

April 25, 2009

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair styled in an updo, wearing a dark, textured top and a gold necklace with a large pendant. She is looking slightly to the left with a gentle smile.

**Ruzan Avedikian:
In search of romance**

In search of lost Armenians in Der Zor

A photographer traces the lives of survivors in the deserts of Syria



by **Maria Titizian**

Hagop Doghramadjian, originally from Urfa, ended up in Der Zor after the Genocide. At the height of the deportations, his mother, at the brink of death, handed him over to a Bedouin family to save his life.

But Hagop's mother didn't die. In fact, she survived and ended up in Aleppo, where she was miraculously reunited with her husband. With her firstborn son lost to her, she went on to have four other children.

She could never forget Hagop, the child she left behind in the desert. Years later, she went from village to village to look for her son, who had a distinctive birthmark on his shoulder. She finally found him, but it was too late, as he was already a grown man and had become a Moslem.

Hagop had become **Abdallah Talal**. But mother and son did not lose touch with each other. Hagop had three wives and decided to give one of his children to his Armenian half-brother so that one of his children could grow up as an Armenian.

This is one of the heart wrenching stories French-Armenian photographer **Bardig Kouyoumdjian** has unearthed in the arid deserts of Syria. Along with French journalist **Christine Simeone**, Bardig has written *Deir-es-Zor: On the trace of the Armenian Genocide of 1915*.

Deir-es-Zor, which was published in 2005 to coincide with the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, is about finding and recording the remnants of the Armenian survivors, of those orphans left behind who became Moslem and Arab. "Until the 1950s there was some research done on these Armenians. A woman, a teacher from Konya was recording and photographing these survivors living among the Bedouins. Her book was published in 1955 – two volumes, 500 pages of eyewitness testimonials and photographs. But that's it. Until the 1990s nothing else was done," Bardig explained emphatically in an interview.

This endeavor has become his life's work. Himself the grandchild of survivors, Bardig has been on a quest for the past 20 years to become the medium through which these stories are brought to the world.

In 1985 he began photographing Genocide commemoration ceremonies and demonstrations. And then in 1997 he



Mari *baji's* hands. Bardig first met her in 1997. "When they told her I had come to photograph her, she said, 'So you've come to photograph Miss World.' The second time I saw her was in 2001. Her door was closed and I could hear that she was praying, beseeching God, asking him why she was still alive. We opened the door, brought her out of her darkened room, and she was sitting on a chair with her arms outstretched and that's when I took a picture of her hand."

Photos: Bardig Kouyoumdjian.

