: the left side of the composition would show wars and the results of those wars, namely the securing of East-West trade routes; in the middle was the rider Tamerlane surrounded by flags; and on the right side Alikulov intended to place the entire dynasty of the Timurids. The Arts Council, which represented high government officials, bank managers, writers, historians, clerics of both Orthodox Christian and Sunni Muslim creeds, found portraying only the Timurid family unacceptable and requested that Alikulov include some scholars, artists and poets as well. Furthermore, the historians from the Arts Council did not accept the appearance of the founder of the dynasty. Alikulov followed what they indicated, but he convinced them that he could not portray the victorious rider as a seventy-year-old man, lame and with a crippled right arm. So the Arts Council, after much debate, agreed that Tamerlane be rejuvenated to his early fifties. Alikulov told me, 'I am not happy that my Tamerlane looks as if he is a weak man: he cannot lead an army. I wished to follow Gerasimov's reconstruction of the Tamerlane portrait.'<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Alisher Alikulov, interview, 21 July 2001.

Alikulov was left in an awkward situation because of the post-Soviet reinvention of Tamerlane (Fig. 9, p.119). Alikulov's comment reflected the logical contradiction in the 'Independence' ideology. The whole bulwark of this ideology was based on two claims. First, that the predecessor to the modern state was the Timurid empire, and the second that Tamerlane, founder of the Timurid Empire, was a figurehead of Uzbekness. These claims led to the assumption that the contemporary nation of Uzbeks have the same ethnic and racial type as Tamerlane. However, true history is less straightforward and cannot fall neatly within a contemporary ideological framework. There emerged a preoccupation with determining a correct racial type for the Uzbek nation by the ideologists, who exercised their pressure on artists to visualise the 'correct' look of the Uzbek race.

The main problem was that, despite the veneration of Tamerlane and his descendants by the official ideology, the warrior was also resented because of his ethnic origin. In 1941, the Timurids' bodies were exhumed by anthropologists and, based on the analysis of the skeletal remains, their appearance was described, reconstructed and published in 1964 (Oshanin 1964). Biological and anthropological research revealed that Tamerlane had the features of a Mongol, which he actually was by ethnic origin (his ancestors were Mongols from the Barlas clan, who converted to Islam.) The Russian anthropologists showed that the Timurids were of a Mongol racial type rather than the pure version of an Uzbek defined as the Ferghana-European race. To the regret of a generation of Uzbek scholars, even the skulls of Tamerlane's son Shakrukh and his two grandchildren, including the famous astronomer Ulukbek, showed various degrees of Mongol descent. Contemporary ideology could not accept the real appearance of Tamerlane as anything other than a pure Uzbek of the Ferghana-European race, so existing sculptural portraiture of Tamerlane based on anthropological reconstruction by Mikhail Gerasimov was discarded. The new Tamerlane image was borrowed from the artist Nabiev's version, which was created for the celebration of the Tamerlane jubilee in 1996. To reintroduce to the population the ideologically corrected image of Tamerlane, all artists were requested to copy the Nabiev version of Tamerlane's face. Previously, Soviet ideology had never exercised power over physical appearance in Uzbek images - the commissioned art historians could point to attributes like costume, but restrictions on the appearance of Uzbeks were never applied to Uzbek images.

Fig.8 Alisher Alikulov's *Timur* (Tamerlane), (600 x 1000 cm, oil on canvas). Photo taken by myself in 2001.



Fig.9 *Timur* (detail). Alikulov was forced to negotiate with his commissioners concerning Tamerlane's physical appearance. Photo taken by myself in 2001.

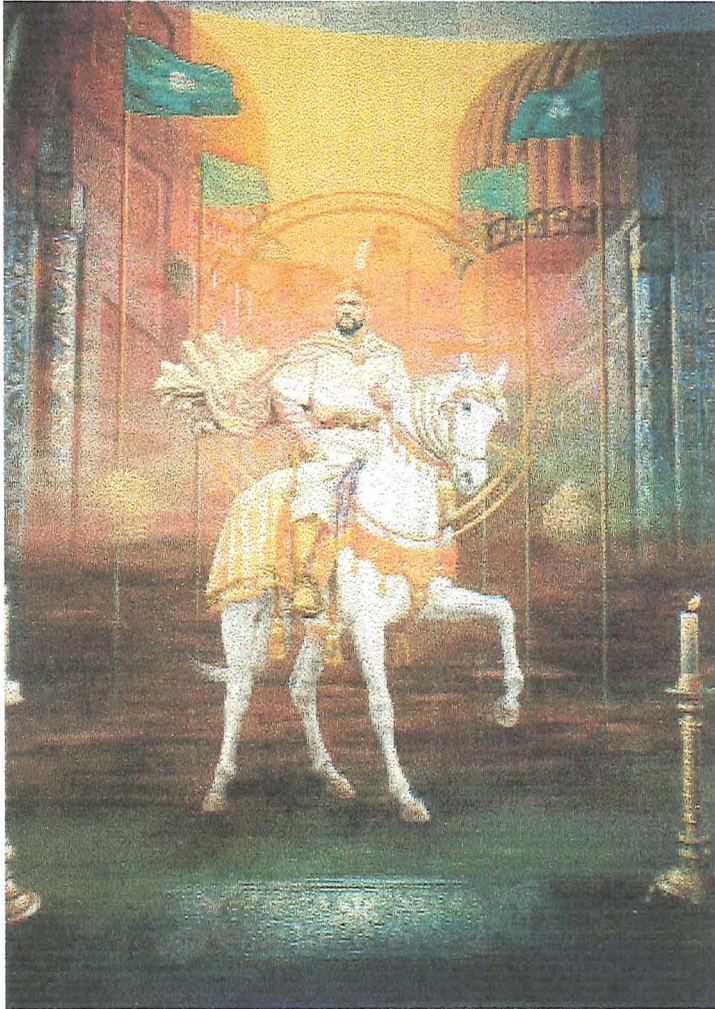




Fig.10 Alisher Alikulov, *Peppessii e Vosstanie (Repressions and Uprisings)* (detail). The image of the woman with children reveals Soviet aesthetics of how Uzbek women should be portrayed. Photo taken by myself in 2001.



Fig.11 Alisher Alikulov and *Represii e Vostanie* (500 x 700 cm, oil on stretched canvas). A column placed directly in front of his painting makes the central part of the composition, with the Uzbek woman, invisible. Photo taken by myself in 2001.



The painting on the second floor concerned 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century Uzbek history, and contemporary Uzbek history starting from the time of Russian colonisation. Alikulov named this fresco *Repressions and Uprising* or *Represii e Vostanie*, and it measured five by seven meters.<sup>30</sup> Alikulov produced a three-part composition: on the right side, the figures of rebels of the Tsarist Russian period, with the dates of important historical uprisings; in the middle, a poor Uzbek woman with two children, left without support due to the persecution of the males in her family; and on the left-hand side Jadids, or Young Bukharans (Sengupta 1997: 406; Khalid 2000: 379), who supported the Russian ‘civilizing mission’ but were executed during the Stalinist purges of 1937. Alikulov radically departed from the Soviet interpretation of the Russian-dominated period of Uzbekistan’s history. Benkov’s version of the beginning of Uzbekistan was devoted to the expectation of a brighter future under Soviet rule, whereas Alikulov’s version stressed how difficult in fact it was to achieve it.

However, according to Alikulov himself, the main problem was with the creation of the image of the central woman. Alikulov told me, ‘I am not happy with her. I could not make a pretty happy face, but I could not also make her how she should look. So what I was able to do was to make her a bit dishevelled and cover her head with a scarf.’<sup>31</sup> His creation of an Uzbek woman from the past required him to take into consideration various Soviet-period aesthetics concerning Uzbek women. Pre-Soviet and very early Soviet period Uzbek women traditionally followed Muslim prohibitions on covering their bodies, making their faces and bodies invisible to male outsiders (Harris 1996). At that time, Uzbek women covered themselves with horse-hair veils called *parandja*, covering the front of the face, and on top of that they wore a robe called the *khalat* which covered their whole bodies. In historical actuality, the scarf on an Uzbek woman’s head replaced the veil only after the mid-1940s. The replacement of the veil with the scarf in Soviet society took twenty years and was regarded as a great achievement, an example of the stated Soviet policy of ‘freeing Muslim women from bondage’ (Massel 1974; Keller 1998; 2005). This new freedom revealed the faces and bodies of Uzbek women to viewers, regardless of gender. It also brought in painting three aesthetics concerning images of Uzbek women.

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<sup>30</sup> Ilkhomova (2002: 35) in her article concerning this Alikulov’s thematic composition, provides another title ‘National Revolt and Movement of Djadids’. Changing of titles often occurs over time, as we can see with Benkov’s thematic composition.

<sup>31</sup> Alisher Alikulov, interview, 21 July 2001.

The first was the use of women's imagery as an exemplifier of the 'contemporary', or in Russian *sovremennik*, representing a continuous social and cultural change within Uzbek society (Lakovskaya 1977: 46; Kettering 1998; Gorshunova 2001).<sup>32</sup> Uzbek women were portrayed battling with illiteracy, gaining their places within the seats of the Soviet government and replacing men in the fields and factories of Uzbekistan. This type of 'contemporary' image flourished in Uzbekistan during the whole Soviet period. The second aesthetic came out immediately after the end of Stalinist period and still graced post-Soviet exhibitions (Myunts 1976: 15; 'Ang Ulu, Ang Aziz', *The Oldest and the Dearest* 1999: 16; Jurayeva 2001: 26).<sup>33</sup> This type cultivated the image of idealised Uzbek women embodying infallible family values, expressed through such archetypes as the young mother holding a baby boy in her hands, the happily subservient daughter-in-law, the obedient wife and most popular of all, the wise matriarch. Those domestic portraits typically portrayed women within the courtyards of *mahalla* neighbourhoods, wearing traditional clothing. The third aesthetic emerged in the Gorbachev period as result of awakening nationalism (Khakimov 1999: 17).<sup>34</sup> This particular type was inherited from traditional Uzbek poetry and the medieval miniatures of the Timurid period, reintroducing poeticised images of nubile ethereal beauties (Taktash 1978: 11).<sup>35</sup> Uzbek painters portrayed their beauties as dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and simply daydreaming in their palatial gardens or interiors. This hedonistic imagery equally contradicted the notion of valuing social input

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<sup>32</sup> Lakovskaya devoted a 1977 article to the solo exhibition in the same year by the Uzbek painter B. Babayev, who was known for his 'contemporary' images: for example, a dairymaid working with modern equipment. Kettering (1998) explored the creation of porcelain figurines of Uzbeks in Russia using various materials such as photos and written sources of the 1920s and 1930s. She especially devoted a considerable part of her research to Uzbek female images.

<sup>33</sup> Myunts (1976) and Jurayeva (2001) assessed Uzbek women images by Rakhim Akhmedov, which he introduced during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods. 'Ang Ulu, Ang Aziz', translated from Uzbek as 'The Oldest and the Dearest' was the title of a 1999 exhibition in the Central Exhibiting Hall by the newly established Academy of Fine Arts. This in an unnamed San'at article from the same year hailed, among other important post-Soviet themes, portraits of aged Uzbek matrons wearing headscarves and traditional clothing.

<sup>34</sup> Khakimov (1999) in his article, written for Jallalov's catalogue, implied what were the reasons behind signs of nationalism in Uzbek painting. Khakimov's claims correspond with the findings of Western anthropologists such as Kandiyoti (1991), Carrère d'Encausse (1993), Roy (1994, 1998), and Adams (1998). During the 1980s, the Cotton Affair or Rashidov Affair took place. This was a political investigation by Moscow officials of certain Uzbek officials' economic misdeeds. In the end, over 2000 Uzbek officials were sentenced, and there was widespread vilification by the Soviet media of the Uzbek elite, leading in turn to Uzbek resentment. Uzbek painters began turning to the pre-Soviet and pre-Russian past, which was epitomised for them by Timurid period.

<sup>35</sup> In a 1978 article, Taktash explored those late 1970s images of Uzbek Timurid beauties. He stressed that they were an attempt to aestheticise the pre-Soviet past using female images.

by bettering through education and labour of the early Soviet period (Kettering 1998) as well as promoting the rise of women's status in the later Soviet period (Kandiyoti 1991, 2000; Ilkhamov 2001).<sup>36</sup> But despite their hedonistic surroundings, the women in these paintings had prim expressions, demure and dignified poses, and always wore modest clothing (Western or traditional), covering legs and arms and not showing cleavage. Uzbek painters never showed Uzbek women nude, badly dressed, expressing emotional distress, or showing physical exhaustion and malnutrition.

Alikulov had to consider the religious prohibitions of the era he was portraying, but he was still tied to these aesthetics of the Soviet period (Fig. 10, p.120). Obviously he was not able to depict a more realistic sufferer under a heavy veil, hiding her face from outsiders, nor he could go against Soviet aesthetics by showing a woman demented from suffering. Alikulov had to compromise: he put a scarf on the head of the woman to make his heroine look like an Uzbek woman from the early Soviet period, who had been through the traumatic process of 'freeing from bondage'. Her further suffering from the Soviet regime's destruction of her traditional life was shown by no more than pieces of her dishevelled locks protruding under her headscarf. Alikulov was upset because he could not portray a real situation with a real sufferer, and his choice of the image was guided by the existing aesthetics of how Uzbek women had to be presented.

The placement of *Repressions and Uprisings* gave a different impression from what the artist aimed to produce. Alikulov did not take into account a column which was standing directly in front of his painting (Fig.11, p.121). That column blocked the view of the central figure of the woman, and what the viewer could see is actually a two-part composition. Viewed from the front, the visible composition consisted of the suppression of the rebels by the Tsarist colonial administration and the elimination of the Jadids by the Soviet state. As result of this spatial mistake, the whole content turned from dark, but hopeful, to a tragic interpretation of Uzbekistan's history. If in the intended interpretation of contemporary Uzbek history the image of the woman provided some solace in hope for the future, here was a bare reality of consistent failure, suppression and endless struggle of daily reality.

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<sup>36</sup> Kandiyoti (1991, 2000, 2004) and Ilkhamov (1998) emphasised the importance of the women's position within her family and in a broader social framework depending on her fertility and her age increase.

Alikulov's and Jallalov's works demonstrated that there was a change in interpretation of the thematic composition. Instead of looking ahead to a utopian future, thematic compositions retreated into examinations of the past. The Russian presence in that past was highly contested, with interpretations ranging from complete omission (as in the case of the staircase fresco) to debate over the benefits of the Soviet period (in the case of the second floor painting by Alikulov). Nevertheless, the compositional structure was the same as that in Benkov's influential painting: the division of the surface of the painting into three parts was still there. Even the use of iconography represented by state emblems, placement within composition of the various images of the founders of the state and colour-coded symbols remained unchanged. It was also assumed that Uzbek physical characteristics, including the height of the nasal bridge, the size of the eyes, and duskiness of complexion had to be as popularised for educational purposes as details of Uzbek national costume such as stripes and skull caps. Thus the principles on which thematic compositions were rebuilt were the same as they had been during Soviet period.

So, in this case, the next question is if the basic principles of Soviet iconography changed only superficially, does this mean the Soviet system of valuing painting was preserved? The conducting of state commissions in the new Independence era had become a long and winding process, with persistent correcting and redoing of thematic compositions. This suggests the procedure of valuing had also changed. In the following section, I will address how valuing thematic compositions by the independent state commission system changed paintings' moral, economic and social values.

### **3.5. How and by whom post-Soviet state commissions were valued**

The President's advisors, the Arts Council and the museum administration monitored the state commissions for the museum (I cite the three bodies in order of influence). The president's advisors gave the order and hired various specialists for the Arts Council. These Arts Council members represented a broad range of specialists such as clerics of both the Muslim and Orthodox Christian creeds, scholars representing socio-political disciplines, bank managers, bureaucrats and so on. But excluded from the Arts Council were artists and art historians. The museum administration remained the same as it had been during Soviet period. Those three bodies had different responsibilities - the advisors gave a commission

and intervened rarely but decisively, the Arts Council was responsible for implementation of the new ideology, censorship, and determining the political correctness of each work put on display, and finally the administration was responsible for covering the financial cost of production. That triumvirate was supposed to approve and oversee the creation of thematic compositions. It was not surprising that there were only males in that triumvirate: clerics in both Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam can be only be males, the advisers to the President and scholars were males, and even if there were a few women in the museum administration their opinions were considered unimportant because of their insignificant employment positions. If there was a similarity between Soviet and post-Soviet period valuing in so far as the valuers were and continued to be men, there were dramatic differences in the ethnicity, religion and ideology of the participants. This, combined with the division of responsibilities over the commission, management, appraisal and the economic reward, made the whole delivery of an art commission extremely painful and protracted.

The President's advisors were in charge of the prolonged reconstruction of the museum (1991–2004). Their interference with projects was rare, but when made was decisive. In the case of Jallalov's commission, they nullified a completed work of the Arts Council, museum administration and an artist. Their action demonstrated that any work could be obliterated if the vector of state policy changed. The destruction of *Under the Vault of Eternity* owed to the rise of militant Islamic groups and radical changes in the direction of the *Mustakilik* ideology by Karimov's regime. This precedent of the futility of labour undermined many artists' morale. Ikramdjanov and Khabibulin became cautious in claiming authorship of the staircase composition. They did as little as possible to produce state commissions because they realized that the new validation system destroyed an important criterion of artistic labour: durability. As I stressed at the beginning of this chapter, durability was an important part of the Soviet definition of a 'masterpiece'. A masterpiece was supposed to symbolize the indestructibility of the regime that commissioned it. Any uncertainty in the long life of an artwork, caused by the flux of different ideologies, made artists less motivated to produce works in a genre which required intensive labour, time and technical skill. This is another important reason why the more complex thematic composition was replaced by a simple landscape, and why that particular

landscape was of a poor technical finish. Replacement of the top genre by the less valued genre revealed a dramatic difference in overseeing state commissions between Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

From the very beginning there emerged a difference between the Soviet and post-Soviet state commission. The post-Soviet state commission was represented by three separate sets of beliefs: the secular *Mustakilik* ideology and two religions, Islam and Orthodox Christianity. Those three ideologies had no common ground in valuing painting and therefore there was only one option, a group discussion over the content of the thematic composition. During Arts Council meetings it became apparent that the bearers of those three ideologies cared more about their own agendas than in speeding the project's end. Protracted ideological competition culminated in ad hoc decision-making over the final acceptance of the commission, which undermined artists' understanding of the rules of what they could and could not do. One example was Alikulov's successful attempt to rejuvenate Tamerlane, a rejection of the previously-approved Nabiev image of Tamerlane. By allowing Alikulov to go against an earlier decision, the Arts Council contradicted itself. Such inconsistencies in interpretation of thematic compositions led to artists' assumption that a work's iconography became dependent on negotiation skills rather than ideological expression.

The museum administration was in a complex situation because it needed to deal with the economic issues of each commission. The administration was not aware of the Union of Artists' economic practices, nor were they able to introduce a comparable scheme of payment. It is possible to blame the administration for an absence of initiative because the whole museum experienced delays in salaries payment up to nearly a half a year. Artists, as museum employees, were forced to wait several months for a contract payment. Even if they received a lump sum of money, gigantic compared to any state employee, the artists' honoraria were immediately devalued by the ongoing inflation and were swallowed by end-of-year taxation. Unlike in the Soviet period, when payment for state commissions was given to artists after taxes, in the independent period artists were taxed at the end of the year. With inflation up to 20% and taxation equal to that on private entrepreneurs, over 85% for each commission, artists had an unpleasant surprise. They discovered that their work for the state, instead of giving them benefits, actually put them in financial debt to the



state. Post-Soviet economic valuing of their painting led to financial difficulties for artists, and the absence of certainty that they would receive a good pension for the future.

Thus post-Soviet state commissions were characterised by a complete lack of Soviet-period painting valuation. Each of the three bodies involved made their own contribution towards shattering artists' confidence in the expertise of state specialists. With the uncertainty over outcomes of the management, ambiguity over the validation of their paintings and negative financial pricing of their artistic labour, artists inevitably had some reflections, which I examine in my concluding section.

### **3.6. The fate of artists**

Four Uzbek painters, Bakhodir Jallalov (b.1949), Akmal'djan Ikramdjanov (b.1952), Azod Khabibulin (b.1959) and Alisher Alikulov (b.1963) were commissioned to create the three thematic compositions for the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan. Because two artists, Khabibulin and Ikramdjanov, had a minimal involvement with the state commission, I am going to focus only on the responses of the artists who were most strongly affected by the events. I interviewed in depth Jallalov and Alikulov many times during my stay in Tashkent (1999-2001). In the case of Jallalov, we had been acquainted since 1987, so it was interesting to compare longer-term changes in his perception of artistic creativity in connection to state commissions.

Bakhodir Jallalov had a significant career under the Soviet period, and was the last head of the local Union of Artists. Jallalov represents the generation that came about in the 1980s. His own interests were turned towards creative, ambitious projects that coincided with a massive building programme of the 1960s-1980s requiring decoration of theatres, concert halls, and educational institutions. State commissions were Jallalov's opportunity to represent his generation of Uzbek artists, whose perception of thematic compositions differ from the older generation. He was the first Uzbek artist to incorporate themes concerning the Timurid period, which claimed Uzbekistan's brilliant medieval historical heritage. Out of his 11 grand projects, nearly all are devoted to glorifying the Timurids' cultural contributions. Moreover, eight of those projects were major landmarks of Tashkent's urban landscape such as the Bakhor Concert Hall and the Turkiston Government Palace. Jallalov's Soviet-era work paved the way for the contemporary Independence-period

ideology, with its emphasis on revival of the past. Therefore it was a rather unexpected turn for Jallalov that he could not find his place within the *Mustakilik* ideology. Jallalov's candidacy for the vacant place of head of the Fine Arts Academy failed, as the Chamber of Ministers preferred the less eminent, but more studious, artist Tursunali Kuziev. This appointment signified to Jallalov that the state promotes artists not for their skill but due to their connections.

According to comments by his fellow artists, Jallalov's creative career as an artist declined after his humiliating experience working for the Historical Museum. But Jallalov decided that he could still mould Uzbek art, if not from a bureaucratic chair or through channeling his efforts in an exhausting state commission system, then from gaining influence over art through a collection policy. He started his new career as consultant for the National Bank of Uzbekistan (NBU) where, together with 12 bank managers, he collected oil paintings of independent Uzbekistan. Jallalov, according to all my respondents, has to handle the collection of oil painting for people who have no understanding or knowledge of art at all, and he does so with great success.

During one of our last meetings in the summer of 2001, Jallalov happily showed me five published volumes of collected oil paintings and told me that the bank's collection has reached over 700 canvases. The collection, however, has not been shown to the general public. Instead, it was partly exhibited for a celebration of the first decade of Independence in the Central Exhibition Hall of the Academy of Arts in 2001. (The collection found its own place in 2005, after the time of my stay in Tashkent.) Jallalov's interest is solely in the quality of the artistic work, and never in what genre is represented or what lies behind the canvas. He applied to the collection the Soviet criterion of painting, regarding manual dexterity, intensive labour and durability of the work, without employing the rigid Soviet genre hierarchy. For him, a well-done painting meant a good finished surface covered with thick solid layers of paint.

Unlike Jallalov, Alisher Alikulov belonged to the generation of artists whose education was formed under the post-Soviet era. The whole meaning of becoming of an artist changed for Uzbeks during that period. An aspiring Uzbek artist of previous Soviet generations would have been less hesitant to become a student in an arts institution, because that education would have been free; after graduation, thanks to the state

commission system, he could secure his artistic career with membership in the Union of Artists. The new generation, whose education fell in between the Soviet and Independence periods, experienced the decrease in state commissions. Akhmedov's fears were correct: that the Academy of Fine Arts system, with its lengthy period of study from secondary to technical, and from technical to higher institutes, would work against Uzbek students (see Chapter 1, section, p.30). Those who entered the arts institutions immediately after independence suffered a complete shock when they encountered a further degradation of teaching staff, due to the endless difficulties caused by small salaries and an undefined teaching policy. Very few graduates managed to work according to their professional education. Alikulov confirmed to me that out of ten graduates from his Arts Institute class, only he was able to pursue a professional artistic career.

Alikulov stressed that for him as for many young Uzbek artists, a main obstacle was his family background, which was a traditional Uzbek family from a *mahalla* (Mirkhasilov 1978, 1979; Tokhtakhodjaeva 1997).<sup>37</sup> His village, with the capital's growth, developed into a remote Tashkent suburb. Alikulov's parents' generation was brought up after the Great Patriotic War; they were educated at university and they expected the best for their male child, who was expected to follow in their footsteps. Alikulov's parents wanted a professional career for their son, a career that would give him a chance to support his own family and themselves when they became old (Tashbaev and Savurov 1989: 23; Temirov 1995).<sup>38</sup> Alikulov has very strong family ties, and despite the improvement of his financial situation, he continued to reside with his parents and siblings when he could easily have moved from his parents' house. While Alikulov struggled in the arts, his parents had to struggle with their own prejudice against the artistic profession and their fears that their son might not succeed. Their son's ultimate success brought them a sense of relief for his future and for their own position in the tight-knit community of the *mahalla* neighbourhood.

Alikulov decided to specialise in 'state art', not because it would give him an easier life, but because he sincerely wished to present his perception of his country's past. He

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<sup>37</sup> Mirkhasilov (1978, 1979) and Tokhtakhodjaeva (1997) give the stereotypical characteristics of an Uzbek family: a big patriarchal family with a large number of children, dependent and subordinate women, residing in a privately owned house in a village or in a *mahalla* neighbourhood.

<sup>38</sup> Tashbaev and Savurov (1989) and Temirov (1995) emphasised that, in Uzbek families, children were brought up assuming that their duty was to work and to take care of their aged parents.

conceded that ideology should be channeled by the state in arts, but what surprised him that there was no valuing of artists' labour by the state. He gave himself as an example, telling me how he established himself in the military genre:

I love the military genre, so I went to all the military institutions and asked them if would they like to have something depicting the Timurid period. They had no decoration in their buildings, so they agreed uneasily. But after I brought my huge canvases, two meters by five meters, depicting cavalry battles, they were overwhelmed. They have got exactly what they needed: the historical and military genre that would remind them of our glorious Uzbek past. Can you imagine that now they have established a tradition of taking photos of foreign military guests standing before my huge canvas? They even proposed giving me an officer's rank, but I explained that I would be useless as a military man.<sup>39</sup>

He stressed that because of inventing his version of the military genre, he found his niche long before he was commissioned to do thematic compositions for the Historical Museum. But his work experience for the museum was different from what he did for the Military Office.<sup>40</sup> Working for the Military Office was hugely beneficial for Alikulov because it made him known in official circles: he was given a medal for his creative contribution for the state in 2002 and he was respected in his *mahalla* (Ilkhamova 2002: 34). Moreover, Alikulov's financial dealings with the Military Office were encouraging: payment was swift and the artist did not lose money by working for the state organization. But his work for the direct state commission in the museum was a disappointment because he hoped not so much to have an economic gain but to be valued as an artist. Instead, he found himself battling the Arts Council until the very end of his commission, and by that time he faced economic devaluation of his labour by the museum administration. Alikulov expressed his opinion of the state commission system: 'Where do we have to look for recognition?'

Both artists, Jallalov and Alikulov, attempted to define their creative practice within the state system. They tried to remain within the legal parameters of state employment, by working for the banking system or for governmental institutions. For them, being an artist still meant remaining within highly official formal surroundings, because it led to social recognition within a broader society not limited by the arts field. This type of validation

<sup>39</sup> Alisher Alikulov, interview, 15 May 2000.

<sup>40</sup> Alikulov's unintentional specialisation in the military genre made him a favourite of the most important ministry in Uzbekistan, the Military Office. Independent Uzbekistan has the largest and the best-equipped army in the Central Asian region, counting 100,000 soldiers. With the preservation of the Soviet two-year compulsory military service, every male in Uzbekistan goes through Military Office records.

was achievable in the Soviet period by working on highly conspicuous commissions within the urban setting of the capital, whereas in the post-Soviet period the artists had only one state commission. The completion of thematic compositions for the Museum of the History of Uzbekistan did not provide Jallalov and Alikulov with the expected appraisal of their paintings. Jallalov and Alikulov had to face the crude reality that only the Soviet institutional framework provided the creative opportunities to fuel their artistic careers, whereas in the post-Soviet world their social standing and creative practice became completely separated. Achieving stability as employees of the state brought them anguish as artists who could not comprehend the value of their artistic labour.

Thus post-Soviet state commissions raise the question: how does the current regime value its chosen genres? In the beginning, the presence of thematic compositions in the Historical Museum indicated that Russian-style painting had survived and even was capable of new interpretations reflecting changing ideological trends. However, the management of the commissions by the joint commissioners demonstrated that valuing of painting was in a deep crisis. Furthermore, the economic devaluation of labour for production of what was previously considered the most sophisticated genre of painting made artists question their perception of how their works were valued. In the next chapter, I will develop further aspects of how valuing of painting was carried out in the parallel non-state sector after independence.

## Chapter 4

### The Illegal Art Market: Shaping the Circulation of Arts in Tashkent (1991-1999)

#### 4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 progresses from Chapter 3, continuing an exploration of changes in valuing painting from the Soviet to the post-Soviet periods. Chapter 3 examined Soviet validation of painting based on the genre hierarchy, and what happened with those Soviet values under the state-controlled art market (1991-2004). As I showed in Chapter 3, during the Soviet period a hierarchy of genres was established based on the Marxist theory of value of labour, favouring those paintings that demonstrated considerable skill and labour. As has often been observed (Humphrey 1983), the Soviet economy was intertwined with ideas of morality and collective sociality. Those ideas were crystallised in the genre of thematic compositions. Thematic compositions were highly didactic, reinforcing ideological messages about society combining within their production and consumption a complex web of moral, social and monetary values. The pursuit of this highly regarded specialisation in thematic compositions reinforced the gender hierarchy for artists: only men were deemed physically capable of producing and overseeing such demanding works. To some extent, the privileged position of thematic compositions continued after the Soviet Union collapsed, not least because the new regime was also looking for vehicles through which new ideologies and messages about the new society's moral values could be transmitted. The Karimov regime's commissioning system for paintings, and its associated valuing system, demonstrated that the mutually reinforcing composite of Soviet values became disengaged and altered. Nevertheless, the post-Soviet state commission system remained male dominated.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> As I discussed in Chapter 3, the main difference in state commissions of the two periods was that the Soviet system was characterised by Russian or Uzbek male artists, whereas the post-Soviet system was far more complex, with highly multiethnic, multi-religious and multi-professional (but still male) representation. Post-Soviet valuers of painting were male because commissioners were represented by professions which were predominantly male in Uzbekistan, such as business and bureaucracy, or exclusively male, such as clerics in Islam and Orthodox Christianity. The diversity of the commissioners made ethnicity less important than in the Soviet period.

Chapter 4 concerns a far more radical change in the valuation of painting, looking at the non-state controlled Uzbek art market (1991-1999). Here I examine how art was produced and consumed in the non-state controlled market, which brought to the foreground key issues such as who produced paintings, what genres of paintings were valued, by whom paintings were valued and who bought paintings. Examining these questions needs to take into account the fact that the whole artistic community changed during this period. What those post-Soviet artists sold was very different from what was produced for the state, and the trade was conducted illegally because of the prohibition on private trade using foreign currency. The paintings' themes revealed fundamental changes in the social structure of Uzbekistan.

An entirely different community of artists emerged in Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet period. Uzbek male painters, graduates of the two-tier arts education system with highly specialised skills, were no longer the sole representatives of the nation's art world. Membership in the Academy of Fine Arts of Uzbekistan, the post-Soviet arts institution, increased 11 times as membership became accessible to all citizens of Uzbekistan regardless of their completion of arts education, ethnic origin or gender. These new members introduced non-Uzbek and female artists to the art field (see Tables 1-2, p.58). What these post-Soviet painters could produce and sell was very different from what was produced for the state earlier in the Soviet period and for the current Karimov's regime.

The etude became a best-selling genre in the non-state art market with the emergence of women artists, indicating the difference between state and non-state controlled production of painting.<sup>42</sup> As previously discussed, under the Soviet genre hierarchy the etude was considered the lowest genre. Thematic compositions, the highest genre, were ideological in content, durable, labour intensive, high in cost of materials used for production and huge in size, whereas etudes were apolitical in content, less permanent, faster and cheaper to produce and small in size. The etude fundamentally contravened

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<sup>42</sup> I stress that post-Soviet etudes were produced by men and women alike. My data based on interviewing and observation of over 452 artists of gender, all ethnic backgrounds and all generations indicated that everybody needed to sell paintings and therefore produced etudes. However, because of women painters' position as newcomers to the post-Soviet art field, their etude production became associated in the arts field in a pejorative sense, implying women's inferiority in skill and education. To show why everybody had to produce etudes, I provide the example of the women from the Yannis Salpinkidi art studio. Further, I demonstrate that women were capable of reviving the local art field by bringing social criticism into creative practices, an ability which men of the Soviet and post-Soviet generation lacked.

Soviet values: moral, economic, and social. Quickness of production and absence of technical finish devalued the meaning of the 'moral superiority' previously associated with more educated, skilled male artists. This seemed to contradict the Soviet idea of a painting's 'worthiness', dissuading artists from creating a solid piece of workmanship which should last centuries hanging in a museum or public building. The imperfect finish of the surface of painting was not associated with the notion of beauty, because there was no institution requiring artists to follow such aesthetics of 'beauty'. This upside-down reversal of the hierarchy of genres plainly showed that Soviet valuing of painting, based on a cohesive interconnection of economic, moral and social values, had become altered by post-Soviet practices. Changing Soviet values through post-Soviet practices begs such questions as what happened with each of those disconnected Soviet values? Do some of those three values become more important than the rest in the post-Soviet period - for example, does economic value become more important than social and moral values? Does separation of those Soviet values from each other keep their content the same, or does their meaning become different as a result of post-Soviet practices?

Those post-Soviet practices in the non-state art market became restricted by the foreign currency prohibitions of the 1995 economic reform (see Chapter 1, p.21). The non-state art market became closely linked to the parallel market in illegal foreign currencies, which shaped consumption practices. This new private consumption of painting was limited to those buyers who could engage freely in transactions of American dollars without fear of being imprisoned for eight years. Those buyers at that time were a minute circle of foreigners, represented by diplomats, bureaucrats from various world organisations and by businessmen. Foreign buyers, usually stationed in Uzbekistan for a limited time, were concerned primarily with the practical problems of taking a purchased painting out of the country, rather than considering the display of their possession either in the host country or back home.<sup>43</sup> Painting as a part of internationalised art trade begs the question, how did this export-oriented art trade affect the local art world?

Art dealers, who were willing to engage in risky illegal economic practices, who estimated the price value of paintings and who arranged trade between artists and buyers,

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<sup>43</sup> According to my informants, artists and art dealers, foreign residents had a limited stay of less than five years. Due to their relatively short stays, it took time for them to become interested in local arts, and in fact trade contacts usually took place just before their departure from Uzbekistan.



did not come directly from the state commission system of the Soviet period and therefore were not exclusively Uzbek male artists. Many art dealers were women who came from the ranks of the arts specialists of academia and the publishing houses, and were different types of specialists compared to the Uzbek male painters. In the Soviet period, those women were excluded from valuing painting as art historians but, ironically, their foreign language and computer literacy skills suited them better in the changed market. Do such trade requirements help to invent new valuing of painting or not?

Chapter 4 indicates the growing importance of gender over ethnicity in the art field, because ethnicity no longer blocked to entrance to the arts institution and because ethnicity did not bring advancement in either the state controlled or non-state arts markets. Chapter 4 demonstrates that women art dealers' and painters' professionalism in the non-state market was influenced by their gender, not their ethnicity. Yet Chapter 4 does not focus directly on gender in arts, for two reasons. First, the Soviet art field had no institutional framework for studying women's creative practice (Baigell & Baigell 2001).<sup>44</sup> In Uzbekistan's case, as I mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 3, the local art world was a totally male-dominated field. Since there were no ways for women to gain a foothold in educational and institutional arts domains in Soviet Uzbekistan, there were neither women's practices in existence nor any discussion of gender roles affecting the local art world.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, those post-Soviet women artists and art dealers whom I studied simply happened to be female; they were not women who interpreted women's creativity culturally and biologically.<sup>46</sup> Yet

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<sup>44</sup> Baigell & Baigell (2001: 8) argued that discussion of women's roles was limited to word endings. All artists used the masculine word for artist, *khudozhnik*, to describe themselves, since the feminine form of the word, *khudozhnitsa*, carried pejorative connotations. It implied superficiality, that women painted decoratively or made decorative objects, and worst of all, that they created 'women's pictures', meaning 'sentimental, sweet pictures vapid in content'. Baigell & Baigell's finding cemented earlier findings which were written by Reid (1998) and Simpson (1998) who researched earlier Soviet period Russian women artists' creative practices.

<sup>45</sup> During the Soviet period, most women painters were Russian graduates of the two-tier educational system who came from Russia to Uzbekistan; Soviet period publications mentioned only two Russian women, Kovalevskaya and Kashina, who lived in Uzbekistan in 1930s-1960s. Local women, irrespective of ethnicity, needed to go to Russia to become painters because access to the second tier was denied locally. In the whole Central Asian region there was only one case of a female Kyrgyz painter, Sadykova, who went to Russia specifically in order to finish two-tier arts education and who succeeded in her endeavour. The reason for that was, as Baigell & Baigell (2001: 47) pointed out, that Russian arts institutions' painting departments were in favour of accepting only male students. Therefore, the whole Soviet arts educational system gave very limited possibilities for women, something which further narrowed their access to the Union of Artists and the Arts Council.

<sup>46</sup> Gender aspects in the Western art field had always been studied through practices of women artists, curators and art dealers, whose practices clearly manifested a gender difference in production, consumption

women's appearance in the art field provoked gender-associated questions such as what women could do and what men could do in arts. Therefore in what follows, I briefly discuss Soviet and post-Soviet sources relevant to the art world's changing perceptions of gender roles.

The perception of gender roles never remained in a static condition in Soviet and post-Soviet women's studies. Soviet period studies dramatically shifted from expecting women to be in the vanguard of social change in early period associated with Stalin (Reid 1998; Simpson 1998; McDermid and Hillyar 1999) to women's return to more traditional family roles in the late period associated with Brezhnev (Bridger 1987, 1992). Post-Soviet studies assessed women's roles through the dramatic shake-ups of society such as the fall of the USSR, ethnic conflicts, the emergence of the market economy, economic migration, poverty and consumption issues (Bridger 1996, 1998; Pilkington 1997, 1998; Buckley 1997; Ashwin 2000). Within Soviet and post-Soviet women's studies were interwoven regional studies of Central Asia, which were mainly focused on the titular nation women, for example Uzbek women in the Uzbek SSR and independent Uzbekistan (Akiner 1997; Megoran 1999). The role of titular nation women was presented by Western and local researchers either as beneficiaries of the Soviet state's emancipation policies eradicating 'bondage' and illiteracy, and providing women with access to the state welfare system (Massel 1974; Aminova 1977; Keller 1998, 2005), or as bearers of ethnic identity heading protests against Soviet anti-religious policies (Kandiyoti 1991, 2000). The following period brought the aforementioned economic hardships for titular-nation women and all women in Uzbekistan, worsening their living conditions with the loss of Soviet achievements and the revival of traditional Islamic ways of life. All these perceptions of gender roles are inevitably reflected in the art world, making equally relevant the findings provided by Soviet and post-Soviet women's studies, regardless of Russian or regional focus.

For a better exploration of how the principles of valuing painting were contested through the practices of women art dealers and by women artists during the period 1991-1999, I divide Chapter 4 into two parts. The first part starts with an explanation of who the female art dealers were. I go on to assess why and how women art sellers organised the art

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and interpretation of works of arts (Parker and Pollock 1981; Deepwell 1995, 1998, Seriff 1996; King 1999 and Perry 1999).

trade of Uzbek male artists, marketing them as ‘Russian artists’ for foreign buyers from 1991 to 1998. In the second part, I introduce the post-Soviet generation of women artists by explaining what made their educational experiences different from those of Soviet-era male artists, and how their education directed their trading and creative practices. Then I examine the reasons why those women artists conducted their trade with foreigners, and why women artists brought non-ideological themes in painting after 1998. I conclude the chapter with an assessment of how the interaction between women artists and women dealers forced the latter group to conceptualize new valuing principles addressed to ethnic Uzbeks after 1999. Those new valuing practices during the period 2000-2004 will be studied in Chapter 5.

