

# ԱՐՎԵՍՏԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

## ART

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### **SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF RAPHAEL CHICHMANIAN**

**Key word:** Public Activity, Union, exhibition, French period, Armenian period, a work of art, Painting.

#### ***Introduction***

Raphael Chichmanian (1885–1959), a distinguished figure of Armenian art, painter, art critic, made a great contribution to the preservation and dissemination of Armenian art.

Until 1947 living abroad, apart from creating paintings, he also carried out pro-Armenian public activities. Devoting a significant part of his life to the study of Armenian art, Chichmanian published very important works, many bio-bibliographic and analytical articles, which are valuable for Armenian culture.

#### ***Raphael Chichmanian's Public Activity in France***

In the 1920–1930s of the XX century the Armenian community of France was distinguished by its cultural figures. Many of them came to France to get professional higher education, and then return to their birthplace with the prospect of carrying out useful activities. The disastrous consequences of WW I

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### Social Activities of Raphael Chichmanian

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became a prerequisite for many people (especially Armenians) to move to different countries and find their second homeland on foreign shores. In the European environment, France was the most favorable land, which became the cultural gathering place of Armenian artists<sup>1</sup>.

Raphael Chichmanian is one of the outstanding representatives of Armenian art. Having lived most of his life in France, the master was engaged in rich socio-cultural activities. In addition to his creative work<sup>2</sup>, Chichmanian gained recognition in France as a professional specialist in art theory. His articles, regularly published in the Armenian and foreign language magazines, became a precedent for interpreting the Armenian art in the European environment. As Manya Ghazaryan, Doctor of Arts, notes. "Chichmanian has always promoted his art hand in hand with public service work. He brought his beneficial participation to the work of many and many patriotic and cultural organizations of the Diaspora"<sup>3</sup>.

Dr. Ara Hakobyan writes: "R. Chichmanian shows a special attitude towards especially gifted young people. Perhaps for the first time, thanks to him, the artistic society gets to know the talented young Armenian artists. It seems that Chichmanian gives them a "passport" of creativity"<sup>4</sup>.

In 1926, "Ani" (1926-1931) was the first group organized in Europe gathering France-based Armenian painters, sculptors, and architects on the initiative of a number of famous artists. Chichmanian was one of its founding members and several times president.

The goals of the "Ani" group were:

- establishing moral contacts between the Armenian painters, sculptors, architects, engravers working in Paris in particular and the country and communities in general,
- evaluating and spreading the production of Armenian artists to foreign and especially Armenian society,

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<sup>1</sup> Armenians were mentioned in France for the first time in the sixth century; there are many facts about it (see **Mathorez** 1919–1921, 330–350).

<sup>2</sup> Chichmanian participated in Paris exhibitions as early as 1912, and particularly, in the annual exhibitions of the Society of Independent Artists (Société des Artistes Indépendants), and the National Salon since 1920.

<sup>3</sup> **Ղազարյան** 1959, 73:

<sup>4</sup> **Հակոբյան** 2021, 152:

- establishing contacts with similar foreign associations,
- give momentum to the study and familiarization of ancient Armenian art and trying to revive it in a modern spirit<sup>5</sup>.

Artists Hovsep Pushman, Sargis Katchaturian, Hovhannes Alhazian were among the first initiators of the “Ani” group, later also joined them Edgar Chahine and others. In September 1927, the first exhibition of the “Ani” group was organized in Paris, in which the works by painters Hovsep Pushman, Sargis Katchadourian, Hovhannes Alhazian, Arminia Carbonel-Babayan, Hrant Benteryan, G. Kevrik, Hrant Gazanchyan, sea painters Karapet Atamian, Vardan Mahokian, Arsen Chabanian with his son Hrant Chabanian, wonderful etching masters Edgar Chahine and Tigrane Polat, sculptor Hakob Gyurjian, architect Levon Nafilyan and Rafael Chichmanian were presented. Martiros Saryan, who was in Paris in those days, also participated in the same exhibition<sup>6</sup>.

The group organized four exhibitions during its existence: at the “Georges Petit” gallery in Paris in 1927, in Brussels in 1928, in Antwerp in 1929, and again at the “Georges Petit” gallery in 1930<sup>7</sup>.

After the dissolution of the “Ani” group, on the initiative of Rafael Chichmanian, the creative association “Armenian Free Artists” was established, and it was particularly active in 1931–1939, and in 1945–1947<sup>8</sup>. The union aimed at organizing lectures, cultural discussions and exhibitions, which were supposed to bring together the Armenian artists, working in the diaspora.