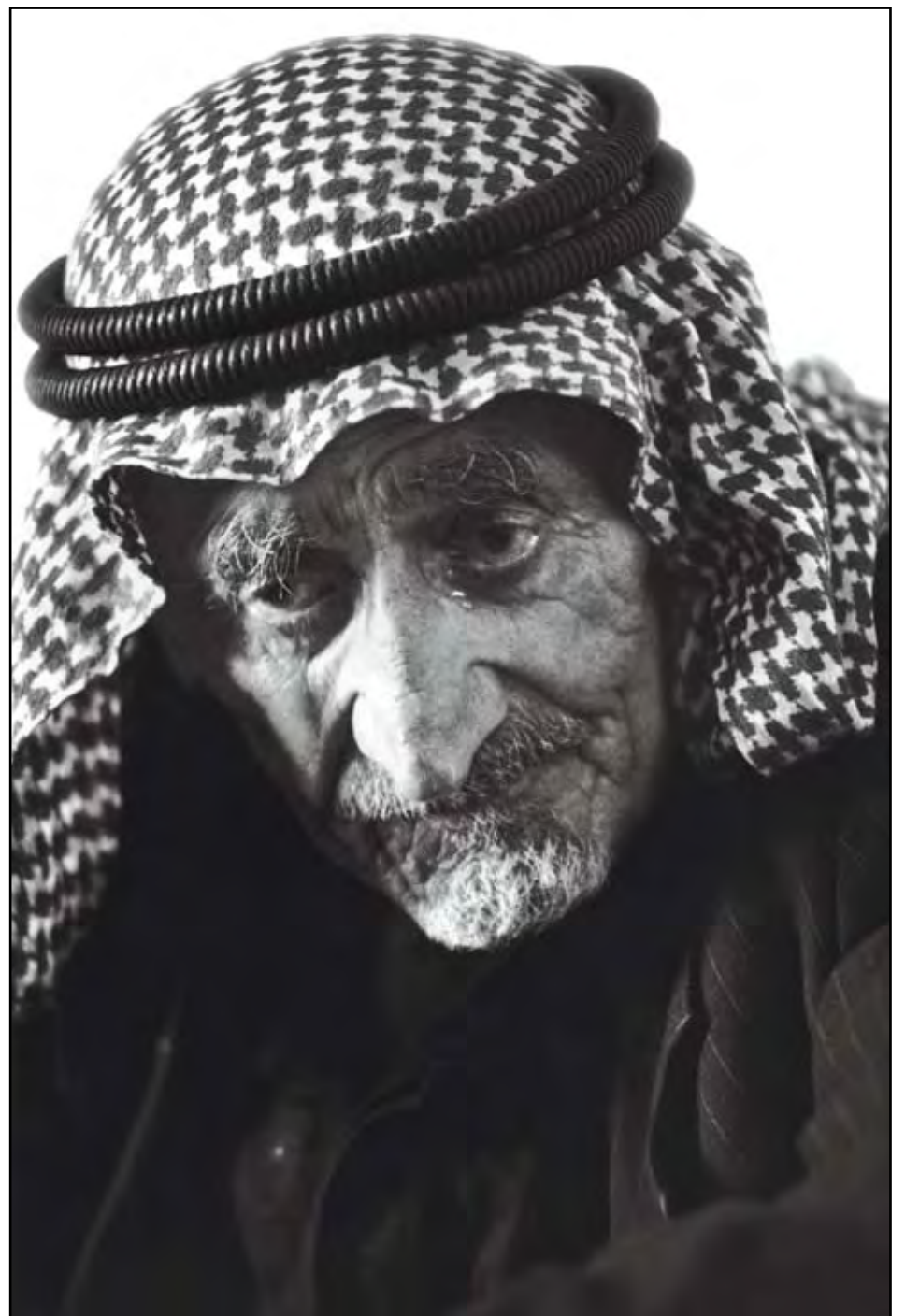


The mother of the man portrayed on the cover of this book was Armenian; her name was Srpuhi. In memory of his mother, he built a mosque and called it Surbiyeh, the Arabic version of Srpuhi.

started interviewing survivors who were living in old-age homes in Lebanon. "Most of them were in their 90s by that time, so they had relatively clear memories of their experiences," says the photographer.

The lost Armenians of Der Zor are waiting for their relatives. "These people have lived with the hope that they would find their relatives.... Wherever I went they would call me *Keri*," he said, using the Armenian word for maternal uncle. "I will never forget entering the home of one of these Armenian-Arabs. A man confronted me and said, 'You abandoned us in the desert.' It's very emotional," he says.

Today, no one is sure of the exact numbers of Armenians who have been lost. But they exist. Thanks to the efforts of people like Bardig Kouyoumdjian, we are being reacquainted with some of the lost pages of our collective history.



Abdallah Talal, born Hagop Doghramadjian.



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Arame. Concept, photo, and design by Arvin Kocharian.

Arame: Even tough guys can be vulnerable



Arame's CD is titled *Un-Dzain*, or voiceless.

by Mher Baghdasarian

The popular singer Arame is nothing if not self-confident. An interviewer from TV Mol brought out the prominent features of his personality.

Mher Baghdasarian: Is it easy being the most in-demand artist today?

Arame: It's very difficult. During the past year, I had a record-breaking number of concerts – so many that I can no longer remember the exact number. There was a period of time that I was giving so many concerts at the Aram Khachaturian Opera and Ballet Theater that I used to joke that I lived there. I also had solo concerts in the regions of Armenia. Sometimes I would give performances several times a day. Being in demand makes it difficult not to make mistakes.