#### **4.1.2. Why women sellers took charge of the local foreign-oriented market**

My interviews with male artists who were members of the Union of Artists and with art dealers, observation of art exhibition and trading sites in Uzbekistan (1999-2001) and following Uzbek artists’ exhibitions in the West (2001-2004), enabled me to find that women had taken control of the non-state Tashkent arts field. Six out of the seven people who controlled the whole illegal art market in post-Soviet Tashkent were women. This unusual situation provokes two questions: why art historians had not influenced valuing practices by the Soviet Arts Council, and why there was a sudden rise of women sellers after 1991. These questions shed light on why from the Soviet to post-Soviet periods, the significance of belonging to the titular nation never played as significant a role for women as it did for male painters in both the state-controlled and non-state controlled market.

To answer these questions, I clarify what the position of art specialists was in the Union of Artists through membership policies, demonstrating that the draconian rules set for arts critics’ membership made their numbers in the Union so small, and women art critics in particular nonexistent in the Union. After that I turn to an assessment of those seven people running the local art market, indicating their age group and Soviet-period educational and work experiences. I then focus on two of the six women, and through an analysis of those two women’s working and trading practices, I explain why women came to control the local art trade. My choice of those two women comes from three reasons. The

first reason is due to ethical considerations. It was necessary for me to assure my respondents that neither their information nor disclosure of their identities would lead to unforeseen damaging consequences to their physical, economic and emotional wellbeing. It was impossible to preserve anonymity in the minute Tashkent art business world which comprised of only seven people in total; thus, even I had tried to anonymise informants it would have been obvious who I was talking about. I therefore decided that I could not disclose names unless the respondents agreed, and those two women allowed me to reveal their identities. Secondly, those two women dealers appear in following chapters owing to their importance in Tashkent arts field, and I find it is better to introduce them now.

So, why were art historians so invisible in the valuing practices conducted by the Soviet Arts Council? Boris Groys (1995: 159) pointed at two important characteristics concerning the Soviet art field, which shed some light on the position of art historians within the Union of Artists and effectively in the Arts Council. The first was that Soviet arts production was similar to the other Soviet industries in that it applied the same principle of valuing quantity over quality. Art historians' selection for membership was based on the quantity of their publications rather than quality of their research. The second characteristic was that the art field had certain specialisations which had less 'status' than others: for example, curators. Curators were art historians trained to oversee museum collections. Groys explained that curatorial positions were less influential compared to artists, because artists enjoyed greater access to influential high party bureaucracy, something curators never had. Further, I am going to discuss Groys's findings on how those two characteristics became decisive in restricting art historians' influence in arts valuing, and placing women art historians on the margins of the state arts system. A thorough description of the entrance requirements is necessary to demonstrate that entrance conditions demanded a mammoth amount of production of sources of the Soviet arts. Quality at the time of publication was rarely either important or good.

Art historians and critics stood very little chance of becoming members of the Union of Artists. The membership requirement for art historians was that a candidate had to demonstrate their contribution to the arts field either as arts researchers or art critics. A candidate researcher needed to have produced extensive scholarly research, including a minimum of three books on Soviet art history addressing such issues as artists' biographies,

iconographic studies, information on the rise of specific genres during various decades in different Soviet republican schools of painting and technical aspects of painting concerning structure of pigments, layers of paint and types of brushstrokes. A candidate art critic was supposed to demonstrate an active engagement in assessment of exhibitions and to promote interest in new names and themes in painting, which should be represented by at least 20 published articles in the leading arts magazines such as *Art, Creativity and Decorative Arts* (*Iskusstvo, Tvorchestvo and Dekorativno-Prikladnoe Iskusstvo.*) Needless to say, the fulfillment of such requirements was extremely difficult. The creation of an art history book, from writing to publishing, took between five and ten years. And amassing such a large number of published articles was particularly time-consuming because the leading art magazines had set quotas of one article per year for non-members from associated Unions. For the same person from the same Union to publish 20 articles was thus a rare achievement.

The average membership age in the arts historians' section was the mid-50s, and membership was usually granted as recognition of a lifetime's work. Women's earlier retirement age, 55, made it futile for women to strive for membership because it was likely that they would retire before they could achieve membership. Male art historians' retirement age was 60, and as members of the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan had very little time to make their mark on the work of the Arts Council. The Uzbek Union of Artists had very few art historians, regardless of gender, who managed to achieve membership during the Soviet period. Those who survived to the post-Soviet period had already reached their 80s, and were unwilling to risk being incarcerated for eight years for illegal foreign currency transactions, which for most would mean finishing the rest of their life in jail. In their place came a much younger generation of arts specialists who were more daring than their older colleagues.

All post-Soviet women art dealers were between 30 and 40 years old at the time of my fieldwork. The women's ages require me to assess what was their occupational position before and after fall of the Soviet institutional system, their ethnic identity and their family position. During the Soviet period, women's positions were peripheral in the arts field, reflecting gendered occupations. Susan Bridger (1987) pointed out that typical Soviet women's occupations in the labour market as a whole tended to be less prestigious, low-

paying jobs. The arts field was no exception: women art historians tended to work in the publishing business as a part of editorial boards, or as researchers in the Arts Institute. Women rarely got respected curatorial positions, which Groys (1995) discussed, not to mention well paid and influential positions as members of the Union of Artists or Arts Council.

However, women's less influential jobs did not necessarily mean that among women there was no variation in access to employment. Gail Lapidus (1978: 228) and Nancy Lubin (1982, 1984) argued that access to occupations among various ethnic groups in Soviet Central Asia was not even. Both researchers pointed out that Slavic women tended to occupy better positions compared to women of titular nations, such as Uzbek or Turkmen women. Yet, art historian positions were considered so 'low' in every aspect that there was no great competition for the jobs of curators, critics and historians between various ethnic groups. As an example, during my own experience as a woman and as a curator in Kyrgyzstan, my salary in fact was 10% less than that of a cleaner in the same museum. The absence of competition for this type of job made women art historians' ethnic representation very broad in Central Asia. Art historians in Uzbekistan belonged to three ethnic groups: Uzbek, Slavic or Russian, and Korean.<sup>47</sup>

Despite their bottom-level institutional positions, all these women came to the arts field from families with strong connections in the cultural, bureaucratic and arts institutional frameworks. With the emergence of the market economy, most of the old elite rapidly became the new elite as the high bureaucracy carried out privatisation (Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 1998; Luong 2002; Hann 2002). Network connections allowed descendants of the old elite to move easily into newly privatised business. Apart from inherited network connections, women also had learned skills, which ironically they had owing to their lower-status positions during the earlier Soviet period.

Women art historians, owing to their junior position, acquired two important skills during the 1980s. Those skills, which male artists were never required to have, made male

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<sup>47</sup> In regional studies, the usage of the term Russian or Slavic was applied in relation to the European settlers coming from Russia to Central Asia. I will discuss the ethnic Koreans' history more closely in the following chapters concerning Christian art themes.

artists handicapped compared to women art historians with the 1995 introduction of market reforms. In the 1980s, art historian positions required additional skills apart from knowledge of art history, skills which became indispensable assets for them in the 1990s. Those skills were computer literacy and the knowledge of foreign languages. At that time the Soviet Academia introduced the compulsory requirement to be computer literate (Heller 1988). Young specialists went to learn those new skills in order to secure their positions. Another requirement for young specialists was a proven certificate of foreign language proficiency. Art specialists overwhelmingly tended to learn French, traditionally the language of arts education in Russian institutions. Knowing a foreign language entitled them to a salary increase of up to 15%, so ill-paid Soviet art specialists were highly motivated to pass language exams.<sup>48</sup> The post-Soviet institutional breakdown and transformation of the Union into the Academy gave advantages to few arts specialists, and those who profited were those who had language and computer skills. I will now move on to two main characters of the local art field in order to illustrate the above points.

Natalya Musina, born in 1952, is a daughter of a prominent choreographer who founded an Uzbek national dance school. Musina went straight from an arts publication house to studying arts marketing at a course in Paris sponsored by the European Union. On the year-long course she learned how the Western art market operates and how to benefit from NGO projects. After returning from France, she became employed by the Businesswomen Association (I shall continue in detail Musina's work in the Businesswomen Association in Chapter 5). Later in 2001, she opened her own gallery, Karavan. She was a leading curator who organised important exhibitions before the opening of the Academy of Fine Arts. She remains a predominant fundraiser for all non-governmental exhibitions in Tashkent. She also curates all major Uzbek trading exhibitions abroad. My cooperation with Musina continued in Uzbekistan and while she was attached to trading exhibitions in France in 2002, England in 2003 and Belgium in 2004.

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<sup>48</sup> Overall, Tashkent had a strong tradition of studying foreign languages and was the only place apart from Moscow where facilities for teaching and learning European and non-European languages existed. Multilingual arts specialists in Central Asia were based solely in Tashkent. Certain specialists, for example those who specialized in medieval arts, knew up to four foreign languages.

Negora Akhmedova was born in 1960. Akhmedova is a daughter of two distinguished representatives of the Uzbek cultural elite: her father is the former head of the Union of Artists, Rakhim Akhmedov, and her mother was a prominent musicologist. During my fieldwork in Tashkent she was finishing her doctorate, which required her to regularly attend various international conferences concerning contemporary arts abroad and presenting papers concerning Soviet arts, publishing her articles in foreign magazines and working on her upcoming book concerning contemporary painting in Central Asia. With the opening of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1997, she was promoted to the position of organizer of the biennial Central Asian regional exhibition, which included artists from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. She also combined her work as the head of the department of contemporary arts in the Arts Institute with a position on editorial board of the art magazine *San'at*.

Women's foreign language skills and computer literacy paved the way for them to rise to the top of the private market. With new support from both government and NGOs for women's issues, women were able to use their skills to move to well paid jobs and privileged treatment. Their skills also enabled them to navigate the complexities of the illegal economy, which required dealing with foreigners and bureaucracy for smoothing the trade in paintings. The Uzbek art world's lack of direct contact with the Western market necessitated women's capacity to create a local foreigners-oriented trade.

One factor that contributed to the rise of women in post-Soviet art field was was a continuation of the Soviet support for women in Uzbekistan by new organisations. In the Independence period, women found that there were new opportunities available to them in both the state and non-state sectors. As we can see from the examples of Musina and Akhmedova, women had the support of governmental institutions as well as foreign non-governmental organisations devoted to women's issues. For example, the Academy of Fine Arts facilitated an increase in female membership and the Soros Foundation sponsored various NGOs run by women. Women were given priority over their male colleagues in studying abroad and participating in arts conferences in Western institutions. But although this support widened their horizons and their ability to understand arts from a Western perspective, their new knowledge did not provide them with financial security. Being in the position of breadwinners in their families, women needed to turn this knowledge into a



clear financial asset. They were able to do this through practical application of their newly-learned skills in the illegal market economy.

Another factor was the emergence of the black market in art, which helped women propel themselves to the head of the foreign-buyer art market buyer and to keep the local art market oriented towards foreigners. The circle of foreigners in Tashkent was extremely small. Women played a vital role in the transaction process. Their role was to work within the law by solving legal problems of the trade: for example, making an illegally purchased piece into a 'clean' one for export. As mentioned before, this trade was illegal because it was conducted in foreign currency. Foreign buyers alone could legally use foreign currency, and nobody would prevent them from buying whatever painting they wished to acquire, but they could still not leave the country with their newly acquired painting. If a foreigner wanted to take a painting home, he or she had to legalise the work's status. Changing the legal status of paintings for foreigners in Uzbekistan primarily involves dealing with complicated paperwork, including approval by the Cultural Office, final payment to the Tax Office and dealing with Customs in the Tashkent International Airport.<sup>49</sup>

The Cultural Office initially determines whether a painting will leave the country. The Cultural Office estimates a bill for the Tax Office, and produces various necessary paperwork. The paperwork amounts to a statement that the painting in question is 'culturally unimportant' for the state of Uzbekistan and can pass Customs in Tashkent International Airport. The tax bill comes out to 40% of the estimated price of the painting. These procedures are farcical because the Cultural Office always gives artefacts of supposedly low cultural value astronomical price values.

Michael Brown (2003) emphasised that such morally motivated attempts to protect 'cultural property' aimed to protect cultural patrimony from Western consumerism in non-Western societies or states. Brown's reference to protection of cultural properties from Western consumerism was supported by the director of the famous regional Uzbekistan

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<sup>49</sup> This situation involving the export of arts remains the same today.

Nukus collection,<sup>50</sup> Marinika Babanazarova. In an interview which I conducted in her office in 1999, Babanazarova stated:

‘The best works never leave national borders. Even loaning Uzbek paintings to Western collections was always an extremely difficult and protracted affair because the Uzbekistan Cultural Office, to protect treasures, sets a very high insurance rate for artefacts. Some paintings were estimated at \$8 million. I found it incredibly irritating that with the fall of the Soviet Union various Western adventurers swarmed in, believing that we would sell some of our treasures.’<sup>51</sup>

The Cultural Office set up the morally motivated protectionist policy that nothing of any real cultural, historical or economic value could ever leave the country of its origin. The Cultural Office set a special date limit to allow the preservation of Uzbek heritage, which for unknown reasons was defined by the year 1970. Everything produced before 1970 became automatically ‘culturally important’, and anything produced after that date could legally be considered ‘culturally unimportant’. In fact, the date division facilitates the export of contemporary paintings by making them potentially ‘culturally unimportant’. But in the case of works produced after 1970, the determination of potential cultural importance is done on an individual basis by a special department within the Cultural Office. Therefore the same state officials who set the rules are needed to engage in elaborate tricks to make an artefact ‘culturally unimportant’ and exportable.

While in Uzbekistan in 2000, I took the initiative to become a participant in these procedures involving the removal of a painting from the country. I painted a couple of flower still lifes and brought them to the Cultural Office for inspection. The price was estimated at a staggering \$600, and when I inquired why it was so high, the officials recommended I bring in an art historian who could negotiate with them the cost of the tax bill. I informed the Cultural Office officials that I am an art historian myself, educated in a Russian university and qualified to negotiate the price. I argued that I am not a professional artist and therefore I am quite capable of producing a ‘culturally unimportant’ artefact,

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<sup>50</sup> See on Nukus arts collection Kovtun, Babanazarova, Gazieva (1989) and Gazieva (1991).

<sup>51</sup> Marinika Babanazarova, interview, 17<sup>th</sup> April 1999. Babanazarova is a director of the Nukus State Museum, located in Karakalpakstan, an autonomous region in Uzbekistan. This museum’s collection of early Soviet art of the 1920s-1930s was assembled by Savitsky from the 1960s to the early 1980s. This is the best collection of Russian arts in state ownership, ironically located outside Russia. Babanazarova’s statement concerning insurance prices is not an exaggeration; to the contrary, the market value of some paintings easily exceeds tens of millions of dollars. Russian arts from the early 20th century are a hot commodity in the Western art market.

especially with the use of inferior materials such as cardboard. After extensive discussion, the Tax Office bill fell down to \$125. This situation indicates that in normal circumstances, it was necessary for foreigners to have a backup, a role filled by the art dealers. To negotiate a reasonable cost for the bill for the Tax Office required a very assertive negotiator, who could protect the interests of buyers and artists by disputing with bureaucracy in the legal issues of cultural property after 1991 including such aspects as the period when the work was done, style, genre, medium, and authorship.

Overwhelmingly, foreign buyers had no understanding of the pitfalls of local law concerning cultural property whereas artists knew and loathed those tedious bureaucratic procedures. Neither foreigners nor artists wished to deal with bureaucracy alone, so it was necessary for the dealers have to have skills in navigating the bureaucratic corridors of the Cultural Office and Tax Office. Either artists or art buyers paid dealers a commission of between 15% and 50% of the purchase price for dealing with bureaucratic procedures. Women dealers created for themselves a new professional niche within the illegal market economy: artists, buyers and the Cultural Office all needed their skills to legalize artefacts by determining their cultural unimportance.

The last factor was the lack of direct contact with the Western art market. Despite this, there were still foreign buyers interested in acquiring paintings according to Western market perspectives. Women dealers advanced themselves because they knew foreign languages, they had access to high-level social events at which they could meet potential foreign buyers, and because they knew how to market local paintings from a Western perspective. Socialising at cultural events involving embassies, the Academy of Fine Arts, theatre, classical music and ballet performances are expensive and only accessible to those with high social connections. An average male artist would not have access to such events or could not participate owing to a heavy workload. In other words, the absence of direct contact with the Western art market did not mean that local art market developed without criteria or prices set by the Western market. But both parties, artists and dealers, knew that it was impossible to blandly copy Western art market practices on the local level. There was a need to match the pre-existing Soviet valuation of art, but without the Soviet institutional framework, to Western market valuation of 'Soviet painting'. In the next

section I will show how post-Soviet painting was conceptualized from a Western art market perspective.

#### **4.1.3. Implications of economic valuing of painting by women sellers**

After the collapse of the USSR, the Western perception of Soviet painting was that there was only Russian art: art in Russia by Russians artists (Bown, Taylor, Lodder, Clark, Holz and Sidorov 1993; Bown 1998; Swanson 2002). During the period 1991 to 1998, Russian art functioned under the rules set by the Western market, which was based on economic valuing. Russian sellers always aimed at Western art buyers. Russian art dealers worked mainly with artists whose works' economic value in foreign currency was unchanged from the late Perestroika period until 1998. In the post-Soviet period, Russian dealers became interested in stressing the value of an unbroken Russian painting tradition which allowed those art dealers to completely ignore how the economic valuation of painting was established through trading, marketing and exhibiting practices during each historical period, and to forget about current Russian art market conditions. Under such uncertain conditions, women art dealers in Tashkent marketed local painting as Russian painting of the Soviet period. They selected artists who established themselves during the existence of the Union of Artists and defined post-Soviet male artists regardless of their ethnicity as 'Russian artists'. This practice by art dealers ignored any artist who came to the art field after 1991.

According to my data carried out among artists, art dealers emphasised life stories aimed at making Uzbek artists seem convincingly 'Russian'. The factors involved in this process could be defined by the following, cited in order of importance:

1. What type of arts education did the artist receive?
2. Who were the artist's teachers?
3. Were any of the artist's works during the Soviet period published in Soviet arts magazines?
4. Did the artist receive any official honours during the Soviet period?
5. Which of the state museums acquired the artist's works, and how?

6. Did any important foreign art collectors or prominent people acquire the paintings of the marketed artist?

7. Does the artist have a contract with a foreign art gallery in the West?

To make artists 'Russian', women dealers stressed the two-tier education, publication in Soviet art magazines and commissioning by foreign galleries. Continuing, I will analyze in detail why art dealers chose those criteria, and what were the outcomes of implementing those criteria.

The main requirement for a sale was the professional credentials of the artist, the most important being his two-tier education. Most of members of the Union of Artists graduated from the local Arts College and the local Arts Institute. The Arts College and Arts Institute were local representatives of Russian arts education. Artists became mechanically 'Russian' graduates because Uzbekistan before 1991 was part of the USSR, which was considered the heir to the Russian empire. Therefore artists' Russian education made artists 'Russian' regardless of their ethnic origin unless they were graduates after the fall of the USSR.

The publications, purchases by museums and honours received by artist within the Union of Artists of the USSR demonstrated Soviet institutional validation. The Western art market specialising in Russian Soviet arts was based on Soviet institutional validation. To sell these male artists' paintings, art dealers needed to tell the story of their achievements, supported by articles in all three Soviet art magazines and proof of purchases by the main Soviet collections such as the Tretyakov Gallery. This institutional validation justified artists' right to be considered part of Russian arts. A particular artist's contracts with and sales to foreign nationals added even more incentive for Western buyers to purchase his paintings. These contracts showed the artist's economic validation by the Western art market.

Marketing based on those three criteria - education, publications and contracts with Western galleries - was successful in one respect: the women art dealers saved the Uzbek Soviet circle of artists from complete destruction as a result of the new paucity of state commissions and prohibitions on foreign currency. Such success was possible because there was a very limited number of art buyers and artists, who during the vogue in Russian

painting at the time were able to follow a rigid price-setting policy. Art dealers put the same price tag on any painting by a 'Russian painter' to keep prices stable. Dealers conducted this policy because they feared art buyers could start decreasing prices of painting in Tashkent by shopping around, and because art dealers were reluctant to spoil their relationships with painters if some artists were paid higher than others.

Tagged with the same price, artists felt that they lost their individuality. As the prominent Soviet-generation artist Medat Kagarov said to me,

'Am I a good artist? Before, I knew that I was special whereas now I do not know that. What makes an artist special is his personality which is revealed through his work, style and context. And what can I aspire to now if we are just the same eggs in one basket?' <sup>52</sup>

Kagarov's comments implied that the same artists who produced masterpieces in the Soviet period were left helpless and disoriented without their Soviet institution. They became mere producers of 'culturally unimportant' paintings and with that there lurked an uncertainty in their own artistic credentials. Paradoxically, being economically valued as artists meant becoming devalued morally and socially.

This new system based solely on selling prices altered the Soviet principles of valuing painting, which were based on morality of labour (supported by the hierarchy of genres) and not on simple price tags. Standardised pricing of paintings regardless of genre made insignificant the moral values which signified for artists both their technical skill and affirmation of their duty to the state. Artists complained to me that pricing of the finished painting regardless of the complexity of genre was detrimental to their aspirations to achieve mastership in specific genres. Social values for artists were formerly determined through arts institutional validation, whereas now there was no social valuing because artists had no possibility of being officially recognized by any arts institutions, Western, Russian or local.

The uncertainties of Akhmedov, the former head of the Union of Artists, echoed those of other artists:

'I think I was the first professional Uzbek artist, and now with me Uzbek national art is finished. However, now I cannot be a Russian artist because I am Uzbek. But equally I cannot claim that I am an Uzbek artist if none of my works are bought by Uzbeks. Foreigners buy my works, but it would

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<sup>52</sup> Medat Kagarov, interview, 13 August 2000.

be even more stupid to say that I am a Western artist. Yet I want to be an artist. But my being an artist used to stand for something good and worthwhile. Now, I am ashamed to face my former pupils. They abandoned their artistic professions by becoming ordinary market petty traders because they could not cope with the changes. They still look at me as a teacher. They think that their beloved teacher has done well despite all odds. What can I say to them? I tried hard to build up an Uzbek school of painting for Uzbek people and what? The very same Uzbek people revered by traditional mahalla ways of life do not need us as they needed us before.’<sup>53</sup>

There was a widespread feeling that with the loss of moral and social valuation of their painting, Soviet-trained artists were losing their professional identity as well as their *raison d’être*.

The 1998 Russian money market crash devalued the Russian economy by 300% (Gustafson 1999), and led to Russian arts falling out of fashion in the Western art market due to a dramatic decrease in the economic values of former Soviet painting.<sup>54</sup> This sudden deflation of the Russian art market made the practice of marketing based on Soviet life stories useless. Women art sellers could not sell the works of ‘Russian artists’, but there now appeared unknown young women painters who were able to sell their paintings in American dollars.

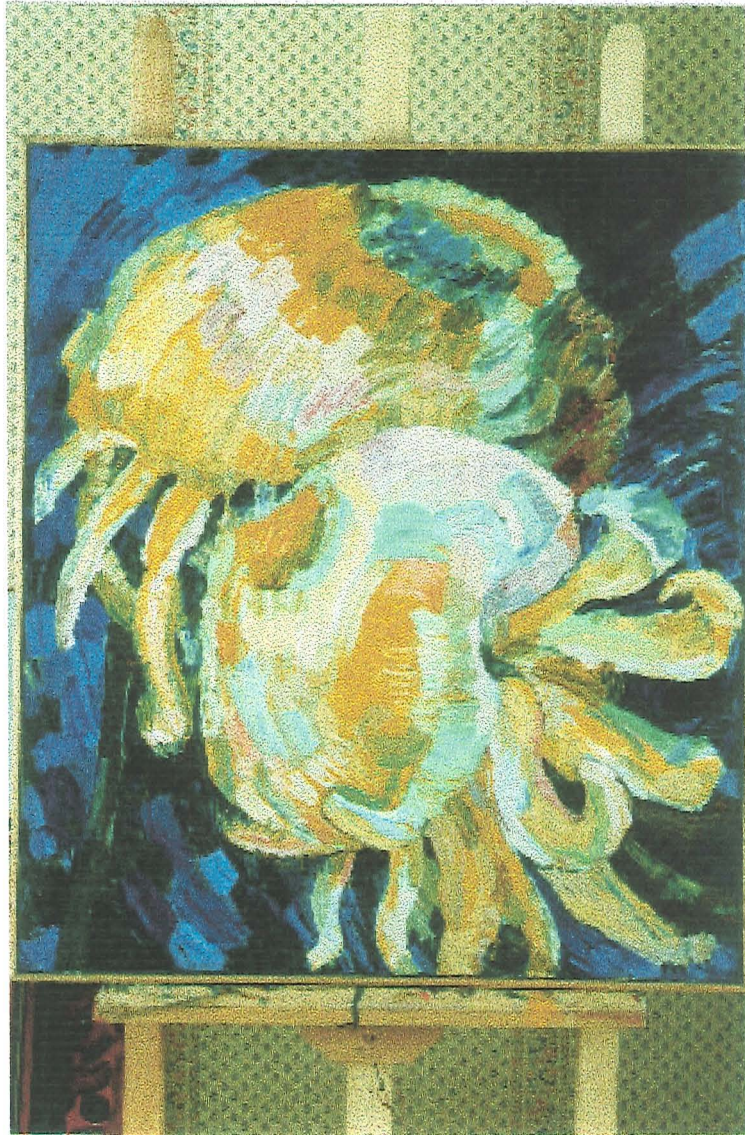
Those young women represented a completely new set of artists who had nothing common with the ‘Russian artists’, and what they sold were *études* (Fig.12, p.151). Their capacity to sell their unfinished and raw sketches for practically the same price as finished paintings by Soviet male artists turned upside-down the marketing strategies of women art specialists. Such a strong shakeup of the new art market made Tashkent’s art sellers question their valuing strategies.

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<sup>53</sup> Rakhim Akhmedov, interviewed 9 September 2001.

<sup>54</sup> The Russian art world fell into a deep crisis as the result of the economic crisis of 1998. But a full recovery had taken place by 2005, in the form of massive exhibitions abroad such as a Russian arts exhibition in the Guggenheim Museum in the USA, a Russian arts exhibition in the Musée D’Orsay in France, Russian arts in the Tate in Britain and a Russian cultural season in the cities of Belgium.

Fig.12.Inna Kulagina, etude, (oil on canvas,1998). Photo was given to me by Kulagina.





After ignoring for years the growing number of post-Soviet artists, women art sellers came face to face with women artists who did not fit the stereotypical definition of Soviet artists. Here I cite the differences:

- 1) Women were of working class origin.<sup>55</sup>
- 2) Women were of multiethnic background.
- 3) Women were very young, with an average age in the mid twenties.
- 4) Women had no two-tier education.
- 5) They worked in the etude genre.
- 6) They had the capacity to conceptualise an exhibition's context without official ideology, either Marxist or *Mustakilik*, but with fully potent social critiques of the post-Soviet state.

In the second part of Chapter 4, I will assess the creative and trading practices of those young women.

#### **4.2.1. The art studio of Yannis Salpinkidi**

I now move to the second part of Chapter 4, in which I examine the emergence of women artists. From my participation and observation of encounters between artists and their clientele, I show that post-Soviet artists could have entirely different educational and work experience from Soviet period artists, which determined their valuing of painting. The meaning and context of each of those values (moral, social and economic) became different for the post-Soviet artists compared to the Soviet artists.

My own introduction to the new generation of artists started with a Salpinkidi group, or Salpinkidi art studio, soiree in February 2000. The soiree was organised by Turtle and Violin. Turtle and Violin, or *Cherepakha e Skripka*, was a venture by Vitaliy Shelest and his wife Marina, who hosted parties with classical music, poetry and arts for

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<sup>55</sup> Soviet artists came from all segments of Soviet society: there were descendants of Russian clergy, which remained a separate class during the Tsarist and Socialist periods; seasonal hired workers without specific working qualifications; collective farms workers; single housewives; orphans and so on. But belonging to the intelligentsia foremost was defined by educational qualifications and not by birth. In case of post-Soviet women, because they never graduated second tier of arts education they remained in fact working class or even worse if they had no professional arts educational qualifications: they were considered amateurs. There was no more insulting term than '*samodeyatel'nyy khudozhnik*', translated from Russian as 'self-made artist', in the professional art world. This term connoted an amateur aping professional artists' creative practice. Those amateurs were never permitted to participate in the same exhibitions with professional artists.

rich locals and foreigners in Tashkent. Musina was particularly uncomplimentary about the Shelests, intimating that the couple was spying on foreigners and rich Tashkenties for the government. Musina's implication may have had a degree of truth, because she reasoned that the authorities would never allow the Shelests to arrange such a mix of locals and foreigners in private premises unless they were somehow involved.

The Shelest mansion was located in the area of Darkhan, the former heartland of Tashkent's colonial administrators. From the outside, the building was a typical dwelling of Russian colonial administrators, a tall one-story building with carved wooden window shutters, but the interior was quite unusual. The mansion had no furniture, and its interior walls had huge square holes that allowed everything from any corner of the building to be seen and heard. (This layout could be seen as further evidence of Musina's spy theory). The guests walked in silence from one room to another, sipping wine, listening to classical music and intently looking at the paintings. The walls in the mansion were covered with paintings from top to bottom. It was a random collection, diverse in genre, style, size and technical finish. After several hours passed, a more formal gathering was announced. Everybody assembled in the largest room, guests, musicians, artists and hosts. The artist Yannis Salpinkidi, the head of the art-studio, was pushed by the artists into the middle of the circle for his speech, which he quickly delivered before sneaking back into the crowd. In his speech Salpinkidi said that he was glad that his pupils fared far better than he did, and he congratulated every of his students for overcoming unforeseen difficulties, which his generation had not experienced.

During this lengthy soiree, the artist Vladimir Kim introduced me to the Salpinkidi group among whom were three young women artists: Inna Kulagina, Elena Lee and Elena Kambina. (Kim had got me my invitation to the Shelests'.) As result of this soiree, the Salpinkidi group managed to find sponsors who provided them with funding, which was invested in the publishing catalogue (2001) *Yannis Salpinkidi and his School*.<sup>56</sup> This catalogue provided brief information concerning each of Salpinkidi's 21 students. *Yannis Salpinkidi and his School* indicated that nine of his students now continue their artistic

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<sup>56</sup> The catalogue *Yannis Salpinkidi and his School* was published on voluntary sponsorship. However, the identity of the sponsors was omitted from the catalogue, as was mention of the Shelests' provision of the exhibiting space and their help in meeting sponsors with Salpinkidi group. Such secrecy in arts funding by private individuals reflects the secrecy behind arts production in the non-state controlled art market under foreign currency prohibition.

pursuits abroad in the United States, and only 12 students remained in Uzbekistan. Out of these 12, 4 were men and 8 were women. The catalogue information demonstrated that from now on, women's numbers were steadily outgrowing men's because of the appearance of non-conventional arts education. My further study of the Salpinkidi group assesses the head of the group, Yannis Salpinkidi himself, and his group's educational practices.

#### **4.2.2. Salpinkidi studio: the teacher**

In this section, I explore the Yannis Salpinkidi art studio as an example of how educational experiences became shaped by the requirements of the new non-state controlled art field. To find out more I highlight such aspects as how the studios changed the educational priorities of young artists in Tashkent, and what type of artists led them.

Tashkent has several studios led by Soviet generation artists who work with young artists.<sup>57</sup> The appearance of these groups reflected the crisis in arts education, the tough economic situation and the absence of generous state commissions in the post-Soviet period. Arts education was plagued with a falling quality in teaching standards in general, and an increasingly non-committal attitude by leading tutors in particular. The tight economic situation did not allow students to complete a time-consuming two-tier education. This combination of factors brought to the surface teachers whose experience was not of that of conventional Soviet-generation artists, and who were unable to pass on to their students Soviet values or Soviet skills.

I start by discussing what kinds of values and skills Yannis Salpinkidi could or would teach his students, and the reasons behind his decision to organize his own studio. This discussion is necessary because Soviet values could be cultivated only by artists who had gone through the complex educational and institutional system, and without those

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<sup>57</sup> According to the writer Erofeev (1995), Moscow and Leningrad in the 1960s were heaving with art studios which artists created in their domestic premises. Within those studios, artists disseminated different ideological and aesthetic trends which were unknown in the state-controlled art world. Those various art studios made up an unofficial arts world. It is likely that those informal art studios were inspirational for such artists as Salpinkidi. However, it is unlikely that Salpinkidi himself could have been accepted as a disciple of one of those Russian art studios. His professional qualifications as a drawing teacher and a graduate of the course in restoration of painting would have barred him from being accepted as an equal in those highly elitist studios.

artists those skills could not be transmitted from the Soviet generation of artists to the post-Soviet generation. Studios like Salpinkidi's were led by artists who never fit into the Soviet arts system and who were unable to accept those Soviet values and skills. Thus those artists were less interested in cultivating those values and skills in their younger followers, signifying the schism between the Soviet and post-Soviet generations.

Yannis Salpinkidi was born in 1944 in Georgia, but is an ethnic Greek.<sup>58</sup> Salpinkidi became a member of the Union of Artists in 1979 (Tulanova 2004). He achieved the modest vocation of a drawing teacher in the Pedagogical Institute, but that institution was aimed at producing schoolteachers, not artists. Despite his obscure standing as an artist and as a teacher, he somehow managed to start running an art studio.

One can see that Salpinkidi was not a conventional member of the Union of Artists, most obviously because he was neither ethnically Uzbek nor Russian.<sup>59</sup> A typical Uzbek male artist worked on state-commissioned thematic compositions, and devoted the rest of his spare time to teaching in the Arts College or at the Arts Institute. An Uzbek male artist taught students the Marxist economic value of artistic labour, emphasising the importance of moral values of labour as service to the state, constant improvement of students' skill at all levels, and above all to take seriously the opinions of the painters section of the Union of Artists.

Salpinkidi was not educated in conventional Soviet arts institutions, and he could not teach in depth difficult genres of painting as Uzbek artists did. Moreover, Salpinkidi never managed to do any thematic compositions during the Soviet period, which meant that he was not considered as skilled as his Uzbek counterparts. He was also a highly non-committal member of the Union of Artists, because he did painting for his own pleasure and not for perceived duty to the state. Such a position signified a disregard for the artistic establishment, a disregard that was returned when the Union's painters section defined Salpinkidi as a mediocre artist and teacher.

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<sup>58</sup> Greeks were one of many ethnic groups accused of collective treason and forcibly resettled by Stalin to the Central Asian region.

<sup>59</sup> The local Union of Artists was always written about from the perspective of either Uzbek or Russian artists. And for artists of other minority ethnic groups, it was quite difficult too fit in to many aspects of the art world: exhibiting, socialising, promoting and so on. Here I gave the example of how Salpinkidi, a Greek, could have an entirely different way of conceiving the meaning of artistic ideals and how he would pass those ideals on to his pupils as compared to an Uzbek artist. I am not discussing here why he would not be a typical ethnic Russian, because Russian artists were not occupying leading positions from the 1950s onwards in Uzbekistan.

Obviously what Salpinkidi would teach his students was different from what Uzbek artists used to cherish. Salpinkidi was able to convince his students to consider their individual welfare above anything. He thought that moral value for an artist should be his/her capacity to continue artistic creativity by selling works, without consideration for the artistic community's judgments on such ardent individualism. Salpinkidi instilled to his disciples that selling paintings must take priority over acquiring new technical skills.

In the post-Soviet period, Salpinkidi began teaching students in his studio free of charge. Salpinkidi understood that in the new era, many young artists would need support in finding what to do after graduation. Salpinkidi's ideas found a fertile ground because art students faced insecure futures after graduation and had no illusions about the possibility of state support.

Salpinkidi's students' artistic careers began not by exhibiting their own work, but from selling other artists' works. The complex process necessary to exhibit their own artistic works was such: sell others' works; after receiving some amount of money, invest in your own work; sell a completed work; use that money to display more of your works. Because it involved all these steps, the production of a single painting was heavily dependent on the artists' income through selling. Such a process demands minimal investment in artistic materials and maximum profit after producing each of their works. Salpinkidi's students learned first to sell and then to exhibit their work. This progression of activities meant that what made them painters was not how skillful or ideologically aware they were, but how good they were as sellers.

In the next section I will assess in detail who Salpinkidi's students were, and demonstrate what the students were able to learn in the Salpinkidi art studio.

#### **4.2.3. Salpinkidi studio: the students**

Those 12 of Salpinkidi's students who remained in Tashkent were a diverse ethnic mix. They were a bright group of young artists whose dates of birth fall between the mid 1960s and the mid 1970s, so at the time of my research their ages ranged from 25 to 36 years old. The date of birth is important because it helps to indicate which type of education (Soviet, mixed Soviet and Post-Soviet) shaped the identities of Salpinkidi's students. Five of the students had finished Arts College and seven had graduated from the Pedagogical Institute.

The young artists from Salpinkidi's studio openly stated in their interviews that none of them had graduated from the Arts Institute: by Soviet standards, their arts education was incomplete or even nonexistent. As graduates of the Arts College, most Salpinkidi disciples had been taught oil painting for only one and a half years of the four-year course. During this short time, students learned to produce some elements of still life, landscape and a face-to-shoulder portrait. The graduates of the Pedagogical Institute had not been taught even half of what was taught at the Arts College, because graduates were expected to become secondary school teachers specialising in technical drawing. The artists stressed that for them, being in Salpinkidi's art studio was a replacement for a traditional two-tier arts education.

I found such a statement very strong. Could Salpinkidi's teaching methods really replace the two-tier education system? Salpinkidi's highly informal teaching was based on *pleine aire* painting within the vicinity of Tashkent and discussing arts issues with an aim one day to organise a joint exhibition with participation of the whole studio. Such teaching methods helped bring an end to students' isolation after leaving educational institutions, but it could not replace the Arts Institute's teaching of art theory and technique. They could not advance in learning how to paint anatomically correct full-height portraits, or how to correctly paint in the architectural landscape genre with all its complexities of rules of perspectives and history of architecture. Overall, a Salpinkidi studio education taught students to be articulate in describing the potential of their painting but hardly to improve their technical skills.

The Salpinkidi/Shelests exhibition demonstrated that the group lacked the capacity to conceptualise the context of the exhibit. Only one of the students, Dilya Kaipova, dared to discuss why individually some works could be regarded as promising whereas as an ensemble they had no appeal.<sup>60</sup> She explained to me that Salpinkidi, from the beginning of his studio, was not inclined to unite his group around any specific ideas. She suggested various reasons behind Salpinkidi's decision. She thought that perhaps his main caution was due to the possibility of incriminating his studio as having some perceived political

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<sup>60</sup> Dilya Kaipova, interview, 21 May 2000. Kaipova was born in 1967 and graduated from Tashkent Arts College. She was employed by a theatrical company and regularly participated in productions for state holidays until 2001, when she moved to Russia. Although she was glad the catalogue was published, she was openly critical that missing in the content was why young artists appreciate being a part of the studio.

agenda. It was indeed dangerous in the new state for any group to have an ideological content apart from *Mustakilik*. Any expression of unified ideas, political or otherwise, could attract the attention of the National Security Services. As a sensible man, Salpinkidi would not jeopardise the well-being of himself or his students. Another possible reason, according to Kaipova, was that Salpinkidi did not want to turn his group into a clique like those in the Academy of Fine Arts, which like many creative institutions is infamous for such factionalism. She also stressed that there was a practical reason: Salpinkidi preferred to step back and observe his students' growth as artists, leaving students themselves to be responsible for conceptualising their creative practices.

Kim told me that as the studio's students progressed artistically, some felt that they at a certain point had reached a level of maturity allowing them to exhibit their works in separate subgroups or alone.<sup>61</sup> Among those subdivided into a separate group for exhibiting were three female artists, Inna Kulagina, Elena Lee and Elena Kambina. Kulagina was an ethnic Russian born in 1972; Kambina was of mixed origin, Russian and Uzbek, born in 1970; and Lee was an ethnic Korean also born in 1970. Kulagina and Lee were graduates of the Arts College, and Kambina was a drawing teacher who graduated from the Pedagogical Institute. None of them indicated that they had had any intention of going for a two-tier arts education.

Interviews with these three women demonstrated how the Salpinkidi studio influenced them. They insisted that for them, it was more important to sell than to exhibit their paintings: artists have to support themselves by selling their works to pay for life necessities and enable them to continue their artistic practice. They confirmed that they capable of mounting a collective exhibition once every two to five years, whereas the rest of the time they had to participate at least in one seasonal exhibition together with the rest of artists from the Academy. But these exhibitions, they concluded, were a marginal part of their creative practice. Speaking frankly, the women stated that they had to cooperate with each other as a group not because of their belief in collective good but for two reasons. First, group exhibitions tended to be better accepted than solo exhibitions in both state and non-state sites. Secondly, they felt that their exhibiting practices were a direct result of their

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<sup>61</sup> Vladimir Kim, interview, 23 March, 2000.

trading practices, so they took their inspiration from general consumption practices. Owing to that affinity in searches of post-Soviet consumption influences, they decided to work cooperatively on exhibitions. They devoted the most of their time to earning a living by selling their etudes. In the next section I discuss production of etudes by a female artist.

