NEW HEIGHTS FOR SCULPTOR TOKATLIAN

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By Thomas Harutunyan, Moscow, 15 September 2013

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Venetians still remember his triumphal exposition in Palazzo Zenobio, the ancient palace on the canal, where the enormous mirrors reflected Tokatlian's phantasmagoric bronze images. In New-York the Lebanese-Armenian artist was named a master of revitalized surrealism while his ingenious art was described as surrealistic-mythologic-classical.

According to American critic Jonathan Goodman, "Tokatlian is an impressive artist whose sculptures inhabit a magical place in which form and emotion mix. Tokatlian's imagination is sympathetic in the best sense of the world; he embraces humanity in its widest meaning, incorporating but also transcending the disturbances of man. This gives his art its imaginative meaningfulness."

Tokatlian's bright and vivid imagination creates images with humanistic content, sympathy and compassion. These characteristics appear particularly in such works as "Prayer", "Liberation of the Spirit", "Third Eye", "The Faith", "Warning from a Black Destiny for Mankind". In Tokatlian's work the statues are not obedient entities, but sensuous, impulsive, flexible beings who charges us with the burden of interrogation, dexterously spinning the flywheel of psychoanalysis, and preceding an

almost universal ambivalence.

The human figure is the main character of the sculptor's allegorical cycle. Such works as "Secret behind the Mask" and "Disappearance of a Kingdom" can be considered unique, judging by their emotional impact.

Despite their small size, the sculptures are monumental in their significance. The professional eye, at once, notices their organic compatibility with, for example, a city park or an exhibition hall. Perhaps "Entering a City" will be the next stage in the artist's development.

Tokatlian was born to an Armenian family in Beirut. His artist grandfather cultivated the love of art in the young man who grew up on his grandfather's stories of the forced emigration to Lebanon from his homeland during the First World War, of Greek mythology and of the Renaissance painters. Young Tokatlian's interest in mythology and sculpture led him to the wall paintings of Pompeii, to the ancient temples of Greece. On a trip to Egypt he discovered pharaonic sculptures. In Italy he absorbed the masterpieces of Renaissance art, particularly Donatello.

After graduating from the design department of the Beirut University, Tokatlian furthered his artistic studies at the School of Fine Arts in Paris. There he discovered Rodin and Giacometti, Bosch and the Surrealists. The last school fundamentally affected his art world view. Returning home full of ideas and creative vitality, Tokatlian lost himself in his work and began experimenting with bronze.

Consuming images from Greco-Roman mythology, Tokatlian successfully adapts them to new conditions. Before starting molding and casting, he considers an image for a long time and then draws many sketches of the future work. They hint at his sculptural aims and uncover the emotional essence of the work.

Tokatlian's painting technique is varied: he uses pencil and pastel, water color and charcoal, China ink, even ground coffee.

He could probably be compared to Renaissance artists in temper, profundity of thought, internal charm and creative rage. Tokatlian is also fascinated by writing, composing music, and climbing mountains: he has climbed Armenia's Mount Ararat and Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa.

Being an enthusiast of Russian art and culture–this was substantially contributed by his research trips to Saint Petersburg and Moscow–Tokatlian is eager to exhibit his work in Russia. The exhibition--at Moscow's Belyaevo Gallery--will contain 19 bronze images and 25 graphic works. The collection will include bronze heroes of Greek and Roman mythology whose incredible inflections of the body, irreproachable aesthetics, convincing illusionism of movements, enigmatic charisma, obeying the viewer's imagination come alive in real time and space.