MB: I saw that you make a note of even the very simple things you need to do. Is your situation that serious?

Arame: This has begun to scare me. I can't remember even the simplest things. For example, a couple of times I have left my house and gone to the Radio Hall instead of going to the Asbarez Music Studio. After that, every evening I now

make note of my next day's schedule. I have even made a schedule so I remember when to take my medicine.

MB: A very tight schedule can lead to health problems. That seems to be the price that stars have to pay for success and fame.

Arame: It's sad. One of my friends told me not to worry so much that I can't find the time to do everything, like visiting with friends, eating properly. It's tiring, and you always seem to be giving something up. The one thing that has been difficult is that after finding success in Armenia, I have been so far away from my family. They didn't get to see a lot of things.... When you start to complain that you're tired, it begins to affect your nerves. My friends often tell me I have turned into a zombie. I'm sure, sooner or later, things will fall into place.

MB: Have you ever felt like throwing in the towel?

Arame: Sometimes, but those feelings last only for a few minutes and then go away very quickly. You look back on things, and then you say "no,"...

MB: And during those few minutes,

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Ruzan Avedikian: A story in search of romance

by Jeni Kocharyan

YEREVAN – Singer Ruzan Avedikian doesn't like to talk about her personal life. She says that there really isn't much to say anyway. Instead, she is always ready to talk about singing, her teachers, her career as a lecturer. We gladly listened to her story, which isn't quite ready to be called a "romance."

"I think in time, that song too, will be written," she says.

"I have loved music and song from a very young age. I remember, when my mother used to try to teach me to recite poems, I wouldn't simply recite them, but would sing them," Ruzan recalls. "My mother had a beautiful voice and she would often sing me lullabies. I think if she had seriously trained in music, she could have become a songstress."

The dynamic singer believes that she got her love of folk music from her mother. She was sent to the Hayrik Nuratyan Choir at the age of five and two years later was accepted to the Sayat Nova School of Music. "However, they quickly transferred me to a special vocal school, at first in the classical section. Later, I insisted that I study at the folk music section, where Hovhanness Badalyan was teaching," she says.

The young, aspiring singer had the fortunate opportunity to work with Badalyan for almost 15 years. She trained with him even while attending the Komitas Conservatory of Music. "The master used to say that I was the breath of the class; therefore if I came to class in a bad mood, I would have to leave that at the door," she recalls. Avedikian graduated from the conservatory in 2001 with high honors.

Immediately upon graduation, she went on to work at the Arno Babadjanian Music Academy. "I have also been teaching at the conservatory in the folk music section. However, I too, have not stopped learning. At the same time I am currently pursuing my Ph.D. in folk music at the conservatory. As a student and as a teacher I am very conscientious," Ruzan explains.

She believes it is because of conscientiousness that she has been able to also pursue a career as a songstress. She makes the point that she works without the benefit of a producer; she does all the work. "I think that a producer must be very skilfull and hardworking so that he or she can take on at least half of the organizational work. But I haven't found someone like that," she says. Avedikian has released two CDs and is currently working on her third. "I also have several video clips: "Ari, Ari, Im Ser," "Anor," "Garod," "Shek Tgha," "Siro Ashkharh," and "Hayastan."

Although she isn't preparing for a solo concert in Yerevan just yet, she will be on tour in Russia and a number of European cities this year.

She admits that her parents sometime remind her that although having a career is important, she shouldn't ignore her personal life. "I admit realizing how nice it would be to have my own family," she says. "To come home from work, tired and feel the warmth of your own family." The singer also acknowledges that for many women, becoming a mother is very important. "Simply, at this time, there is no one is my life who will become my other half. I think that in time, that song will be written," she smiles.