#### **4.3.1. How women painters introduced etudes to the art trade/Inna Kulagina**

This section is based on the observation of Inna Kulagina's production and selling of painting. Kulagina volunteered to help me explore Salpinkidi's doctrine of the importance of selling. For her, this theory stood on firm ground because for a post-Soviet artist to produce, market and sell an etude could take as much time and effort as would have taken a Soviet artist to complete a commission of a finished painting. In the post-Soviet period there was no institution which supplied artists with the necessary materials for painting production. Materials such as brushes, canvases, oils and turpentine were produced in Russia; therefore, artists outside Russia had to be highly inventive in obtaining these materials or working without them. Kulagina stated her point of view: 'This individual inventiveness was a sign of the moral value of an artist's labour.'<sup>62</sup>

Kulagina generously offered me four months' observation to see how difficult it was for an artist to produce and sell etudes, something the other two artists could not offer me. Kambina, at the time, was involved in the production of ephemeral arts such as sand sculptures and she was too busy to spare her time for etudes. Lee was less available than Kulagina because during those four months, she was busy with the creation of a commercial website. Kulagina's own experience was enlightening for me because her situation was emblematic for most Tashkent artists; the change in economic policies of the current arts institution, and the shortage of artistic materials, pressed artists into etude production and selling.

On the first day of our first week I was observing two artists, Kulagina and Lee, buying sugar bags in the Rice Market. The Rice Market was located in the downtown working-class section of Tashkent built under the 1924 regeneration scheme. This market was not a stereotypical bustling market of fruit and vegetable stalls, but an unattractive wholesale market. Nobody came here for a leisurely stroll; they were all here for purely

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<sup>62</sup> Kulagina interviewed 23 January 1999.



business purposes. On this day, the two artists were among those who came to the market for a trade. Lee was holding empty sacks in her hands and scrupulously examining them for holes and other damage. Meanwhile, Kulagina was haggling over the wholesale price of those bags with a sugar vendor. Attempting not to distract from the trading procedure, I asked Lee, 'What about the stamps?' Each of the sacks was stamped '100 kg of Sugar' or 'Product of China'. Shaking one of the dusty bags in the air, Lee responded, 'It does not matter. Art buyers always look on the front of the work and not on the back.'

During the following three weeks, I observed that the production of etudes was a well-planned process. In the Soviet period, etudes were highly spontaneous; artists painted on something available that they fancied, or produced etudes for developing a theme into a future finished painting. However, since artists now had to deal with turning bags into canvases, they were required to plan everything ahead such as quantity of gesso, time of drying surfaces and the cost of the wooden frames needed. Lee took the bags to her fifth floor flat in a remote suburb. She shared the flat with her mother and married brother with children. That day, after we climbed the stairs with our hands full of empty bags, her mother opened the door to us pleading, 'Lena, I need to wash Marishku, do not mess with your bags in the bathroom, please!' Lee washed the dirt off the bags, dried them, cut them into pieces and stretched them on wooden frames. The frames had been ordered from a local carpenter in advance; because the size of bags was standard, no measurement for frames was necessary. Meanwhile gelatin and chalk were mixed, boiled and cooled, for covering the stretched surface. After applying this domestically made gesso to the porous surface of the stretched bags, they were left to dry in the cool shade until they finally became ready for painting.

In the fifth week, to my surprise I observed that the etude had become an expensive genre to produce. Due to the cost of paints, the artist was limited to the use of only a few plastic containers. Previously, the Union of Artists had supplied artists with all necessary materials, and it was never questioned how much paint was needed to finish a painting, how many different colours were required, or how expensive certain colours were.<sup>63</sup> But

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<sup>63</sup> The correlation between the paint's cost and artistic skill affecting the economic estimate of a finished painting was discussed by Baxandall (1985) on Renaissance artistic practices. According to Baxandall, at first, commissioners valued the use of costly materials over painting itself. Only after there was a change towards

now, paints had to be purchased in Russia, transported and traded back in Uzbekistan. Artists went from Uzbekistan to Russia for special petty trading. Petty trading operations were risky because they required traveling by railways full of unpredictable passengers, including active criminal gangs and extortionists. An artist's safe return from Russia with a cargo of paints was an occasion for celebration with colleagues. There was a party thrown in 2000 by an ethnic Korean artist who had recently returned from Russia. Kulagina and Lee went for the party, and to buy paints.

After returning from the party with loads of paints and depleted resources, the women artists needed to carefully plan the use of their new purchases, factoring in the cost of various colours. Different colours have different price tags depending on the cost of the pigment used in production of the paint: for example, Cobalt Blue costs five times higher than Zinc White. The cheapest colours were used in the production of etudes, and the amount of paint had to be limited even before painting started. Therefore the artist prepared in advance four to seven main colours. In this instance, I observed that Kulagina had Yellow Ochre, Chrome Green Deep Hue, Prussian Blue, Red Ochre and Zinc White, bottled in one-liter plastic pots. These etudes were not rich in colour palette because production of an etude became less dependent on the skill of artist and more on the cost of the paint. In fact, to make a finished painting in a couple of earthy pigment based tints and one mixing white became as expensive to produce as one etude with several different colours. In the post-Soviet era, the etude was no longer a cheap genre.

In the eighth week, I observed that despite their higher cost, etudes were still easier and less time-consuming to produce than finished paintings. Kulagina's etudes were done by kitchen knife: thick paint layers were scratched into a flower still life rather than lovingly painted layer by layer. I popped into Kulagina's rented studio in the center of Tashkent. At the time, she was working as an arts teacher in the American school. Her salary was enough to rent a studio for herself, but the job limited her creative practice to evenings or weekends. Having a studio was a necessity for her: she could not work at home with her alcoholic father. At the beginning of the painting process, I observed the artist

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appreciation of painting did skill became more valued than cost of paint. The current women's trading practices allowed me to observe the same tendency: women pressed forward economic issues based on cost value because foreign art buyers were often uncertain of the criteria of good painting.

trying to find a better naturally-lit corner of the room for a jug containing calla lilies. Next to a wall was placed a wooden frame, four bottles of paint, white spirits, some precious linseed oil and a long kitchen knife instead of numerous brushes. Without the slightest preparation of putting the contours of the flower stems or the pot, Inna began straight away to mould, shape and scratch thick layers of paint with the blade of the kitchen knife. After several hours of intensely shaping blotches of paint over the treated surface of the flour bag, it turned into a still life with calla lilies. Owing to the thickness of the paint layers, it took several days for the canvas to dry out.

For a month Inna disappeared. Later she told us that her father had suffered an attack of alcohol-related delirium. The hospital did not want to keep him so Inna, as an only child, had to deal with him until he regained consciousness. She invited me to attend a viewing of old Soviet Uzbek films. I came with Lee to the cinema. Lee told me that Kulagina had also invited the parent of a child from her school, and we had to be discreet because this could be a potential client. We sat in the cinema several rows behind Kulagina chatting in English about Uzbek arts. The meeting was a success for Kulagina: after that evening, the parent made several visits to her studio.

In the fourth month of my observation, Kulagina managed to sell an etude to her student's parent. She sold it for a price of \$700 - equal to the price of a finished painting by a 'Russian artist' prior to 1998. Kulagina was always open about technique, genre and cost to her buyers, and she handled all the Cultural Office paperwork single-handedly. When I inquired why foreigners would buy from her such a contradictory artefact, she explained to me that foreign art buyers appreciated the experience of seeing how an artefact was produced, more than the etude itself. Seeing the artist at work, buyers were not so enticed to consider money - for example, how much they would save buying a cheaper etude in Tashkent compared to what they would pay for the same type of etude in New York or in London. In her turn, she felt that it was 'rewarding to teach individually each of her buyers how her paintings were produced.' In her words, buyers were investing in a first-hand cultural experience of arts in Uzbekistan. Kulagina brought back what the Uzbek male artist Kagarov craved in the post-Soviet period, the value of 'personality'. It was for Kulagina's unique personality that her etudes were purchased, not for her belonging to the Uzbek school of painting, generational division or affiliation to Soviet or Russian arts.

Such dealings made Kulagina far more morally content than the more distinguished Uzbek male painters who were marketed by art dealers as ‘Russian artists.’ While those artists tortured themselves over what type of artists they were, Kulagina clearly understood the results of her economic success in selling ‘culturally unimportant’ artefacts to foreigners for a high price. She told me,

‘I knew that I remained an artist because my art was capable of teaching people something about the time and place where the painting was created. I had no doubts that foreigners bought my etudes because I am an Uzbek artist of Russian descent working in Tashkent. By the way, what else apart from being an Uzbek artist could I be?’<sup>64</sup>

She stressed that her etudes were valued according to local conditions and not by some imagined Western market requirements. Kulagina had a clear sense that selling ‘imperfect’ work is moral, if the transaction was not based on the rules of the illegal market (attempting to outsmart the Cultural Office) or trying to adapt to the fluctuations of the Western art market. In following section I will go back in time, showing how consumption trends served as an inspiration for Kulagina and her friends in their art.

#### **4.3.2. Consumption instead of ideology**

In this section I connect anthropological issues concerning consumption to the women artists’ themes. I explain why women choose these themes and not men, and demonstrate that women’s exploration of consumption was in fact an overt critique of the new market economy in Uzbekistan. Consumption themes were chosen by the artists for educating an audience not limited to the artists themselves and to improve a stagnant arts field, not for making their works economically profitable.

Explorations of how ‘the powerless’ resisted state power (Scott 1985; Comaroff & Comaroff 1993) show that resistance took various forms, not necessarily direct confrontation. In Soviet culture in particular (Yurchak 1997; Tupitsyn 2002) and socialist in general (Humphrey 1995), so-called ‘decoded’ language and ‘decoded’ images were invented. In visual anthropology, those ‘decoded’ messages were studied through the objects and subjects in late Soviet period paintings, which portrayed hidden political

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<sup>64</sup> Kulagina, interview, 3 July 2000.

messages as immediately understood by the whole Soviet population (Boym 1994, 1996).<sup>65</sup> This point of view is disputed by various art historians and writers, who stated that at the time of their introduction those messages were circulated and interpreted only for and within artistic circles (Dyogot 1995; Golomshtok 1977). In other words, the senders and receivers of these messages were the same: male professional artists of an advanced age (Baigell & Baigell 2001). Supporting that argument of a self-contained circle was that those male artists did not do any valuing of their paintings, including economic estimate of their creations (Efremov 1995). The fall of the oppressive USSR regime brought to life new regimes with various degrees of political oppression, which revived the necessity of ‘decoded images’ in art as an artistic response to the new reality.

In post-Soviet Uzbekistan women who came to the art field could not look for creative inspiration in the male artists opposed to the Soviet state, because they had very little awareness of the existence of Soviet Russian non-official artists’ creative practices. The new women artists chose to conceptualize consumption themes in their art, exploring the dramatic changes from Soviet to post-Soviet consumption. These themes expressed what they thought about what was going on in Uzbekistan without saying it openly, and the implicitness was a shield covering them from accusations of political criticism of the Karimov regime. By discussing those three women, I am not implying that exploring issues of consumption was the prerogative of women only. On the contrary, in the following chapters I am going to show that artists of both gender and all generations were attracted to different aspects of consumption issues in their art. Nonetheless, what made those women’s focus on consumption special was that they used this popular theme in a form of an oblique critique whereas other artists did not.

In 1998, on behalf of the three women artists, Elena Kambina approached Natalya Musina to ask for help in opening an exhibition in the Russian drama theatre Ilkhom.<sup>66</sup> The

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<sup>65</sup> Boym (1994, 1996) provided a potent coded image in Soviet painting using the example of a domestic ‘rubber plant’ or aspidistra. From an official interpretation, the depiction of a family moving to a new apartment including an aspidistra was a positive representation of the state providing people with a free accommodation and a ‘*novyi byt*’, or new life. But on the other hand, the aspidistra was reintroduced in the domestic interior in the 1960s and before that was a plant associated with the homes of the pre-Soviet petty bourgeoisie. The appearance of an aspidistra signified a hidden message of the return to some missing domestic values, or a revival of the bourgeoisie so despised during the earlier Stalinist period

<sup>66</sup> The Ilkhom theatre played an important part in the cultural life of Tashkentites, being the place where the former Soviet cultural elite socialised. In addition to drama, the theatre provided space for exhibiting arts. Being permitted to exhibit at the Ilkhom was considered highly prestigious by artists.

exhibition was titled *The Thing*, or in Russian *Vetshch*, and its thematic range was inspired by consumption issues of the post-Soviet period. Musina, who was in charge of the exhibition space, did not approve of the subject matter and blocked the exhibition. The relationship between her and the artists swiftly deteriorated. The women artists were forced to rent the space for the exhibition in a privately run health center. What was interesting was not the lack of understanding between the women art dealers and the women artists, but the differences in how those two parties valued art.

These two generations had difficulties in communicating with each other because their ideas of moral value in arts were so opposed. Musina represented the generation of Uzbekistan's intelligentsia educated during the Soviet period. She had a clear understanding of Soviet art and was full of nostalgia for the Soviet past. Musina was used to professional artists being men. She was comfortable with arts representing political ideologies, either Marxist-Leninist or *Mustakilik*. She was also well educated and aware of non-official arts from Russian cities. Musina explained her rejection in an interview with me: she said she found it highly unacceptable to let the Ilkhom premises become accessible to non-professional women painters.<sup>67</sup> As I explained before, unlike the Soviet generation, the independence-period generation of artists was mostly of working class origin with a one-tier education which classified them as working class and not as intelligentsia. For Musina, to accept women artists meant to accept the ascendance of a new type of artist who brought with them new values not fully supported by their skills.

The young artists' themes covered social changes in independent Uzbekistan, such as the rise of capitalist consumption. The paintings explored social changes based on the quick rise of consumerism, when priorities became fixed on acquiring expensive goods whose symbolic values were only comprehensible to former Soviet citizens. Women artists wished to articulate their own experience of losing the naiveté of their childish beliefs in the Soviet paradise under the harsh realities of excessive consumption in independent Uzbekistan, which had brought poverty to so many.

The artists' analyses of the consumption issue were represented in their joint exhibition *The Thing* in 1998. Each of them interpreted the issue in their own way,

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<sup>67</sup> Musina, interview, 23 August 2002.

allowing them to express their unique personalities. The women agreed among themselves that each would create a painting of objects based on their personal life experiences. To understand their paintings, it is important to look at their own and their families' experiences as a result of the fall of the USSR and the economic reform of 1995. Their families came from non-elite, working class backgrounds, and their families' experiences were typical of what the impoverished suburbs of Tashkent went through during the first decade of independence. Therefore I start with what women did and what they meant to express in their works connected to their early inspirational sources.

Kambina explored objects that had symbolic meanings relating to the Soviet and Independence epochs. For example, a trivial object such as a Lenin electric light bulb had different meanings. Kambina painted a big, bright electric bulb with gouache paints on a cardboard measuring 80 by 110 cm (see Fig.13, p.168). The bulb proudly occupies the whole surface of the painting. The bulb is painted in bright orange and yellow colours, whereas the background is a dark blue. In one way, the light bulb signifies the unfulfilled Soviet electrification project, a failed attempt to reach the goal of socialist progress. However, in the mid-1990s the light bulb came to be considered a luxury item. Kambina thus exposes how values signified by the same object might be changed through the lens of different eras.

Kambina's representation of the electric light bulb is not accidental. For her, the failure of progress connected on a deeply personal level as a Slavic woman from an industrial town. Kambina's own life experiences were connected to the building up of industries based on modern technologies.<sup>68</sup> By bringing electricity all over the USSR, the Soviet state conquered new territories by building new industrial towns and moving Slavic technical specialists into those towns, a process sometimes called '*osvoenie*' or conquering (Widdis 2003: 153). Kambina was an inhabitant of Chirchik, outside of Tashkent. Chirchik was the site of the first hydroelectric station in Uzbekistan, built as part of Stalin's industrialization of Central Asia. Around this hydroelectric station, the town of Chirchik was built in 1935 as a satellite town to the capital, and soon became the main industrial

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<sup>68</sup> See Kreindler (1982) on Russian minorities in the USSR, and social, political and economic changes affecting them brought by the fall of the USSR (Kaizer 1998; Schlyter 1998; Juska 1999; Kolsto 1999; Hanks 2000).

muscle of Uzbekistan. It contained 28 plants of such important industries as electrical, chemical and agricultural machinery. Unlike many industrial Soviet cities, which were dirty and polluted, Chirchik from its beginning meant to be an idealistic model of industrial town because it was well planned and had developed cultural institutions. Despite its small size the town had a large number of cultural and educational institutions such as clubs, theatres, cinemas, news agencies and even hosted some facilities of Tashkent University. Chirchik was built by a succession of prominent Soviet architects; the 1933-1936 architectural planning was done by famous Muscovite architects T.M. Orlov, M.E. Tarasov and V.A. Lavrov, and the 1964 regeneration scheme was by Uzbek architect P.A. Duda-Dudinskii (*Entsyclopedia Tashkenta* 1983: 394). This architecture of the 1930s and 1960s introduced wide open streets on a grid system with an abundance of greenery, which made Chirchik a modern, clean and green city.

The Kambins' family life personified the history of the rise and fall of Russian-headed industries in Uzbekistan. Kambina's father was a skilled artisan working at the technical glass laboratory in the electric lamp production plant. Both her parents, apart from a short period of work in Algeria, worked most of their life in Uzbekistan. The Kambins had a flat provided by the plant. The Kambins' children attended first the kindergarten belonging to the plant, and later the school built by the plant. The cultural activities of the family were connected to the eight clubs belonging to the main industries of Chirchik's factories. These clubs provided workers and their families with leisure and entertainment activities by showing films, providing sporting activities, and teaching adults and children. In the chemical industry club, Kambina as a child learned to draw and there as an adult she found her vocation as a drawing teacher. The fall of the USSR brought down the plants with vital infrastructures based on local industries, by that dramatically affecting the life of the community of Chirchik which was so dependent on those industrial plants. Chirchik lost not only jobs when industries collapsed, but also its whole welfare system and social structure. All the Kambins lost their jobs with the collapse of industry. Sitting at home, Kambina felt an irreversible change from the Soviet period. For her, the brightness of the electric light bulb symbolised women's emancipation, financial security and a sense of certainty. Thus, losing sight of the electric light bulb for her was not only a failure of Soviet ideals but also the reality of the 'darkness' of post-Soviet urban life.



Fig.13 Elena Kambina's 1998 painting *Lampochka Il'icha* (*Lenin Electric Light Bulb*), (80 x 110 cm, gouache on cardboard). Photo taken and given to me by Kambina.



Kulagina works with the idea of mobility, with its connotations of migration for the non-titular nation population, through the symbolic image of a wheel. She worked with oil paints on canvases sized 80 by 90 cm. One of Kulagina paintings' portrays a toddler's skateboard violently upright with a wheel pointed at the viewer (see Fig.14, p.170). On first sight, such an idyllic object connotes nothing more than childhood. But on the other hand that furiously posed little wheel and the absence of the toddler pointed at the helplessness and abandonment by the child of his/her favorite toy. She told to me that for her it was connected to her ideas of childhood and emigration.

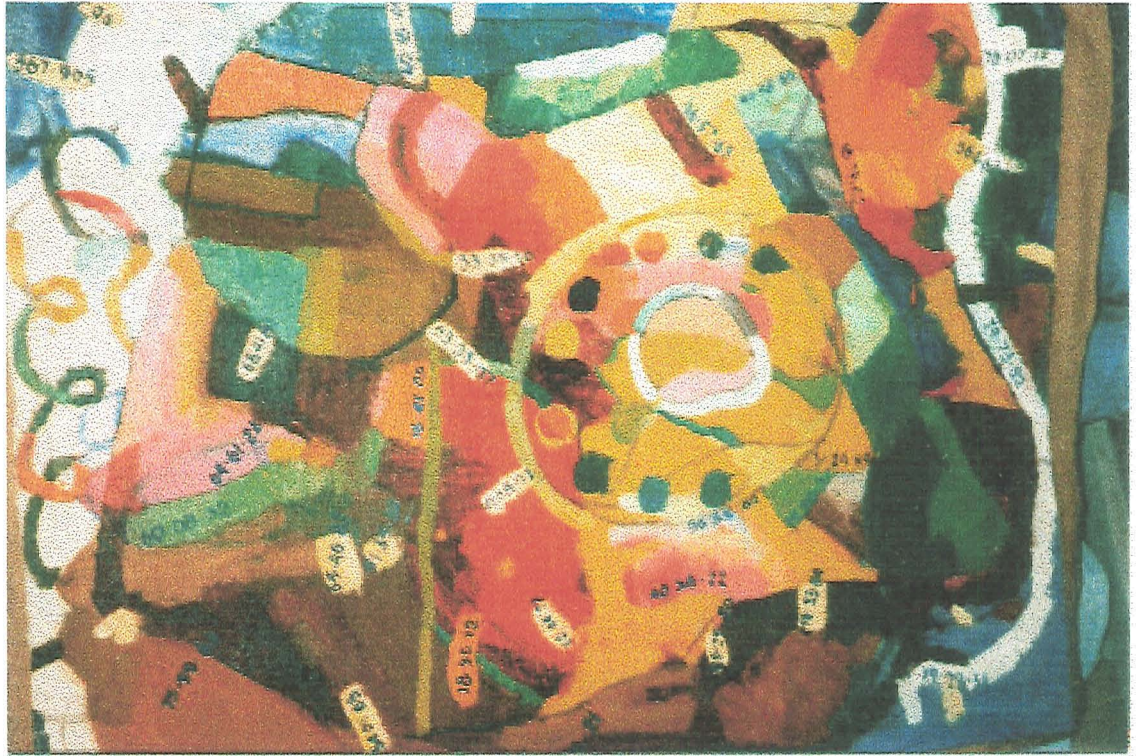
Kulagina came from a working class suburb which was sprawled out next to a military station. The area, like Chirchik, suffered as result of the breakup of the USSR and the decline of industry. During her adolescence, she saw most of the families of Russian descent losing their employment. Women headed households after male workers lost their jobs owing to the decline of the heavy industries which employed mainly Russians. A typical solution for many Russian families was the women's decision, 'for the sake of the children', to move to Russia (Pilkington 1997). Mothers were motivated by the chance to give their children better options in education and employment. Russian emigration from Uzbekistan totaled up to 200,000 in the last decade, draining the country of many well-educated and well-trained Russian specialists (Sievers 2005).

In Kulagina's case her mother did not make a decision to move out of Uzbekistan for the sake of her daughter, because she died while her daughter was studying at the Arts College. Her mother, who was a one-legged invalid, died of a heart attack as result of stress, overwork and an absence of adequate medical care. Still in her teens, Kulagina became the breadwinner for her alcoholic father. Kulagina, tied to her father with his addiction, could not move to Russia because that would mean abandoning him to destitution and death. The way out of the suburb for Inna was learning English, which helped her get a position as an arts teacher in the American school. Nevertheless, she had high and low times with money, which meant that sometimes she was unable to rent a studio and had to bring her canvases home. At those times, she said, 'I was so worried for my paintings. Father, when he had an urge to drink, would trade any of my works for a bottle of vodka.' In her painting, Kulagina's notion of mobility was centered on the wheel, which can one day become mobile again.

Fig.14 Inna Kulagina's *Samokat (Skateboard)*, (80 x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 1998). Kept by Kulagina. Photo taken by professional photographer and given to me by Kulagina.



Fig.15 Elena Lee's *Telephone* (80 x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 1998). Kept by Lee. Photo taken by a family friend of Lee and given by Lee to me.



Lee preferred to explore aspects of the economic shortage and frustrated consumer dreams associated with the inaccessibility of specific goods - phones, money, electrical appliances and many other desirable items - using the example of an average inhabitant of Uzbekistan. Lee worked with oil painting on standard sized canvases measuring 80 by 90 cm. Lee attempted to show to viewers the meaning of any ordinary household items. She used as one of her examples a telephone (see Fig.15, p.171). She painted a telephone and links to the actual phone numbers of her friends and relations. She told me:

'It is like an anecdote. What before was taught to us about communism was untrue and what was taught to us about capitalism became true. In the Soviet past a telephone signified access to allocation of services. A phone would be installed according to the classification of citizens. Obviously we all hated that phones were installed first for those with connections among the elite. Yet, there were chances that families with large numbers of children, veterans of the Great Patriotic War and the disabled would get phones. Nowadays those needy disadvantaged have no chance to get a free installed phone. With regard to that, now the telephone changed its significance for its owners from status symbol to a vital necessity item. Transport fares have become so expensive that they almost cost one's whole salary. Seeing friends and relatives, going to such places as the theatre, cinema and exhibition halls, doing shopping, became unattainable owing to the rise in transport fees. The telephone became a crucial item of the household, because without a telephone people would be cut off from communicating with each other. Unlike the Soviet period, when friends and families were meeting and spending time talking in their small kitchenettes, communication is now one on one. Therefore I put all those phone numbers. Everybody was so excited to see their phone number on my painting on the exhibition's opening day'.<sup>69</sup>

Lee wanted to make a statement about the two types of consumption in the Soviet and Independence periods. Soviet consumption was defined by 'allocation' (*raspredelenie*), of goods and services (Humphrey 1995). But in practice, Soviet consumption often deviated from socialist ideals (Masson 1985): the Soviet state channeled consumer items not to all citizens but mainly catered to its own high bureaucracy. Nonetheless there was still state-provided care for the 'needy'. Post-Soviet consumption rapidly revealed an immense polarisation between the poor and the rich (Ilkhamov 1998, 2001; Pomfret 1999). A few 'New Rich' emerged, with the majority of population becoming the 'New Poor'. The New Rich could enjoy the dramatic rise in consumption choices, whereas the New Poor lost all access to the state's allocation of goods and services. And among those New Poor were

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<sup>69</sup> Lee, interview, 18 May 2000.

those whose position was unlikely to improve without state support: invalids, orphans, the elderly and many others. Those ‘needy’ were abandoned by the state to struggle alone.

Lee gave her own family as an example of the ‘needy’. Her father was an invalid, who died leaving her mother with two youngsters. In the new era, families like hers had little chance of overcoming poverty on their own. They were no longer under the protection of the state. Sitting at home penniless and cut off from her friends, depending financially on her younger brother, Lee started rethinking the meaning of every object which surrounded her. In her paintings, the objects are portrayed from the perspective of the ‘needy’: what they could not afford compared to the Soviet period, and how the meaning of that object altered with the economic reform.

The art dealers as well as art critics ignored the exhibition, but the artists thought it sufficient that the public reacted enthusiastically to their display of new, relevant themes. The artists achieved a widening audience from professional and non-professional artistic circles, as well as the general public, including the New Rich of Uzbekistan. One outcome of the exhibition was that Lee’s painting *The Wallet*, or *Koshelek*, was bought immediately by a local ethnic Korean buyer.<sup>70</sup> Although Kambina’s and Kulagina’s works went unsold, they too were pleased to meet this first local buyer who purchased a painting which was never intended to be produced for profit.

#### **4.4. Aftermath of the conflict between women dealers and women artists over how to value painting**

The Uzbek art field changed immensely with the rise of non-state controlled arts production and consumption. The previously Uzbek male dominated art world became led by women art dealers and artists of multiethnic origin. Interesting results came out of the fractious relationship between these art dealers and painters. The independent success of women painters forced art dealers to understand the importance of revaluing painting not just from the perspective of foreign currency prohibitions or the changing tastes of the Western art

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<sup>70</sup> Despite her Korean ethnicity, Lee’s circle of buyers was not limited only to Tashkenti Korean businessmen. Far from that, her works were sold to various ethnic groups and foreigners in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. She even managed to sell some works to Europe through a website.

market. The women artists revealed that economic value is not only based on the skill of artists and size of the work, as in the Soviet era, but also on the cost of materials invested in creation of painting. Moral values no longer meant ideological service to the state, but to make viewers aware of the existence of an individual artist. Most importantly, the dealers were forced to accept that paintings' value could be seen in non-economic terms. Further post-Soviet art valuers turned to local institutions instead of to international institutionalised validation of arts and arts producers. These debates over how to value arts paved the way for the formation of the local art market from 2000 onwards, when the art world braced itself to face the traditional values of the newly empowered *mahalla*, which I explore in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### The Influence of the Mahalla on Painting and Artists (1999-2004)

#### 5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 continues from Chapter 4, assessing the production, consumption and valuing of painting in the non-state-controlled market in independent Uzbekistan. Chapter 4 concluded with an assessment of the dramatic 1999 decrease in foreign buyers' purchases of Uzbek painting, a development which forced female art dealers to face the *mahalla* institution<sup>71</sup> which held significant influence over the domestic sector in Tashkent. Chapter 5 examines the *mahalla* institution's shaping of women art dealers' domestication of painting in Tashkent between 1999 and 2004.

To explain the complexity of the domestication of painting (the relocation of painting from public to private spaces), I turn to a post-socialist reassessment of Soviet public and private spaces. 'Public spaces' refers to spaces run by the state such as schools, streets, undergrounds, stadiums, factories, airports, museums and many others. However, it is more difficult to define 'private spaces', and the terms were and are often more flexible than commonly assumed. For example, Katerina Gerasimova (2002) showed that Soviet and post-Soviet communal apartments (*communalka*) defied conventional definitions of public and private spaces and also pointed at the fluidity of these terms.

The same fluidity of public and private existed in Uzbekistan, especially with regard to *mahalla* spaces. However, post-Soviet *mahalla* spatial practices were not taken into full account because of the lack of specification of the changes within the *mahalla*'s components. Western researchers (Abramzon 1998; Geiss 2001; Mandell 2002: 290; Sievers 2003: 110; March 2004) have traditionally defined the *mahalla* institution as self-governing associations with administrative powers over certain neighborhoods ('*mahalla* neighbourhoods'). But this broad definition does not take into account the specific components of the *mahalla* institution, nor how those components' roles hold together the institution. Here I specify six (sometimes overlapping) components of the *mahalla*

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<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.6.



institution, in order of importance: area, administration, neighbourhood, elders' council, community and residents.

*Mahalla* area: After Uzbekistan's 1995 market reforms, Tashkent's entire domestic sector underwent a privatization process. This including state-owned land and privately-owned land leased from the state. This newly privatised domestic sector became defined as the *mahalla* area.

*Mahalla* administration: Another result of the 1995 market reforms was the emergence of the *mahalla* as an administrative institution with state powers. The new *mahalla* administrations took over the role of the former Soviet Dom Upravlenie, or Housing Office - a state institution with a state payroll. Additional to all previous responsibilities, *mahalla*<sup>72</sup> administrations now have to deal with property transactions and turning private properties into enterprises such as shops, eateries and workshops. Since the 1999 terrorist attacks in Tashkent, the *mahalla* administration also became responsible for supplying information concerning residents' discontent with the Karimov regime to the police, the military, the Taxation Office and the National Security Office.<sup>73</sup>

*Mahalla* neighbourhood: The Encyclopedia of Tashkent (1983) defined Soviet-era *mahalla* as private property on state-leased land. This included two types of *mahalla*: the remnants of the Tsarist-period Old City, and the 1970s suburbs allocated for private housing.<sup>74</sup> The *mahalla* neighbourhoods within the Old City remained ethnically Uzbek, while the 1970s suburban *mahalla* neighbourhoods became highly multiethnic. But after the 1995 market reforms, which privatised the capital's domestic sector, post-Soviet *mahalla* neighbourhoods became demarcated on areas run previously by the Housing

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<sup>72</sup> The Housing Office's Soviet-period responsibilities included payment of benefits and providing the population with heating, water, gas and electricity. Additionally, the *mahalla* administration inherited a direct connection to the Police Office. Both institutions dealt with the documentation of domicile registration (*propiska*), and family member registry of each household (*domovaia kniga*).

<sup>73</sup> Information provided by the *mahalla* administration is vital because of Uzbekistan's strict laws concerning movement within the country. Anyone who stays in a location more than three days has to register at the local police station. The *mahalla* administrations also help find hiding military conscripts. But most importantly, the *mahalla* administrations are required to inform on those dissatisfied with the Karimov regime, and to report any occurrences of religious proselytism by non-Muslim religious groups.

<sup>74</sup> The old Tsarist-era *mahalla* neighbourhoods have individual names, while the newer Soviet *mahalla* are usually nameless.

Office. In other words, all the post-Soviet *mahalla* neighbourhoods are areas managed by the state administrative institution, the *mahalla* administrations.<sup>75</sup>

*Mahalla* elders: Each *mahalla*'s council of elders is elected by the *mahalla* community, and voluntarily carry out their responsibilities. These responsibilities considerably broadened in the Independence period as the elders became directly connected to the post-Soviet *mahalla* administration. Through the council of elders' cooperation with the *mahalla* administration, the state channeled its help for the needy and the poor in the *mahalla* communities. Further, elders were allowed openly to promote Islamic belief and ways of life.<sup>76</sup> Instead of solving minor domestic quarrels or neighbourly disputes, as in the Soviet period, elders were newly empowered to force residents to conform to the way of life they deemed appropriate, without considering the residents' wishes (Mandel 2002).<sup>77</sup> Also, the elders' involvement helped the *mahalla* become a uniquely Uzbek institution: the elders helped Uzbek residents and generally ignored the needs of non-Uzbeks (Micklewright and Marnie 2005: 445).<sup>78</sup>

*Mahalla* community: As I mentioned above, current *mahalla* neighbourhoods are the areas controlled by the *mahalla* administration. But residing within a post-Soviet neighbourhood managed by a *mahalla* administration does not automatically create a *mahalla* community. Strong *mahalla* communities tend to be the older, more established ones in the Old City and to a lesser extent in the 1970s *mahalla* neighbourhoods. The appearance of *mahalla* communities in the rest of Tashkent depends on the condensation of the ethnic Uzbek population.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> In order not to mix up between current and older *mahalla* neighbourhoods I either name the area or point at its historical period, Tsarist or Soviet.

<sup>76</sup> The promotion of the Islamic faith and way of life requires both men and women to follow religious practice by praying, fasting and celebrating Muslim life cycle rites. Additionally, Muslim men were expected to attend weekly mosque and to do almsgiving. Meanwhile Muslim women residents were expected to follow traditional ways of life and to be subservient to men and the elder members of their multigenerational families.

<sup>77</sup> See Mandel (2002: 190-91), who points out the elders' harassment of women.

<sup>78</sup> Micklewright and Marnie (2005) suggested that post-Soviet *mahallas* were transformed from community institutions into state administrative institutions, becoming a state tool. The researchers emphasized that post-Soviet *mahalla* dealt with outcomes of market reform by financially assisting disadvantaged *mahalla* residents: households with numerous children, households with the unemployed, households with pensioners, households with invalids and many others. Nevertheless, both researchers pointed that because the *mahalla* was an Uzbek institution, even though *mahalla* residents included some Slavic households, the *mahalla* administrations largely skipped over assisting impoverished Slavic residents.

<sup>79</sup> The condensation of the Uzbek population in such parts of Tashkent as the New City was limited because of antiterrorist measures between 1999 and 2004. As I was told by a police officer, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 1999,

*Mahalla* residents: *mahalla* residents are the whole of the multiethnic Tashkent population residing in the neighbourhoods run by *mahalla* administrations. In the parts of the city of Tashkent where *mahalla* residents do not form a real *mahalla* community, residents were bound to experience more pressure from the state and the state-run *mahalla* administration.

Here I provide two diagrams (see Diagrams 3 and 4). Diagram 3 shows that before 1991, there was a clearer ideological divide between public and private spaces: domestic spaces within *mahalla* neighbourhoods were seen as private spaces separate from the state-controlled public spaces. Diagram 4 shows that after 1991, the definitions changed because the *mahalla* acquired administrative functions and a state payroll, which before was purely characteristic of public spaces. By becoming state-controlled institutions, *mahalla* merged with public space and were no longer considered private. Private/domestic homes now existed within the public space of the city's *mahalla*. Under private spaces I defined how and by whom spaces were controlled meanwhile under domestic spaces I refer to kin relationship.

To gain access to private space in the *mahalla* neighbourhoods between 2000 and 2004, women art dealers needed to find a space from which they could start negotiation between the *mahalla* institution (both administration and community) and the New Rich of Uzbekistan. They found this space in courtyards. To entice their New Rich clientele, women art dealers had to manage the themes and images in painting reflecting courtyard consumption within Uzbek homes. Under the women art dealers' guidance, artists of the Soviet and post-Soviet generations, male and female, decoded consumption themes taking place within domestic grounds of the courtyard. Following the art dealers, I focused on the courtyard space because of its changing functions and symbolic values. Neither public nor private, the in-between status of the Uzbek courtyard makes it an excellent example through which to explore the shifting local social relations, power structures, and ideas of kinship and community. More importantly, it also provides clues about how paintings have come to be valued, and I use courtyard consumption as a lens to allow me to see the

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domicile registration became restricted because there was genuine fear that it would be impossible to control the Uzbek population willing to relocate to the capital. Therefore condensation remained low during 1999-2004 because it depended entirely on Russian migration out of Uzbekistan and an increase in the number of well off Tashkenty Uzbeks capable of buying the property of the outgoing Russians.

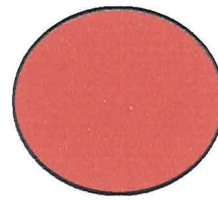
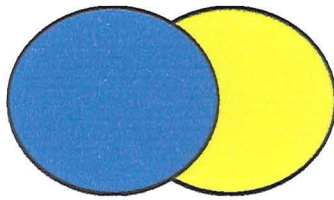
**Diagram 1. Tashkent Spatial Divisions (1980-1995)**

Private spaces:

*Mahalla* neighbourhood spaces (blue)  
+ domestic spaces (yellow)

Public spaces (red):

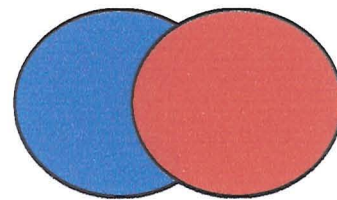
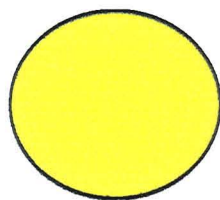
Schools, squares, streets,  
undergrounds, hospitals, stadiums  
and so on.



**Diagram 2. Tashkent Spatial divisions (during 1999-2004)**

Private Spaces  
Domestic spaces

Public spaces  
The entire *mahalla* institution,  
administration and community  
spaces + schools, squares, streets,  
undergrounds, hospitals, stadiums  
and so on.



domestication of painting in Tashkent. By ‘courtyard consumption’, I mean what various researchers (Koroteyeva & Perepelkin 1990; Koroteyeva & Makarova 1998; Ilkhamov 2001; Sievers 2003) have defined as traditional, communal, indigenous and *mahalla* spending on life cycle rituals and ceremonies such as circumcisions, weddings and funerals, involving the *mahalla* community.

Chapter 5 asks why and how do moral, economic and social values in relation to painting correlate to social diversification in the previously economically homogeneous *mahalla*? In domestic anthropology, relocation is often a ‘time when identities had to be reaffirmed’ (Attfield 2002). Studies of post-Soviet relocation of the New Rich referred to the many limitations experienced by New Rich in their new luxury dwellings, caused by pressures exercised by neighbours, community, administration and so on (Humphrey 2002). The post-Soviet relocation of the New Rich Uzbeks illustrated a combination of difficulties raised by their attempt to affirm their new social group identity. Moving out of Soviet *mahalla* neighbourhoods to the New City demonstrated New Rich Uzbeks’ difficulty to conform to *mahalla* identity, causing a strong sense of resentment towards them by ordinary *mahalla* community members. Within a particular section of Tashkent, the New City, the New Rich Uzbeks<sup>80</sup> demonstrated that they could not affirm their ethnic identity either to the historical identity of the locality (associated with the Russian bureaucracy and merchants, epitomising a colonial Russian past<sup>81</sup>), nor to the current residents, the ethnic Russian former Soviet intelligentsia<sup>82</sup>. Facing pressure from freshly installed *mahalla* administrations loyal to the Karimov regime, New Rich Uzbeks in their new locality had to prove their worth as a new social group. As a new group, the New Rich emerged under a

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<sup>80</sup> There was no space to build luxury houses in the Tsarist and Soviet *mahalla* neighbourhoods, nor was there an availability of luxury private houses where the New Rich families came from. Those families moved to the Russian part of the city, built during the Russian Tsarist period. Practically at the same period of time the *mahalla* administration was also introduced to the Russian part of the city.

<sup>81</sup> By moving to the New City, New Rich Uzbeks questioned their Uzbekness in the eyes of the *mahalla* community, because the New City was associated with poor treatment of the Muslim population by the Russian colonial administration under Tsarist rule. According to various local historians, in the colonial period there were various degrees of restrictions for Uzbeks entering the New City. Uzbeks were thought to wear tattered clothing and carry infection. The Russian bureaucracy and merchants were especially poignant, hanging plates with the inscription ‘Entrance is not allowed for Sarts and dogs’ outside areas of leisure and entertainment designated for Russians (Sarts was a prejorative name for Uzbeks).