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<sup>5</sup> Նավասարդ 1925, 272: See also Արագած 1926, 12, Կանոնագիր Անի Հայ Արուեստագէտներու խմբակցութիւն 1926, 1:

<sup>6</sup> The close contacts of Martiros Saryan and Rafael Chichmanian started back in 1927, when Saryan was in Paris. The correspondence between Chichmanian and Saryan is stored in the personal archive of Chichmanian in the National Gallery of Armenia (the letter written by Chichmanian to Saryan on June 3, 1945 in Paris, HAP, f. 108, item. 1, paper. 5, i. 9644). Later, in Armenia, Chichmanian depicts “M. Saryan's apartment and garden” (1948), and in 1955 he presented Saryan with this painting on the occasion of Saryan's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. The latter, in his turn, painted Chichmanian's portrait in 1955. Today, both of the mentioned works are kept in the house-museum of Martiros Saryan.

<sup>7</sup> Gregorio Sciltian, Varduhi Tamiryants, Elvir-Zhan Guyumchyan, Shahnazar Garuni, Levon Muratoff, Carzou (Garnig Zouloumian) took part in subsequent exhibitions organized by the “Ani” faction.

<sup>8</sup> The Union did not function from 1939 to 1945. The inaugural exhibition organized by the Union was held in the halls of Murad-Rafaelyan College of Sevres.

### **Social Activities of Raphael Chichmanian**

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The union included a number of members of the “Ani” group, as well as new names: Zareh Galfayan, Pazil (Barsegh) Poghosyan, Armis (Armenak Misiryan), Grigor Petikyan, Ariel Afemyan, Garzou (Garnig Zouloumian), Petros Konturajyan, Tadevos Kanachyan, Byuzand Topalyan, Muko (Michel Hovik-yan), later Zareh Mutaftyan, Gabriel Harents, Jansem (Jean Semerjian) and others.

Apart from all this, in 1931–1947 Raphael Chichmanian was a member of the “Armenian National Front” in 1945, and since that time also a member of the “Armenian National Union” board and the chairman of the artistic committee.

Living in Europe, Chichmanian, in spirit and heart, was closely connected with his Motherland. With the sincerity of a child he was always happy to learn about the success of the newly created Soviet Armenia, tying his best to support the cultural ties between the Diaspora and Armenia.

On October 16, 1923 editor, politician, statesman Askanaz Mravyan wrote a letter to Paris-based artist Sargis Khachatryan on behalf of the People’s Commissariat of Education, asking him to urge Armenian artists Raphael Chichmanian, Hovsep Pushman, Zakar Zakaryan and Hovhannes Alhazian, who lived in Paris, to donate a copy of their paintings to the newly created gallery of Soviet Armenia.

This letter gives us grounds to believe that Chichmanian sent two of his French landscapes and his portrait created by Karapet (Charles) Atamian to the gallery<sup>9</sup>.

#### ***Raphael Chichmanian’s Public Activity in Armenia***

In 1947 Chichmanian immigrated to Armenia from Paris. Later, the dedicated artist had to write: “Paris is a beautiful city, France has a quiet nature, but it is foreign to me. I was suffering day and night with the loss of my homeland, the people who gave birth to me, and I dreamed of the day when I would live with my people, facing Ararat and having the opportunity to put my brush and pen at the service of Soviet Armenian art... That’s what I thought about when the Nazi invaders were attacking Paris... I believed in the victory of my Soviet homeland and was eagerly waiting for the end of the war to immigrate to the homeland”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> We learn about it from the article of the artist's wife, Alis Chichmanian. (See Chichmanian) 1980, 5–7.

<sup>10</sup> **Կուրսիկեան** 1960, 3:

A year later, Chichmanian switched to pedagogical activity in 1948–1951. teaching at Yerevan's Panos Terlemezyan Academy of Fine Arts. In 1956 he was awarded the title of Honored Art Worker of the ASSR<sup>11</sup>.

Raphael Chichmanian was one of those Diaspora Armenian intellectuals who became an unconditional friend of the newly created republic from the very first days of the establishment of the Soviet power in Armenia.

Already on April 27, 1947 the exhibition of the works of the Armenian artists who returned to their homeland from abroad was opened in the House of Artists of Armenia<sup>12</sup>.

Raphael Chichmanian, also participating in the opening of the exhibition of the repatriated artists, noted: "Thanks to paternal care, the people who have been suffering for centuries return to their native land and get an unlimited opportunity for a free and happy creative life"<sup>13</sup>.

In 1947 Chichmanian participated in the "Jubilee Exhibition of Soviet Fine Artists of Armenia" dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. In 1950 the artist presented his works at the "Art Exhibition Dedicated to the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Soviet Armenia", as well as the "Republic Art Exhibitions" in 1953 and 1954.