Today, Ruzan's family is composed of her parents, her two sisters and brother. "I worship my parents. I don't have close girlfriends; my parents are my friends," she says. Her father, Suren Avedikian, was a weightlifter and for many years was the principal of a sports school. Today, he no longer works in this field. Her mother is an engineer, who is a homemaker. Her older sister, Vartuhi is an economist, while the

younger one, Gohar, is a linguist. Her brother Gegham assists Ruzan in some aspects of her career. "These are my loved ones," she says the talented song-

stress and adds, "Oh, I forgot about my dog. My friend gave him to me as a gift upon my graduation from the conservatory. He is very white, except for his nose and eyes, which are black. Therefore my sister decided that we should call him Yugi, which means snow in Japanese."

She admits that like most people, she too has many flaws which she hasn't been able to overcome. "I am extremely demanding and I quickly lose my temper," she says. "As for the positive things: When I devote myself, I do so completely and if I can help someone by doing good, I do so without expectation. Contrary to the misconception, I am not a snob, I simply allow only a few people to become close with me, and I have a lot of friends."

Ruzan says she enjoys reading eastern love stories and she generally likes to be in a calm environment. "I try to avoid going to noisy places," she says.

If she doesn't have any plans, then she prefers to stay home with her family. When it comes to keeping her shape, she says she regularly goes swimming but swears that she never follows a diet.

And what would she have done if she had not pursued her dream of becoming a singer? "I would have become a doctor. When my mother is not feeling well, she allows only me to take her blood pressure. I know everything about first aid," she explains.

And what about her fans? Avedikian says that she has a wide fan base. She recounts the story of being stopped by the traffic police a few months back. She knew that she hadn't committed any traffic violation and was hoping to have a few words with the police and be on her way. "At first, the police officers asked how I was and then pointed to the dark windows of my car. I explained that I wasn't the only one driving a car with dark windows. Only at the end of the conversation did the traffic police admit that they had seen me coming and wanted to stop me to wish me luck." ■