<sup>82</sup> The bitter reaction of the ethnic Russian former Soviet intelligentsia towards the emergence of the New Rich echoed that of the Uzbek intelligentsia. However, for ethnic Russians in the New City those relationship with New Rich Uzbeks turned from disdain to a personal affair, because the New Rich and *mahalla* administration, lured by the costly property, were willing to take unlawful actions to squeeze old residents out. I will partially touch on this subject in Chapter 6.

high level of social distrust expressed by the state, administration and neighbouring residents, which made it out of question to display paintings as a mark of their status. Women art dealers, without discussing the display of paintings, began the domestication of painting in Tashkent with negotiations among the New Rich, the *mahalla* community and the *mahalla* administration. They used as a negotiating point the space of the courtyard which helped to affirm the new social group's identity.

Chapter 5 stresses that a moralised framework was necessary to make post-Soviet Uzbek painting part of general consumption trends in Tashkent. Women art dealers had to balance the 'public' and 'private/domestic' spaces as well as the different values of the *mahalla* community and the New Rich. According to the women art dealers, consumption of painting by the New Rich was 'moralised' if the paintings dealt with courtyard life, a theme acceptable to the popular imagination of the *mahalla* community. The moralization of painting allowed painting to become socially accepted by the *mahalla*, both community members and administration. Accordingly, the economic valuing of painting by the New Rich consumers would be dependent on the virtues of *mahalla* morality, specifically multigenerational family values. This moralization of social and economic valuing became an essential goal of art dealers such as Musina and Akhmedova. Those art dealers who were unable to reconcile the contradictory values of the *mahalla* and the New Rich, through production of suitable themes and images acceptable to both sides, were squeezed out of the art trade during this period.

In order to build up Chapter 5 around courtyard themes and images, I have divided the chapter into three parts. First, I explore which spaces within domestic compounds inspired new 'public' valuing of paintings not intended for display. Second, I discuss the moral, social and economic valuing of that space, which brought acceptance of art consumption through the mediation of art dealers. Third, I analyze the themes of the paintings. The first and second parts will clarify why certain courtyard consumption themes which were appreciated by the *mahalla* community were introduced by Musina. Therefore I assess the history and background of spatial patterns within domestic premises in *mahalla*. From that I explain why courtyard functions became a central focus of Musina's brokering activities in the *mahalla* neighbourhood. By Musina opening a gallery/restaurant in a *mahalla*, I explore why she attached economic pricing of paintings directly to the price of

property in desirable parts of Tashkent. To make the mutual dependence between property and painting pricing more obvious, I compare the cases of Moscow and Tashkent through prices attached to different period styles. In the last section, I explore the courtyard consumption themes that are expressed in paintings by two artists affiliated with Musina's gallery. Those artists are Bakhtiayr Umarov, a Tajik refugee from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, a painter and former graduate of the Arts Institute; and Lola Babayeva, a female Uzbek artist educated in the Russian Cineaste University. By examining these two artists' creative practices, I support my earlier statement that ethnicity, gender and religious affiliation did not affect their capacity to express *mahalla* values through the selection of themes and the technical complexity of painting production.

## 5.2. What is the meaning of the courtyard within domestic spaces?

The opening section of Chapter 5 concerns the assessment of a courtyard within domestic space and its role in *mahalla* consumption patterns. This assessment was necessitated by the fact that previous studies analysing types and significance of the collective *mahalla* consumption did not take into account the courtyard as the space within domestic premises where *mahalla* consumption actually took place (Koroteyeva & Perepelkin 1990; Koroteyeva & Makarova 1998; Ilkhamov 2001; Sievers 2003). In current post-Soviet consumption studies, Uzbek collective *mahalla* consumption was conceptualised by Deniz Kandiyoti and Nadira Azimova (2004) as an attempt to oppose the excessive consumption by the New Rich, stressing communal Uzbek *mahalla* values of consumption, led by the older women of the *mahalla* community. By stressing the role of older women in lieu of absent men<sup>83</sup>, these researchers of *mahalla* celebratory consumption posed two questions. First they asked, why *mahalla* consumption was led only by middle-aged women and, second, what was the meaning of 'excessive consumption by the New Rich' from the *mahalla* perspective: is it of the whole *mahalla* community or just those older women?<sup>84</sup> I therefore begin this section by focusing on the work of Uzbek ethnographers (Faiziev 1965: 100; Ismailov 1972: 138; Tashbulatov and Savurova 1989: 100) that is relevant to

<sup>83</sup> In traditional celebrations, men congregated in the local mosque, while women celebrated at home.

<sup>84</sup> An example of the excessive New Rich consumption so vilified by *mahalla* residents might be so trivial as owning an uneatable domestic pet such as a dog or cat, whose function is to give companionship rather than to guard or to catch vermin. Older *mahalla* women cynically said that instead of having more children, the New Rich spend their money on expensive dog food, pampering their pets and so on.

anthropological theory of domestic spaces. Their research covering the period 1960-1980 broadens the article by Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004), which concerned the changing significance of post-Soviet *mahalla* consumption which took place within courtyard spaces. To justify the role of the physical courtyard space in courtyard consumption, I reconnect Kandiyoti's and Azimova's findings with background information provided by my own fieldwork (1999-2001) in Old City and New City *mahalla* neighborhoods. The section is summarised with a broad discussion of what the art dealers and artists could or could not do in the case of domestication of painting.

In anthropological research, the house has always had the opposite meaning of public places (Cieraad 1991, 1993; Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995). Also discussed were divisions such as outside-inside and public-private (Miller 2001, 2002). With time, those divisions showed that within the house there existed many liminal spaces (Alexander 2002: 868).<sup>85</sup> These liminal spaces, for one reason or another, are understudied despite the possibility of playing an important role in the house. There was no relevant information within Western anthropology concerning Uzbek courtyards. So how does a courtyard become such an important public space?

Originally, the Uzbek house was a Muslim house. The Muslim house was scrupulously described by Pierre Bourdieu (1970, 1990, 2003) using the example of a Kabyle/Berber house, with its spatial divisions of male-female, public-private, and dark-light. However those depictions cannot be directly applied to contemporary Uzbek houses because, as Uzbek ethnographers have always stressed, the Uzbek Muslim house drastically changed under the Soviet state (Faiziev 1965: 100; Ismailov 1972: 138; Tashbulatov and Savurova 1989: 100). These Soviet Uzbek ethnographers argued that under Soviet rule, policies of titular nation women's emancipation, which aimed to free women from domestic and gender subjugation, served to alter domestic spaces symbolically and functionally. The pre-Soviet home was Muslim and was indeed based on gender division principles; Soviet policies altered a private female zone of the house, the courtyard, into a communal space visible and accessible to any local member of the *mahalla*.

To support their claim, these ethnographers provided architectural plans which clearly demonstrated that despite the survival of dwellings' spatial divisions, the special

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<sup>85</sup> Alexander in her article (2002) discussed liminal spaces as gardens.



significance of those spaces was utterly changed by the new type of relationship between the multigenerational family of a household and the *mahalla* neighbourhood community.

All architectural plans drawn by T. Faiziev (1965) and S. Tashbulatov & P. Savurova (1989) demonstrated that the typical Soviet Uzbek house was of a walled rectangular shape with two courtyards: an outside-looking *tashkari* or male space, an inward *ichkari* or female space. *Tashkari* consisted of two chambered guestrooms or *mehmonhona*, with a veranda called an *aivan* next to which was erected the storage space or *ambarhona* and a lavatory or *hidzhat*. Between the guestrooms and the storage was a gate leading through a narrow passage leading towards the *ichkari*. Ethnographers pointed out that the female space was the largest part of the house, a large courtyard which contained living and working compartments. Along the walls encircling the courtyard itself were located storage rooms, a kitchen (*oshhona*), the oven for bread making (*tandoor*), the winter kitchen, laundry, lavatory, and a poultry shed (*katak*) and cow shed (*molhona*). Meanwhile within the open space of the courtyard were a water storage pool (*hauz*), a summer gazebo, vegetable plot and vineyard. Within all those functional rooms and buildings, there were incorporated numerous chambers called *hona*, each of which was intended to accommodate a married son and his family. *Hona* had windows looking out onto the courtyard. The researchers summarised that those layouts illustrated a gate between male and female spaces, the male spaces public and the female domains private, keeping any stranger away from the *ichkari*.

After explaining these symbolic and functional divisions of the pre-Soviet Uzbek home, researchers elaborated on how Soviet policies of education and employment for women outside of the home changed the meaning of the *ichkari* by turning it into a public courtyard. Instead of being a private family domain, the courtyard became a public space open to the whole *mahalla* community. Researchers emphasised that that openness of that courtyard helped to strengthen traditionalism in the multigenerational family, reinforcing the extremely rigid hierarchy of gender, age and social status. The position of women in the family depended on maintenance of the functional parts of the courtyard, providing the family with food, and not on the salary earned outside which meant that older women would get an upper hand over younger women and unmarried men in the family. Preserving that age and gender hierarchy has long been a collective preoccupation of the whole

*mahalla* community instead of a private family matter. *Mahalla*'s preoccupation with peace and quiet in multigenerational families within *mahalla* culminated in the 1980s with the emergence of *mahalla* neighbourhood committees whose primary function was sorting out family disputes.

The research of Faiziev (1965), Ismailov (1972) and Tashbulatov & Savurova (1989) showed that the use of courtyards to promote 'old traditions' expressing communal *mahalla* values actually originated in the recent Soviet past. These Uzbek researchers explained the recent origins of such valuing by clarifying where exactly that consumption takes place and how this enclosed domestic space influenced the meaning of courtyard consumption. Their explanation was crucial for three reasons.

First, it allows us to understand that what was called 'traditional' consumption did not indicate the strength of the collective *mahalla* values hidden in domestic spaces during the Soviet period, but was instead a direct result of alteration of the domestic spaces by Soviet rule. This Soviet alteration of Uzbek Muslim domestic space continued to play a strong role in post-Soviet consumption because the public space within the domestic setting was not the interior of the home but the courtyard space.<sup>86</sup>

Secondly, the researchers' investigations helps us understated why the reinvention of courtyard space during the post-Soviet relocation of the New Rich Uzbeks in the New City was used to bind them to the *mahalla*.

Thirdly, this complex and uneasy relationship between the New Rich and the *mahalla* administration and community reveals the role of the arts during this time of social distrust.

Thus Uzbek researchers' discussion helps to justify the link between Soviet and post-Soviet consumption patterns, based not so much on how different patterns of consumption are opposed to each other by different social groups but how those types of consumption were shared by each other. In the following section I stipulate the above points on my fieldwork in Tashkent.

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<sup>86</sup> Concerning post-Soviet domestic spaces, there is a huge variability among them in a regional context, so what I mean by Uzbek Muslim domestic spaces has nothing to do with their Kazakh or Kyrgyz counterparts.

### 5.3. Post-Soviet consumption patterns

My Tashkent fieldwork (1999-2001) allowed me to witness firsthand what happened after the *ichkari* was turned from a private female space into a public courtyard space. I provide two examples as typifying post-Soviet consumption patterns, one in the Old City and the other in the New City. The first example shows traditional patterns of consumption in a Tashkent *mahalla*, leading some members of a multigenerational family to feel resentment against *mahalla* intrusion. The other illustrates the emerging patterns of consumption by the New Rich and their nuclear families. A look at the use of the spaces within which those types of consumption take place shows more resemblance than opposition.

In October 1999, I was invited to a circumcision ceremony in the Sebzar *mahalla*, of the Old City (see Map 4, p.187 and Fig.16, p.188). Negora<sup>87</sup>, who invited me, was the wife of the fourth of five married brothers living under the same roof (Fig. 17, p.189) and the mother of the baby. I made my way to the house in Sebzar *mahalla* through a short and very narrow, dead-end street, no more than 80 centimeters in width (see Fig. 18, p.190). When I entered through the wooden gate, I was led to the *mehmonhona* where everybody viewed and congratulated the circumcised child, who was laid in an austere empty whitewashed room. After leaving the *mehmonhona*, I noted that there was no division between male and female spaces. The gate had been removed and the passage was enlarged as much as possible so that whole *mahalla* community could easily enter the *ichkari*. The existing *hona* or chambers within the courtyard became accessible to anybody regardless of gender, age or status, thereby depriving the homeowner family of privacy. The residents were entering all the *hona* during their visit. The *hona* all look alike, with carpeted walls and floor and simple beddings piled in the corner of the room. Looking through those low curtainless windows into the various *hona* allowed me to find the one where older women were receiving guests at the head of a tablecloth with fruits, crockery and food spread out on the floor. The guests were expected to taste a few sips of tea with a piece of bread and sweets, then move on to allow the next group of guests to enter.

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<sup>87</sup> Negora is the first name of the respondent, an Uzbek woman in her late twenties.

Map 4. Map of Central Tashkent showing Tsarist-period *mahallas*, among which we can see Sebzar *mahalla*, research site.

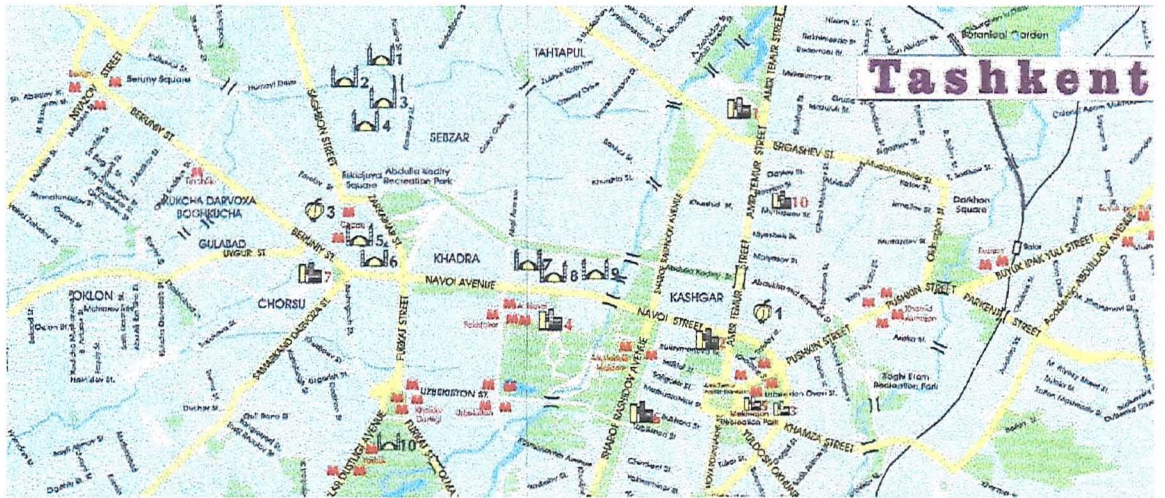


Fig. 16 Sebzar *mahalla* in 1999, before it was demolished. Sebzar typified the older, pre-Russian sections of Tashkent.

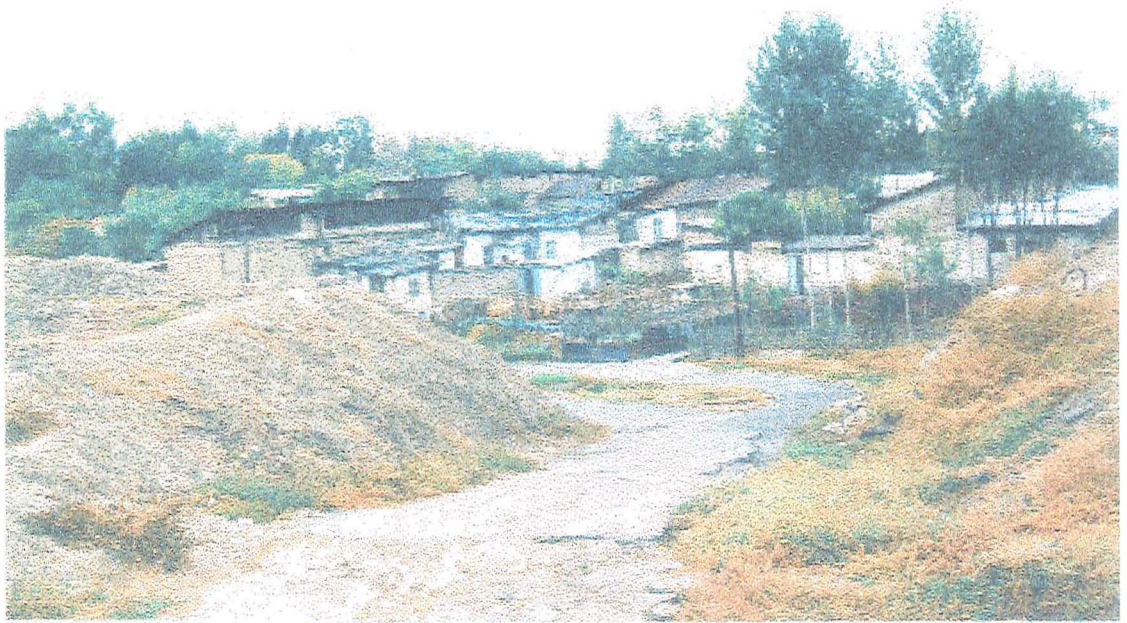


Fig. 15 Plan of Negora's house in Sebzar mahalla, 1999.

A *Tashkari*

1. guestroom (*mehmonhona*)
2. storage (*ambarhona*)
3. lavatory (*hidzhat*)

B *Ichkari*

4. poultry shed (*katak*)
5. cow shed (*molhona*)
6. kitchen (*oshhona*)
7. laundry
8. chamber (*hona*)
9. vegetable plot
10. oven (*tandoor*)
11. vineyard
12. water tank (*hauz*)
13. gazebo (*baland-suri*)

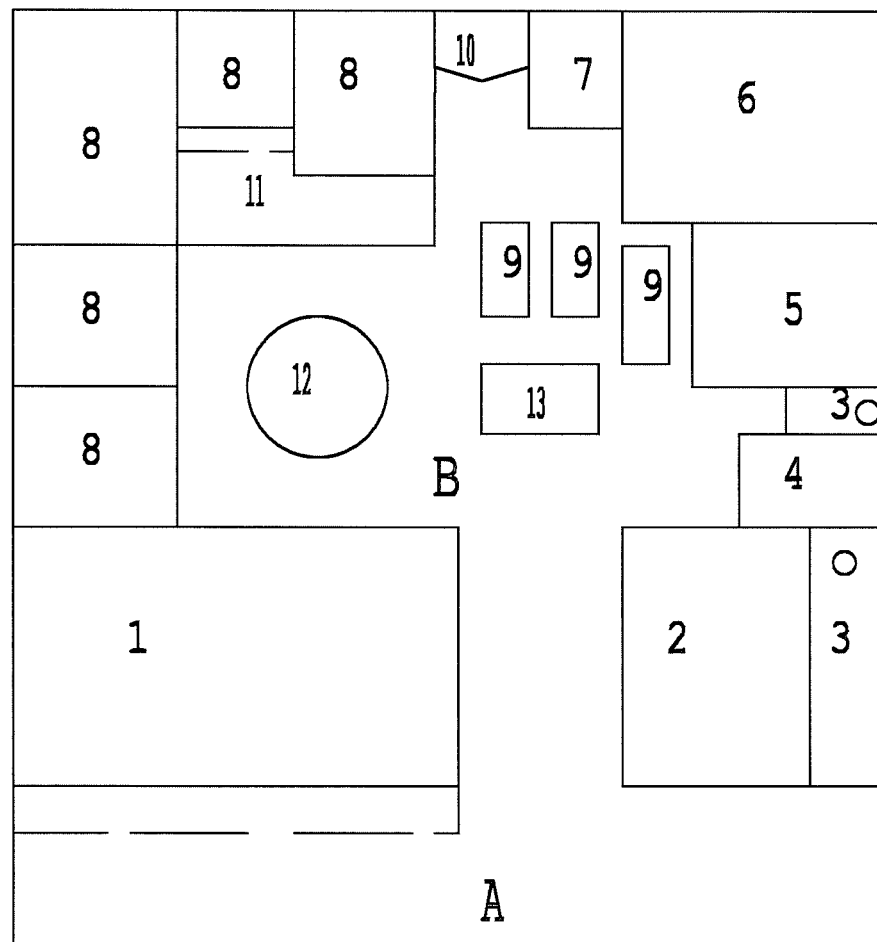
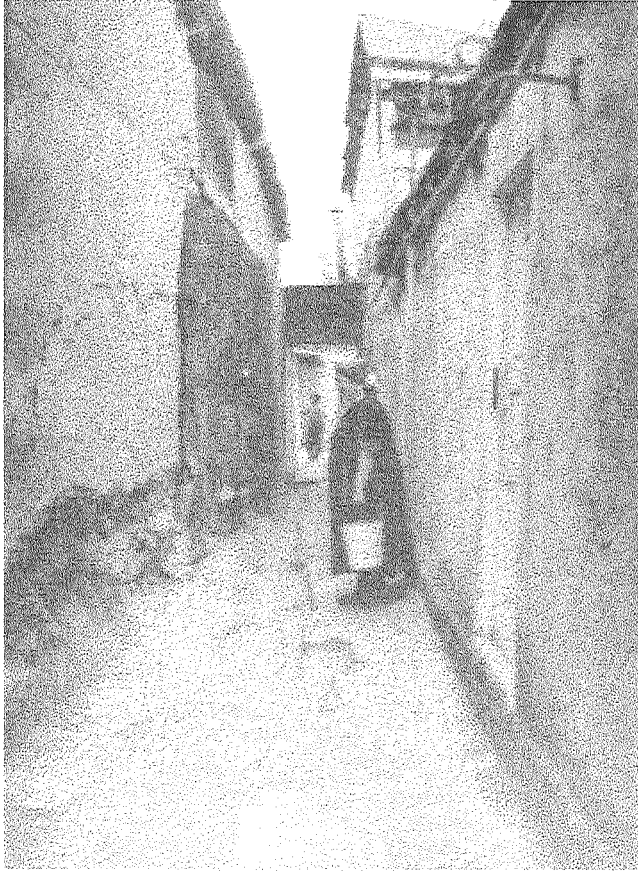


Fig. 16 The view of Negora's house from the dead-end street.



I was intrigued by the apparent insignificance of the couple who were celebrating their only son's circumcision: since neither parent was receiving attention from the guests.<sup>88</sup> As I mentioned before, the older women from the *mahalla* managed the guests, leaving the young mother, Negora, to pour tea while the father went to the mosque with the rest of *mahalla* men. Visiting Negora several weeks later, I asked her (trying not to offend) what she thought of being so sidelined by those older women, women from the *mahalla* mainly and not even her kin, and at the same time being so publicly exposed to the *mahalla*? Negora told me, 'I became engaged because my fiancé promised that we will move from his parents' into a separate flat due to residing in demolition area. I am still waiting. Obviously I envy New Rich couples who live by themselves.'<sup>89</sup> She implied that both her and her husband had a genuine desire to get out of the *mahalla* community, but that they were simply not wealthy enough. With regard to being so exposed to the *mahalla*, she pointed at the miniature plastic tree standing on the floor with paper flowers, 'This is one of the examples of what the *mahalla* calls a wasteful thing to have in the house. I should not be keeping it in our *hona* even though I like it so much, because our entire family would become a laughing stock in the *mahalla* because the junior daughter-in-law could have fanciful stuff at home. But they [the other *mahalla* residents] cannot do such openly to us because by making those flowers, I earn money which I give to my family.' Negora's responses illustrated that not all residents were satisfied with the older women's dominant position, and that the *mahalla* community's definitions of 'excessive' consumption were not necessarily consistent. Further interviews with Sebzar residents indicated that anything could be seen as 'excessive consumption' apart from objects which could be turned into cash money for family needs. With such a vague definition, the term 'excessive' was often simply used by the community to express disapproval of a particular family residing within the neighbourhood.

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<sup>88</sup> Since circumcision is an important religious rite for Muslims concerning their male offspring, I was more accustomed that both parents actively manage and receive attention of the guests in Kyrgyz families in Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>89</sup> Sebzar was demolished in 2000, and when I returned to Tashkent in 2001, I did not see Negora. I learned that she had moved into a multi-floored apartment block, which allowed her and her husband to have at last control over their modest possessions in a flat, something they lacked in their *hona*.



I was introduced to the aspirational lifestyle<sup>90</sup> of the New Rich Uzbeks in the New City by my parents' friend Renat Nazarov. Nazarov, a prominent botanist and a former director of the Tashkent Botanical Garden in his mid seventies, became a private gardening specialist in Tashkent specializing in turning the New Rich's courtyards into gardens in the New City. In this case the courtyard became reinvented by the New Rich as a result of their relocation. The New Rich did not need to provide themselves with food supplies by keeping livestock or growing vegetables in their courtyards, so the position of women who were previously were in charge of that aspect of the household declined. New Rich couples would often hire a professional horticulturalist to deal with the courtyard.

Nazarov showed me his photographs of the redone courtyard gardens of the New Rich. As we looked at the photos, Nazarov explained to me the complex function of a courtyard as a liminal space. Courtyard gardens served to bind together members of the new social group of New Rich Uzbeks, and were therefore created as places where they could come for socialising. By maintaining their gardens, they were able to show their piety as educated Muslims, citing the Koran's 13<sup>th</sup> Sura which describes heaven as a garden (Dickie: 1976). By providing additional income for extra work by residents coming from their original *mahalla*, the New Rich were able to stay true to their *mahalla* roots. And by giving donations to their new *mahalla* administration, additional to payments for extra water and many other services spent for their gardens, they showed themselves to be an emerging new social group capable of understanding the of new local administration.

Nazarov and many other people involved in courtyard reinvention emphasised courtyard consumption's current importance for the New Rich. But at the same time, all my respondents who were involved in improvement in the private dwellings of the New Rich told me that there was still a strong sense of social distrust which led to a desire for privacy in the interior of a home. For a New Rich homeowner, their house's interior was off limits not only to *mahalla* personnel and workers, but also to other New Rich. Socialising by the New Rich was limited to the warm period of the year, allowing guests to be firmly kept in the courtyard garden. In a climate of distrust, nobody apart from the couple owning the

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<sup>90</sup> I suggest the use of the adjective 'aspirational' as a positive alternative to 'excessive'. The reason for not using the term 'excessive' is based on the fact that Sebzar *mahalla* community members, regardless of their gender and age, aspired to be as wealthy as the New Rich, but at the same time they were certain that they would not indulge themselves as the New Rich did.

property was allowed to glimpse the inside of the house. Many owners feared the *mahalla* administration would denounce them for spending more than they declared in their annual taxation. For the New Rich, the display of their interiors could only come after establishing themselves as a special social group above threats from the *mahalla* administration, the community or the government regime. In other words, post-Soviet consumption trends continued to keep the courtyard open to all, but the interior of a home was finally turned into a private exclusive space.

So what was the function of arts if social distrust did not allow an art buyer to display a painting within the house itself? As we can see, there was no place for painting display in the traditional Uzbek house. If in the Old City it was impossible to hide anything from *mahalla* interference, while in the New City the desire for privacy led to the interior of a domestic space being completely hidden from public view. But impossibility of the display of painting does not necessarily imply uselessness of painting. In the following section I demonstrate that arts still could help buyers express themselves in their choice of themes, in this case themes concerning courtyard consumption, and by that making art buyers and their purchases more acceptable from a social and economic standpoint.

#### **5.4. Musina, her courtyard, and the *mahalla***

In this section I am going to explain how and why the art dealer Natalya Musina negotiated courtyard space. I first explain the reasons behind her move to the *mahalla*. In the early winter of 2001, Musina found herself laid off by the Businesswomen Association after returning from an exhibition of Uzbek crafts and paintings which she had arranged in Paris. In Tashkent there were already three dozen art boutiques, which belonged to state organizations such as the Academy of Fine Arts, Uzbek Airlines, the Businesswomen Association and private individuals. All those galleries were located in the Russian-built section of the city and were aimed at foreign buyers. Contrary to the rest, Musina opened a new art gallery, Karavan, deep inside a 1970s-era *mahalla* neighbourhood on Kahhar Street (see Fig. 19, p.195). From there she intended to entice the Uzbek New Rich as her new arts clientele. Musina's move was symbolic because she wanted to value painting from a *mahalla* perspective. Painting production and consumption seemed contradictory to moral, social and economic *mahalla* values. Painting was a highly individualized achievement

based on education and completion of prestigious state commissions, which contradicted moral *mahalla* values based on preservation of the multigenerational family, within which the status of an individual is defined by gender and age. Socially, painting consumption often involved foreigners, situating painting beyond the reach of the *mahalla* community. And consumption of painting, with the average cost of a painting \$700 and average monthly wages \$25, was against *mahalla* values of communal well-being. So Musina set her goals which became: 1) to gain acceptance in the *mahalla*, both for herself and for the art trade; 2) to convince the country's New Rich to come to her art trading place in the *mahalla*; 3) to make typical *mahalla* residents more accepting of the New Rich. She moved to the *mahalla*, she attempted to entice New Rich Uzbeks and she single handedly tried to introduce themes of courtyard consumption in paintings.

Previously, her position as an art dealer of Russian descent and female gender who had freely engaged in a series of marriages and extramarital liaisons had not been a significant issue. But to open a business in the *mahalla* required her to rethink her self-presentation. She faced two difficulties: her ethnic origin and her gender. Musina had no illusion about what it meant for a Russian-descended female to open business in an Uzbek male-dominated business world. To be accepted she needed to create a positive image of herself and her business for the *mahalla*'s perception.

Musina made an initial positive (moral) impression on the *mahalla* community and administration by introducing herself as an older woman or mother of a successful businessman, instead of as an independent Russian businesswoman. She calculated that her age allowed her to present herself as a mother working with her son for the family business. From the *mahalla* perspective, an older women contributing to a family business would be more appreciated than a married woman running her own individual business. Musina approached the *mahalla* administration for permission to convert a house into a restaurant and gallery. Formally, the whole business was shouldered by her son, Timur, a recent graduate of Moscow State University. Timur took the role of restaurateur while his mother was in charge of the art gallery.

Fig. 19 Karavan gallery/restaurant, 2001. Karavan is situated on Kahhar Street



Musina attempted to introduce the art trade as one of the businesses acceptable within the *mahalla* by combining the art trade with the food trade. Food is one of the most common businesses in a *mahalla*. Snack vendors, small family eateries selling kebabs, bakeries and many others exist in every *mahalla*. No *mahalla* administration would stand in the way of a resident family who wished to open such a business in the *mahalla*. But to open an unusual business such as an art gallery would be resented. The *mahalla* administration willingly accepted one more family of Russian descent turning a living house into a restaurant, and in this case also a gallery. The *mahalla* community could not ostracise an enterprise led by one more domineering older woman trying to improve her courtyard, as there had been plenty of other women in the *mahalla* doing the same thing for years.

Musina made use of the courtyard of her house for a gallery/restaurant named Karavan. Using a courtyard as a public space was common in *mahalla* homes. She dealt with the improvement of her courtyard as any New Rich would, by inviting specialists amongst whom was the botanist Nazarov. The courtyard became a place with plants and small tables, with walls covered with textiles and covers from the sun spread over the top of the courtyard walls. Musina was aware that the New Rich were not intelligentsia: they were a mixed group of business people of various social origin, and therefore the place where they came to lunch and dine should not be too sophisticated. Musina intended to make the courtyard a place where the New Rich could come without feeling pressured to expose their lack of knowledge of arts, or even to purchase artworks. In fact, there was an atmosphere in Karavan which they aspired to have in their own courtyards.

It was logical that if in the courtyard Musina marketed a lifestyle, then she would continue to do so inside her gallery. There, the same lifestyle marketing was manifested in paintings, which the New Rich could view, learn about, and ultimately affirm their social identity by choosing and buying paintings which depicted typically Uzbek courtyard consumption. But her main achievement was making the courtyard a place where ordinary Tashkenties from the *mahalla* could see other lifestyles and open new possibilities for painting within the interior of homes. In this regard Musina's venture was a success: there was no attempt by the *mahalla* administration to condemn her for promoting 'excessive

consumption', nor were there any attempts to denounce Musina's illegal art trade based on foreign currency.

### **5.5. Why an economic value of painting depends on property prices**

Art traders' professionalism is based on their capacity to price art objects correctly. Correctness might be expressed only through mutual agreement between dealer and art buyer based on understanding of how an economic estimate is made. In this section I explain the uniqueness of the Uzbek art market. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Tashkent's foreigner-orientated market is similar to that in any big post-Soviet city with a sizable artistic community. Meanwhile, local markets had differences based on the property movements of the New Rich. To show this, I explain Musina's early attempts to adapt to Muscovite New Rich relocations dictating tastes based on simple acceptance of economic price value of property.

As I wrote in Chapter 4, women art dealers like Musina dealt primarily with foreigners. She knew both Western market pricing of Soviet painting and local pricing depending on export requirements. There was a fixed price for paintings at 700 US dollars. As she explained to me, 'you could not charge more than the buyer could afford.'<sup>91</sup> But when it came to trading with the Tashkenty New Rich, she realised that foreigners' pricing need not be applied because these were people who did not depend on their monthly salaries and who had untapped resources hidden from taxation. Musina thought at first that she could rely on the example of the Moscow art trade<sup>92</sup> which was much affected by property pricing. Her attempt to reconnect property and arts was not entirely new: she had learned some of these economic aspects of the art trade during her time in France.

Sharon Zukin (1988) and Xavier Greffe (2002), among others, point to the close relationship between fluctuations in property prices and the price of arts, arguing that the gentrification of urban areas is connected to artists and art galleries who move to previously dilapidated areas, attracting property developers. What I want to draw attention to here is that property, far from being the passive pawn of the art world and developers, also

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<sup>91</sup> Natalya Musina, interview, 26 July 2001.

<sup>92</sup> Musina tried to apply Russian display trends to the Uzbek domestic art market because in Uzbekistan there was no interior place for oil paintings in the past, so it was necessary to create a place for oil paintings in the new interiors.

generates artistic trends by affecting the rise or fall in cost of different types of artworks. Therefore I continue with an examination of Moscow property prices, the connection in Russia between property type and choice of artworks, and how that was inapplicable to the Uzbek case.

Any firsthand examination of property prices in Moscow indicates that the most expensive prices are within the circular line of the city's underground.<sup>93</sup> Within that encircled space are located all historical parts of Moscow, with buildings ranging from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to Stalin's skyscrapers. The median cost of property by square meter within that space, according to various property agencies, is over \$3000 (2002). Such a high cost for domestic property motivated Moscow's New Rich to look for exceptional buildings associated with a distinctive historical past which would turn domestic property into a sound investment. From my firsthand observation in Moscow in 2002, variations in price can differentiate even more between a typical flat in central Moscow and a flat with a historical past: a typical central Moscow flat starts at \$350,000, whereas the price of a flat in a historical building rises up to several million US dollars.

The Russian New Rich's relocation to historical apartment buildings boosted a boom in the antiques market, mostly in artefacts from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Flamini 1999; Moline 1999; Simpson 2001). The tastes of the New Rich began to follow the palatial styles of St. Peterburg, the Hermitage and other palaces of the Romanov dynasty. The New Rich's taste for the palatial Tsarist past affected Russian museums, which popularised displays in both Russia and Western Europe on how the Russian royalty and aristocracy lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

But back in Uzbekistan, Musina could not blindly apply Russian tastes regarding these earlier periods, nor did she have a choice of period buildings in Tashkent. Her Uzbeks were reluctant to have any associations with the nation's Russian colonial past, but they were aware of the price value of each square meter of their property. The price of one square meter in the New City fell roughly to \$600 US. This solved the difficulty of determining a price at which to start negotiations. Pricing should have been dependent on how much clients agreed to pay for artworks expressing an intentionally positive portrayal of their new social group. However, art dealers were unable to explain to artists how this

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<sup>93</sup> Based mainly on my three-week stay in Moscow and St. Petersburg in February 2002.

economic valuing functioned, which meant that artists began testing their creative practices without the help of dealers. Artists' own search for economically profitable themes left art dealers helpless. Therefore it became the turn for the dealers to start learning from artists which themes were most valued by the New Rich and *mahalla*, and why. In the following section I provide an example of a genre which became a favourite of both the *mahalla* and the New Rich.

### 5.6. Economic valuing of the still life genre

To demonstrate how even the most experienced art dealers were humbled by an incapacity to comprehend new economic valuing of painting, I start this section with an anecdote. The anecdote shows us how the Soviet-era viewpoint had become outdated by dramatic post-Soviet social changes. As Laura Lee Adams (1998: 37) stressed,<sup>94</sup> local specialists have their own way of knowing their subject and for anthropologists is important to be aware of it; therefore I found that it was necessary here to illustrate on the example of the still life genre assessed by Akhmedova.

In 2001, Akhmedova told me she was surprised by the high demand for the costly still life genre. She was approached by a New Rich Uzbek who wanted a still life in the Flemish style by Ikramdjonov (see Chapter 3, p.115). 'Flemish-style' still lifes, reminiscent of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch still lifes, were done in a meticulously realist style of painting combined with a smooth, mirror-like finish of the canvas surface. The objects depicted were usually a varied combination of crockery, textile, fruits, food and occasionally flowers or birds. Akhmedova was on friendly terms with Ikramdjonov for a personal reason: earlier she had lent him her German-made china for a time to incorporate it into his still lifes.<sup>95</sup> In the Soviet period, Ikramdjonov did not have access to such goods, and in the post-Soviet period ironically there was no quality porcelain services available.<sup>96</sup> His clever

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<sup>94</sup> Adams (1998) stressed this point in her Uzbekistan fieldwork research in relation to local specialists in the cultural field. I think it is important here, while discussing Akhmedova and male painters' conceptualisation of the Flemish still life genre, to demonstrate how local knowledge might be built up by various specialists such as art historians and painters.

<sup>95</sup> Negora Akhmedova, interview, 17 August 2001.

<sup>96</sup> Porcelain available in the post-Soviet market was limited to inferior quality Iranian and Chinese imports. In the Soviet period, imports were from original factories established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in East Germany and Hungary. Regardless of the communist regimes, these imports still had a very high economic and aesthetic value.



incorporation of expensive china in his still lifes made the paintings attractive to his New Rich clientele. Prices for his still lifes were increasing steadily, and Akhmedova joked that she deserved a percentage for providing him with suitable items for his still lifes - until she learned from Ikramdjonov in person how much he was charging for the paintings. The price per still life was \$3,500 US, which she found extortionate.<sup>97</sup> For the sake of her client, and reminding Ikramdjonov whose china he was actually using, she asked him to reduce the price but the painter firmly declined to do so. In disbelief, she returned to her client and reluctantly informed him of the artist's price. To her astonishment, the client, instead of objecting to the high price, was proud that he could pay for such a wonderful work which he said was 'worth the amount of money requested'.

Akhmedova told me that she felt humiliated as an art historian and dealer because none of her education and experiences could provide a clue about why still lifes were economically, ethically and aesthetically valued by New Rich Uzbeks. She tried earnestly to explore what made Flemish-style still lifes so desirable to the New Rich. She determined that there were no similarities between Dutch burghers and New Rich Uzbeks in aspects of domestication of painting, similarities that Ikramdjonov and the other artists, by choosing the Flemish style, were implying. More to the point, her own perspective was shaped by the genre hierarchy of the Soviet system, and therefore she became convinced that the taste for Flemish-style still lifes was a simple whim of the New Rich clients.

Akhmedova, who read art history at the Leningrad Academy of Fine Arts, had a good knowledge of Dutch painting. Russian Soviet art history taught the history of Dutch painting through teaching of the variety of genres, authorship and various artistic studios' activities within the many flourishing cities located in the territories of contemporary Holland and Belgium. However, due to the lack of access to Dutch arts collections in the West, this knowledge was perceived only through collections in Russian museums. Museum collections in Moscow and St. Petersburg were based on purchases of Dutch paintings by the Russian royal family and nobility in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These purchases reflected the Russian infatuation with the West and discoveries of Western art, rather than a specific Russian interest in Dutch art itself. Russian selection of Dutch still

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<sup>97</sup> \$3,500 is an extremely large sum in Tashkent. For this amount of money it was possible to purchase two flats in the Sergey Lee suburb. Such a price would be considered more appropriate for the London Art Fair, recognised by arts specialists as a middle-price art market.

lives in those museums was limited to a certain type of still lifes which depicted rare items of tableware, fruits, plants and hunting game, indicating the distinction of the Russian aristocracy as a landowning governing class.<sup>98</sup> Soviet Russian art historians missed an opportunity to study how Dutch painting turned from purely religious themes to secular themes as result of domestication, and what kind of requirements were needed of painting as a result of the move from public to domestic spaces.