The year 1948 was significant for Raphael Chichmanian. The Union of Soviet Fine Artists of Armenia organized an individual exhibition of the well-known artist in the artist's house in Yerevan, where his works included 81 paintings, 18 graphic works and 20 copies of the books he had designed. The exhibition had a great response in the most important Soviet-Armenian and Unionist newspapers and journals<sup>14</sup>.

In the illustrated catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition, artist and art critic Eduard Sargsyan, summing up Chichmanian's forty-year career abroad, wrote: "Working mainly in the field of landscape genre, the artist tried to depict the beauty of nature realistically, with the charm of life, comprehensible to every viewer".

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<sup>11</sup> By the way, the artist thought that being awarded the high title by the government was the most significant event in his life (see Artist Chichmanian (Rafael Martiros) (autobiography), 1956.

<sup>12</sup> 14 artists with 203 works participated in the exhibition.

<sup>13</sup> Ավանգարդ 1947, 4, Էջմիածին 1947, 85:

<sup>14</sup> See Գրական թերթ 1948, 4, Ավանգարդ 1948, 4:

### Social Activities of Raphael Chichmanian

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Throughout his creative life, keeping the convictions of a realist painter intact, avoiding the influence of formalist schools, Chichmanian was able to continue on the path of optimistic healthy worldview, always faithful to the living image of nature and the lyrical impulses he received from it<sup>15</sup>.

In the same period, at the invitation of the USSR Art Fund, Chichmanian, along with a number of repatriated artists, went on a business trip to Moscow and Leningrad, to get acquainted with the creations of the Russian masters and the outstanding Soviet fine artists in the museums of the two big cities, to establish live contacts with modern painters.

In 1956 in Moscow, Chichmanian participated in the fine art exhibition held within the framework of the decade of the Armenian art and literature<sup>16</sup>.

Most of the Russian artists considered Raphael Chichmanian's paintings to be works of true talent, though not so large in size.

On January 28, 1957 at the House of Art Workers of Armenia, the Union of Soviet Fine Artists of Armenia organized an evening party of honoring Raphael Chichmanian<sup>17</sup>. In his acceptance speech, he says: "It seems to me that the sky is brighter, the water is fresher, the earth is more powerful and fertile... Now I feel the more life-giving power of my native land... I respond with pen and brush to the honor you showed to my modest merit"<sup>18</sup>.

In addition to painting, pedagogical and public activities, Chichmanian was also involved in art studies, authored many articles and books. In 1956 Chichmanian published his monograph "Edgar Chanine (1874–1947). life and creativity", and in 1958 – the book "Landscape and Armenian Artists", where Armenian artists, working abroad were presented according to their merits.

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<sup>15</sup> Սարգսյան 1948, 5:

<sup>16</sup> The artist's personal archive contains an article entitled "Creative meeting of artists of Armenia and Moscow", from which we learn that on June 15, a creative meeting of artists of the USSR with Moscow artists took place at the Academy of Fine Arts of the USSR. The works presented at the Armenian art exhibition opened in Moscow, and during the decade Armenian art and literature were discussed. The vice-president of the Academy of Fine Arts, sculptor Matvey Manizer, People's Artist of the USSR Boris Ioganson made introductory remarks at the event, who stated that the works of Armenian artists are of great interest to Soviet art (see HAP, f. 108, p. 24, paper 58).

<sup>17</sup> Գյուրջյան 1957, 60:

<sup>18</sup> See Կուրտիկեան 1960, 4:

Thus, painter Raphael Chichmanian made a great contribution to the development of Armenian art and culture both outside the borders of Armenia and in his native land with his public activities, giving a fresh breath to the cultural life of the then newly created state.

### **Conclusion**

Painter and art critic Rafael Chichmanian connected with the Armenian community of Paris with his active social and cultural activities, contributing to the spread of national culture. He published remarkable materials in a number of magazines ("Mehyan", "Gegharvest", etc.). He made a significant contribution to the formation of such creative associations as "Ani" and "Armenian Free Artists".

It should also be noted that R. Chichmanian organized charity events, among which we can single out the lottery organized on June 18, 1916 for the benefit of the Care Committee for Supporting French Artists Damaged by World War I, to which twelve Armenian artists living in Paris (including Raphael Chichmanian) donated works.

### **ՄԱՏԵՆԱԳԻՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ**

**Գյուրջյան Գ.** 1957, Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի ստեղծագործական երեկոն, Սովետական արվեստ, N 2, էջ 60:

Կանոնագիր. Անի Հայ Արուեստագետների խմբակցութիւն 1926, Փարիզ, 7 էջ:

**Կուրտիկեան Ստ.** 1960, Ռաֆայել Շիշմանեան բազմավաստակ նկարիչն ու հայրենասէրը, Երիտասարդ Հայաստան, 57-րդ տարի, N 39, 27 սեպտեմբեր, էջ 3-4:

**Հակոբյան Ա.** 2021, Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի որմնանկար աշխատանքները, Արվեստագիտական հանդես, N 2 (6), «Գիտություն», էջ 151-159:

Հայ արվեստագետներու «Անի» միությունը 1925, Նաասարդ, Բուխարեստ, Թ պրակ, էջ 272:

Հայրենադարձ նկարիչների ցուցահանդեսը 1947, Ավանգարդ, N 39 (4744), 5 մայիսի, էջ 4:

ՀԱՊ ՀՁԲ [Հայաստանի ազգային պատկերասրահի հուշածեղագրային բաժին, Երևան, ֆ. 108 (Ռ. Շիշմանյան)]:

**Ղազարյան Մ.** 1959, Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի հիշատակին, Սովետական արվեստ, N 4, էջ 73-74:

Նկարիչ Շիշմանյան (Ռաֆայել Մարտիրոսի) (ինքնակենսագրություն) 1956, ՀԱՊ, ֆ. 108, տ. 19, թղթ. 51, ի. 2420, էջ 1-4:

Նկարիչ Ռ. Շիշմանյանի ցուցահանդեսը 1948, Ավանգարդ, N 53 (4865), 3 հուլիսի, էջ 4:

**Շիշմանյան Ա.** 1980, Կյանք, որ նվիրում էր, Հայրենիքի ծայն, N 44 (796), 29 հոկտեմբեր, էջ 5–7:

Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի ցուցահանդեսը 1948, Գրական թերթ, 31 հուլիս, N 28 (468), էջ 4:

**Սարգսյան Է.** 1948, Նկարիչ Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի ցուցահանդեսի կատալոգ, Հայաստանի սովետական կերպարվեստագետների միություն, հ. Ա, Երևան, 16 էջ:

Սովետական Հայաստանում 1947, Էջմիածին (կրոնական, պատմաքանասիրական հանդես), մարտ-ապրիլ, Երևան, էջ 77–88:

Փարիզահայ կյանք 1926, Հայ արվեստագետներու «Անի» միությունը, Արագած, Փարիզ, N 3, էջ 12:

**Mathorez J.** 1919–1921, Les Etrangers en France sous l'ancien régime, 2 vol., Paris: E. Champion, 460 p.

## ՌԱՖԱՅԵԼ ՇԻՇՄԱՆՅԱՆԻ ՀԱՍԱՐԱԿԱԿԱՆ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ

ԱՆԱՆՅԱՆ Ռ.

Ամփոփում

**Քանալի բառեր**՝ հասարակական գործունեություն, միություն, ցուցահանդես, ֆրանսիական շրջան, հայաստանյան շրջան, արվեստի ստեղծագործություն, գեղանկարչություն:

Գեղանկարիչ, արվեստաբան Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանը (1885–1959) ապրել է օտար ափերում, ապա՝ հայրենադարձվել Հայաստան: Նա իր ողջ կյանքի ընթացքում, ստեղծագործական գործունեությունից զատ, ծավալել է հայանպաստ հասարակական գործունեություն: Մեծ է Շիշմանյանի ավանդը «Անի» և «Հայ ազատ արվեստագետներ» ստեղծագործական միավորումների ձևավորման գործում: Ապրելով արվեստների կենտրոն Փարիզում՝ նկարիչը ողջ եռանդով նվիրվել է հայ մշակույթի քարոզչությանը, արտասահմանում ստեղծագործող հայազգի արվեստագետների միավորման երախտաշատ գործին:

Ռաֆայել Շիշմանյանի հեղինակած արվեստաբանական աշխատությունները մինչ օրս ուղեցույց են արվեստասեր հանրության համար: Իր հասարակական գործունեությամբ ևս նա իր նպաստը բերեց հայ արվեստի և մշակույթի զարգացմանը:



## ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТЬ РАФАЕЛА ШИШМАНЯНА

АНАНЯН Р.

### Резюме

**Ключевые слова:** общественная деятельность, союз, выставка, французский период, армянский период, произведение искусства, живопись.

На протяжении всей своей жизни, как за границей так и на родине – в Армении, Р. Шишманян кроме профессиональной деятельности вел общественную работу, направленную на содействие соотечественникам. Велика роль Шишманяна в создании таких организаций, как «Ани», «Свободные армянские художники». Живя в Париже, художник не переставал пропагандировать армянскую культуру. Его деятельность была направлена и на консолидацию армянских художников, живущих за границей. Не менее значима искусствоведческая деятельность Р. Шишманяна, являвшаяся познавательную ценность для общества.