		27 April	28 April	29 April	30 April	1 May	2 May	3 May
		MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
EST	PST							
09:30 PM	12:30 AM	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	Hot Line	Hot Line
10:00 PM	1:00 AM	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Hamerk	Gongret Show
10:30 PM	1:30 AM	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer		P S Club
11:00 PM	2:00 AM							Blef
11:30 PM	2:30 AM							Yere 1 (ye:re:van)
12:00 AM	3:00 AM	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq		Mer Lezoun - Mer Khoske
12:30 AM	3:30 AM	5	1	2	3	4	Khohanotz	Mer Aybenaran
1:00 AM	4:00 AM	Khohanotz	Khohanotz	Khohanotz	Khohanotz	Khohanotz	Arogchabahagan	Century
1:30 AM	4:30 AM	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	Arogchabahagan	Arogchabahagan	Discovery	Discovery
2:00 AM	5:00 AM	Discovery	Discovery	Discovery	Discovery	Discovery	Century	Film Story
2:30 AM	5:30 AM	Century	Century	Century	Century	Century	Gevo	
3:00 AM	6:00 AM	Gevo	Gevo	Gevo	Gevo	Gevo	Tesangouyn	Hay Film
3:30 AM	6:30 AM	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	Bari Louys Hayer	My Big, Fat Armenian Wedding	Armenian Movie
4:00 AM	7:00 AM						Deal or No Deal	
4:30 AM	7:30 AM							
5:00 AM	8:00 AM	CLONE Repeat	CLONE Repeat	CLONE Repeat	CLONE Repeat	CLONE Repeat		
5:30 AM	8:30 AM	5	1	2	3	4		
6:00 AM	9:00 AM	Sassounian Commentary	News	News	News	News	News	Hot Line
6:30 AM	9:30 AM	Unlucky Happiness Repeat	Unlucky Happiness Repeat	Unlucky Happiness Repeat	Unlucky Happiness Repeat	Unlucky Happiness Repeat	Mer Aibenarane	
7:00 AM	10:00 AM	Repeat	Repeat	Repeat	Repeat	Repeat	Mer Lezoun Mer Khoske	Armenian Teletime
7:30 AM	10:30 AM	5	1	2	3	4	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)	
8:00 AM	11:00 AM	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	P S Club	Film Story
8:30 AM	11:30 AM	Live	Live	Live	Live	Live	When Stars Are Dancing (Hamerk)	Hay Film Armenian Movie
9:00 AM	12:00 AM							Hamerk
9:30 AM	12:30 PM							
10:00 AM	01:00 PM	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	The Armenian	Hay Film Armenian Movie	
10:30 AM	01:30 AM	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian	Stepan Partamian		
11:00 AM	02:00 PM	Sassounian Commentary	News	News	News	News		
11:30 AM	02:30 PM	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq	7 Mekhq		
12:00 PM	03:00 PM	1	2	3	4	5	News	Love E Lee
12:30 PM	03:30 PM	P S Club	Mi Gatil Megher	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	Tesangouyn	Tesangouyn
01:00 PM	04:00 PM	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	YO YO	Mi Gatil Megher	Mi Gatil Megher
01:30 PM	04:30 PM	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	When Stars are Dancing	Arogchabahagan	Arogchabahagan	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)
02:00 PM	05:00 PM	Live from America	Live from America	Live from America	Mi Gatil Megher	Mi Gatil Megher	Garkin Haghortoum	Garkin Haghortoum
02:30 PM	05:30 PM	News	News	News	News	News	Sassounian Commentary	Sassounian Commentary
03:00 PM	06:00 PM	CLONE Original	CLONE Original	CLONE Original	CLONE Original	CLONE Original	Discovery	Deal or No Deal
03:30 AM	06:30 AM	1	2	3	4	5	Century	
04:00 PM	07:00 PM	Unlucky Happiness Original	Unlucky Happiness Original	Unlucky Happiness Original	Unlucky Happiness Original	Unlucky Happiness Original	Mer Lezoun Mer Khoske	Blef
04:30 AM	07:30 AM	1	2	3	4	5	Armenia Diaspora	My Big, Fat Armenian Wedding
05:00 PM	08:00 PM						Deal or No Deal	Directions With Rafi Manoukian
05:30 PM	08:30 PM							
06:00 PM	09:00 PM	News	News	News	News	News	Sassounian Commentary	
06:30 PM	09:30 PM	Gyanki Keene - Original	Gyanki Keene - Original	Gyanki Keene - Original	Gyanki Keene -Original	Gyanki Keene -Original	Blef	
07:00 PM	10:00 PM	1	2	3	4	5	Gongret Show	When Stars Are Dancing
07:30 PM	10:30 PM	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	Bari Kisher Hayer	PS NEWS	Yere 1 (ye:re:van)
08:00 PM	11:00 PM						Film Story	Cool Program
08:30 PM	11:30 PM							Hot Line
09:00 PM	12:00 AM						Hot Line	Hot Line

Arame: Even tough guys can be vulnerable

Continued from page C4

what is it that you do?

Arame: I act like an ass. I become very nervous, although I don't hurt anyone's feelings. I just simply disappear for a while. And then after a while I realize that this is the life I always dreamed of. It's a sin to complain.

MB: When you have reached the pinnacle of success, is it difficult to think that you might return to square one, from where you started?

Arame: In my circle of friends, we try to stay real. We are not so self-absorbed. We understand, that in the larger picture, we are not everything. And we don't do things which would cause people to turn their backs on us or have a warped impression of us.

I receive a lot of positive energy from my fans.

MB: Among the rumors that are circulating about you, the one which is the most common is that you are really not talented. The reason you have found success is because you have a very good team around you.

Arame: In that case, God is on my side. If there are people who think that way, that's fine. When I came on the music scene, there were certain singers who didn't believe there could be anyone other than themselves in that field. Not one of

them believed that there could be someone who could be a competitor with them. I appeared and in a short time the competition began. Anyway, if people don't like you, they don't like you - regardless of how often you are on the airwaves or even if you spend the entire budget of Armenia.