Russian Soviet art history did not take into account the entirely mundane requirements to the medium of painting caused by domestication of painting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There was a difference in maintenance of painting in public compared to domestic spaces. In public spaces like churches or guilds, paintings were kept practically without upkeep whereas in domestic spaces paintings were looked after as any ordinary domestic object. Dutch painters produced durable paintings from which dust could be literally wiped. Paintings were also washed with clean water, to clear the surface of grime and blackness caused by burning tallow candles. To be able to withstand such cleaning procedures, the surface needed to be perfectly smooth and solid. A solid surface combined with a highly realist style of painting made Dutch burghers certain that what they were buying was both durable and naturalistic. The fact that these requirements were overlooked explains why Akhmedova could not take artists' allusions to Dutch still lifes seriously from an art historian's perspective. From the artists' perspective, they were exploring different painting techniques required by the different environment in which paintings were to be displayed.

Akhmedova, as an art historian, had a clear understanding of the complexity of the genre hierarchy in Soviet arts, and she was adamant that there were much greater variations than were earlier assumed. She was taught, like any Soviet-educated art historian, to validate the still life genre within the institutional genre hierarchy. According to the hierarchy of genres, the still life was the lowest genre in the Soviet period for two reasons: the apolitical nature of the genre (Prokhorov 1995), and a perceived lack of skill required in production (Reid 1998). However, as an Uzbek art critic she was aware that up until the

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<sup>98</sup> In other words, the collections did not help Russian art historians typify the true range of Dutch painting. Dutch still lifes had a plethora of subgenres indicating various ideas of the society's interests. There was a moralising genre called *vanitas*, implying the futility of life. There were genres celebrating Dutch maritime supremacy and control of international trade. Those still lifes showed Dutch fascination with all the items which foreign trade brought to Dutch cities: Turkish tulips, Chinese porcelain, German silverware, Turkmen carpets and so on. There were also still lifes illustrating plentiful life of Dutch cities, depicting stalls of meat, poultry, fish, and vegetables in naturalistic ways.

mid-1980s, the still life remained ‘a peripheral genre’ in Central Asia (Shostko 1979) and she attempted to explain what caused the genre’s peripheral position.

Between 1980 and 1991, Soviet Uzbek artists created still lifes incorporating objects glorifying the craftsmanship of Uzbeks residing within *mahalla* neighbourhoods, such as national ceramic ware from Khoresm and Rishtan and embroidered dowry hangings and carpets. Yet those still lifes implying the ‘goodness’ of the *mahalla* people were limited to the studios of artists; artists artificially created staged tables with handmade textiles and ceramics for receiving guests from similar intelligentsia backgrounds. But these ‘national crafts’ were no longer in daily use by ordinary *mahalla* inhabitants, who were already secure enough in their Uzbekness. Uzbek *mahalla* residents dined on plastic tablecloths, and ate and drank from cheap, factory-made china plates and cups without pangs of guilt about ‘national crafts’, a preoccupation of artists. Akhmedova’s research missed that those Soviet still lifes had the agenda of showing what *mahalla* residents ought to be - but not what *mahalla* residents, through possession of valuables, wanted to be.

Here I point out that Ikramdjonov selected objects for his still lifes through the *mahalla*’s perspective of ‘moral’ and ‘aesthetic’ values. Ikramdjonov understood that in order to make his still lifes acceptable to the *mahalla*, his paintings had to stick to the *mahalla*’s accepted communal values. Indeed, *mahalla* residents, regardless of income, often invested in some expensive crockery because this china was displayed and used during courtyard communal gatherings. The possession of good quality porcelain was considered ‘moral’ by the *mahalla* because this china was used not just for daily family use but for communal use, and therefore such items were not considered excessive or wasteful. And aesthetically, Ikramdjonov demonstrated his awareness that New Rich and *mahalla* residents both wished to see a painting resemble the original valuable as precisely as possible, because this was their definition of a good painting.

For me it was important to have a definition of ‘a good painting’ from Sebzar *mahalla* residents who have no arts education or connections in the arts field. I found it surprising to have such responses concerning painting because those people could previously have seen paintings only in public spaces - paintings which are not so immaculate in showing detail. I asked them why they made such responses, and my respondents gave me two criteria based on moral principles: first, that all jobs had to be

done ‘honestly’ and an ‘honest’ job for an artist is to do a good finish of the surface of the painting, and secondly a ‘good painting’ had to contain visualised depictions of a healthy, moral life.

Further, Ikramdjonov’s works created according to *mahalla* ‘moral’ and ‘aesthetic’ requirements also needed to be done in a specific medium befitting the New Rich’s perception of painting as a valuable, durable product. All this demonstrates that as an artist, Ikramdjonov had more foresight than Akhmedova did as an art historian, because he realised that in the same ways as 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch burghers, the Uzbek New Rich between 1999 and 2004 wanted to be sure what they were buying was a perfect representation of nature, extremely durable, convincingly realistic and morally instructive.

The choice of items depicted in the paintings suggested that the taste for Flemish-style still lifes was not a mere whim of the New Rich. The New Rich were never easily manipulated by artists or art dealers because they wanted still lifes in an atypical skill of painting. Normally still lifes were done by less skillful artists, even by women without any arts education. I previously explored the roughness of those still lifes (see Chapter 4, p.162). But since the still life became a favourite genre, the requirement for technical accomplishment and artistic materials completely altered. These still lifes needed a sophisticated finish, like the classical realism of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and not of Socialist Realism. An almost photographic portrayal of objects was achieved with endless thin layers of paint applied one after another, and done mostly on the best linen canvas using high quality paints imported from the West. How those requirements were fulfilled will be assessed in the following section concerning Umarov’s creative practice.

### **5.7. The invention of themes connoting New Rich understanding of *mahalla* values**

In this section I use the example of Bakhtyar Umarov (b. 1963). An examination of his creative practices demonstrates what kind of artists produced still lifes for the New Rich and how artists responded to the demands of the market. Additionally, I assess how male artists trained to express national identity become preoccupied with expressing social identities. Umarov’s own identity, that of a refugee educated in Tashkent who carved himself a niche in the local art market by working for different art galleries, supports my

previous statement that for the New Rich, an artist's technical skills and understanding of *mahalla* values were more important than their ethnicity.

Before meeting Umarov in person, I saw his works in National Bank of Uzbekistan publications as well as in several galleries (including Musina's). To meet Umarov in person and ask to view his still lifes was difficult because of his status as a Tajik refugee. After graduating from the Tashkent Arts Institute, he had returned to his home in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. During this time Tajikistan went through a decade of brutal civil war, in which various warring factions tortured and killed many residents of Dushanbe. Umarov finally decided to return to Tashkent, where he started an art trade in a street market and then slowly improved his artistic credentials by moving to more respectable trading sites such as galleries. But as a Tajik refugee, his situation turned worse with the 1999 introduction of antiterrorist measures, under which people without domestic registration in Tashkent or Uzbek passports could be detained by police for up to three days. Umarov had neither an Uzbek passport nor a domestic residency stamp. His safety was dependent only on a piece of Musina's stationery, on which she wrote that she was his employer. On several occasions, Musina's paper saved Umarov from being incarcerated or deported. He was therefore reluctant to speak to me, but after Musina asked on my behalf, he agreed to meet with me.<sup>99</sup>

It turned out that Umarov lived with two other Tajik refugees, a painter and a film cameraman. The men shared a small apartment, sleeping in one room and working in the other. The working room was tiny, dirty and smelly, with cockroaches running over the floor with crowded paint jars, oils, turpentine and brushes. The only pieces of furniture were the chairs on which the artists sat while painting. The men wore only pajama trousers because it was a hot summer day and because pajamas were their working clothes. They were unhappy that I had to see them in such undignified attire and messy conditions. The boiling point came when I asked about prices. One of them screamed, 'How dare you ask such questions? My sister was carrying bloody dollars from me to my parents in Dushanbe and she was caught. Do you understand she got eight years' imprisonment?' After apologising and leaving the unhappy and angry artists, Umarov and I went out. Umarov was more relaxed outdoors than in the apartment with his friends.

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<sup>99</sup> Bakhtyar Umarov, interview, 16 May 2000.

Fig. 20 Flemish-style still life by Bakhtyar Umarov (oil on canvas, 2001). Photo was given to me by Umarov after the painting was sold to an unknown foreign buyer.



Umarov explained to me that he loved to work in multifigured compositions. He stressed that this did not include thematic compositions of the Soviet period and that he called his genre 'folk painting'. 'Folk' implied humorous situation with *mahalla* inhabitants wearing non-European clothing and local textiles.<sup>100</sup> The scenes were far from those depicting dignified, stern matrons or old glorious men with medals on their chests. His characters were portrayed in teasing ways: tipsy elderly couples returning home from a night out, virile old men attempting to kidnap yawning beauties, or a poetic young mother and son hanging washed linen. Those characters, however, were not highly appreciated by Uzbek art buyers. Instead, they were bought by foreigners. But at the time of my interview, foreigners' interest had waned and Umarov was now relying on the Uzbek New Rich.

The New Rich wanted Flemish style still lifes, which Umarov disliked (see Fig. 20, p.205). He enjoyed painting in his folk genre and he complained to me, 'the Flemish still lifes make me sick'. I asked him what made him respond like that if during the Soviet period the still life was considered an easy, uncomplicated and unmanly genre.

What Umarov told me contradicted all Soviet art history. He stressed that those Flemish-style still lifes are even more difficult to produce than multifigured compositions. I argued that the human figure is more difficult to paint than scattered peaches on a table cloth. Patiently listening to me, he disagreed: a different type of technical skill is required to work in this style, he said. Normally in the Soviet two-tier education system, artists were taught to work in different styles of painting appropriate for different historical periods. During his studies in the Arts College and Arts Institute, which had the compulsory practice of copying in Russian museums, he had gained an interest in 17<sup>th</sup> century Spanish still lifes by Francisco de Zurbarán. Umarov stated that the copying technique required patient, slow and precise work with semitransparent layers going one on top of the other. The production of a still life is also highly time consuming: one still life can take over one and a half months to paint, often putting strain on the painter's eyes. He told me that larger finished works in the conventional broad brushstrokes of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century require less layers of paint and in fact could be finished much quicker than a still life. His folk genre paintings were two to three times bigger than Flemish still lifes but he was able to finish them in half a week. Umarov stressed, 'In fact, there are more New Rich desiring my still lifes than I am

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<sup>100</sup> I will give a full assessment of national textiles in the following section.

able to satisfy, therefore I have only photos of my still lifes in the Flemish style, not any of the paintings themselves.’ Later he showed me a photo of a Flemish still life which portrayed fruit and birds on a dark table with a blue background. He further stressed that Uzbek New Rich buyers are not only attracted to this combination of visual image and investment in high artistic labour, but also to the artist’s employment of expensive artistic materials such as real linen canvases and high quality foreign oil paints.

I asked him if he thought that artists without a two-tier education (I was implying women) could master this old-fashioned technique.<sup>101</sup> Umarov was doubtful that even current Arts Institute students, deprived of the practice of copying from Russian museum collections, would be capable of emulating the Flemish style; unless, he suggested, the students were lucky enough to be taught the technique manually by artists skilled in the style. That, he emphasised, was one of the reasons that there were few artists available to meet the demand for this particular type of still life. Due to the lack of artists with the necessary skills, the price of the paintings would remain high.

My interview with Umarov portrayed a familiar picture of the male-dominated Soviet art world. Male art buyers commissioned male artists, and both parties were ethnic Uzbeks. Hopefully, the local Arts Institute would have enough two-tier Uzbek male artists capable of teaching Uzbek male art students the necessary skills to satisfy the demand for still lifes. But I felt that in this exciting new local-oriented art market there was little margin left for women artists. In the next section I provide an example of how some women succeed to thrive with the new domestication of arts.

### **5.8.1. Lola Babayeva and ikat cloth**

In this section I assess a female Uzbek artist, Lola Babayeva (b. 1962) and her ways of adapting to the domestication of arts.<sup>102</sup> By her move from the state sector to the non-state sector, she completely altered ideas of what woman could or could not do. Like Umarov, Babayeva was connected to Musina’s gallery and actively helped Musina attract the desired Uzbek New Rich clientele. Babayeva entered the art market after the decline of the state-

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<sup>101</sup> Bakhtyar Umarov, interview, 12 July 2001.

<sup>102</sup> Lola Babayeva, interview, 10 June 2000.



funded film industry in the 1990s; she had previously been a film production designer.<sup>103</sup> In her case, I will show that she was able to depoliticise national costume by making it commercially attractive. She traded in photo calendars containing models wearing her costumes, exhibiting costumes in various venues, and painting images of so-called ‘beauties’. Before examining Babayeva’s creative practices in detail, I connect relevant anthropological theoretical aspects in relation to costume.

Costume, in anthropological theory, is perceived through its capacity to embody national identity in a particular garment made of a specific type of textile; for example, a kilt made of Scottish tartan. The Scottish kilt represents not only Scottish identity but also variable colouring and patterns indicating different Scottish clans (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983). More broadly, clothing and costume are often markers of status in relation to gender, wealth or marital status (Tarlo 1996; King 1999; Eicher 1999). In the same way, Uzbek costume became closely associated with a textile called *abr*, translated from the Arabic as ‘cloudy’ and better known in the West as ikat. I am going to show that through the efforts of Babayeva (under the roof of Musina’s Karavan), the cut and colouring of ikat came to connote for New Rich women not only their Uzbekness but also their marital position and their membership in the new social group. Those costumes were specially made for *mahalla* celebrations and garden parties in the courtyards of the New Rich.

Returning to ikat as a national textile representing Uzbekness, I have to stress that the cloth’s ‘Uzbekness’ (territorially defined within the contemporary frontiers of Uzbekistan) is a recent development. Ikat weaving has been done since the 8<sup>th</sup> century and is spread as far as northeastern Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the western autonomous region of Xinjiang in China, Gujarat in India, Japan and Indonesia. But only in Uzbekistan did ikat achieve identification with national identity, and become venerated by Western auction houses dealing with non-western textiles. I have to explain in stages how exactly Uzbek ikat came to the surface in the Soviet period as part of the military complex, how ikat reached Western auction houses and later how it became part of Musina and Babayeva’s post-Soviet marketing strategy. To make it clearer, this section concerns

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<sup>103</sup> The Russian Cinematic Institute has a faculty of film production designers, which gives a very broad specialization for artists from planning sites of film location to designing costumes.

primarily the costume and textile history intertwined with Babayeva's experience as a film designer, and the following section assesses her work with Musina.

Under Soviet rule, republican authorities attempted to preserve handmade textiles<sup>104</sup> as early as the civil war in which Uzbekistan was subdued (Skallerup 1990).<sup>105</sup> Despite the opening of *artel*, or united enterprises by craftsmen, ikat slowly started disappearing from major Uzbek cities (Mahkamova 1970: 12; 1983: 86).<sup>106</sup> In the 1970s, local Communist Party leader Sharaf Rashidov<sup>107</sup>, under the pretext of enlarging parachute silk factories in Margelan, opened two factories: Atlas, aimed at producing machine-made ikat, and an experimental factory, Yadgorlik, where ikat was handmade (Mahkamova 1963; Akilova 1999). Soviet industrial production not only saved the craft (Koroleva 1972: 29; Suprun 1982:4), but also improved the quality of production, because workers along the lengthy silk production chain underwent as many as thirty-seven processes of specialised qualification. The demand for the local mills' production evidenced a very steady local market which provided the titular nation population with traditional textiles for special occasions (Sorkin 2000: 8). But all that does not explain why such expensive non-utilitarian clothing which required costly, or in rural areas unavailable, dry cleaning (ikat is spoilt by washing), was kept by titular nation women for courtyard communal occasions. The transformation of ikat from smelly garb in sacks to festive clothing worn in *mahalla* gatherings to a national symbol in the late 1980s, I suggest in the following paragraph was owed to an appreciation of Uzbek ikat from abroad.

According to various written sources and my firsthand fieldwork encounters, ikat was first brought to the West by Jewish émigrés from Uzbekistan in the early 1980s (Sorkin 2000; Frankl 1998). Since then, ikat cloth became highly commercially valued in the West. Due to the émigrés bringing ikat from the Uzbek cities where it was produced, ikat became defined as Uzbek (Marechal 1985; Markuson 1988; Fitz Gibbon and Hale 1997; Ledes

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<sup>104</sup> The favouring of silk by the communists is quite curious because silk was traditionally a luxury item even condemned by Islamic clerics. True believers are never supposed to wear clothing made of pure silk, therefore craftsmen were obliged to make clothing of mixed cotton and silk. Nomads, though, were known to purchase pure silk owing to its capacity to keep parasites away.

<sup>105</sup> Mark Skallerup (1990) stresses that the Soviet state protected craftsmen even in the 1930s, after the end of the Civil War in Uzbekistan.

<sup>106</sup> According to Saira Mahkamova (1970: 12; 1983: 86), individual craftsmen became united in 1935 by working at the state factory in Margelan in the Ferghana Valley.

<sup>107</sup> Sharaf Rashidov was First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party from 1959 until 1982.

1997; Watkins 1998; Carlano 1999). Because of its huge acclaim in the West as a type of textile which looks like a painting, ikat became a high art status symbol.<sup>108</sup> As a result of that, after 1991 when Uzbekistan became widely accessible to foreigners, ikat came to be considered a national symbol of Uzbekistan (Mahkamova 1963, 1970, 1983; Avedova 1986; Musina 1995; Akilova 1999).

Babayeva graduated from the Cinematic Institute of Moscow (Tashpulatova 2001: 44)<sup>109</sup> and, unlike other artists who were solely painters, had a direct experience with national textiles from the very beginning of her artistic career. Her career fell into the period when Uzbek cinema incorporated two genres: historical period pieces and contemporary propaganda films. Babayeva's films were contemporary dramas inspired by the luxuriant medieval past or the adventurous early Soviet past. In her films, she depicts the uninspiring costumes of the Soviet Brezhnev period in semi-rural areas. In her film *The Bride From Vuadil*, the protagonists range from a new bride from an unrefined rural area to a more sophisticated family in an urban location, so the costumes had to demonstrate social and gender differentiation. These types of films honed Babayeva's ethnographic precision in reflecting the state order and propaganda of progress and the enlightenment of Soviet life.

At the beginning of the post-Soviet period, Babayeva as a film production designer did not start too badly. But she was a divorcée with a growing boy, and she was the breadwinner for two retired and impoverished parents, both painters. Babayeva managed to participate in exciting ventures such as the British production *Orlando*, shot on location in Khiva, Uzbekistan; and the Uzbek blockbuster *Tamerlane*, filmed in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Those films provided her with experiences missed in the Soviet period: conceptualising historical costume dramas and utilising expensive textiles. But after those films, the work dried out because the Cinema Union suffered the same sad fragmentation process as the Union of Artists of the USSR. Witnessing the fall of two creative unions, she was not as hopeful as the majority of male artists but not entirely disappointed with the new institution, the Academy of Fine Arts. She was a film production designer who without a

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<sup>108</sup> The head of the oriental textiles division at Christie's told me that even ikat garments were defined as flat art, implying that flattened ikat robes could hang on walls like paintings.

<sup>109</sup> Tashpulatova (2001: 44) pointed out that Babayeva was among very few in Central Asia to gain this type of education, and the only Uzbek female to do so.

film industry could only do painting. She also understood that she could not rely on the state sector, only on what she was able to accomplish herself. In the following section I discuss Babayeva's popularisation of Uzbek costume under the roof of Karavan.

### **5.8.2. Babayeva and the invention of themes connecting New Rich identity to *mahalla* identity**

As I previously mentioned, Babayeva as a cinematic artist had a wider experience, and broader and more market-oriented artistic vision than contemporary male painters. When we first discussed how she adapted to the new situation, she told me that she was inspired by the early 20th century Russian arts, which involved close cooperation between various arts such as photography, dance and painting. One such famous collaboration was the Ballet Russe under impresario Sergei Dyagilev. For those Paris productions, highly acclaimed costumes were created by Leon Bakst, the artists were photographed and the ballet performances studied in detail by choreographers. One of the most interesting Bakst works was devoted to the 1001 Arabian Nights fairy tales. Babayeva decided to paint images of 'beauties' dressed in so-called 'oriental' costumes in the Bakst style (see Fig.21, p.212). She produced photo shoots reminiscent of those Bakst odalisques, and she decided to streamline and modernise those ikat costumes, hoping it could go well in Karavan.<sup>110</sup>

I met her during one of those photo shoots in the courtyard of Karavan. Babayeva was carrying a painting of a 'beauty'. Musina was there, lending models her antique silver jewelry in preparation for the shoot. Some wealthy young men were also hanging around, friends of Musina's son Timur. They teased Babayeva, pointing at the picture portraying the belly-exposing languid 'beauty' and asking her, 'What about the model in your picture, could you introduce her to us?' Babayeva politely answered, 'Sorry boys, she's married.' Babayeva was aware that in New Rich families, men controlled spending on luxury items, but ikat clothing was not part of the male wardrobe. Ikat clothing was always intended for women. To be suitable for both audiences, male and female, and of all age groups, Babayeva needed to clearly state her messages through the dissemination of various images using ikat cloth.

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<sup>110</sup> Lola Babayeva, interview, 12 July 2001.

Fig. 21 Lola Babayeva's *Krasavitsa (Beauty)*, (paper, gouache and watercolour, 2001).  
Photo taken by myself.



Fig. 22 A model dressed in Lola Babayeva's design, which followed *mahalla* traditions of modesty in clothing. Photo from *San'at* magazine, 2001.



Fig. 23 Lola Babayeva, Western-influenced clothing made from ikat cloth. Photo from *San'at* magazine, 2001.



She introduced drawings of delicately exposed ‘beauties’ dressed in Uzbek ikat, which titillated male audiences. Men, especially of a younger age, stopped associating ikat with their grandmothers’ outfits. For those wealthy young men, to have Babayeva’s painting on the wall was considered more appropriate to their social standing than a mere sexually explicit poster suitable for teenagers and purchased at a street market.

She also arranged photo shoots of models dressed according to ‘*mahalla* aesthetics’ connoting modesty, propriety and respectfulness (long clothing with covered ankles and wrists) for annual calendars (Fig. 22, p. 213). Buying images of models in Uzbek ikat cloth was something which affirmed the buyer as ‘moral’ and Uzbek. Those tasteful calendars did not cause embarrassment or annoyance in the older generation. This type of calendar was aimed by Babayeva at families aspiring to one day become New Rich.

She produced a line of clothing made of ikat for various social occasions for women from New Rich families. Rich women often had to participate in cultural events at which they were expected to show up dressed up in ikat clothing, but they wanted to have Western-cut clothes showing body line rather than traditionally shapeless Uzbek garments. For these Western-cut dresses, she used only handmade ikat produced by craftsmen who had left the Margelan factory and opened their own enterprises (Fig. 23, p.213). Those craftsmen’s ikat was exported to London and Paris and sold for £80 per meter, mainly used by designers in Europe. Babayeva’s clients wearing her dresses were not so much affirming ‘Uzbek’ identity, following the *mahalla*-controlling older women, but affirming themselves as a new social group: the post-Soviet New Rich, proud of wearing their internationally fashionable attire.

By reaching out to the traditional, the aspirational and also the New Rich, Babayeva managed to domesticate her paintings in a new context. Although those paintings were not the main part of her activities, she clearly illustrated to everybody the ways how women could broaden their activities in the local market. She proved that the inability to produce a Flemish still life did not bar an artist from success in the local art market. The most important capacity for an artist was to have a vision of whom they were targeting as clients, and why.

### 5.9. What does domestication of post-Soviet painting in the non-state market show?

The domestication of painting in Tashkent revealed the complexities of the relationship between *mahalla* communal and domestic spaces and the values attached to those spaces. The relationship was negotiated through the choice of artistic themes selected by New Rich Uzbeks and *mahalla* residents and administration. Economic valuing of arts is not measured by the simple yardstick of money, but high cost does express affirmation to the new social group identity negotiated through courtyard themes. Molding such group identity is not as hermetic a process as it was in relation to Soviet Uzbek identity, imagining its own glorious Uzbek past. Borrowing from and relating to various cultures' locations and historical periods is broad, thoughtful and never lacks imagination.

Domestication of painting made its own stars among artists and art dealers, some of whom became far more financially secure at home than they would have attempting to sell their works abroad. Looking at those who succeeded in the local art market, we can see that there were mature artists of both genders, not necessarily Uzbek, but well-educated and capable of conceptualising the necessities of the new social group within domestic space. Perhaps residents of Moscow, St. Petersburg and Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan, lacking courtyards and meaningful courtyard consumption, would never pay exorbitant prices for Flemish-style still lifes nor purchase images of exotic beauties wearing ikat textiles. Those places have their own, different domestic spaces and their own New Rich who do not so dramatically struggle with their amassed wealth as their Uzbek counterparts. New Rich Uzbeks achieved what the Soviet system always made doubtful: whether local painting was Uzbek or Russian. From now on painting became truly Uzbek, by moving from 'public' state-controlled spaces to 'domestic/private' spaces via '*mahalla/public*' spaces.

Domestication also revealed that increasingly, social and economic validation of artistic practices directly became attached to the moral values of artists, sellers and buyers. Those moral values were based on *mahalla* institutional values, which were different from those of the arts institutions. In the following chapter concerning the Russian Orthodox Church, I am going to show that the Church mirrors the *mahalla* institution in that it prioritises moral valuation over social and economic valuing in its assessments of religious artworks and their producers.



## Chapter 6

### The Russian Orthodox Church: Renewing Church Arts Commissioning in Tashkent (1998-2004)

#### 6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 discusses a newly revived commissioner of painting, the Russian Orthodox Church. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the ROC has become the second biggest commissioner of art after the state in terms of the scale and substance of commissions. Chapter 6 explores the sacred religious validation of arts, which is different from secular arts validation, using the example of the Church's moral valuing of religious painting and its producers from 1998-2004. The Church has distinct moral parameters regarding arts, and claims sole moral authority to religious validation of art through sanctification of artworks and approval of artists. Only priests can sanctify (*osvyatit'*) a work of art, transforming it from a simple secular works into a holy religious object. The essential purpose of a religious art object is to connect a praying believer to God. This is particularly true regarding the Orthodox Church's tradition of icons, which will be discussed in this chapter. Owing to the role of the religious art object as transmitter between God and believer, an icon painter's strength of belief, personal religious practice, conduct and comportment affect, in the eyes of the Church, the religious efficacy of his product. The ROC is responsible for the production and consumption of religious paintings, which are an integral part of Orthodox Christian worship, and conducts its valuing practices from a purely moral framework.

In this chapter, I argue that the ROC's valuing of religious arts is adaptable to institutional changes caused by the schism between the Church and the Soviet state, the fall of Communism and the emergence of independent Uzbekistan. These changes, and their effects on the Church's arts-valuing system, were not discussed in either art historical or theological literature (see art history in Chapter 1, p.31). An assessment of current ROC valuing of religious art, based on a study of reintroduced religious practices, could demonstrate the fluidity of the Church's valuing principles.

The Russian Orthodox Church lacks significant social influence in Uzbekistan. Independent Uzbekistan is a secular state in which all religious institutions, including the ROC, are tightly controlled by various state offices responsible for the censorship of

published religious literature, oversight of funds used by the Church and release of land for the construction of new Church buildings. In addition, the ROC also has little economic power in Uzbekistan, owing to the local dioceses' economic dependence on the main office in Russia. The continuous decrease of the number of believers and potential believers, through Slavic emigration to Russia, further weakens the social and economic standing of the ROC in Uzbekistan.

My main argument is that the Church is rapidly reshaping its valuing practices in response to post-1991 institutional changes. To find out how the ROC values religious painting and its producers, we have to start with the valuers and producers. Traditional valuers and producers were monks (Florensky 2002; Ouspensky 1982).<sup>111</sup> The newly emerged valuers of religious painting were not monks but parish priests and nuns. Priests and nuns are not expected by the Church to have sound theological knowledge for valuing religious painting. Parish clerics are responsible for supervision of the laity's religious practice and conducting religious services at local churches. Meanwhile, nuns' main vocation is limited to charitable works for the sick and poor. The renewed institutional practices of valuing religious painting can be assessed through participation and observation of daily religious practice, interviewing religious practitioners and observation of their interactions with the producers of religious arts.

It becomes equally important to find out who was allowed to produce icons by these religious valuers. The new producers were professional artists, not monks. Monks give their vows to the Church, live within a monastery compound, and are celibate. Their lives revolve around prayer, abstinence and serving within the single realm of the ROC. Professional artists are both men and women, of diverse ethnicities, family situations, types of secular education and incomes.

Professional artists working for the Church live in overlapping social domains: the Church through commissioning, the *mahalla* due to their domestic residence and the Union of Artists and later the Academy of Fine Arts through their membership. As I discussed in previous chapters, all those institutions had a strong moral emphasis. But

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<sup>111</sup> Pavel Florensky and Leonid Ouspensky were two luminaries of Russian theology who discussed the valuing of Russian icon painting from a purely theological perspective. Both of them viewed icon painting as an integral part of the monastic tradition. Their literary heritage is inaccessible in Uzbekistan for ideological and linguistic reasons. The Uzbek state limits circulation of any theological literature which does not openly support the current regime of president Karimov, and Florensky's and Ouspensky's works were written well before the independent Uzbek state emerged. Florensky was executed by the Soviet state in 1924, whereas Ouspensky died in 1982. Ouspensky was a Russian émigré who lived in France; his books were written in French and English and never translated into Russian.

the moral values of each of those institutions are not the same, and it is necessary to examine how the artists cope with conflicting moral values.

Bearing in mind this question, I have divided Chapter 4 into three parts: the first section discusses the historical background and the following sections introduce two artists, one working with religious painting and one using religious themes in secular painting. The historical background section explains the Church's efforts since 1991 to revive the monastic tradition in Tashkent, one of the aims of which was to promote the Orthodox Christian faith through production by a convent of religious art objects for worship.

Table N.4. The number of artists working with Christian themes

<i>Artists working with Christian themes</i>	<i>116</i>
Artists sanctifying religious artworks at various times in all Tashkent churches	83
Artists sanctifying icons at the same church with the same priest	21
<b>Artists involved in the Holy Trinity Church</b>	12

During my fieldwork (1999-2001) I questioned 452 artists and found 116 who worked with religious themes. After that, I determined who of these artists had undergone Church valuing (see Table 4). Finally, to make reliable and consistent data I needed to focus on artists who worked consistently at the same location and who dealt with the same ecclesiastical valuers over an extended period. For this reason, I chose two very different artists working in the same site, the Holy Trinity Church convent, in the period of 1998-2001. These two artists present different characteristics. One, Alexei Rassol, was a Russian male, a devout Christian, a professional artist by education and by vocation an *ikonopisets* (icon painter). The other, Olga Kharitonova, was not considered fit to be an *ikonopisets* according to the Church's parameters for a religious artefact producer. Kharitonova was Orthodox Christian, but female, of mixed ethnic origin, a professional painter and volunteer icon painter.

## 6.2. The Russian Orthodox Church in Tashkent

In the first three sections I explore the institutional differences between parish priests and monks, and nuns and monks, in order to demonstrate how the institutional positions of these religious functionaries affect their perceptions of how religious art and its producers should be valued.

I begin with the parish clergy, a category different from monks. In Russian society, the parish clergy have represented a special class since the medieval period, in which the priesthood was a family occupation.<sup>112</sup> Parish clergy have never played an important administrative role for various reasons: the parish clergy is made up of married priests who were often unable to engage in demanding Church appointments. The parish clergy dealt with mundane aspects of secular life which did not require deep theological knowledge. Unlike parish clerics, monks came from all sways of society and various ethnic groups. All administrative positions within the Church structure were recruited only from the ranks of monks<sup>113</sup> who, as a rule for getting promoted, needed to be broadly educated in secular and theological disciplines.

According to Christel Lane (1981) and Nathaniel Davis (1988), the status of the two types of clergy was affected by the schism between the Church and the Soviet state. Lane (1981) suggested that under Soviet rule, parish clergy wielded more authority because of the Soviet suppression of monasteries. However, parish clerics' acquisition of new administrative responsibilities coincided with a loss of their traditional parish work. Lane connected the decline of the parish work to the poor intellectual level of parish clerics. She especially pointed at the Central Asian dioceses; in Central Asia, large numbers of ordained priests not only lacked religious education but also had not even completed secondary school. Davis (1998) summarised that after the fall of the Soviet state, the Church attempted to reform its parish clergy through improvements in education and bettering their skills for parish work, as well as to revive the monastic tradition.

Owing to the fact that in Uzbekistan the ROC was represented only by parish clergy,<sup>114</sup> the Church's attempts to recuperate from the effects of the Soviet period on its institutional structure led to the reinforcement of the parish clergy in independent

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<sup>112</sup> See Hosking (1997: 235).

<sup>113</sup> Parish clergy could become promoted to positions occupied by monastic clerics only if the parish priest was widowed and became a monk.

<sup>114</sup> The only exception was the archbishop, who came from monks' ranks and was appointed by the main Russian office.

Uzbekistan. The ROC opened a religious educational institution called the Academia in 1998 in Tashkent, in order to improve the education of local priests. However, making formal religious education necessary for priests' ordainment reduced access to the priesthood for other social groups. All 29 places for the Academia's four-year courses were filled by the sons of parish clergy. The students were required to be married by the time of their graduation, and they looked for brides with similar family backgrounds.<sup>115</sup> The Tashkent parish clergy became an increasingly tight, insular and family-related community. In further sections I am going to demonstrate that the parish clergy's insularity affected the formation of the monastic tradition between 1998 and 2004, and influenced parish clerics' valuing of artists.

### **6.3. The monastic tradition in Uzbekistan**

Russian Orthodox religious arts were developed within the monastic tradition, but in Uzbekistan the Church did not attempt to re-establish that tradition until 1998. My following assessment of the current ROC explains why it was easier for the Church to open new convents than monasteries. This leads to an explanation why in convents, religious art valuers were not only nuns but parish priests. Then I specify why the subsequent revival of icon painting took place in a female convent.

Although convents and monasteries belong to the same monastic tradition, nuns have a status far below that of monks. Nuns play no role within the ROC's institutional structure. Nor are they similar to parish priests: nuns participate in, but can not officiate, religious practices. The conduct of religious services in a convent required the daytime presence of a parish priest. In order to function, convents needed both priests and nuns.

Opening monasteries was difficult in Tashkent because there were more women wishing to take the veil than men wishing to take monastic vows. The strong presence of women in the Orthodox Christian faith has been discussed by various anthropologists since the 1970s (Lane 1981: 42; Dragadze 1993). These scholars stressed women believers' predominant numbers in church attendance, and women's attempt to influence religious practice in the cases of the absence of male religious functionaries during the Soviet period.

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<sup>115</sup> Divorce is practically unacceptable by the ROC, and is completely impermissible for priests: if a priest were to divorce through a secular court, he would be immediately defrocked. Priests needed brides who understood that divorce was an impossibility.

The scarcity of men willing to become monks was due to two factors. The first was the continuous emigration of Uzbekistan's ethnic Russians to Russia. The second was the preference among clerics' sons for the secure option of parish priesthood, entitling them to a family, free education and a lifelong stable income.

So it was not surprising then that in Tashkent, the Church attempted to revive the monastic tradition by opening not a monastery but a female convent. A convent, in addition to its direct religious function and charitable work, was supposed to become engaged in the production of religious art objects. Therefore the opening of a convent required the commissioning of artists, first to decorate the building and then to teach nuns to produce religious art objects.

The opening of any new Church establishment presented difficulties. Under Uzbek law, the ROC can reclaim any property it owned prior to 1922, whether land or religious buildings. But in practical terms it is not easy for the Church to recover property, because those buildings have been appropriated by state institutions or because the old Church-owned buildings were levelled and the land rebuilt. The Church needed plots of land in urban areas with a high concentration of potential believers. In Uzbekistan, the Slavic population is clustered only in three densely populated cities: Tashkent, Fergana and Samarkand. In the post-Soviet period, Samarkand and Fergana have become overwhelmingly populated either by Uzbeks or Tajiks, leaving only Tashkent, in which there is an even split between Uzbeks and Slavs. To build a convent in a public space in Tashkent was a symbolic challenge to the majority-Muslim Uzbek state, and to build it in a residential area of Tashkent would mean antagonising the *mahalla*. Therefore, for the ROC each case of opening a religious establishment is a special case, and the case of the convent in which I did my research is worthy of an introduction.

#### **6.4. The Holy Trinity convent**

In this section I discuss the history of the opening of the Holy Trinity convent in 1998 in the area near the Rice Market. Then I explore how its reopening changed the relationship between the ROC and the laity.

On the contemporary site of the Holy Trinity convent, there was a short-lived convent which was opened and closed down during the First World War. The closure of the convent was followed by the introduction of the first Soviet city regeneration scheme in Tashkent. The 1924 regeneration scheme aimed to give leased land for

building private property to the Russian working class population in the Rice Market area, and the remains of the convent were levelled. However, the regeneration scheme provided residents with much smaller land plots compared with the New City houses, Old City *mahalla* or *mahalla* of the 1970s-1980s, allowing only the construction of houses consisting of a kitchen and one living room with facilities in a tiny courtyard with no space for a vegetable plot, garden, poultry, cowshed or water tank.<sup>116</sup> Yet the smallness of these new houses ensured that this mainly Slavic-populated area kept its Russianness in the post-Soviet period, due to Uzbeks' unwillingness to move here from other Tashkent areas. This limited the creation of the local *mahalla* community and made the local *mahalla* administration ineffective. The Uzbek state, motivated by the weakness of the *mahalla*, permitted the ROC to clear out Russians' houses built over former ROC land for the rebuilding of the Holy Trinity Church and convent. The clearing of houses for building the convent was welcomed by local Russians, and did not provoke a sense of resentment by residents towards the state or the Church.

The Holy Trinity church with its walled convent was built deep in the Rice Market area, providing the possibility for a renewed relationship between the ROC and the laity. The building and decorating of the Holy Trinity Church took place between 1998 and 2001, after which there was at last a parish, with actively practicing parishioners and parish clerics overseeing religious services. There were three priests: two fathers named Vladimir and father Genadiy, all of whom churchgoers knew by name and who knew parishioners by name as well. The number of churchgoers averaged 80 for daily services, and on Sundays and holidays numbered over 200. Daily services were attended mainly by old retired women, while Sunday service was attended by men and women of various age, who brought their children with them. Apart from conducting services from six a.m. until six p.m., priests performed all Christian rites and rituals such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, taking confessions and the blessing of workplaces and objects (purchases of great material value such as cars, or as small as food) for their parishioners. There were also nuns, busy with singing during church services, praying, helping priests and arranging choirs around the administrative office and workshops. The creation of the convent required the services of artists, whom

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<sup>116</sup> The small size of the Russian families' houses in the Rice Market area made the area extremely poor, because residents depended entirely on their salaries earned from factories, without the possibility of having supplies provided by vegetable plots, orchards and livestock. Despite the surviving cultural homogeneity in the post-Soviet period, nobody wishes to stay on in such areas because they are ridden with alcoholism and violent crime.

parish clerics and nuns expected to become devoted parishioners. Their artistic worth was based more on their status as obedient parishioners than on their skills as religious artefact producers. As parishioners, artists were requested to regularly attend church services, take communion, celebrate Church holidays, fast and pray at home - activities not requested of them before 1998. In the following section I concentrate on an artist who worked at the Holy Trinity Church, Alexei Rassol.

### **6.5. Alexei Rassol**

I start with the icon painter Alexei Rassol because I first met him in the Holy Trinity church. In fact, the local ROC commissioning started with Rassol, and after him there were set requirements clarifying who could work as an icon painter in Tashkent. Rassol's practice revealed the local ROC's capacity to assess icon painting during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Alexei Rassol,<sup>117</sup> who was 78 years old at the time of our interviews in 1999, was a local ethnic Russian. His parents were from Russia. He had been raised by his mother, a secretly practising Christian, and knew very little about his father. However, he was aware that since he had belonged to the gentry and served in the Russian Tsarist army, he should avoid advertising his family past. Before the Great Patriotic War, Rassol graduated from the Samarkand Arts College. After the war he was falsely denounced and sentenced to ten years in a prison camp. After his release, Rassol returned to being a creative artist, working on Church commissions for the oldest monastery in Moscow, Donskoi Monastery. He was also known within non-conformist art circles after his participation with other non-conformist Russian artists in the famous 1962 'Bulldozer Exhibition' banned by Nikita Khrushchev. Rassol's rich creative experience made him aware of the difference in valuing art works within secular and religious commissioning systems. Rassol was commissioned by the ROC in 1954 to carry out church decoration throughout the former Soviet Union, and he worked on 58 churches in total. In the following section I focus on the ROC's valuing of artists.

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<sup>117</sup> Interviews took place after permission was gained from Mother Superior Lubov, the head of the convent, and after Father Vladimir, who leads services there, had given his blessing for questioning the employed icon painter.