This becomes evident at concerts. When a singer comes on stage who's been on the television all the time, and only half of the audience claps for him, then you know being liked is more important than coverage. As for financial investments, no one really knows how much money is being spent. A lot is always being said. We don't give ourselves the right to be so self-indulgent. These rumors are usually spread by those who want to weaken our position.

MB: The usual answers that stars in Armenian show business give when asked about competitors is, "I have no competitors." They are the ones who usually have their heads stuck in sand like ostriches and refuse to notice anything. In your case, what would your answer be?

Arame: Let them consider me to be their competitor and not anyone else. Let me be their competitor and let them strive to be better.

MB: So, are you the best then?

Arame: No, there are others of course, I wasn't referring only to myself.

MB: Are relationships in show business artificial, or is there some honesty



Arame is one of Armenia's hottest pop stars. Photo: Arvin Kocharian.

left?

Arame: There are people who gossip, who create rumors. I always say, act like men, stand in front of me and say, 'Arame jan, we don't like you because...' I have never done anything to hurt anyone. Perhaps some people don't like me because of my position.

MB: You are now 26. That is no longer 20. At your age, most men [in Armenia] are in serious relationships. Has the time arrived for you?

Arame: Huh, sometimes, when I am very tired, a moment comes when you realize that something is missing; you don't know what, but your heart wants something. Then it hits you, that you need someone with whom to fall in love, to place your head on their shoulder, to call, to complain. But that feeling doesn't

last long and in a short time you understand that it's still too soon. For the past four years, I haven't had that, I haven't had a serious girlfriend.

MB: Before falling asleep, people analyze their day. Would you be able to analyze this past year?

Arame: After releasing my song, "Aravod" (morning), I began thinking that if my career were to resemble a single day, then I am in the *aravod* of my stage career. I am only beginning. This past year has been extremely rewarding, I carried out a lot of plans and the coming year promises to be even more exciting. I am convinced that I will be working even harder. An idea has been formulated in my mind, which I will carry out this year and that is to release an album of traditional Armenian folk music.



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Satellite Broadcast Program Grid

27 April - 3 May



27 April		28 April		29 April		30 April		1 May		2 May		3 May			
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	EST	PST	
4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	4:30	7:30	7:00	10:00	10:00	Unhappy
															Happiness - Serial
5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00	5:00	8:00			8:30	11:30		Concert
															Unhappy
6:00	9:00	6:00	9:00	6:00	9:00	6:00	9:00	6:00	9:00			11:00	14:00		Happiness - Serial
6:30	9:30	6:30	9:30	6:30	9:30	6:30	9:30	6:30	9:30			13:00	16:00		VOA(The Voice of America)
7:20	10:20	7:20	10:20	7:20	10:20	7:20	10:20	7:20	10:20			13:30	16:30		Los-Armenios
												14:00	17:00		Cool Program
7:45	10:45	7:45	10:45	7:45	10:45	7:45	10:45	7:45	10:45			14:30	17:30		Jo-Jo
												15:00	18:00		Cost of life-Serial
9:30	12:30	9:30	12:30	9:30	12:30	9:30	12:30	9:30	12:30			17:30	20:30		A Drop of Honey
												18:00	21:00		Cost of life-Serial
10:00	13:00	10:00	13:00	10:00	13:00	10:00	13:00	10:00	13:00			19:00	22:00		News in Armenian
												19:30	22:30		Good Morning,Armenians
11:00	14:00	11:00	14:00	11:00	14:00	11:00	14:00	11:00	14:00			21:00	0:00		News in Armenian
												21:30	0:30		Two Faces-Serial
11:30	14:30	11:30	14:30	11:30	14:30	11:30	14:30	11:30	14:30			22:15	1:15		Telekitchen
												22:40	1:40		Our Alphabet
12:00	15:00	12:00	15:00	12:00	15:00	12:00	15:00	12:00	15:00			23:10	2:10		Concert
12:30	15:30	12:30	15:30	12:30	15:30	12:30	15:30	12:30	15:30			1:30	4:30		News in Armenian
13:00	16:00	13:00	16:00	13:00	16:00	13:00	16:00	13:00	16:00			2:10	5:10		A Drop of Honey
13:30	16:30	13:30	16:30	13:30	16:30	13:30	16:30	13:30	16:30			3:00	6:00		Two Faces-Serial
14:00	17:00	14:00	17:00	14:00	17:00	14:00	17:00	14:00	17:00			3:30	6:30		Two Faces-Serial
15:00	18:00	15:00	18:00	15:00	18:00	15:00	18:00	15:00	18:00						
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21:00	0:00	21:00	0:00	21:00	0:00	21:00	0:00	21:00	0:00						
21:30	0:30	21:30	0:30	21:30	0:30	21:30	0:30	21:30	0:30						
22:15	1:15	22:15	1:15	22:15	1:15	22:15	1:15	22:15	1:15						
22:35	1:35	22:35	1:35	22:35	1:35	22:35	1:35	22:35	1:35						
23:00	2:00	23:00	2:00	23:00	2:00	23:00	2:00	23:00	2:00						
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1:00	4:00	1:00	4:00	1:00	4:00	1:00	4:00	1:00	4:00						
1:30	4:30	1:30	4:30	1:30	4:30	1:30	4:30	1:30	4:30						
2:00	5:00	2:00	5:00	2:00	5:00	2:00	5:00	2:00	5:00						
3:00	6:00	3:00	6:00	3:00	6:00	3:00	6:00	3:00	6:00						
3:30	6:30	3:30	6:30	3:30	6:30	3:30	6:30	3:30	6:30						