### **6.6. Church valuing of religious art producers before the Soviet period**

In this section I explore the Church's valuing prior to the Soviet period, a subject which was not examined by art historians (Tarasov 2002; Sarabianov 1981, 1989, 1990). These historians' works on religious art in Russia are important for two reasons. First, they did not limit their research of religious arts to the monastic tradition, as theologians like Florensky and Ouspensky did. Secondly, they argued that the changing status of religious art producers depended on the position of the Church in the Russian state.

According to art historians, during the medieval period, when the Church achieved its highest position in the feuding states, the Church had its choice of icon-painters from the large ranks of monks. After Peter the Great's reforms, the Church was downgraded to the bureaucratic institution of the Synod. During the second half of the 18th century, professional artists emerged along with the introduction of secular educational institutions such as the Fine Arts Academy in Russia. Artists were commissioned by the Church to decorate religious buildings as monks had previously been. At the same time there emerged craftsmen working for Church commissions, concentrated in three villages: Kholuy, Mstyora and Palekh. These artisans were not required to have extensive religious training or secular painting education. The decrease of the church's status at the later period of Russian history resulted in an increase of professional artists and craftsmen in Church commissions. However, artists' and craftsmen's prestige was lower than monks, and the Church was able to turn down a commission if the work did not follow the religious canon.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, art historians' research never directly focused on how the lowering of the ROC's status in the Russian state from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through 1917 affected its valuing of non-monastic religious art producers and their works. The absence of any concise study of the Church's institutional valuing of non-monastic religious artists contributed to the current perception in post-Soviet artistic and religious circles that Church valuing remains intransigent. In the following section, I demonstrate that the lowering of the Church's status under the Soviet state shaped its valuing of the non-monastic arts producers and their arts, influenced by Soviet arts institutional practices.

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<sup>118</sup> Failing to adhere to the religious canon was nothing unusual: sometimes even such outstanding artists as Mikhail Vrubel had their commissions rejected on these grounds.

### **6.7. ROC valuing of religious art producers during the Soviet period**

To understand Soviet-era Church valuing I look at Oleg Kharhordin (1999), who questioned the extent of the schism between the Church and state under Soviet rule. Providing examples of the striking similarities in practices conducted by the Church and state (for example, confession of sins in the Church and the Soviet practice of self-criticism), he argued that the Soviet state in fact borrowed many traits from the ROC. I am going to show that such borrowing could go both ways: that the Church also took on elements and practices from the state. The further examples demonstrate how the Church chose its religious art producers.

One example of the Church borrowing from the state was the selection of religious arts producers from the ranks of professional artists based on Soviet arts institutional practices. The Church had lost its monastic icon painters with the closure of monasteries, and it was left to cope with the institutionalization of arts and crafts, which enrolled artists into the Union of Artists and employed craftsmen in state enterprises (I will discuss an example of this, the Palekh factory, in the following chapter concerning miniature painting). Artists and craftsmen affiliated with the state commission system were retrained in the secular style of Socialist Realism. But the selection of those artists by the Soviet arts institution depended on their parents' class origin and ethnicity.<sup>119</sup> Having to commission art works from professionals educated or having work experience in the atheist state sector made the Church borrow the blueprint of the state's own selection system, rather than invent new practices. In the following section concerning Rassol's commission, I discuss what type of artist the ROC targeted according to class and ethnicity.

### **6.8. The ROC's choice of religious art works producers**

My interviews with Rassol's interviews between 1999 and 2001 illustrated the typical situation under which ROC commissions had been restarted. In the 1950s, the Church commissioned him to redecorate the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral. This early commission

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<sup>119</sup> Parental class origin played a crucial role during Stalin's regime. The class issue became less relevant only during the last decade of the existence of the Soviet state. Ethnicity also played an important role with the creation of the USSR. Professionals of the titular nation ethnicity were given preferential treatment for entering associated Unions in their Soviet republics. For example, Uzbek artists had better chances of joining the Union of Artists in Uzbekistan, but would have less chances of entering the Union in neighbouring Kazakhstan. The same rules were applied to Russian artists.

indicates that the ROC's criteria for artists were set during the early years of the legalisation of the Church.

Earlier Soviet policies persecuting the Church changed during the Great Patriotic War. In 1942, the Soviet state accepted all types of support, even from the previously antagonised Russian Orthodox Church (Gordienko & Novikov 1988: 317). The Church donated a considerable amount of money to the state to fund the army. This collaboration with the communist state gained the ROC a humble position in the Religious Office of the Soviet state, as well as legalised status. During the 1950s, Church buildings that had been confiscated and converted for utilitarian purposes were returned to the Church. However, the ROC could not use them for religious practices until these facilities had restored their traditional decorations and were reconsecrated. During the 1950s, the clergy took on an ambitious project to revive the most prominent of Central Asian diocese churches, the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral on Gospitalnaya Street.

The newer Central Asian dioceses had always either invited Russian craftsmen and artists to decorate their churches, or simply imported religious art objects from Russia, but by the 1950s there were no possibilities available. By that time in Uzbekistan several Art Colleges had been established, producing up to 20 artists annually, and there were already over 20 artists affiliated with the local Union of Artists. Tashkent clerics conceded that they had no choice but to commission a local professional artist with an atheist education.

There was also a gender issue: an icon-painter's redecoration of an entire church building would include work over the iconostasis, a sacred wall of icons separating the nave from the altar, and according to Church law, this work had to be done by men. In the Orthodox Christian faith women were forbidden to enter certain parts of the church, and therefore female artists could not participate in large-scale interior church decoration. But in the 1950s there were few women artists in Uzbekistan anyway; it was highly unlikely that clerics ever approached them.

Most local artists were linked to the state through their work under the existing state commission system. But for the decoration of the Cathedral, the Church preferred an artist unattached to the commission system of the atheist state. There was only one reason for an artist to be disqualified by the Union of Artists: on political grounds. These artists unattached to the state commission system became social outcasts.

The Church clerics specifically targeted these Soviet arts institutional outcasts. The choice of outcast was guided by his ethnicity, which marked a potential believer. Even if the artist was not baptised or practising, he should at least by origin be from an Orthodox Christian family which had practised the faith prior to 1922. For the ROC, an artist's ethnicity has always been an indicator of the depth of religious practice within his family. The Russian empire consisted of different ethnic groups, and there believers were treated differently of depending on when conversion had taken place. Those who counted centuries of established religious practice were Russians, Eastern Ukrainians and Greeks. There were also more recent converts, consisting of whole ethnic groups or individuals. For an entire ethnic group, mass conversion was usually a means of becoming Russian subjects. One such ethnic group was the Koreans. During the Tsarist era, Koreans, in order to obtain the right to settle in the Russian Far East, underwent conversion from Buddhism to Orthodox Christianity. Under Stalin they were forcibly relocated to Central Asian Soviet republics. Koreans in Uzbekistan rarely kept up their practice of the Orthodox faith during the Soviet period. During both the Tsarist and Soviet periods there were also few individual converts from other religious denominations who were always called by pejorative names, such as the converted Jews referred to as *vykrest*. There were obvious reasons to convert from Judaism during both the Tsarist and Soviet periods. But for all converts in the Tsarist period, conversion provided such benefits as right to live and work in Moscow and St. Petersburg and to be able to study in university. In the Soviet period, conversion was an affirmation of Russian cultural identity (Kornblatt Deutsch 2004).

Rassol is characteristic of a Soviet-period icon painter: a professional male artist of Russian ethnicity, educated within Soviet institutions, who through his church employment became an active religious practitioner. The parish clergy's choice of artist is a mirror image of the Soviet commission system. The Soviet system expected male painters to be ideologically fit to produce a masterpiece in the genre of thematic composition. Additionally, the artists' parents' origin was always taken into account by the Union of Artists of the USSR; parents had to be of the politically loyal classes of workers and peasants. The parish clergy's selection of Rassol can be explained not only by his social position (a skilled worker outcast from society following imprisonment), but also by his parents' social class (gentry) and family ethnicity (Russian).

After clarifying the characteristics of the typical Soviet-period religious art producer, in the following section I examine the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral

commission. An exploration of a ROC commission of the 1950s indicates that for parish clerics, it was easier to select the artist than to provide the necessary guidance for that novice religious artefact producer to achieve canonic correctness in his commission.

### **6.9. Soviet period: the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral commission**

Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral on Gospitalnaya Street was Rassol's first experience in church painting, and he was not proud of the end result. Rassol put all the blame on himself. Coming from state-run art, he unconsciously compared religious painting commissioning to its secular counterpart.

According to him, his main problem was a naive assumption that within religious arts there should be a single existing style of religious painting, as there was the single style of Socialist Realism within the state's commission system. However, Rassol found that in religious arts there were in fact several styles that had been used during different historical periods:

- 1) the Russian iconic style inherited from the Greek Orthodox Church and developed into distinct local versions all over Russia;
- 2) the secular Western-oriented style of the Russian Fine Arts Academy that emerged after Peter the Great's reformation, when iconic images were replaced by non-canonic images; and
- 3) the style used in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when artists tried to reassess Orthodox Christianity spirituality with regard to contemporary events.

For Rassol, another inheritance from the secular system was his desire to make everything 'beautiful'. He reasoned that his craving for beauty was understandable after a decade of labour in prison. However, he believed it was an ignorant, impulsive craving that he now describes as deeply sinful. After practising for many years under the Church commission system, he came to understand that a church was not a place for aesthetic admiration, but for the saving of souls. In following section I discuss Rassol's decoration of the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral commission.

### 6.10. An assessment of Rassol's commission

My observation of the Svyatouspenskiy Cathedral as a religious site is necessary because it helps to understand why Rassol worried that his workmanship could affect the believers worshipping within his creation.

The Cathedral was rebuilt in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century style, characterised by the use of luxurious gilded surfaces and Corinthian columns, and was light blue in colour. The interior decoration includes frescoes, an iconostasis, a cross and icons. Decoration follows a canonic composition with vertically structured divine figures: Christ positioned on the dome, the four Apostles under the dome, the iconostasis dividing the altar from the main prayer area and the walls covered with icons. Rassol's paintings (in fresco and tempera) are easily recognisable as the work of an artist well-trained in socialist realism. The holy images are portrayed as fleshy and glorious, and are executed in the most baroque style. The baroque look is achieved by introducing dramatic clouds in each small scene. Apart from Rassol's frescoes, iconostasis and cross, all the interior walls of the church are densely covered with icons donated by believers. These abundant icons are made in different styles and techniques: they are painted in Russian and secular Western European styles, and some are even embroidered.

Inexperienced worshippers returning to religious practice after 72 years under an atheist state interpreted the church decorations in an entirely different way from Rassol. With his religious perspective gained over time, he now finds the decorations theologically unacceptable. Referring to them bitterly as 'sinful images', he said he would have preferred to destroy them. But for new believers, his decorations served to reconnect them to their own Russian Christian past.<sup>120</sup> Rassol's 'sinful holy images'-combining flying holy images on clouds with the robust working-class Apostles in the Socialist Realist style - did not perturb members of the new congregation, who attended church services irregularly. Rassol's frescoes were on the upper level of the walls and the iconostasis was far from the reach of believers. Worshippers mainly addressed the icons that were situated on the lower level of the church building, following from one icon to another. They were unaffected by theological considerations about how images should look according to the canon.

In the following sections, I move to the post-Soviet period, assessing a current ROC commission: the decoration with religious art objects of the Holy Trinity convent.

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<sup>120</sup> Alexei Rassol, interview, 19 November 1999.

### 6.11. Post-Soviet period: the Holy Trinity Church commission

Despite Rassol's awareness of the religious canon, which grew from his lengthy experiences working within the ROC commission system, he had trouble accepting the moral superiority of religious functionaries such as nuns. In this case, Rassol's disputes with Mother Superior Lubov demonstrate that the actual choice of colour of the church building was dictated by the individual choice of his supervisor, the Mother Superior, rather than following theological principles or secular traditions.

One morning when I entered the church shop, the nuns were complaining that although the Mother Superior had chosen an umber shade that would have looked particularly stunning at sunset, the 'icon painter' (as they called Rassol) had insensitively opposed the Mother Superior's wish and had insisted on using a pale white paint. I asked the nuns why they thought the choice of colour mattered at all. The nuns explained that all decision-making over commissions was done by the convent's three priests, because they had to sanctify every single object within the building. The nuns, including the Mother Superior, have no say in the convent's decoration because they could not sanctify art works. The choice of colour is one of the few areas within ROC commissions in which nuns' opinion could matter. Therefore they felt that it was insensitive for the icon painter to oppose the Mother Superior.

After leaving the shop and waiting until the end of the church service, I met with Rassol. He explained to me the historical symbolism of the paint colours that lay behind his difficult decision to oppose the Mother Superior.<sup>121</sup> White, he said, was typical of medieval Russian churches. The widespread use of other colours started at the advent of Peter the Great's rule in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Nikolskii 1985: 190). It had been introduced under Peter the Great's father, Tsar Alexis, and was called the Naryshkin style after Peter's mother's family name. Naryshkin-style churches were easily recognisable with their red-painted walls, white architectural details, and the introduction of elongated columns. It was regarded as an attempt to incorporate Western influences, which had appeared at the time of the second marriage of Tsar Alexis with Natalya Naryshkina. The choice of colour changed with each succeeding Russian monarch.

According to Rassol, white symbolised the era prior to Peter the Great's rule. He suggested that the latter period was associated with the Church becoming a repressive

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<sup>121</sup> Alexei Rassol, interview, 12 March 2000.

bureaucratic institution, instead of an equal to the state (particularly with the degrading of the sanctity of confession through Soviet-era priests denouncing their confessing parishes). The image of the Holy Church, whose reputation was pure and high for Rassol, was associated with the time before the introduction of secular painting tradition. His ideal image was of green Russian plains with a modest white church surmounted by a gilded dome that could be seen from the opposite bank of a river. This idyllic image of a Russian church is found in a range of literature from children's books to tourist brochures.

Fig. 24 The Holy Trinity Church in Tashkent, painted in the colour requested by the Mother Superior. Photo taken by myself in 2000.





This odd dispute over colour between the Mother Superior and the artist was mainly about how artistic practices should be conducted in post-Soviet church commissions (see Fig. 24, p. 231). The disagreement was settled in favour of the Mother Superior, whose idea was based on her individual liking rather than her theological sophistication or cultural and historical knowledge. Yet she was very keen to show Rassol that although her status was modest within the ROC's institutional hierarchy, she still possessed moral authority as a religious functionary. In the following section, I assess Rassol's thoughts concerning his post-Soviet commission. I illustrate the artist's attempts to reconcile the importance of correct theological requirements with the actual production of religious artworks.

### **6.12. Post-Soviet icon-painter and icons**

Within religious arts, icons occupy a special role because believers communicate with divine powers through the worship of icons. Icons are represented by both individual icons and iconostases. An iconostasis is the partition between the altar and the nave, or praying area. However, in the Orthodox Christian faith an iconostasis represents more than a functional partition. An iconostasis is a monumental wall of assembled icons, as wide and as tall as the whole building of the church. From a theological perspective, an iconostasis is the manifestation of the Russian Orthodox Church based on Greek ritual (Florensky 2002; Ouspensky 1989; Tarasov 2002: 8).

The top of an iconostasis contains a cross, followed beneath by the first row of icons containing images of the Old Testament prophets. Below that is a second row with icons containing images of the prophets of the New Testament. The third row depicts the Apostles, and the fourth contains icons depicting Church holidays. The lower part of the iconostasis is divided into three parts. The left side consists of the left 'deacon's gate' in between a miscellaneous icon and an Our Lady icon. The right side consists of the right deacon's gate in between the Church's icon (in the case of the Holy Trinity Church, there was the Holy Trinity icon), and the Savior icon. In the centre are located a wide narrow icon depicting the Last Supper and the 'royal gate'. A royal gate consists of the icon depicting the Annunciation, below which are placed four icons depicting the four Evangelists. The skill needed by the icon painter is varied, starting from a simple individual icon to a complex iconostasis holding together many icons.

Rassol, as an icon-painter repeatedly commissioned by the ROC, stressed throughout the important role of priests during the creation of the iconostasis. Rassel believed that a painter had to be personally blessed by a priest before starting his work, and that during the time of his work, the artist also had to fast and pray intensively in order to remove himself from mundane everyday life. The artist, according to Rassel, also had to regularly confess to a priest and take Holy Communion. Otherwise, he said, negative energy could flow from the icon to the believer. He also affirmed that after completion of the work, the artist must ask a priest to sanctify it in order that it becomes a sacred object. In other words, the supervision of priests, regardless of their theological knowledge, is essential for religious artefact producers from the beginning until the end of a project.

Using the example of the Holy Trinity Church icon, Rassel attempted to specify the meaning of the iconic 'prototype'. His definition of an icon was similar to Pavel Florensky's, which was that 'each icon has its prototype and the icon painter's goal is to produce exactly from the prototype, not showing his individuality or style' (Florensky 2002: 87). Rassel explained to me that when he was a beginner, he was not aware of the prototype rule, so interpretation of religious works had been a painful issue for him. He referred to the pictorial representation of the composition of the Holy Trinity. According to him, the composition of the Holy Trinity is the most common case in which icon painters mixed up different religious traditions, Western Catholic and Russian Orthodox. The Western tradition was much freer in allowing artists to interpret religious themes. Western versions interpreted the Trinity with Jesus as handsome and dark-haired, the Holy Spirit as a white dove, and God the Father as a white-haired, bearded grandfather. The ideal Russian 'prototype' of the Holy Trinity was elaborated by the 15<sup>th</sup> century icon painter Andrei Rublev. Rublev represented the Trinity as three equally youthful angels. Rassel was angered by the idea that the Holy Spirit might be presented as an unintelligent dove, even metaphorically. Therefore, he insisted that artists had to follow Rublev's prototype in their creative work.

Rassel showed me his Holy Trinity icon within the church's iconostasis, which looked very different from his work in the Gospitalnaya Street cathedral. Rassel's images in the Holy Trinity icon were flat and decorative, the colours were restrained, and the deep shades had disappeared. Although Rassel had followed Andrei Rublev's composition, he had not used Rublev's palette of radiant colours; Rassel's own colours were pale and washed out. I tried to politely ask him why it looked so pale. Rassel

explained that an icon should be light, as clear as God's message. He turned to one of the small icons on the wall and apologetically commented: 'They are dark, aren't they? This is by a friend of mine. He's a young artist who tries to work in icon-painting but the dark side of his character comes out in his icons.' Rassol was highly resentful of the separate icons within the church buildings produced by secular artists because they did not always follow 'prototype'. Rassol said that from a theological perspective, even reprinted icons from the church shop were superior to the original works by those artists. A reprint of the 'prototype', mechanically produced but blessed and sold by the Church, serves its purpose to connect a believer to God. The printed icon was 'produced purely for dogmatic purposes,' he said, 'whereas an icon produced by a secular artist was created purely out of artistic ambition.'<sup>122</sup>

The convent commissioned Rassol to create its frescoes, iconostasis and cross; supplied him with materials; provided him with a room in which he could work and sleep; allowed him to share meals with the clergy, in this case nuns; and even covered some of his expenses. The amount of work by Rassol was enormous (Fig. 25, p. 235). The painted interior surfaces in the case of a medium sized church like Holy Trinity would be from 125 to 175 square meters, plus the iconostasis which was about 18 square meters, and even the cross which was about two meters long. The measurements are approximate because of the difficulty in measuring the building and leaving some spaces free of decoration.

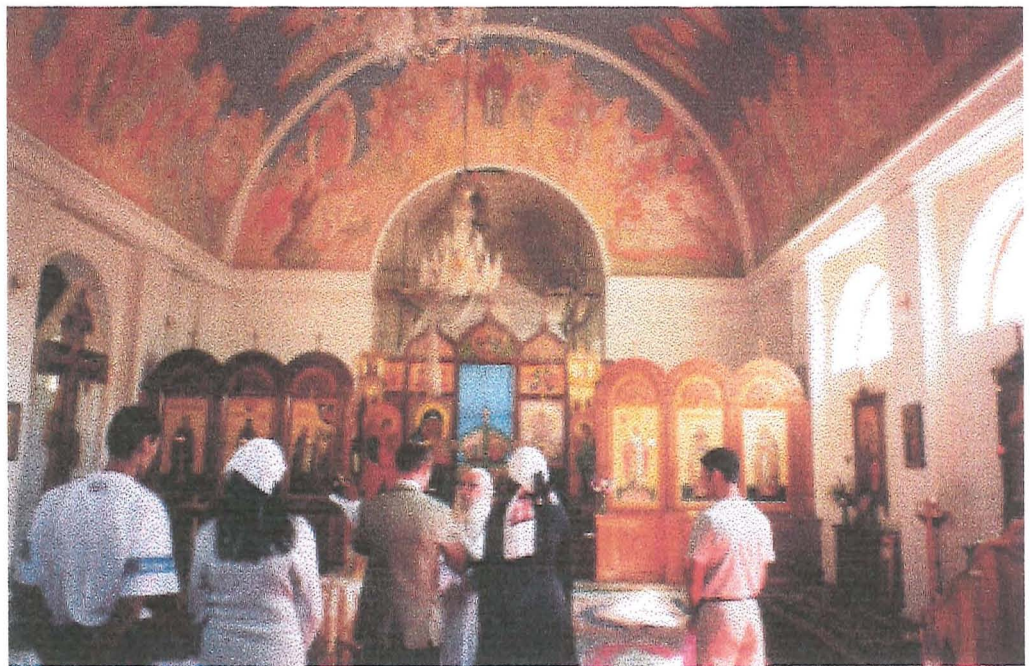
Only later did I understand that Rassol was in a better financial position than any secular artist of his age. This realisation came when, just prior to my departure, Mother Ekaterina from the convent told me that Rassol had left for Moscow for a brief visit to Donskoi Monastery. Being able to afford such travel signified a luxuriant lifestyle by local Tashkent standards (the airfare from Moscow to Tashkent costs as much as from London to Tashkent). Nevertheless, despite an enormous amount of work appreciated in generous pay by the ROC, the Church expected from Rassol not to request full pay for commissions as recognition of his financial disinterest and purely moral motivation to serve God.<sup>123</sup> In the following section I move from Rassol to a female artist working for the church.

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<sup>122</sup> Alexei Rassol, interview, 17 April 2000.

<sup>123</sup> Only once did Rassol tell me that he does not charge for his work, when he kissed the big wooden cross painted by him.

Fig. 25 Rassol's religious artworks in the Holy Trinity Church. The photo shows Rassol's works incorporated within the church's decoration: the iconostasis in the back, frescoes all over the ceiling, and the cross on the left wall. In this photo we can also see the baptism ceremony of a newborn baby from the Rice Market area. The priest (Father Vladimir) is conducting the service, the godfather is holding the baby, the godmother is standing next to him, on the left side are the parents and on the right side friends of the family. Photo was taken by myself with the permission of the priest in 2000.



### **6.13. The Russian Orthodox Church and female artists**

This section concerns the appearance of female artists in the post-Soviet period, which led to difficulties for the ROC in defining the role of arts producers whose gender is not male, using the example of the female artist Olga Kharitonova. The appearance of female icon-painters led the Church to question women's status because as producers, women could not be engaged in the painting of a church's frescoes or iconostasis, and had to be limited to the production of individual icons. The change in the relationship between the Church and producers of religious arts that occurred after the fall of the Soviet state motivated me to focus on what had really changed in the Church's commissioning arts practices.

Here I cite the following features and beliefs which emerged within society and the clergy with the appearance of female icon painters:

- 1) Female icon-painters were supposed to offer the Church their voluntary services as selflessly as other women parishioners did by cleaning premises, bringing flowers, working in kiosks, and so on.
- 2) Female icon-painters worked for no remuneration because they were not employees of the Church.
- 3) Female icon-painters could only work on small-scale projects like individual icons, because they were believed to be less versatile and less technically accomplished than male icon-painters.
- 4) It was believed that female professional artists who became icon-painters with no religious training would not be able to interpret the canon of icon painting correctly in such complex commissions as iconostases.

Their gender, then, dictated that they could not be regular producers of sacred objects, because they were believed to be bound to the mundane world instead of being consistently immersed in the pure and devoted world of the Church. This mirrored the Soviet and post-Soviet arts institutions' valuing of women artists' creative practices, under which women were denied access to the departments teaching the genre of thematic compositions due to their perceived biological frailty and reproductive functions. The inability to produce large-scale thematic compositions resulted in women's production of economically and socially less valued genres such as the etude and still life, and were marginalised in the state-controlled arts world.

It is interesting to compare how Alexei Rassol and Olga Kharitonova established different relationships with the convent and the Mother Superior. Here is a vivid

illustration of how the artists were treated very differently, owing to what types of icon painting they produced depending on their gender. Rassol covered the interiors of churches with frescoes, created iconostases and crosses, whereas Kharitonova taught nuns to produce individual icons for domestic use and supplied some small religious artefacts such as Easter eggs. In the following section, I introduce Kharitonova and her family. Her example illustrates the new types of relationship between artists and the Church established after the fall of the Soviet state and the emergence of independent Uzbekistan.

#### **6.14. Olga Kharitonova**

In this section I introduce the reasons behind Kharitonova and her extended family providing services to the Holy Trinity Church for a lengthy period of time.

Olga Kharitonova, like most people of European descent born in Tashkent, is of mixed ethnic background. Her father was Russian, and her mother was half Armenian and half Russian. Her parents' social background was linked to the military: her father's side sympathised with the Red Army, whereas her mother's family was on the side of the White Army. The elderly Kharitonovs recognised both their peasant and gentry backgrounds with equal pride and fondness. They were both artists. Vladimir, Kharitonova's father, was an artist who taught at the Art College and her mother, Louisa, was an artist who specialised in embroidery. Vladimir helped his wife with the creation of a design scheme for embroidered wall coverings, which Louisa embroidered mainly under the state commission system.

Olga Kharitonova completed her education at the Art College and the Arts Institute<sup>124</sup> in Tashkent. After graduation, she earned money by producing huge portraits of local Communist Party leaders for the celebration of national holidays. As with the majority of artists who lived under the state commission system during the Soviet period, Kharitonova was used to the protection of the Union of Artists. After the Uzbek independence, the situation changed. She needed to pull her extended family through economic hardship. Kharitonova's parents had a very small pension, which was not enough to make ends meet. Her only sister, Nadezhda, a ceramic artist, lost her job when the local ceramics factory closed down. In addition, Olga was overburdened by

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<sup>124</sup> Kharitonova graduated from the graphics department.

dividing her time between looking after other family members in Tashkent and her children who had moved to Moscow and Kazan, Russia. The Kharitonovs experienced the difficulty of many Tashkenty families of European descent who were torn apart by emigration of their children and grandchildren (Pilkington 1997, 1998).

But Kharitonova's efforts to improve the financial state of her extended family were halted by her sister's husband falling gravely ill, and it turned out that there was little hope apart from divine intervention. One of the customary rituals in Russian Orthodoxy for asking help from divine powers is to make a donation to the Church. Her brother-in-law's illness was one of the reasons that Kharitonova, who came from a moderately religious family, volunteered for service at the convent. A gift to the Church may come in any form, but the Kharitonovs had little to offer. After a family discussion, they decided that they would all participate in making a family donation. Thus, Olga volunteered to work for the convent. When I met the Kharitonovs, they were mourning Nadezhda's deceased husband. His death, however, had not embittered them.

Kharitonova was blessed by the Mother Superior to teach nuns painting. It was quite hard for Kharitonova to deal with teaching teenage nuns. Olga Kharitonova tried to give her inexperienced pupils very basic lessons in drawing and painting once a week. The convent had nuns of various ages. The older nuns had moved to Tashkent from other convents in Russia, and the young nuns were local Russian girls. Apart from teaching at the convent, Kharitonova had to complete different types of work, usually on pressing deadlines. The amount and type of work was not always consistent, with the schedule depending on the church calendar. Kharitonova complained: 'I want to do beautiful things for the Church, but due to a shortage of time I can't do anything that I would do in a relaxed way.'<sup>125</sup> For example, at Easter, the convent might hand out three hundred wooden eggs that had to be thoroughly decorated in only a few days. Kharitonova would not be able to finish the order in time by herself, so she would ask her family and friends to help her.

In the following section I assess the Kharitonovs' reaffirmation of their Orthodox Christian faith through their domestic premises.

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<sup>125</sup> Olga Kharitonova, interview, 3 April 2000.

### 6.15. The Kharitonovs' domestic display of icons

In this section I assess the changes in the contextualization of the domestic display of religious art objects from the Soviet to post-Soviet periods. Previously, scholars connected the limitation of the display of icons within contemporary dwellings purely to the separation of the Soviet state from the Church (Lane 1981: 69; Buchli 1996: 104; 1999: 48). Separating the social domain from religion brought religious practice into private/domestic spaces. Hanging icons in such intimate places as the walls over the bed helped believers to continue their religious practice in discretion. However, with the Church's resurgence in the post-Soviet period, it became possible to reveal previously hidden religious art objects. In other words, the location of religious arts within domestic spaces had to be reassessed and recontextualised by their owners. My assessment of the Kharitonovs' dwelling and the display of icons within their main room demonstrates that the family's display of religious art objects indicates their professional, social and ethnic belonging rather than simply stating their belief in the Orthodox faith.

Olga Kharitonova invited me to her parents' house in April 2000. The old Kharitonovs lived in Chilanzar district's *mahalla*. The one-story house was a typical well off house, built in the 1970s. The Kharitonovs had running cold and hot water with contemporary plumbing facilities including a WC and bath in the house, a gas cooker in the kitchen and even a telephone. The house itself was of mixed Muslim and Russian construction. The Islamic structure was kept by building the house in the form of a 'closed court', with windows looking inside to the courtyard. Russian influences were seen in the interior of the house. The interior had no resemblance to Russian working class houses, which typically had an entrance through the kitchen and a single multifunctional room. The Kharitonovs had a separate entrance which led to the main room, and everybody had to pass through each other's bedrooms to get to their own bedrooms (see Fig. 26, p. 240). Such construction was reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian officials' dwellings in colonial Tashkent's New City.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Unlike their Uzbek neighbours, the Kharitonovs did not grow vegetables, have a vineyard or keep cattle and poultry in their courtyard.



Fig. 26 The interior of the Kharitonovs' house. We can see the great-granddaughter of Vladimir Kharitonov, Katya, in the bedroom cramped with artworks created by the family. To the right of Katya, standing with back turned, is Olga Karitonoa preparing paint; behind the girl we can see through an open door two following bedrooms. An the end of the third room we can see Nadezhda Kharitonova sitting. Photo taken by myself in 2001.

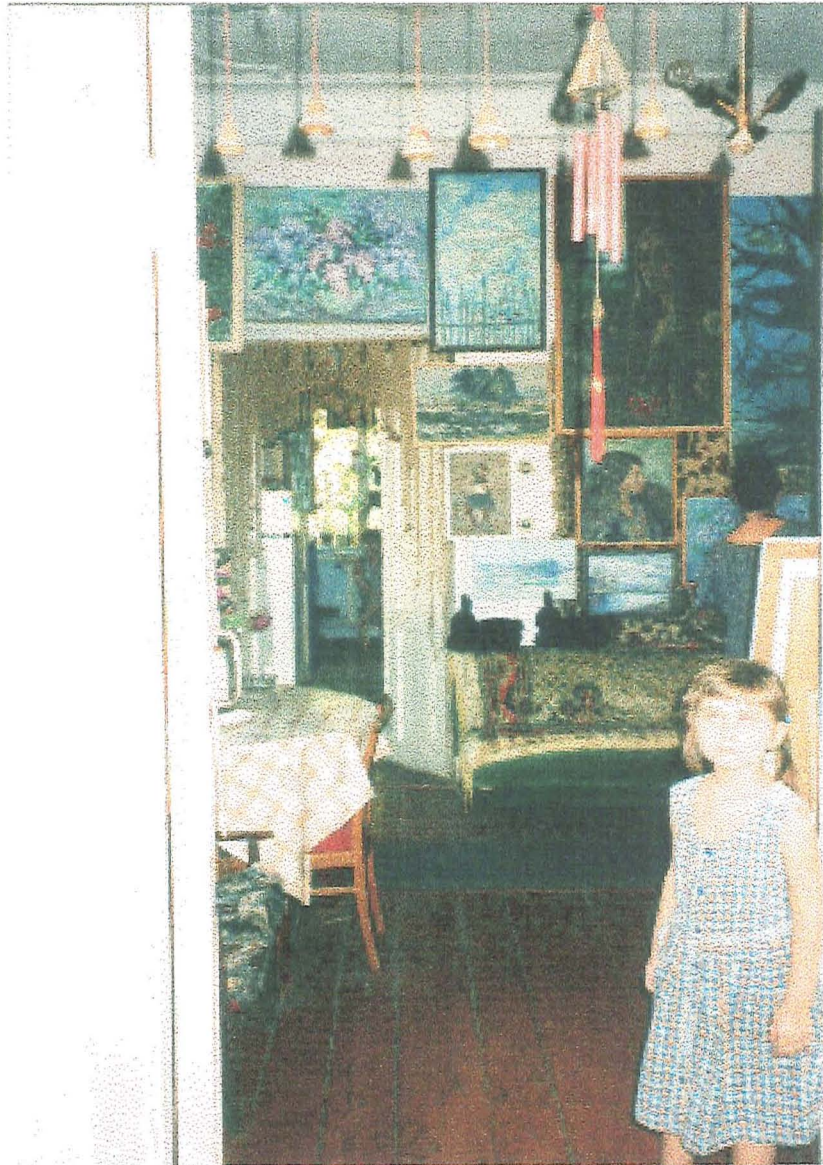


Fig. 27 The Kharitonovs' *gostinnaya* (best room). In this corner of the room we can see a couple of icons among the paintings, embroideries and other artworks created by the Kharitonovs. This photo shows the changes in the context of the domestic display of religious artefacts. Religious artefacts moved to the best parts of the home, because there was no need to hide them, and it was newly important for Russians to distinguish themselves as Orthodox Christians from their Uzbek, Muslim *mahalla* neighbours. And in this case, the display of icons was intended to define the professional identity of their owners. These icons were made by the Kharitonovs themselves and connote their close collaboration with the Holy Trinity Church as professional artists. Photo was taken in 1999.



The most remarkable room in the house was the main room or *gostinnaya* (Fig 27, p. 241). The décor of the main room returned to the old-fashioned pre-Revolutionary way of openly displaying religious arts.<sup>127</sup> The walls were bedecked with photographs of living and deceased family members, regardless of their social belonging. These framed photographs were joined by canvases and different types of icons, all made by the Kharitonovs. By showing off their self-painted icons, the family demonstrated not only their religious affiliation but also their professional belonging. The incorporation in the display of photos of ancestors who were of the wrong class during the Soviet period affirmed the Kharitonovs' identity according to the ROC's class and ethnicity standards for art producers. The admission of their family's uneasy Soviet past was needed for their acceptance by the Holy Trinity Church clerics' approval of their suitability as religious art producers and helpers. The importance of being suitable for such tasks will be discussed in the following two sections.

#### **6.16. Icons for domestic worship and private consumption**

In this section I discuss the reasons behind the Church's attempt to control production of individual icons. The ROC intended to improve its relationship with the laity since under the independent state there were no restrictions on religious belief. Non-committal potential believers were now expected to become active religious practitioners, and active practice included the worship of icons. However, there emerged visible post-Soviet trends which had nothing to do with strength of belief. Icons became profitable collectors' items valued from economic and aesthetic perspectives. Fearing the growth of commercial valuing of icons, the local ROC needed to increase control over current icon production and consumption. This was achieved in two ways: through instruction to religious practitioners and through management of the sanctification of religious art works.

To better instruct religious practitioners, the Church disseminated various leaflets advising practitioners what kind of icons they were to have. In a leaflet for practitioners published by the Tashkent diocese (1999: 8), it is suggested that three icons always remain with the practitioner, helping him or her for daily prayers: the Savior, the Holy Virgin Mary and the believer's namesake saint (*imennaya ikona*).

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<sup>127</sup> The Kharitonovs did not place icons in their bedrooms.

My interviews with nuns and priests from the Holy Trinity Church confirmed the importance of these three icons. All of the informants stressed that these three icons were necessary for every religious practitioner, because the believer addresses them to help endure the difficulties of daily life. They also pointed that the Savior and the Holy Virgin Mary icons were likely to be inherited within the family, so they had no need to be blessed by the priests.

Father Vladimir Lapyn pointed out that namesake saint icons are unlikely to be the same even in the same family<sup>128</sup>. He complained that there was an additional difficulty with the names of current believers because many contemporary names are either invented or borrowed from other cultures. He supported the Church's decision to advise active religious practitioners to be rebaptised in order to take appropriate Orthodox Christian names. Father Vladimir reasoned that the possession of a non-Orthodox Christian name excludes the believer from praying and being prayed for by priests in the case of illness, difficulties and death.

The Church also controlled the trade in icons through priests' sanctification of art objects. My interviews with female icon painters showed that the Church had the final word in everything that was produced by female artists, because a priest must bless an artwork in order to transform it into a sacred object. No artist could sell a painting as an icon until it had been blessed by a priest, and artists would honestly inform a client if a priest had not blessed an icon. In that case the client would have to go to the Church himself and ask for a priest to bless the purchased icon, covering the expenses of the priest's services. If artworks were not recognised as Orthodox Christian, a priest could refuse to bless them; the main criterion of an Orthodox Christian icon was that it followed the canonic prototype. Generally, the artists and priests were sufficiently knowledgeable of the canonic correctness of the main icons necessary for worship, the Saviour and the Holy Virgin Mary, but most lay believers were not. Artists thought that selling an unblessed icon to an inexperienced buyer would be dishonest, but also knew that a blessed icon was more valued by buyers. Giving a blessing for a produced art object was one form of control the Church had over its commissioned icon-painters, and the Church attempted the same control over icons produced for private worship.

In following section I further explore what kind of conditions were put upon women artists to gain sanctification of the art works produced by them. It was generally

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<sup>128</sup> Father Vladimir Lapyn, interview, 27 July 2001.

assumed by artists that the bond between artist and Church is based purely on faith and voluntary service to the Church. But despite that, artists who have given devoted service still have conflicts with the Church and the society within which they work. In the case of women artists, these conflicts became especially acute because of their gender. In the following section I connect the gender issue to the re-traditionalisation of the ROC.

### **6.17. Female icon-painters: conduct and comportment**

In this section, I discuss how the Church's re-traditionalisation affected the economic aspects of religious arts in the case of female artists. As I showed in the section above and in Chapter 4, both institutions, the ROC and the *mahalla*, could control the economic sphere of artistic production. Priests controlled economic production through sanctification of artists' works. The *mahalla*, administering the privatised domestic sector, could control any transaction on domestic premises regardless of the type of artwork or the ethnic origin and religious affiliation of the producer. The re-traditionalisation of both institutions was manifested through their attempts to control women's productive and reproductive capacities (Verkhovsky 2004; Knox 2005; Mandel 2002; Humphrey and Mandel 2002; Sievers 2003)<sup>129</sup>. These institutions view women not as individuals but as parts of households within extended families (Megoran 1999; Kandiyoti 2000, 2004; Cartwright 2000).<sup>130</sup> Therefore for these institutions, women's reproductive capacities are of paramount importance. The ROC's concern over the falling birthrate became a pressing issue due to the dramatic decline of the Russian population in Russia and within ethnic Russian enclaves in the former Soviet republics.<sup>131</sup> Both institutions showed marked disregard for female artists' professional achievements. By assessing the Church's and the *mahalla*'s requirements for women artists' conduct and comportment, I demonstrate that traditionalist institutions bend women and their families to follow a more fundamentalist way of life. This comparison

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<sup>129</sup> Verkhovsky, the main critic of the ROC in Russia, termed re-traditionalisation as fundamentalism. These fundamentalists stand for the restoration of autocracy, a state structure on the imperial model, restrictions on religions other than Orthodoxy, official state status for the ROC, rejection of the concepts of democracy and human rights and opposition to any forms of Western influence beyond Russia's borders. Knox (2005) provided a broad assessment of the ROC's traditionalist position leading to the rise of chauvinism, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. Sievers (2003), Mandel (2002) pointed out the re-traditionalisation of the *mahalla* was expressed through the institution's treatment of women.

<sup>130</sup> Megoran (1999), Kandiyoti (1991, 2000) and Kandiyoti and Azimova (2004) discussed gender construction by Central Asian local institutions. Cartwright (2000) discussed the ROC's gendered perceptions with the Russian religious community.

<sup>131</sup> The Russian government specially relies on the ROC's promotion of family strengthening. In 2006, the falling birthrate in Russia reached such a point that Putin's government decided to return to the Soviet policy of providing maternity leave for women.

makes clear that these rigid parameters of decorum and appearance do not apply to male artists.

Kharitonova is strikingly beautiful, and her ex-husband and son were jewellers, which allowed her a great choice in self-decoration. But this was combined with an overall austerity. She always dressed in something long and black, a colour that befitted a bohemian as well as an icon-painter. She styled her hair and braided it into one long braid that suited the rigid requirements of the convent. But she would not compromise when it came to toning down her make-up. It is well known that female believers are not allowed to enter a church with uncovered head or arms, or if they are wearing trousers, low-cut dresses, makeup, nail polish or perfume.

The ROC disseminated publications highlighting the importance of the proper conduct and attire of female churchgoers. One of them, titled 'What Every Attendant of the Orthodox Christian Temple Must Know' (1999: 95), stated: 'Women must know that entering the church they should be with covered head, wearing gender-appropriate clothing (dresses or skirts, and never trousers), and without visible make-up. In the case of make-up already on the face it should be wiped off.' It irritated Kharitonova and her friends that the convent stipulated that she had to remove her make-up. As her sister Nadezhda said, 'There are few things we allow ourselves as a treat, so it is unfair to deprive us of the use of *kosmetika* (make-up). When we were young we used to be harassed for having make-up by Uzbek men in our *mahalla*, who assumed that if we wore make-up we were of flirtatious behaviour. Now we are middle aged women [her sister is a grandmother and she is a great-aunt] who are beyond accusations of attracting men's attention, but now we are reprimanded by the priests under the same pretext.'<sup>132</sup>

Fatinya Kirichenko, one of Kharitonova's artist friends, reported bitterly one of her encounters with Church attitudes towards female icon-painters. Recently she had attended the baptism of her friend's child, and the priest had refused to allow her to be a godmother because she was wearing bright nail polish. He called Kirichenko a whore and accused her of having had an abortion, a scandalous accusation since she is a childless spinster whose reproductive years are over. She was hurt that a priest had treated her in such an unacceptable way, and felt unable to go to the church where that priest served. Since there are only three Orthodox Christian churches and a limited number of closely interconnected clergy in Tashkent, the situation was further

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<sup>132</sup> Nadezhda Kharitonova, interview, 23 July 2000.

aggravated. As a result of the conflict, Kirichenko was not directly commissioned by the Church to work, but she was able to continue working on Church commissions on behalf of Kharitonova. Having lost the possibility of voluntary service to the Church, Kirichenko was at least able to continue icon-painting, not for the church, but for herself and for those who wanted to buy her Christian-themed artworks directly from her without bothering for their sanctification. I thought about Kirichenko's story of her relationship with the priest; it was not an experience that one would expect a devoted Church volunteer to have.

Kharitonova and Kirichenko were antagonised by clerics' reaction to their comportment. According to them, the attitude of the clerics was no different from what they experienced from male *mahalla* administrators. Knowing of Kharitonova's frequent visits to Kirichenko, who lived in the New City, the head of the nearby *mahalla* harassed her, implying a lesbian relationship between the two women. The same man had earlier arranged the fraudulent sale of Kirichenko's house, where she lived with her retired sister, from a fictitious homeowner to some New Rich Uzbeks for \$78,000 US. A bitter legal suit between the new owners and Kirichenko ensued, and the local *mahalla* administration was not pressed to take responsibility over the deal. Not surprisingly, my own meeting with the head of the *mahalla* administration, who bought the house next to Kirichenko's and rebuilt it into a handsome three-floor mansion, was not a pleasant one. Looking for Kirichenko's house and knowing nothing of his conflict with her, I asked him on the street the whereabouts of Kirichenko's house. He spat in my face, and told me 'This whore is dead!'

Since single females were treated so harshly by the *mahalla* administration, the older Kharitonov insisted that both his daughters, the widowed Nadezhda and divorced Olga, move back to their parental home. By my next visit in 2001, all the Kharitonovs were living together. Olga's daughter had also returned with her child from Russia, joining the older Kharitonovs. The Kharitonovs blamed her return on the unstable legal definitions of Russian citizenship. Becoming a Russian citizen immediately after the fall of the USSR was due to ethnicity, place of birth and place of residence, which was supposed to ease the position of 25,000,000 ethnic Russians scattered in non-Russian states. As the years went on, the rules changed. By 2001, to obtain Russian citizenship, ethnic Russians moving to Russia were required to show proof that at least one of their parents had domicile registration in Russia prior to the fall of the USSR. For the ethnic Russians whose families had lived for several generations in Tashkent, it meant that

they could not move to Russia permanently as Russian citizens. Olga's daughter's experience mirrored what many ethnic Russians moving to Russia after the fall of the USSR experienced: prejudiced treatment by Russian citizens and the Russian government, who saw in her not an ethnic Russian returning to the homeland of her forebears, but an Uzbek economic migrant competing with them for jobs and access to already-reduced state services.<sup>133</sup>

The inability to move their children to Russia motivated both Nadezhda and Olga to put their own properties on the market. They explained to me that for them it would be better to live in their father's local *mahalla*, where the local elders of the community have known their family for nearly forty years and the *mahalla* administration would treat them with respect. Ironically, the older Kharitonov moving his daughters, the granddaughter and the great-granddaughter back to his home conformed to the *mahalla* ideal of residence under the same roof of the multigenerational family. By following the Uzbek pattern of living together and helping each other, the Kharitonovs were more accepted by their Uzbek neighbours than they would have been living separately in their individual households.

Rassol refuted the story of the bright nail polish. He confessed that in his past he had been a heavy drinker and a smoker and that he had been saved from these vices by the prayers of his friend Father Feodor. He was clearly in a stronger position than the female artists working as icon-painters. Despite his past, he was confident enough to challenge the Mother Superior in her knowledge of church decoration. His relationship with the Mother Superior was built on the fact that he was of the gentry, male, and an old man. He was humble in his service to God, but proudly defended the work he was doing. Rassol had no difficulties with the *mahalla*. The *mahalla* excused Rassol his solitary life on the ground of his being a victim of state persecutions, and respected his continuous service to the Church despite his advancing age. Unlike Rassol, women artists could not oppose their commissioners; there was always the possibility of new and more suitable candidates. Women could not be socially accepted by the *mahalla* unless they were able to prove their worthiness by helping to sustain multigenerational families and raise good children who would not abandon them in their old age. Women could not be accepted by the Church unless they represented their entire household's

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<sup>133</sup> The Kharitonov offspring's difficulties in moving to Russia undermines the idea of women-led migration assessed by Pilkington (1997, 1998). With restricted rules on Russian citizenship, the type of migration changed from permanent migrants (mostly young couples with their children) to ethnically varied young individuals of both sexes aged from early 20s to 40s.



affirmation of their Russian ethnicity (preferably their ancestral roots in the Russian gentry) by various means including the domestic displays of religious arts.

In the following section I compare assessments of Karitonova's work by the Mother Superior and by local art critics.

### **6.18. Professional artist or icon-painter?**

In this section I discuss Kharitonova's paintings and their assessment by the Mother Superior and by local art critics. I demonstrate that for art critics, her painting were too direct in their connotation of religious life in Tashkent whereas for the Mother Superior, the works were too personalised.

Working in the convent influenced and inspired Kharitonova's secular art. Some of her paintings reflected her socialising with nuns, some were influenced by spiritual themes and some were inspired by icon paintings. Kharitonova told me about her exhibitions, and about how her new works with religious themes were banned. Karitonova exhibited her works in 1999 in the Ilkhom Theatre and in 2001 in the Indian Embassy in Tashkent. However, she was told in both cases that any works alluding to religion had to be omitted. I asked Kharitonova why works with religious content were forbidden, she told me simply, 'Well, they would not have anything that relates to religion.' However, owing to my acquaintance with Natalya Musina (see Chapters 4, section 4.1.2. and Chapter 5, section 5.4.), who supervised the Ilkhom exhibition site, I was able to discuss with her what Musina and other art historians thought about works containing religious content. Since 1999 there had been a significant change in religious policy in Uzbekistan. The acceptance of all religions by the modern Uzbek state dissipated after the April 1999 Islamic terrorist attack in the center of Tashkent, which caused many casualties. After that horrific event, the state publicly refrained from encouraging anything that related to religion in Uzbekistan. As a result, Kharitonova's religious-themed works, according to art historians, were not acceptable for public display.

I asked Kharitonova to show me the paintings that were not accepted for display in 1999 and 2001. While showing me the works, she discussed the responses she had received from the Mother Superior and other clerics. One painting was a group portrait of nuns. The painting depicts aged nuns with gloomy expressions, dressed in black clothing that contrasts with a vivid bright-green background. The nuns appear bleak and provoke little else besides the fact that the nuns are from the Holy Trinity Church of the

convent in Tashkent. There is no interest expressed by the Mother Superior towards her subordinate nuns in the painting.

Another painting was painted on a type of canvas that was common for secular painting, but followed the Russian Byzantine style of icon-painting (see Fig. 28, p. 250). It is a shoulder-length portrait of a sad-looking Virgin Mary adorned in a red scarf on a turquoise background. It was understandable why it had not been accepted for display in the theatre. Nevertheless, I was interested to know what the Church authorities thought about this type of work. Kharitonova recalled, ‘Mother Superior was not happy about that work. She asked me, “Why is our Holy Lady Mary sad?” I responded: “Why should she be overjoyed? Personally, I think that Mary can have many different expressions and to be sad is no more unusual than any other.”’<sup>134</sup>

I was puzzled by Kharitonova’s reaction, because it was unusual for her to have to defend something she had produced that was not for Church use. I understood the Mother Superior’s adherence to the canonic perception of Mary, whose iconic images should not present a direct expression of emotion. Dramatic moments might be presented through composition or through specific symbolic gestures and postures, but not through personal characterisation. Kharitonova, as a professional artist who worked in the portrait genre, transferred her skills in portraying the emotions of ordinary people to enriching her holy images with those emotions. According to dogma, icons should not represent emotion because the holy people depicted should be serene and dignified. In other words, Kharitonova veered towards making a portrait of a sad, pretty woman in the Russian Byzantine style, instead of creating an abstract icon of the Holy Lady Mary.

The last two works were not explicitly religious, but contained Christian elements. They are large-scale, vanitas-style still lifes and contain such objects as a white napkin with red folk cross-stitch, an icon of Christ, forget-me-not flowers (called in Russian ‘Ann’s eyes’ or *Anutiny Glazki*), scales, a copper goblet and so on, all on a black background. The choice of objects is not part of an interior, imagined or otherwise. Each object is symbolic; for example, forget-me-not flowers are associated in Russian literature with the pristine Russian countryside that vanished beneath ugly collective farms. Kharitonova’s still life creates an imagined Russia gleaned from vacations she’d taken. These works also provoked a negative reaction from the Mother Superior. Kharitonova’s response was brusque as she defended her professional

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<sup>134</sup> Olga Kharitonova, interview, 13 June 2000.

interests: 'I wanted to create something beautiful, but the Mother Superior does not understand that. In my opinion it's one thing when I work for them, but I can do as I wish when I work for myself.'

Fig. 28 Olga Kharitonova's *Bogomater'* (*Holy Lady Mary*), (50 x 60 cm, oil on canvas, 1999). Kept by Kharitonova. Photo taken by myself in 2000.



Thus there was a line that Olga Kharitonova drew between her voluntary service for the Church and the nun's patronising attitude towards her. Her work as an icon-painter involved a constant negotiation between her role as a submissive woman artist in the realm of the Church, and a professional artist in the secular world. She was emotionally committed to her religious affiliation through which she tried to show her Russian cultural identity. But the Church only accepted her artistic practice as a volunteer from a Russian family and not as an individual icon painter, and for art critics she was unacceptable for her incapacity to distance herself from the local religious scene.

### **6.19. Conclusion**

In conclusion I suggest that for all the previously discussed institutions (the Union of Artists, the local foreign-oriented market, the *mahalla* and the ROC), the person and attributes of an artist had a direct bearing on the worth of what he or she produced. The Church looked for moral probity within its moral framework, requiring artists to become active parishioners. The *mahalla* set different standards of conformity, requiring artists to be good family members in their multigenerational families. Despite the differences between the ROC and the *mahalla* in valuing artists, both institutions were in complete accord when it came to female artists. This accord was owed to the re-traditionalisation of these two institutions in the post-Soviet period. Re-traditionalisation made explicit that women's artistic practices were valued based on their position as child bearers and nurturers of their families, rather than as professional artists. And the foreign market prized painters whose creative practice had in the past been highly valued by the Soviet institution. Arguably, the connection between the practices of the artists and their products can be linked to the Soviet period, where ideological conformity had not only to be depicted on the surface of the painting but manifested in the person of the artist.

In the following chapter I shall explore the last type of painting which was rooted in the Soviet institution, the Union of Artists, miniature painting, which is also connected to the Russian Orthodox icon painting tradition.

## Chapter 7

### Miniature Painting From Besh Agach Mosque (1987-2004)

#### 7.1.1. Introduction

Within the body of the thesis, Chapter 7 is the last of five chapters connected to the Soviet institution, the Union of Artists. In these five chapters I examined how Soviet moral, economic and social valuing of painting have been changed by the fragmentation of the Soviet institutional art world into various institutions and fields such as the Academy of Fine Arts, the independent state's commission system, the parallel non-state art market, the *mahalla* and the Russian Orthodox Church. I came to the conclusion that each of these fields and institutional bodies elaborated their own set of criteria in shaping their own particular moral, economic and social valuing of painting and its producers. Many of these criteria were shaped by Soviet formulae, and further exploration shows extensive back and forth 'borrowing' between some of these entities and the Soviet state.

Chapter 7 follows Chapter 6 because of the direct connection between miniature painting and icon painting. Miniature painting was the last of the Soviet arts to be introduced in Uzbekistan; miniature painting's Soviet institutional existence lasted only four years (1987-1991), after which it broke up into a small group of producers: 84 male Uzbek artists, grouped within a single site: the Besh Agach mosque in Tashkent. Current Uzbek miniature painting can be defined as figurative, ornamental or calligraphic painting on lacquer boxes<sup>135</sup> or individual sheets of paper. Like all Soviet arts, miniature painting borrowed from Russian arts - in this case it evolved from Russian icon painting. Between 1922 and 1938, the Russian Palekh school of icon painting turned to secular lacquer work through Soviet institutionalisation.

However, post-Soviet miniature painting presents a special case. Post-Soviet miniature painting's production and consumption encompassed all the problems related to the fragmentation process: the drying up of the state commission system, frantic readjustments to the restrictions on foreign currency, and the need for *mahalla* acceptance. In the previous Chapters 3-6, valuing was assessed through each of these aforementioned institutions and fields by various producers, valuers, sellers and buyers. Unlike the rest of

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<sup>135</sup> The boxes themselves are made with papier-mâché.

the institutions and social fields, valuing of miniature painting had to be done mainly by the artists themselves, who function as producers, valuers and dealers at the same time. By being in direct charge of their art's production and circulation, the Besh Agach group established very different relationships with the state and the *mahalla*. These relationships demonstrated that the Besh Agach group on one hand helped in the legitimization of the state in and out of Uzbekistan, and on the other hand was involved in the dissemination of religious arts. Their practice reveals the fluidity of the perceptions of Islam by the state and the *mahalla*. The *mahalla* is a state-subsidised institution, but it has many links to the Islamic faith, for example in its promotion of lifecycle ceremonies (Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985: 58). The Besh Agach artists promote, through dissemination of their miniatures, what both the *mahalla* and the state understood as an acceptable, politically neutral Islam. An assessment of the change in the values and practices of the group of miniature painters allows me to build my argument in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7 argues against the assertion by the American anthropologist Nazif Shahrani (1993: 125) - originally an Afghan Uzbek - concerning the impact of the Soviet legacy on traditional Islamic culture in Central Asia. According to Shahrani, the Soviets aimed to destroy Islamic culture and to replace it with an alien Soviet culture.

In order to build my argument against this assertion made by Shahrani immediately after the fall of the USSR, I suggest that miniature painting offers a good example of how a linear view of the replacement of traditional Islamic culture with Soviet culture might be deceptive. Shahrani's statement of the forceful Soviet replacement of Islamic culture underestimated Soviet utilisation of other cultures, including religious ones, for ideological purposes as well as the reusing of Soviet cultural concepts by the independent Uzbek state. Therefore my argument is twofold.

My first argument is that the assertion of Soviet destruction of Central Asian religious culture is highly controversial. Soviet culture indeed secularised, through institutionalisation, the production and consumption of religious artefacts. The ideological remolding of religious arts was managed for Soviet state interests. Soviet miniature painting, like all Soviet arts, had to serve its ideological purpose. The presence of secularized institutionalised arts like miniature painting helped to justify the territorial, historical and cultural claims of titular nation elites (Tajik and Uzbek).

My second argument is that miniature painting's roots in religious traditions, both Christian and Islamic, only enhanced its importance with the emergence of the independent Uzbek state. The Uzbek state's attempts to reconnect with the pre-Soviet traditions, through the revival of national holidays and national institutions such as the *mahalla*, allowed miniature painting to survive the decline of the Soviet arts institutions and be renewed in both secular and religious forms.

To support my arguments, I subdivide this chapter into four sections. The first section introduces the Besh Agach mosque, a site used by miniature painters as the showpiece of an Islamic tradition which came out of the Soviet period absolutely intact and whose production justifies a direct connection between the independent Uzbek state and its pre-Soviet past.

The second section goes back to the time of my fieldwork in 1985-1995 carried out in Tashkent, Dushanbe and Moscow. The second section focuses on the rivalry of Uzbek and Tajik art historians over a shared historical past represented by medieval miniature painting. This section additionally highlights why the revival of miniature painting survived only in Uzbekistan after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Subsequent sections are devoted to artists who work in miniature painting. I focus my attention on two particular aspects, the ethnicity of artists (Uzbek or non-Uzbek) and artists' qualifications (one-tier Arts College education). These aspects are relevant because valuing of artists in the state sector during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods was built upon these factors.

The third section is devoted to the founder of miniature painting in Uzbekistan, Vladimir Ann (b.1932). Ann, an ethnic Korean and graduate of the Palekh Arts College and Moscow Art Institute, set up the department of miniature painting at Tashkent Arts College and formulated the curriculum for students that is still in use. An investigation of Ann's artistic practice in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods brings up aspects of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in the state arts sector, depending on the artist's capacity to conform to the arts institutions' position towards religious arts. A second artist, Rasul Pulatov (b.1966), was chosen because of the fact that he has a qualification in miniature painting from Tashkent Art College, he was Ann's pupil, and he is Uzbek. Most importantly, he is a leading artist of the Besh Agach mosque. Pulatov's multiple practices as producer, valuer

and seller allow me to use them as a lens through which I can explore changes from Soviet to post-Soviet moral, social, economic valuing of miniature painting and its producers.

### **7.1.2. The Besh Agach mosque site**

In this section I introduce Tashkent's Besh Agach mosque, where miniature painting artists have worked since 1989 (see Fig. 29, p.257). This section clarifies why artists chose the mosque as their creative and commercial site.

Since independence, the Besh Agach mosque has become one of the top cultural attractions of Tashkent, where foreign tourist groups are taken by guides to purchase traditional Uzbek crafts. The mosque is presented in travel guides as a place that maintains the spirituality of modern Uzbekistan's Islamic heritage and a place where Uzbek craftsmen continue the ancient Uzbek tradition of miniature painting.

However, Uzbek miniature painting is done by professional artists, not craftsmen, and the mosque is not a place that keeps Islamic heritage so much as a building that professional artists use to accommodate their studios, shops, and teaching rooms. Artists, by choosing the mosque as their headquarters, intended to create a perception of themselves to the outside world (tourists, spectators and buyers) not as contemporary artists, but as traditional craftsmen. After graduating from Tashkent Arts College, professional miniaturists struggled to gain membership in the Union of Artists, and those who successfully became members of the Union were supposed to be granted their own art studio. But by the end of the 1980s, the Union lacked funding to build new art studios. One of the few options for new members then was to find a dilapidated and unused building in the overpopulated city. The building they found was the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Besh Agach mosque in the rebuilt section of the Old City.

The mosque has a large inner court and small rooms for religious students. Under the Soviet regime, like many religious buildings the mosque was classified as an important part of Uzbek historical heritage, but the city authorities were indecisive as to its utilisation. Miniature-painting artists, deprived of studios, slowly began to occupy the mosque, and by the beginning of the independent period in 1991 each of its rooms was used by two or three artists. Despite the post-Soviet rise of Islam, the Islamic clergy never expressed desire to



return the mosque to its religious purpose. There were many newer mosques built in the territory of the Old City by Uzbeks, who voluntarily donated and participated in building mosques in great numbers; therefore, there was no need to take the Besh Agach mosque back from the artists. Since there was no request from the clergy, the mosque was left for the artists to use on the basis that the artists would pay rent for their rooms to the state and that they would pay taxes on their commercial activities.

The artists working at the Besh Agach mosque value the location for two reasons. First, they insist that only former members of the Union of Artists (now the Academy of Fine Arts) work in Besh Agach and that their production is the finest in Uzbekistan. The concentration of these highly qualified artists preserves the aesthetic and technical quality of their productions, helping to differentiate their work from the lower-quality art produced in other places.

Secondly, it is a highly symbolic location: the mosque is located behind Friendship Square, where the Uzbek state manifests its return to pre-Soviet tradition by celebrating the Navruz holiday. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, the day of Navruz, the celebration is led by President Karimov in person. All high state officials and delegates from the country's 13 regions join the president. During the celebrations, craft stalls exhibit and sell artefacts representing national arts. Amongst these stalls, the Besh Agach mosque's products occupy a prominent place. By exhibiting, selling and publicising miniature painting to the state officials and delegates from around the country, the Besh Agach artists affirm their connection to an ancient Uzbek heritage.<sup>136</sup>

All of these reasons make the mosque a real home for artists specialising in miniature painting. But the choice of location does not necessarily indicate the recent origins of the art of miniature painting. In the following section I explore the reasons behind attempts to reintroduce the art of miniature painting. To do that, I point at the Perestroika period when the completion of my diploma project intersected with the rebirth of Uzbek miniature painting.

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<sup>136</sup> Security is remarkably tight at these events: even the officials from all 13 regions of Uzbekistan are screened by the Interior Office as a preventative action against suicide terrorist acts.

Fig. 29 The Besh Agach mosque. Photo taken by myself in 1999.



### 7.2.1. 1986: The beginning of miniature painting

Benedict Anderson (1988) introduced the hypothesis that nations are invented. Under the Soviet state, the invention of nations was achieved by massive literacy campaigns which allowed large swathes of the population access to the material culture (Gellner 1980, 1983, 1988). In Central Asia this led to linguistic-cultural congruity between people and territories (Akiner 1994; Birch 1996: 674). During the perestroika period, the conceptualisation of titular nation culture was done by titular nation scholars through their emphasis on the rediscovery of their national historical pasts (Paksoy 1994).<sup>137</sup> I suggest that within this 1980s process of the invention of the titular nation by Uzbek and Tajik scholars in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the creation of contemporary miniature painting served to reclaim missing links with their pre-Soviet past. In this section I assess the creation of contemporary miniature painting, which I encountered during my student fieldwork in 1985.<sup>138</sup>

I witnessed the first attempts to reintroduce miniature painting in Dushanbe in November 1985. Kamol Ayni - the head of the Dushanbe Medieval Manuscript Treasury and son of the founder of Tajik contemporary literature (Ayni senior), whose sister and wife (Mukadima Ashrafi) both specialised in art history - showed me the Treasury's collection. During our meeting, he showed me a small black lacquered box whose design was borrowed from Persian medieval miniatures and the technique of the Palekh school. He said to me 'This box is one of our first hopeful experimental attempts to revive miniature

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<sup>137</sup> Titular nation invention is largely known as the creation of Soviet ethnographers during first decades of the Soviet state (Allworth 1973; Connor 1986; Hirsch 2005). Meanwhile, Central Asian scholars' own assessment of their titular nation invention during the 1980s, prior to the Independence period, was largely unknown. Recently, Paksoy's 1994 edition at last gave them a voice by providing a rare opportunity for Central Asian scholars to be published within Western academic publications.

<sup>138</sup> At that time I was completing my degree in the art history department at Moscow State University, specialising in Persian medieval miniature painting. My diploma project concerned Kamalladin Behkzod's influence on the development of miniature painting from the 15th century. My supervisors, Boris Stavisky, an archaeologist, and Alexander Morozov, an art historian, both suggested that in order to broaden my approach to the chosen subject I should carry out my research in the places where miniature painting originated. Following their recommendation, I went to two capitals, Tashkent in Uzbekistan and Dushanbe in Tajikistan. My stays in the two cities were rewarding because I did not come as a mere student from Moscow State University, but was treated as a very welcome guest thanks to my parents. They asked their friends from Uzbek and Tajik cinematographic, artistic and academic circles to take care of me while I was carrying out my research in Tashkent and Dushanbe. My parents' friends enabled me for a short time to gain access, discuss theoretical aspects, and meet with the main specialists in Persian medieval miniature painting in these two republics.

painting'. Ayni explained to me that his institution not only aimed to preserve manuscripts, but also to revive miniature painting. He hoped that in a very short time miniature painting would be reintroduced into the contemporary arts field. Ayni's aim to revive miniature painting by borrowing the Palekh technique could be explained by the competition between Tajik and Uzbek intellectual and artistic elites over the same historical heritage.

Both elites had some theoretical justification for their claims. The researchers in Tashkent were led by Elmira Ismailova, who referred to Persian medieval miniature painting as Mawarannahr miniature painting (Ismailova and Poliakova 1980; Ismailova 1982, 2000), whereas in Dushanbe, researchers such as Mukadima Ashrafi defined the Persian medieval miniature as Bukharan miniature painting (Ashrafi 1974, 1987). Despite the fact that the content of both Mawarannahr and Bukharan miniature painting was the same, researchers such as Ismailova and Ashrafi resisted classifying miniature painting according to the patronage of the dynasty (Timurid), or to a language that was the state language (Persian). For the Uzbek art historian, the definition as Mawarannahr was due to the name of the heartland of the Timurid realm, and they would not accept the supremacy of the Persian language (the Uzbek language belongs to the Turkic language group). In the eyes of Uzbek researchers, Timurid heritage was and is Uzbek. On the other hand, for the Tajik art historian Ashrafi, the definition of it as Bukharan miniature painting concerned the fact that the city of Bukhara was predominantly populated by the Persian-speaking population of ethnic Tajiks, so miniature painting belonged to Tajik heritage regardless of its location in Uzbekistan.<sup>139</sup>

Both elites had very little documentary evidence to support their claims, because the Tashkent and Dushanbe collections were extremely poor. For example, Dushanbe's collection of medieval manuscripts did not contain any miniatures, although Tashkent's collection was a little better. Yet the miniatures from Tashkent's collection were dated to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and were not by well-known artists. Moreover, Uzbek and Tajik art historians did not actually see the originals they were discussing and hence built up their knowledge from available English and French books.

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<sup>139</sup> For Ashrafi, who was from a Tajik family from Uzbekistan and whose father was a prominent composer, the heartland of Tajik culture remained in Uzbekistan and she, along with many other Tajik intellectuals, resented the national delimitation (1924–35) that robbed Tajik culture of its traditional cultural centres such as Bukhara. For more on Uzbek-Tajik relations, see Folz (1996), Akbarzadeh (1996) and Djalili, Grare and Akiner (1998).

Both elites were certain that the absence of documentary evidence could be recompensated by the presence of a living tradition of miniature painting. However, any living tradition meant an institutionalised tradition. Therefore, the dried-out local tradition could be revived by borrowing from another source which proved to be more resistant to historical upheavals: Russian Palekh miniature painting.

In the following section, I continue to explore how far these intellectual disputes were taken during the later years of the Soviet state.

### **7.2.2. The rise of Uzbek miniature painting**

The Union of Artists of the USSR was the Soviet institution responsible for state commissioning, and included associated Unions from each Soviet republics. One of the tasks of the national Unions was the forging of each titular nations' identity through material culture. With this goal in mind, all associated Unions contributed to annual jubilee exhibitions commemorating the October Revolution. For these exhibits, each Soviet republic arranged displays featuring its arts and crafts, and introducing its best artists. In 1987, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary jubilee arts exhibition was held at the Krymski Val Exhibiting Hall in Moscow. In this exhibition I encountered evidence of Ayni's intentions, but on a large scale that embraced all Central Asian republics (and one Caucasian republic, Azerbaijan). In that exhibition, all the Central Asian republics and Azerbaijan showed their keen interest in reviving miniature painting. That last all-Soviet exhibition marked the apex of interest in miniature painting.

The Uzbek Union of Artists was noted for its capacity to combine a solid educational and research base with efficient management. At the jubilee exhibit, Uzbekistan had one of the largest displays, which presented for the first time high-quality lacquered boxes with designs borrowed from miniature painting and samples with separate sheets of miniature painting. In addition, Uzbekistan's exhibit excelled in the quality of finish, variety of techniques, and aesthetic appearance, compared with the exhibits of other republics. It was obvious that Uzbekistan had done much better even than Tajikistan, its rival in miniature painting. It seemed likely that interest in miniature painting could easily spread and that other republics would repeat Uzbekistan's perfectionism, but in four years

the dramatic disintegration of the Soviet Union obliterated the vogue in miniature painting in the other republics. Even in Tajikistan, where miniature painting had been taken so seriously, all efforts were ruined by the onset of an eight-year civil war. Uzbekistan has thus become the only former Soviet republic where the complex process of reviving miniature painting by art historians, historians and artists has succeeded.

It would be wrong to suggest that miniature painting failed in the other former Soviet Muslim-populated republics solely because of the end of the Soviet Union. This would mean that Shahrani's statement about the replacement of traditional Islamic culture by the alien Soviet culture was correct, because miniature painting was representative of Russian culture. On the contrary, I argue that there was no replacement by an alien culture, but rather the introduction of an invented national culture, and the rise of miniature painting was due to the rise of nationalism in the arts of Soviet Muslim republics.

The rise of nationalism in Central Asia did not express itself only under the Islamic banner. All of those republics have other sources of inspiration besides their Islamic heritage. For example, Kyrgyzstan, apart from a weak Islamic heritage, had a great wealth of inspiration from many different sources, such as shamanism, epic oral literature, genealogy, funerary monuments, and applied arts related to the nomadic dwelling known as the *yurt* (Urmadova 1986: 11; Okada 1994: 78; Akhmedova 1999, 2000(b), 2004). Therefore, for national arts in Kyrgyzstan, reorientation from themes of a short-lived Islamic past towards its other pasts was relatively painless and an easy way to rejuvenate nationalism in the national arts.

Secondly, only two Soviet Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, were in permanent competition over their own historical pasts, due to the 1924 national territorial delimitation.<sup>140</sup> Miniature painting was linked to the written sources of manuscripts that were a part of the most illustrious presentation of that competing past and, as result of that, miniature painting has become an indicator of that past. Neither republic could claim a continuous tradition of miniature painting, because the tradition had already been lost. In other words, it was essential to re-create miniature painting in order to continue that

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<sup>140</sup> After the 1924 national territorial delimitation, the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, predominantly populated with and symbolising the titular national heritage of both Uzbeks and Tajiks, both fell within the borders of Uzbekistan. This led to a constant rivalry between the elites of both republics during the whole of the Soviet period. For more on national delimitation, see Sengupta (2000).

tradition. The justification for the right to reclaim that glorious medieval past depended on the successful revival of miniature painting. That competition was one of the most important factors leading to the establishment of contemporary miniature painting in the Soviet period.

### 7.3.1. Vladimir Ann

I begin with Vladimir Ann, the artist who introduced miniature painting to Uzbekistan from the Palekh Arts College. Through his creative practices, I can explain why local miniature painting dried out, why Ann was able to connect Palekh to Uzbek tradition and why Ann's contribution made him unfit for the post-Soviet arts scene.

I decided to meet with Ann because all his former students from Tashkent Arts College working in the Besh Agach mosque insisted that I talk with their old teacher. I met Ann in his art studio one week after the 10th jubilee of Independence in 2001.<sup>141</sup> The artist's studio was in a dilapidated flat in an unimpressive 1980s apartment block in Tashkent's Chilanzar district. Ann was in high spirits and told me, 'I got a medal for my contribution to Uzbek culture.' I asked him what for, specifically? He seemed suddenly distressed and asked me, 'Who sent you?' I told him that I had met his pupils, who had asked me to interview him. He commented bitterly, 'I restored the lost tradition of miniature painting in Uzbekistan, and then what? Do they [Uzbek art historians] recognise that they would never do such a thing? As for the medal, I deserved it, but could they have added what kind of contribution I was being honoured for? All my craftsmanship with my golden hands was wasted and taken for granted during the Soviet period!' Ann's bitterness was understandable: his contribution in establishing the miniature-painting department was never acknowledged by art historians in the 1980s and 90s.

To understand Ann's reaction, it is important to connect the history of the Korean diaspora in Uzbekistan to the creative careers of ethnic Korean artists. Unlike most of the younger generation of Korean artists who were born and taught in Uzbekistan (*Vystavka Koreiskikh Khudozhnikov Uzbekistana*, 'Exhibition of Korean Uzbek Artists' 1999: 5), Ann belongs to the first generation who experienced the horrors of exile and were driven to make a choice in their new homeland by their own will. The Koreans were listed as a

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<sup>141</sup> Vladimir Ann, interview, 8 September 2001.

displaced ethnic minority, classified by the Soviet state as *vyselennye pereselentsy* (in Russian, ‘forcefully relocated settler’). Under this category fell entire ethnic groups who had been accused of collective treason by the Stalin regime. *Vyselennye pereselentsy* had to regularly check in at the local police station in the places of their resettlement; they had no right to free movement; they did not have access to higher education, and were employed as a rule in unskilled and hard labour. The easiest treatment was for those who were deported from the Russian Far East before the Great Patriotic War, and the worst was for those who arrived during the war. Koreans who arrived before the war were treated better compared to the other displaced minorities because they were not stigmatised as collaborators with the German Army. They were granted many concessions, such as the right to receive technical and higher education even before being cleared of treason, which took place mainly after Stalin’s death in 1953.

Ann had a relatively lucky life. He was born before the deportations from the Russian Far East; his family was deported to Kazakhstan, and he was fortunate to survive the horrible first years of starvation in the frozen Kazakh steppes. After leaving school, he embarked upon a trip to Moscow, an opportunity granted by his parents, and for the first time in his life Ann went to art museums and decided that he wanted to become an artist. Ann recognised that he had little chance of passing exams at the Palekh Arts College in Russia; his only prior education was from a school on a remote Kazakh collective farm. But Ann passed the exams thanks to the help of other boys who had just been demobilised from the army compulsory military service. The ex-soldiers decided to take lessons in art and built up his self-esteem with a sense of camaraderie and the idea that together they could get through the entrance exams. Ann was loyal to the Palekh Arts College for his entire life and maintains ties even today.

After graduation from the Palekh Arts College and Moscow’s Surikov Arts Institute, Ann settled in Tashkent instead of returning to Kazakhstan. His artistic career in Tashkent was successful; he became a member of the Union of Artists and was employed as a senior teacher at Tashkent Arts College during the Soviet period. He actively participated in the opening of the miniature-painting department at the Arts College in the mid-1980s.



His pupils were mainly Uzbeks who were grateful to him for his teaching and who always maintained loyal respect for him as an artist. Nevertheless, they would not discuss what Ann actually did for the restoration of miniature painting. All of them were bitterly disappointed and expressed their anger that Ann was removed from his teaching position at the Arts College in the early 1990s; methods that Ann introduced were neglected and the teaching deteriorated without his presence. After Independence, Ann retired but still occasionally participated in seasonal exhibitions.

In the following section I shed some light on why miniature painting died out.

### **7.3.2. Why miniature painting died out**

Since neither Uzbek nor Tajik scholars provided an explanation for the death of miniature painting, in this section I clarify some facts on the subject.

Since the medieval period miniature painting functioned under the guild system that belonged to the realm of ‘court art’; as such, miniature painting depended on the ruling Bukharan court’s commissions. Miniature painting had suffered a continuous decline since the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Bukhara. This decline is constantly debated by art historians who blame the rise of purist Islam, failing trade between Bukhara and its neighbouring countries, and continuous feudal warfare between neighbouring states (*‘Iskusstvo e Remesla Uzbekskikh Khanstv XVIII-Nachala XX Vekov.: Upadok ili Vzlet? Arts and Crafts in Uzbek Khanats of the 18<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Rise or Decline?’* 1999: 32). Later, under the rule of the Russian Tsarist Turkestan General Governorship, book production was mechanised everywhere, including in the Bukhara emirate (Pugachenkova 1957: 49). Miniature painting came under pressure from technical progress, combined with reduced commissions from the Bukharan court.

The reason for the final reduction in commissions was the Westernisation of the lifestyle of the Bukharan emirs under the Russian empire. This was especially true during the era 1910-1924 of the last Bukharan Emir, Alim Khan, who was educated in St. Petersburg. After returning to his homeland, he preferred to employ Russian artists from Moscow and St. Petersburg, and supported only the crafts that emphasised the grandeur of his rule. Crafts connected to costume and architecture particularly flourished. He built summer residencies all around Bukhara, which were designed by Russian architects and

artists, whereas local craftsmen were initially invited only to do some minor work (Alpemeev 1999). Court art flourished, except for the art of miniature painting, which became less relevant because of its incapacity to reflect changes in the lifestyles of the ruling Manguit family.

By the time of the establishment of Soviet rule in Bukhara in 1925, miniature painting had already vanished. During the following 55 years under the rise of titular nation awareness, the importance of reviving miniature painting was promoted by art historians and artists. Moreover, the 1980s was a period of ‘romanticising the national past’ by the local intelligentsia, regardless of ethnic origin, in Uzbekistan, and miniature painting became a symbol of that past. Therefore, it would be logical to expect that at last miniature painting would be revived by professional Uzbek artists, who by the 1980s had graduated in large numbers from the Russian arts institutes and the local Tashkent Arts Institute, and that the Union of Artists of Uzbekistan would support the effort to revive miniature painting. But as it happened, none of the Uzbek artists were interested in reviving miniature painting, and it was done thanks to the sole efforts of an ethnic Korean artist, Vladimir Ann. Therefore in the next section I explain why there were no Uzbek artists wishing to save miniature painting from oblivion.

### **7.3.3. Why were no Uzbek artists available for reviving miniature painting?**

In this section I cite the reasons why ethnic Uzbek artists were not interested in reviving miniature painting.

In the 1980s, miniature painting fascinated many Uzbek artists, but their appreciation for the miniature was arrested by creative challenges and by practical complications. As artists, they were interested in using the miniature style in their own oil paintings instead of the routine procedure of creating the miniature itself (Akhmedova 2000(a); Ilkhamova 2000).

There were practical reasons as to why the idea of reviving miniature painting did not inspire them. In that decade, many artists were employed on huge state commissions, including colossal architectural constructions such as railway stations, theatres, sporting arenas, and many others. Those commissions were creatively challenging because of their massive scale. They were also financially rewarding because a single large project would

provide an artist's family with financial support for several years. Moreover, those commissions were inspired by the Timurid past, which encouraged Uzbek artists to employ some technical or aesthetic aspects of medieval miniature painting. Since state commissions were more attractive to artists than a modest teaching salary, it became obvious that the best artists would try to win the biggest commissions while teaching positions would be left for the less fortunate. Furthermore, those Uzbek artists who were teaching at that time at the Arts College and Arts Institute preferred to continue to teach what they had learned themselves when they were students. Those Uzbek teachers would not attempt to develop new or different teaching methodologies for miniature paintings, especially if they were not specifically paid to do so.

Under these circumstances it is understandable that rescuing miniature painting would require a professional artist who had little access to the best state commissions and who would voluntarily agree to take on extra work without putting a financial burden on the Arts College. There was no better candidate for that task than Ann, who already had a Palekh education.

In the following section I discuss Palekh icon-painting's secularization and institutionalisation within the Soviet commission system.

#### **7.3.4. Why was Palekh chosen as an inspiration?**

To explain secularisation and institutionalisation under the Soviet state, I point out that Soviet cultural policy was based on Marxist-Leninist principles.<sup>142</sup> These principles were based on class structure,<sup>143</sup> in which artists were classified as a class of intelligentsia, whereas craftsmen were defined as working class; neither class was considered inherently antagonistic to the regime. So according to these class-conscious principles, craftsmen as workers had to be kept working although their product had to be changed.

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<sup>142</sup> Early Soviet policies were mainly based on Marx and Engels's Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), which declares that historical progress is bound to the class struggle.

<sup>143</sup> Figes and Kolonitskii (1999: 6) argued that class categories were long taken for granted, while at the time of the October revolution all social groups needed to define their social existence. Following Figes and Kolonitskii's point on the linguistic application of class terms, I emphasise that those linguistic interpretations allowed different social groups to self-define their class belonging during the first decades of the Soviet state (in order to be either treated favourably or to escape destruction by the state). It is understandable why artists classified themselves as 'intelligentsia' rather than bourgeoisie, and why craftsmen opted for terming themselves as working class '*rabochii*' instead of '*kustar*' *odinochka*' (lone handicraftsman or petty entrepreneur).