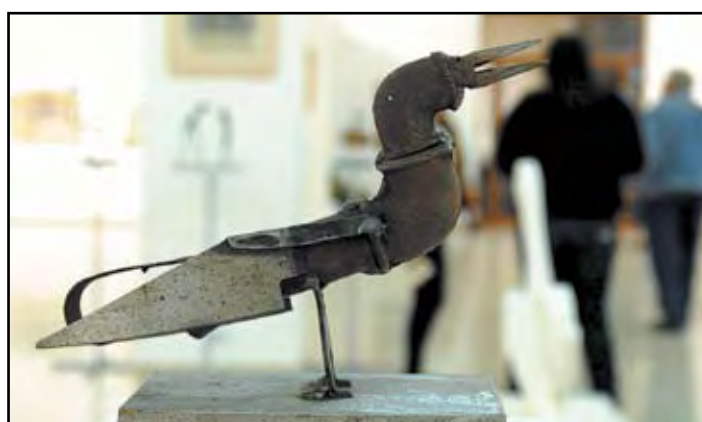
Hakob Hakobyan opens a solo exhibition in Yerevan

YEREVAN – The renowned Armenian painter Hakob Hakobyan held a solo exhibition of his latest works at the Artist's Union of Armenia from April 8 to 18.

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1923, Hakobyan moved to Soviet Armenia with his wife Mari and their two daughters in 1962. "It was my destiny to move here... I have never regretted coming, I have never thought about leaving or living somewhere else. I always wanted to live in my country among my people," he said in an interview with the *Armenian Reporter* (February 21). While he had to endure great difficulty, especially during the early years of his move to the homeland, the august painter had no regrets.

"There is and was only one Armenia. There wasn't a capitalist Armenia or a Bolshevik Armenia. There was only one Armenia. At that time it happened to be under a communist system. Armenia is a much older thing than that regime it was under for 70 years. That regime disintegrated and disappeared but Armenia remained," he said.

Over the past year, Hakobyan has started creating sculptures out of scrap metal parts. "Every weekend I go to the *Vernissage* and buy these metal parts. After creating the sculpture I incorporate in into my paintings. I have made about 100 sculptures this past year," he says. His desire to continue creating memorable pieces of art is inspirational.



Scenes from Hakob Hakobyan's solo exhibition. Photos: Tigran Tadevosyan/Photolure.

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