Palekh's icon painting has a controversial history. The village of Palekh specialised in creating icon paintings for religious institutions, but in the atheist USSR, religion was completely banned between 1922 and 1942. It seems, from a logical standpoint, that traditional arts like icon painting would have the same fate as the institutions for which they were produced. Monasteries and churches were closed down, the clergy were repressed, religious practice was punishable by imprisonment, and objects of religious faith were appropriated by the state and either classified as arts objects or discarded. But icon painting was not suppressed; instead it was institutionalised within the Soviet state.

The Palekh arts were under the state commission system and craftsmen were therefore state employees. Palekh arts had to change from clerical arts to state arts. To become state art, Palekh artefacts had to change their thematic content and practical purpose (Pirogova 2001: 3). Themes were no longer taken from the Bible and the Apocrypha, but now came from old Russian fairy tales; the product was no longer icons but lacquered boxes. In order to preserve Palekh as an embodiment of Russian culture, the village of craftsmen was turned into a factory, and the craftsmen became artists. In the factory, artists produced lacquered objects. Later the local Art College was established with a specialisation in lacquer techniques. Because Palekh art was capable of reinventing itself, it survived as a symbol of Russianness in the Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet periods. That Russian example provided a clue for the institutionalisation of Uzbek miniature painting. Ann, graduated from Palekh Arts College and applied his experience to his work in Uzbekistan.

Returning to the subject of miniature painting in Uzbekistan, it could have been the same scenario. Miniature painting could have been preserved as a highly valued court art, miniaturists granted membership in Union of Artists might have been assembled in a factory, and technical aspects might have been taught at Arts College. But it did not happen that way because the tradition of miniature painting had already vanished by the emergence of the Soviet state. To revive Uzbek miniature painting it was necessary to borrow from already functioning Soviet institutionalised secularised arts, like in Palekh.

Fig. 30 A photo from a Palekh newspaper acquainting locals with Uzbek students' practice at the Palekh Arts College. In the photo we can see Vladimir Ann, third from left, looking at one of his students giving a Russian teacher a tea pot as a gift.



В БЕСЕДЕ С НАШИМ КОРРЕСПОНДЕНТОМ

Народный художник РСФСР  
Н.И. Голыков:

— Николай Иванович, сегодня уже не секрет, что Вы получили просьбу из Ташкента взять на себя обязанность председателя Государственной экзаменационной комиссии на защите дипломных работ первых выпускников отделения лаковой миниатюры Ташкентского художественного училища.

— Я рассмотрю это приглашение как высокую

## Общность лаковой миниатюры Узбекистана и Палеха в поэтичности стиля

прочность дружеских связей между нами, единство всего нашего светского многонационального искусства.

— Как бы Вы сформулировали общность между лаковой миниатюрой Палеха и живописными миниатюрами Узбекистана?

— Красиво и оригинально черты характера — грубость и невежество. Другое искусство и неадекватно. Две силы, всегда непримиримые друг против друга, но в конечном счете через иррациональное всегда все же соединяются. Возрождение искусства лаковой миниатюры — наглядный пример

Ann's re-creation of miniature painting was based on his experience in Palekh, where he had studied for five years. Soon after his appointment as head teacher for the miniature-painting group at Tashkent Arts College, he contacted his Palekh colleagues for assistance in conceptualising his teaching methodology. Ann organised his first miniature-painting students group with 11 people in the 1980s; this group graduated in 1985, and in 1987 his graduates were good enough to participate in the jubilee exhibition for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Revolution in Moscow. After being released by the Arts College, Ann explained, 'It was a teaching position and they wanted to give my place to someone who would be their man.' Ann completely disappeared from the Arts College, and his work on reviving miniature painting was forgotten by everyone apart from Ann and his pupils.

Ann's endeavour at the Arts College was mentioned only once in the Palekh newspaper (see Fig. 30, p. 268), and Ann keeps this as evidence of his role in reviving miniature painting. That article includes interviews with the head of the student group from Uzbekistan, a senior teacher from the Palekh Arts College, and the famous artist Vladimir Golikov. The article is important because it presents Ann's student-group photo, a description of the cooperation between the Tashkent and Palekh Arts Colleges, and the goals of this cooperation. The main goal of the relationship between the two art colleges was to preserve and rejuvenate the old miniature-painting tradition in Uzbekistan.

But the relationship between the art colleges was broken with the fall of the Soviet state and the fragmentation of the Union of Artists. Uzbek students lost the opportunity to continue their practice at the Palekh Arts College. During the post-Soviet period, Palekh went through its own agonising stages of fragmentation, dispersing into five bodies, none of which had the authority or resources to support artists. The main problem for Palekh artists was that without state-supported consumption, nobody needed lacquer boxes, however skillfully made. The last thing Palekh artists wanted was to degrade their art into tourist souvenirs. The Palekh artists decided their only hope for salvation was a return to the Russian Orthodox Church commission system (Pirogova 2001: 12). The Palekh artists, like any artists who moved within the ROC valuing system, became immediately involved in the processes of politicisation of the Church in the post-Soviet Russian state. This return to the bosom of the Church made Ann's Palekh connection a subject of contempt from all

sides, including the Korean community and local art critics. These conflicts clearly demonstrate that institutions and communities became highly politicised in the post-Soviet period.

### 7.3.5. Ann's post-Soviet position

In the previous chapters, I discussed Uzbek artists' need to conform to varying moral values, which could be very different in the cases of the Union of Artists, the Academy of Fine Arts, the *mahalla*, and the Orthodox Church. According to Ann, he was left in a difficult position: 'I feel that I have gone through a long path by the end of my artistic career, but I cannot understand why I am nowhere.' Those who cannot fit into at least one of these fragmented art fields tend to fall and disappear. In this section I explore why the Palekh group's return to the Church made Ann become perceived as a supporter of Russian national chauvinism by both the Korean community and the Uzbek artistic community.

The ROC's return to the political arena in the current Russian state became connected with the boosting of Russian national identity (Carrère d'Encausse 1994). Zoe Knox (2005) argued that the ROC's conceptualising of Orthodoxy as synonymous to Russian national identity fanned Russian national chauvinism. The ROC's attempt to revitalize Russian national identity in the multiethnic state promoted the exclusion within the priesthood and laity of anybody who was not white and Slavic. Further, Knox stated that patriarch Alexei's rejection of denominational cooperation and interfaith dialogue was used by many of the priests as a pretext to instigate violence against representatives of other religious denominations and ethnic groups in the Russian Federation. Thus, she concluded that the ROC gave a silent seal of approval to the religious, social and economic exclusion of non-Russians in the Russian state.

In independent Uzbekistan, Ann became unwelcome in the Korean community. The Korean community had long experienced Russian chauvinism through frequent work experiences in seasonal jobs in Russia as well as through being shunned in Russian churches.<sup>144</sup> In the Independence period, the whole Korean community, including artists,

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<sup>144</sup> See on racialisation of non-Russians in Roman (2000, 2002). Roman assessed various aspects of racial prejudices on the example of treatment of non-Russians (Caucasians and Central Asians) coming to Russian cities for work. Koreans, despite their belonging to Russian Orthodox faith, are often treated in the same way as these ethnic groups due to their racial difference to Russians..

became heavily influenced by the proselytising of South Korean Protestant churches. Ann's closeness with Palekh, associated with Russian Orthodox religious painting, made him keenly disliked by Korean pastors and by Korean community who saw those pastors as saviors from the Soviet past.

Similarly, Ann became unwelcome in Uzbek artistic circles because of the Palekh school's return to the ROC. Although he did much for arts in Uzbekistan, he did it as a non-Uzbek artist borrowing from Russian religious arts, which under the current political climate were considered by Uzbeks to be arts promoting anti-Muslim, anti-Central Asian sentiments in Russian society. *San'at* issues 1 and 2, published in 2000, which concern miniature painting of the past and present in Uzbekistan, are dedicated to the celebration of the 545th jubilee of the miniaturist Kamalladin Bekhzod. Bekhzod is proclaimed as a founder of miniature painting during the Timurid period, and his legacy to contemporary art is extensively discussed. (The Arts College was renamed from Pavel Benkov in honour of Bekhzod in 1998.) Zakhid Pulatov wrote in the second issue, 'It is wonderful that the name of Kamaladdin Bekhzod and the traditions of his school are alive in Uzbekistan. Art historians recognised a long time ago that contemporary fine-arts miniature painting is revived and developing. It is possible to see masterpieces by Uzbek artists now in the biggest art collections of the world' (Pulatov 2000: 17).

Shomakhmud Mukhamedzhanov, a linguist, claimed in his interview with Elmira Guyl in the article *Vozrozhdaya Rukopismuyi Knigu* ('The Rebirth of the Hand Illuminated Book') and later in his own article *Iskusstvo Rukopisnoy Knigi: Traditsii e Sovremenost* ('The Art of Book Painting: Traditional and Contemporary'), that he alone revived miniature painting in Uzbekistan in the 1980s, while he was working at the Institute of Eastern Languages (Mukhamedzhanov 2000: 32; Gul 2000). Yet in private conversation with me, Negora Akhmedova recognised that Ann played a significant role in reviving miniature painting as a taught course, but within the Uzbek artistic community nobody would recognise his contributions because of the awkward fact that a traditional Uzbek art was revived by a representative of a displaced ethnic minority, as well as because of Palekh's return to its Christian roots. The local arts community preferred to give credit to the scholarly Uzbek linguist Mukhamedzhanov. And since Mukhamedzhanov was elected



as one of the 19 academics of the Fine Arts Academy of Uzbekistan, it was impossible to challenge his claims on reviving miniature painting.

This conflict demonstrates that the artist's worth became defined not by his contribution in the recent Soviet past but by the current politico-economic dimension within which their artefacts' production, circulation and consumption took place.

#### **7.4.1. Rasul Pulatov**

This section is concerned with what has happened to miniature painting with the decline of the state commission system and the emergence of the market economy. I will investigate this using the example of the artistic practice of Vladimir Ann's ex-pupil Rasul Pulatov. Pulatov's case shows the conditions in which miniature painting was reinvented as a new national art. Pulatov (b. 1966), was Ann's pupil from his first group (1980-85). Before our first interview, he provided me with Ann's phone number and insisted that I visit his former teacher, promising me that he would give me his own interview in time. In the subsequent interview sessions, Pulatov told me his thoughts concerning the Besh Agach artists coping with the decline of the state commission system, the market economy reforms and the rise of the *mahalla*. In the following section, using the example of Pulatov, I assess the social group from which miniature painters were drawn.

#### **7.4.2. Pulatov's *mahalla* background**

Pulatov's origins in the Old City *mahalla* played a crucial role in his ability to cope with Soviet and Independence period changes in institutional priorities. Like all the Besh Agach artists, Pulatov's family came from the demolished area of the Old City. And like many Old City families, the Pulatovs' lives revolved around the *mahalla*. His parents had seasonal work, obtained through their *mahalla* connections. The use of those connections meant that these jobs had to be later reciprocated in one form or another. For example, his mother was an embroiderer of skullcaps, and she often took her unfinished samples from the factory to finish at home.<sup>145</sup> Being able to complete some of her work at home meant that in addition to her factory work, she had to take private commissions from the local *mahalla* families who needed embroidery for their daughters' dowries. The Pulatovs allowed themselves

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<sup>145</sup> Pulatov's mother was classified as a *nadomntsa* (a person working from home).

few diversions from *mahalla* interests. Pulatov's father occasionally took his family to watch Uzbek plays at the Mukimiy Theatre. Pulatov's mother encouraged their son to go the House of Pioneers (the Soviet institution for children's leisure activities), where he enrolled himself in drawing classes. Pulatov's early (*mahalla*-oriented) ambition was to have a steady job as a chef in a restaurant. However, he succumbed to the temptation to apply for a theatre-related job after finishing school in 1980, and he applied to the Tashkent Arts College miniature-painting department, which had opened the same year. According to Pulatov, due to his limited knowledge of the Russian language he at first believed that 'miniature' was a type of pantomime performance. Nevertheless he passed his entrance exams and proved to be a good student.

He studied in the first of Ann's groups of students. There were twelve students, of whom only eleven graduated, as one student dropped out of the course. The group consisted only of boys; nine were from the Old City of Tashkent and three came from other regions of Uzbekistan. In their final year the group went with Ann for training at the Palekh Arts College in Russia. Ann praised his ex-pupil Pulatov for his high-quality work; Pulatov excelled in both ornamental and figurative styles. Lacquered boxes required from an artist patience, accuracy and good taste, as well as hours of back-breaking work and eyestrain. But it was obvious to Ann that his ex-pupil would not finish his artistic career as simply a box decorator (see Fig. 31, p.274). Pulatov, from a very early stage, had showed his capacity to work with the gilding technique. Pulatov explained how he was able to do that: 'I have a dry-skinned, light hand and therefore I could work well with gold. I think that my capacity is mostly due to my physical specificity rather than anything; you know, something as special as the physical capacity required for a sportsman or a dancer.' Pulatov was capable of the highest specialisations in miniature painting: the production of lacquered boxes with figurative and ornamental designs, miniature painting based on illustrating traditional Oriental poetry, and illuminated miniature painting combined with calligraphy.

To his parents' pride, Pulatov successfully graduated from the Arts College. After graduation, Pulatov gained better opportunities than his parents: he had regular work as a professional artist, and he earned at the outset of his career several times more than his parents.

Fig. 31 Rasul Pulatov, box (papier mâché, lacquer and watercolour, 2000.) The scene depicts Uzbek musicians performing at a *mahalla* wedding. Photo was given to me by Pulatov.



Fig. 32 Rasul Pulatov in his studio in the Besh Agach mosque. Photo taken by myself in 2001.



Fig. 33 Rasul Pulatov, illuminated sheet (gilding, mulberry paper and watercolour, 2001).  
Photo taken by me in 2001.



### 7.4.3. Pulatov's Soviet and post-Soviet working practices

Pulatov's career can be divided into two periods, the Soviet period and the Independence period. I start with his Soviet-period working practices, through which can be seen the short history of miniature painting in 20<sup>th</sup> century Uzbekistan.

The state commissioned miniature paintings for the purpose of exhibitions in Uzbekistan, the rest of the USSR and abroad. Those commissions were aimed towards the popularisation of Uzbek crafts. The beginning of Pulatov's working experiences coincided with his move from the *mahalla* to a suburban multifloor apartment building as the demolition of the Old City went ahead. Pulatov's professional artistic career started in a window sill of the apartment's minuscule kitchen. For two years he worked from home, and later moved with friends to the Besh Agach mosque where he has now worked for over a decade.

He shares his room with a fellow artist (see Fig. 32, p.275). When they moved into the room, it was in the same condition as it had been since the 15th century. In their room, as in the others, there are no facilities. The artists manage to provide rooms with electricity but there is no heating yet. In time, the room achieved its present look. The room has tables covered with a black cloth on which are immaculately arranged rows of freshly made lacquered boxes; on the walls are hung framed miniature paintings with themes of lovers and dervishes, and separate sheets of illuminated manuscripts with complicated gilt ornamentation and Arabic calligraphy. Pulatov's work-table is placed in the middle of the room. In this room Pulatov and his friend started as Union of Artists members having state commissions during the Soviet period, and later they became Academy of Fine Arts members - without state commissions - in the Independence period.

In the following section I discuss how Pulatov's career changed in the Independence period.

### 7.4.4. The decline of state commissions

In this section I assess the further decline of the state commission system in connection to miniature-painting artists. This section shows the dangers of the commission system's move from the Union of Artists to various state institutions including the Cultural Office. A result of this transfer of responsibility was that valuers were no longer fellow artists, but

now state bureaucrats. As I discussed in Chapter 3, artists' perceptions of their own worth from moral, economic and social perspectives were shaped through the ways the new valuers from state commission system conducted, assessed and delivered state commissions.

The 13 years of the post-Soviet period have completely changed artists and their world. The Soviet state offered numerous state commissions, artists were provided with artistic materials, and they had good honoraria. The Independence period brought new challenges, as artists themselves had to cover the cost of rent, pay taxes, and buy the necessary supplies of artistic materials for their own work. After 1991, no artistic materials were available to artists in Uzbekistan because all materials were produced in Russia. In order to continue their work, artists covered the cost of their materials, and also went on petty trading expeditions to barter or buy Russian-produced materials. After all the growth in their artistic lives, their precious room could no longer remain solely an art studio. It had to slowly transform into a shop and also had to serve as a storage space. If, for the majority of artists, the decline of the state commission system was difficult, for miniature artists it was a complete disaster. The current conduct of state commissioners eroded artists' belief in the authority of the commission system and deeply ingrained seeds of distrust towards state policies in the art field.

In independent Uzbekistan, state commissions were extremely rare. Those few commissions were mainly intended for sending Uzbek artworks to exhibitions abroad. One of these exhibitions was supposed to take place in spring 2002 in Hanover. Pulatov's works were chosen among others, but a high-ranking state official who decided whose works were to be sent wanted to 'appropriate' one of Pulatov's works for himself. Under normal Soviet circumstances, with artists heading the Arts Council, this type of theft was rare: the valuers, being artists themselves, would not steal from fellow artists. Under the contemporary state commission system it became possible for corrupt officials to abuse the rights of artists. But under market conditions, Pulatov was at least able to express his opinion.

Pulatov began to doubt the meaningfulness of miniature painting within the state commission system. Pulatov rejected the idea of giving away his work as a bribe, and decided to withdraw from the Hanover exhibition to show his opposition to the corruption in the Cultural Office. He explained to me, 'It is a pity that my works were not seen abroad.

But my work is my work; I worked tirelessly to finish that sheet for two months, so why should I have to bribe that guy? I can sell my illuminated page for a price that it actually costs.’<sup>146</sup> Pulatov was no longer a state-employed artist who could passively wait and expect to be paid for his production, supplied with materials, and supported with life’s necessities. Instead he became a self-employed artist who was completely independent from the state apart from being a good taxpayer. As a result he decided to make his own choices as to how, to whom, and for what kind of money or services he would sell his art works.

In the following section I shall discuss Pulatov’s adaptation to the emergence of the market economy in Uzbekistan.

#### **7.4.5. The market economy’s effects on miniature-painters**

In this section I specify the reasons why the emergence of a market economy in Uzbekistan made miniature-painting artists’ lives especially difficult owing to the absence of women art dealers.

The main reason was that women art dealers, who came to the forefront of the new art economy, specialised in contemporary painting. Women art dealers did not know how to value miniature painting because the artists lacked the two-tier education that was so important to the dealers’ appreciation of artists and their work (see Chapter 4, p.148).

Women art dealers were equally unable to apply their knowledge of the foreign art market’s valuing, because the foreign market had an economic valuing of Soviet professional arts but not crafts. In addition, women’s skills in dealing with the Cultural Office for exporting artworks were, in the case of miniature painting, redundant: miniature painting objects were small enough to be easily smuggled out of the country, and were rarely declared to Customs.

Women art dealers were unable to successfully market miniature painting to the local Uzbek New Rich, for two reasons. First, art historians specialising in miniature painting were medievalists from the Academy of Science, while the women art dealers, discussed in Chapter 5, mostly had art history backgrounds and specialised in contemporary arts. Secondly, miniature painting did not conveniently fall into the pattern of traditional

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<sup>146</sup> Rasul Pulatov, interview, 11 September 2001



*mahalla* life and courtyard consumption idealised by the New Rich (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.).

The absence of women art dealers willing to deal with miniature painting meant there were no professional art dealers in this field. Artists specialising in miniature painting had to conceptualise their art in order to market it themselves. Owing to the limits of their Old City *mahalla* connections, miniature-painters were unable to gain access to the exclusive circle of locally residing foreigners from diplomatic, NGO and business circles, and therefore had to focus on the tourist trade. For artists, tourists were foreigners traveling for leisure who could spare desirable foreign currency in poorer Uzbekistan (Turner and Ash 1976).<sup>147</sup> Yet artists were unaware of any of the pitfalls awaiting them.

#### **7.4.6. Besh Agach distances itself from Palekh**

This section explores the reasons behind why tourism failed to influence the Besh Agach artists' trade. For this exploration, it is better to emphasise the particular reasons why tourism in Uzbekistan was insignificant,<sup>148</sup> instead of going in depth into anthropological studies of tourism, which are based on locations and situations in which the tourist industry is strong. My discussion of the effects of tourism demonstrates that a climate of political instability makes reliance on tourism by local arts and crafts risky from an economic perspective.

Nelson Grabum, in 1976, described the tourist-oriented trade as a meeting of the West with the native people of the Fourth world; in such trading zones native people commoditise their rituals, customs, costumes, artefacts, music and many other aspects of

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<sup>147</sup> Turner and Ash (1976) discussed the pros and cons of the tourism industry. However, in the Besh Agach case, artists were not preoccupied by the comparative wealth or high status of tourists. What was important for them was that, as locals, they knew best how to run their trade.

<sup>148</sup> Airey and Shackley (1997) stipulated that with the beginning of the market economy there appeared a chance to develop tourism in Uzbekistan. However, authors suggested that despite the presence of tourist attractions in form of impressive historical and architectural sites, creating a modern tourist industry would require enormous effort and funds for various tourism-connected businesses like airlines, infrastructure, hotels and services. These authors could not foresee that other obstacles, primarily the threat of terrorism, would prevent Uzbekistan from becoming a tourist destination.

their cultural and daily activities. Some anthropologists later came to view tourism as helping to authenticate native people's uniqueness (MacCannel 1989; Sjoberg 1993)<sup>149</sup>.

However, in Uzbekistan the tourist trade was not able to help distinguish Uzbek miniature painting from its Palekh counterpart, or to be seen as a purely Uzbek product rather than one borrowed from Russian arts. And the growth of domestic and global Islamic terrorism undermined the functioning of the commodified tourist zones (Dean 2002; Sloboda 2003; Dhariwal 2005). The tourist-oriented trade in miniature painting became a victim of the rise of militant Islam. Continuous instability led to a decline in the flow of tourists, and tourism practically came to a complete halt after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.<sup>150</sup>

Pulatov admitted, 'That whole Besh Agach group committed mistakes together.'<sup>151</sup> He explained to me that miniature artists clung to each other because they realised that they had to face the market together. The Besh Agach group's mistake was to attempt to expand their business because they badly needed cash. They thought it might be wise to send their work to be sold in cities with higher volumes of tourist traffic - Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva. Unfortunately, this strategy had horrendous consequences. Tourist cities were soon flooded with cheap and poor-quality work done by amateurs. The prices of ready-made art objects fell below the cost of production and materials. The most painful result of miniature-painters' stubborn reliance on tourism between 1999 and 2004 was the economic degradation of their precious arts.

In the following section I move to the restructuring of artistic practices from *mahalla* perspectives.

#### **7.4.7. Pulatov's use of the *mahalla* perspective**

In these two final sections, I explore how Pulatov attempted to reorient the Besh Agach artists away from the Fine Arts Academy and back to the *mahalla*. These sections will

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<sup>149</sup> MacCannel (1989) suggested that tourist industry allows the staging of authenticity by cristalising a sense of ethnic uniqueness. Sjoberg (1993) discussed the conceptualisation of ethnic identity through the tourist industry, using the case of the Japanese Ainu.

<sup>150</sup> My Uzbekistan fieldwork in 2001 coincided with the 9/11 attacks. In September/October, the main months of the tourist season in Uzbekistan, out of a planned 108 tourist groups, only 3 came. Between 1999 and 2004, domestic terrorist attacks, as well as the wars in Afganistan and Iraq, helped to destroy the local tourist-oriented art trade.

<sup>151</sup> Rasul Pulatov, interview, 15 September 2001.

demonstrate that miniature painting revived its social and moral values through artists' contribution as *mahalla* community members.

Pulatov's search for social recognition for artists within the *mahalla* community was due to the installment of *mahalla* institutions in the previously state-owned high rise apartment blocks. In the Soviet period, those areas with apartment blocks were never regarded as *mahalla* neighbourhoods. It was also highly questionable whether in Independent period those areas run by the former Housing Office could motivate multiethnic apartment block dwellers to become *mahalla* community members. However, Russian migration out of Uzbekistan led to the sale of significant number of flats within apartment blocks to Uzbek buyers, bringing a condensation of Uzbeks in the Soviet-built areas.<sup>152</sup> Those new coming Uzbek families were not extended multigenerational families with parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and children. They were simply couples with children who could separate themselves from their extended families and *mahalla* communities, able to afford a small apartment but not rich enough to move to a traditional house with a courtyard. The ages of those couples and their children was already beyond the celebration of weddings and circumcisions. To turn the newcomers into *mahalla* community members, there was a need to find new ways of reconnecting neighbours to each other apart from the collective lifecycle celebration consumption conducted in the courtyards of the traditional *mahalla*.

The *mahalla* community is built around the preservation of multigenerational families (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.). Within those multigenerational families the main aim is to provide sons with a feasible option of employment, and the goal was the same for the smaller families in the new *mahalla*. Sons are the priority because they stay in the extended family whereas daughters leave the family after marriage. Access to education is one of the ways in which *mahalla* connections are vital. The marginalisation of miniature painting started with its declining prestige, and was exacerbated by lowered teaching standards at the Art College's department of miniature painting. Pulatov and the other artists who came from the Old City felt that they could be useful for the recreation of the *mahalla* in high rise buildings, and that their *mahalla* connections (mostly from teaching *mahalla* residents'

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<sup>152</sup> Suburbs with high rise buildings are the cheapest in the domestic property market so it is not surprising that trade is fast and big in numbers. During my four-month stay in Sergey Lee 4, which counted over 30 housing blocks, I observed many Russian families leaving for good after selling their homes to Uzbeks.

male offspring at the Besh Agach site) could be advantageous for everybody. Pulatov and his colleagues believed that their economically selfless teaching of their *mahalla* neighbours' children would protect them from denunciation to the *mahalla* administration and to the various state offices by their neighbours.

Pulatov told me, 'I take pupils privately, I do not charge them, and anyway we are turning more and more to the old-fashioned guild system of craftsmen, rather than contemporary educated artists.'<sup>153</sup> Pulatov's pupils came to study privately with him through his former *mahalla* neighbours from the Old City and his new neighbours in the high rise apartment blocks. These boys' parents made their choice not to send them to the Arts College to acquire meaningless papers for specialisation in miniature painting. These students decided that they would be better skilled than students with a formal state education and, as a result of better application of their skills, they would succeed professionally. Their appearance changed the image of the professional miniature artist. Miniature painting slowly redeveloped from a taught, theoretical discipline into the type of craft learned through *mahalla* connections it had been before its re-introduction in the 1980s.

#### **7.4.8. Miniature painting as religious arts**

This section further explores Pulatov's following of *mahalla* values, specifically religion. One of the forms of the reaffirmation of Islam promoted by the *mahalla* was following religious practice in public and at home. The possession of the Koran (in Arabic, or translated into Uzbek or Russian) became a must in Muslim Uzbek homes. Believers' reliance on Koranic scriptures for guidance prompted Pulatov and other artists to supply the local believers with miniature paintings containing individual Koranic suras.

The *mahalla* elders considered it acceptable to display some scriptures from Koran to help guide people through the difficulties of their daily lives. Pulatov decided to incorporate his creative practices within the current resurgence of Islamic practice. He reasoned that if even the poor could afford prints with verses from the Koran in Arabic to stick on their front doors in the Old City, then the New Rich Uzbeks could allow themselves something more than a simple printed slip.

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<sup>153</sup> Rasul Pulatov, interview, 9 September 2001.

Pulatov began to decorate individual pages with gilded ornamentation, calligraphy and painting, something which had been done by professional miniaturists from the medieval period up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning, he attempted to re-establish the local production of paper from mulberry trees, even though the process was very intricate and slow (to produce decent-quality mulberry paper requires three years). He realised that he had to postpone his plan to produce mulberry paper himself, but he needed paper for his calligraphy and illuminated sheets (see Fig. 33, p. 276). He started searching for old manuscripts of the Russian Tsarist period. He protested when I asked him whether he destroyed manuscripts.<sup>154</sup> He explained to me:

Filling manuscripts by hand was an awesome task. Miniaturists never knew how many pages they would decorate, so a bookmaker had to be aware of that. I found that all those books in Bukhara had extra plain pages so I decided to buy them for whatever price their owners would charge me. Decorating them with just ornamentation was quite boring, so I learned the Arabic alphabet myself in order to combine ornamentation and calligraphy. There is a great difference between decorating boxes and decorating illuminated sheets; decorating a box requires between three days and a week, whereas one sheet takes more than one month of work. It is rewarding when you know that what you create is real art.

The pious Uzbek New Rich were the first to appreciate Pulatov's return to the traditional roots of miniature painting. The New Rich completely embraced the appearance of Pulatov's works because his artefacts responded to three requirements. First, they were religious arts, so placing Pulatov's verses from the Koran on a wall was not disturbing to even the most rigid traditionalists. The purchase of Koranic verses was considered a display of piety rather than a waste of money. Secondly, Pulatov's miniature paintings signified a certain status, achieved through the acquisition of an expensive piece of consumer art with its opulent gilded surface. Thirdly, Pulatov's work was marketed as traditional Uzbek art with all the credentials that that implies: hand-made, Islamic-influenced, and executed on pre-Soviet period materials.<sup>155</sup> All of these features made Pulatov's case exceptional and enabled him to build up a stable local clientele.

<sup>154</sup> Rasul Pulatov, interview, 9 September 2001.

<sup>155</sup> Pulatov's marketing strategies are reminiscent of the trade in medieval sacred relics explored by Geary (1986:186). Geary's point was that as new objects, relics had to be validated through the myth of production'. Pulatov stressed the use of pre-Soviet materials of his illuminated pages. However, this claim could be seen as dubious, for two reasons. First, period materials were far from plentiful, and Pulatov worked prolifically. Secondly, I observed that many of his works were executed on A4-sized paper. Obviously, in the past there was no such standardisation of paper size. Nevertheless, because of his 'myth of production', his private

Broadening international connections and the expansion of air routes into post-Soviet republics led to numerous requests from Arab emirates.<sup>156</sup> Many of these Arabs wanted not just a luxuriant sheet with verses from the Koran, but wished for far more expensive and complex masterpieces; for example, one buyer requested a complete Koran with illuminated miniature painting and calligraphy. Pulatov was surprised by this request and honestly admitted that such a project would be a lifelong undertaking that he would not dare take on alone, and would therefore require the involvement of the entire Besh Agach group. Apart from that, he was sure that it would cost a fortune and the artists would benefit if both sides came to an agreement on a contract. I left Tashkent in October 2001, before this issue was resolved, but nevertheless, I was surprised that both local and foreign Muslims appreciated miniature painting not only as art, but mainly as religious art.

### 7.5. Conclusion

The specifics of Uzbekistan's case reveal that what occurred in the Soviet period was opposite to what Shahrani thought, that is, the irreversible destruction of Islamic heritage. On the contrary, former Soviet arts such as miniature painting possessed an astonishing capacity to outlive the Soviet state. Miniature painting had the ability to survive the effects of the Soviet state's collapse, including the fragmentation of the Soviet arts institutional framework and the decline in state commissions. At the same time miniature painting went through a difficult period of readjustment to the market economy, which caused difficulties in finding local and foreign buyers. The rise of terrorism prevented the opportunity to market Uzbek miniature painting to the tourist industry. But the embrace of Islam by *mahalla* men brought a revival of miniature painting. By making economic estimation of miniature painting moralised, miniature painters intended to embody *mahalla* values. This was expressed through the content of their works, and through their daily life practices involving helping to disseminate knowledge of miniature painting within their residential

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comissioners believed that Pulatov's works on 'old paper' were more inspiring of religious piety than normal post-Soviet stationary materials.

<sup>156</sup> Pulatov was reluctant to elaborate on these Arab 'tourists' or what were they doing in the country apart from comissioning art works. However, other artists from Besh Agach explained to me that these Arabs could hardly be called 'tourists', because in fact they very often focused on religious proselytising. Owing to Uzbekistan's strict visa policies, they come to Uzbekistan as tourists or businessmen.

communities. By becoming the embodiment of the virtues of the *mahalla*, artists themselves were able to dictate the rules of social inclusion in the newly established *mahalla* neighbourhoods in former Soviet state-owned housing sector. This differed greatly from the older established *mahalla* neighbourhoods, in which privately owned housing had always existed, where the *mahalla* leaders were at liberty to bend artists to their own rules. By being a decisive force within the *mahalla*, which were state-supported institutions, miniature painters newly politicised their arts. If, during the Soviet period, miniature painting was introduced as a means for claiming the legitimacy of the Uzbek titular nation's territorial and cultural integrity, in the post-Soviet period miniature painters were able to use their arts to express loyalty to the regime. At the same time, miniature painters presented themselves and their arts as representations of the politically neutral version of Islam espoused by the Karimov regime. Miniature painting's economic, social and moral valuing demonstrated that valuing became shaped through politicisation of the economy.

## Afterword

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all sense of certainty disappeared for the citizens of the new Uzbekistan. Issues such as ethnicity, citizenship and professional identity, which had been clearly demarcated in the Soviet system, now became unclear. In order to understand their new world and their positions in it, many people sought reassurance and justification from others who were experiencing the same loss and confusion. The uncertain new atmosphere also provoked an inevitable search for a ‘deeper past’ and its traditions, even if, as many studies of new nationalisms have shown us, those ‘traditions’ were partly invented or, in this case, based partly on a particular Soviet view of material culture. However, the reassurance found in the certainty of a fabricated ‘deep past’ failed to provide an understanding of the present.

One of the consequences of such yearning for the ‘deep past’ can be seen in post-Soviet Russian arts. The Russian art historians Andrei Kovalev (1995) and Ekaterina Dyogot (1995) emphasised the continuity of Russian arts, regardless of Soviet past and post-Soviet present. Kovalev suggested that there had in fact been no ‘Soviet arts’ during the Soviet period, but that there had always been ‘Russian arts’, limited to the two cities of Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>155</sup> Dyogot tied ‘Russian arts’ to ethnicity, linking the idea to the Russian artists still working in non-Russian places.<sup>156</sup> Thus, in order to demonstrate an artistic connection to a pre-Soviet past, these historians reduced the whole notion of Russian arts either to location or ethnicity. Their glossing over the term ‘Russian’ undermined any conceptualisation of post-Soviet arts, because if there was no such thing as ‘Soviet arts’, there could not be ‘post-Soviet arts’ either.

However, many Western cultural specialists (Kettering 1998; Widdis 2002; Kiaer 2005) argued that the influence of Soviet arts extended beyond the state institutions, and were an essential part of the Soviet utopian social model. Kovalev’s and Dyogot’s perceptions could be justified if Soviet arts had been indeed limited to the

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<sup>155</sup> Kovalev did not mean location *per se*, but the location in which artistic *milieux* were clustered and within which they functioned. However, his point sounds hollow because a group of miscellaneous artists and art critics could hardly exist in isolation within the big urban megalopolises like Moscow and Leningrad, and because the fall of the Soviet institutional art world and its ensuing fragmentation made artistic conclaves in post-Soviet Russian capitals transient and unstable.

<sup>156</sup> In fact, Dyogot’s claim of the ethnic (Slavic) purity of Russian arts contradicts the history of Russian arts. Opening any Russian art history book of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, one would see practically no Russian artists, but many French, German, Scottish and Italian artists who worked in (and were often naturalised in the Russian empire). 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian arts includes more Russian names, but was highly multiethnic. And in the Soviet art world, Jewish artists in Moscow and Leningrad were especially prominent.



Soviet institutional framework. They never considered that Soviet arts were an essential part of Soviet life. With the emergence of a new post-Soviet way of life, many people in the former Soviet Union are still deeply affected by Soviet ways. Because of the continuing connection of citizens to the Soviet way of life, the USSR's split into different states did not necessarily lead to the eradication of 'Russian' arts in non-Russian places like Uzbekistan.

My dissertation is concerned with the new social forms that filled the cracks and liminal places left after the system's collapse. In Uzbekistan, the emergence of the post-Soviet *mahalla* brought an entirely new outlook on daily life. Suddenly everyone was preoccupied with relationships within the multigenerational family, between families, with their *mahalla* neighbours. Many of these relationships were shaped through new forms of consumption and access to goods and services, including art. Arts stopped being a mere backdrop to *mahalla* residents' public lives, which lay outside their immediate family and the *mahalla* community. The arts moved directly into the *mahalla* neighborhoods and became closely linked to *mahalla* society. Arts production (through arts educational institutions, art studios and sites like the Besh Agach mosque) and arts consumption (through purchase and possession of paintings, icons and miniature paintings) involved the whole of the *mahalla*. Arts guided *mahalla* residents and administrators in finding some kind of self-definition. Nevertheless, my *mahalla* ethnography demonstrated that nobody in the community could provide clear definitions of new identities, roles and social relations. My ethnography revealed people taking different roles and readjusting themselves to new challenges.

In Chapter 4, I examined the internationalisation of Uzbek arts through a look at Soviet arts' place at the lowest rung of the Western art market, which pushed local women art dealers to market the Soviet generation of Uzbek artists as 'Russian artists'. Because of this, there was limited access to the Western art market for the majority of artists who emerged after the fall of the USSR. For post-Soviet artists, there was no alternative to marketing their work in the West as simply as one of many 'ethnic' arts. Uzbek artists knew that their arts would be struggle for a fully conceptualised place in the Western art world. Without a place in the Western arts institutional framework, Uzbek paintings were lower in prestige and several times cheaper than contemporary Russian paintings. As a result, there was little incentive for Uzbek painters or for art dealers to travel to the West for exhibiting and selling, which would include battles over

visas and travel permits, payments to Customs and other bureaucrats for permission to sell their works, and high transportation costs.

Unlike Russia, the rest of the post-Soviet states were unable to hold international art fairs at home, so they brought their commercial-minded exhibitions to the West. One such exhibition took place in the autumn of 2005 in Brussels, and was aimed at bringing the arts of Central Asia to the West. Among the Central Asian participants, there was an Uzbek delegation headed by Natalya Musina (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6). In the Uzbek case, the 2005 Brussels exhibition was particularly exciting because the ban on private individuals handling foreign currency (in effect from 1995 to 2004) had finally been lifted. In my naiveté, I assumed this legalisation would provide an easier path for Uzbek arts. I wanted to find out from Musina and the other Uzbek representatives how the lifting of the almost decade-long restrictions had changed the market.

The Uzbek delegation arrived a few months after the killing of demonstrators by the Uzbek army in the eastern city of Andijan, an incident which became known in the Western media as the Andijan massacre (Powell 2006:72). The crowd of demonstrators, which had assembled in the central square of the city on 13 May, were fired on by soldiers with automatic weapons. The death toll is still unknown, with figures ranging from 187 to 1000 people killed. The event was interpreted by the Uzbek state media as a foiled Islamic terror attack, and portrayed the demonstrators as terrorists attempting to create an Islamic state. But because of the secretiveness surrounding the event, it is unknown whether the demonstrators actually had Islamist goals.

For the Uzbek group coming to Brussels, it was traumatic to represent such a brutal regime, but on the other hand the fear of an Islamist revolution was so great that they were unwilling to openly condemn the government's actions. Lola Boboeva (see Chapter 5, section 5.8.1.) was the rare person who dared to speak on the subject. As she put it, 'We all feel dispirited about what happened in Andijan. But there are none of us [artists] who would actually condemn the President's wrongdoing, because we are really frightened by the thought of what awaits us ahead without such a regime if fundamentalists take hold of the state.'

I was surprised by the lack of paintings represented in the Uzbek delegation. Musina brought fewer painting than ceramics, textiles and jewellery this time. I inquired about this among my contacts in the Uzbek art community, who directed me to Ira Salahutdinova, an employee of Musina's Karavan gallery who had remained in Tashkent during the exhibition. She explained why Musina did not want to take painting

to Brussels. Salahutdinova explained that Musina's reluctance was caused by the rise in art prices locally.

Uzbek artists and art dealers were able to sell works at home for much higher prices than in the West. In Chapters 5 and 7, I emphasise the fact that selling paintings at home for prices higher than in the West could explain artists' and art dealers' unwillingness to move paintings from Uzbekistan to the West. But that does not necessarily explain the Uzbek art world's apparent wish to endure an extremely suffocating life under the current repressive regime. Even the implicit critique of the regime in paintings on the theme of post-Soviet consumption by a younger generation of women artists (discussed in Chapter 4) did not inspire the local art world into resisting the regime. But there were reasons beyond economics, politics or simple survival for Uzbek artists to remain in Uzbekistan.

Post-Soviet Uzbek arts reinforced the Soviet notion of the inseparability of art producers from their works. In Uzbekistan, arts continued to embody and reflect the moral and social person of their producers and their consumers (such as the local *mahalla* residents). A move out of Tashkent to Russia or to the West meant that what artists produced would become a mere consumer good, a good with no merit apart from its economic value, detached from social connection to other human beings. Regardless of the possible benefits, this change would lead to the destruction of an artist's personhood. The post-Soviet situation brought to light the fact that Uzbek arts are not just a field where career opportunities could be realised and social connections revealed. At a time when categories and identities were being blurred and re-forged, for artists in Uzbekistan the ability to produce artworks was profoundly connected to their ability to redefine their sense of person.

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