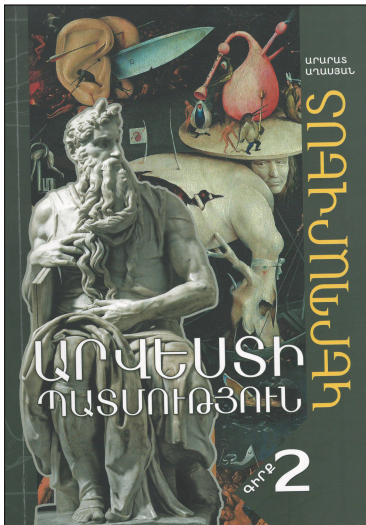


ԳԻՐԱԽՈՍԱԿԱՆՆԵՐ BOOK REVIEWS



ARARAT AGHASYAN

HISTORY OF ART: FINE ARTS
(Yerevan, "Armar", 2022, 308 p.)

ԱՐԱՐԱՏ ԱՂԱՍՅԱՆ

**ԱՐՎԵՍՏԻ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ.
ԿԵՐՊԱՐՎԵՍ**
(Երևան, «Արմավ», 2022, 308 էջ)

In 2020, on the initiative of NAS RA Institute of Arts and the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of RA, "Armar" Publishers issued Book One of the textbook "History of Art: Fine Arts", authored by the long-time director, presently – research director at the Institute of Arts, NAS RA Corresponding Member, Merited Worker of Arts of RA, Doctor of Arts, Professor Ararat Aghasyan. At the end of the year 2022, Book Two was presented to students and teachers of Art Colleges, as well as to broad art-loving public. Shortly, the final, third volume is to come out.

It is a pleasure to underscore that such a responsible task, such a long-awaited work has been fulfilled at a high professional level and with fundamental approach by a most knowledgeable and experienced professional, an outstanding intellectual who with his years-long academic and creative activity has contributed a lot to the field of Armenian art studies.

It is unprecedented, highly topical, and truly significant that this is the first untranslated textbook, narrated in the Armenian language.

In Book One, the author described fine arts in chronological sequence, beginning from the primeval to Gothic period. Book Two presents history of art from the Renaissance to the early XX century. It tells about the centers, where European art developed in the XIV–XIX centuries, as well as the life and prominent works by the outstanding artists of the said period. This enables the readers to closely familiarize themselves with the art of such titans of the Italian and Northern Renaissance, as S. Botticelli, Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, Al. Durer, H. Bosch, and others, to immerse in the atmosphere of the European artistic schools of the XVII–XIX centuries, learn about the Little and Old Dutch masters, reveal the Baroque, Rococo, Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, Symbolism art styles, etc.

If in European art, the transition from the Middle Ages to newer times spanned several centuries, in Russian fine arts it did not take that long and proceeded under the apparent initial influence of European art. In Chapters Five and Six of the volume, the author devoted 70 pages in total to a detailed analysis of the XVIII–XIX century Russian fine arts. The reader acquaints oneself with the portraiture by F. Rokotov, D. Levitzky, V. Borovikovsky, O. Kiprensky, V. Tropinin, classicist sculptures by E. Falcone, M. Kozlovsky, gets insights into P. Fedotov's genre works, discovers for oneself the genius of K. Bryullov, A. Ivanov, I. Repin, V. Surikov, I. Aivazovsky, admires the landscapes by V. Polenov, A. Savrasov, I. Shishkin and I. Levitan, and so on. An Armenian language narrative on Russian art at such a high academic and educational level is also a novelty in our reality.

An obvious innovation is the idea to introduce Armenian fine arts into the context of the world art. This makes it possible to distinguish and evaluate the authentic Armenian art within the intercultural differences and similarities. Thus, in the final, Chapter Seven of the book, the history of Armenian fine arts from the XIX to the early XX century is presented, beginning from Hakob Hovnatanyan's creative legacy. It is noteworthy that the author addressed here the oeuvre of illustrious artists from both Eastern and Western Armenia, and after 1915 – of the Armenian Diaspora. A concise, yet holistic and sequential mosaic of the new period of the history of Armenian fine arts is compiled by putting together the creative portraits of various artists. Artworks by S. Nersisyan, G. Bashinjaghyan, Ye. Tadevosyan, V. Surenyants, A. Fetvachyan, P. Terlemezyan, Ye. Voskan, H.

Gyurjyan, S. Khachaturyan, H. Pushman, Z. Zaqaryan, E. Shahin, M. Saryan and others are presented here side by side.

This is an easily comprehensible writing of encyclopaedical scope, academic exactness, polished and rich Armenian language, providing condensed, systematized and updated knowledge. At the same time, it is not just a depository of dry facts. The author sheds light on the historical and social prerequisites of the development of art, dwells on the basics of how to analyze an artwork, understand and interpret its technique, genre, thematic, form and stylistic peculiarities, characterizes the epoch and its prevailing artistic style.

A worthwhile innovation is the glossary, placed on the page margins, the more so as to date, there is no Armenian language dictionary of art terms. Professor A. Aghasyan seems to have bridged this grave gap to some extent.

By providing explanation of professional terms, illustrating with interesting and relevant facts, commenting on and accentuating the causal relationships of events, the author solves an important educational problem – that of teaching to comprehend through understanding, to delve into and analyze on one's own and, as a result, to think on one's own.

A conspicuous merit of the manual is the numerous high quality colorful reproductions between the texts, which illustrate, make the narration more understandable and memorable, form aesthetic taste.

From the general educational perspective, the "Questions and Tasks" section at the end of every Chapter should be pointed out, as it induces the learner to be more concentrated when reading. The detailed and ample legends to artworks are provided with a mention as to their places of storage, which is yet another new and agreeable detail.

The nineteen recommended titles of literature are an important supplement both for teachers and future specialists.

The texts are provided with QR-codes of accompanying films, which is another attractive addition to the book. Their selection and placement are carried out by the editor of the textbook, Head of the Department for Studying Diasporan Armenian Literature at NAS RA Manuk Abeghyan Institute of Literature, PhD in Philology Armen Avanesyan. Quality graphic design is the creation of Aram Urutyun.

This interactive, thought-provoking and topical textbook is unique in not only the Armenian, but also international practice and provides a firm basis for

educating well-bred, intellectual and broad-minded generations. That said, we totally agree with Artur Avagyan, PhD in Art, in whose opinion, “although the volume under review, as well as the textbook as a whole, is designed for art school students and teachers, it is sure to be useful for art specialists and broad art loving public”¹.

The indubitable merit of this work is the role it is called to play in enhancing our national identity and self-esteem.

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¹ **Ավագյան Ա.**, ԱՐԱՐԱՏ ԱՂԱՍՅԱՆ, Արվեստի պատմություն. կերպարվեստ, գիրք երկրորդ, Երևան, «Արմավ», 2022, 308 էջ // «Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների», 1(667) հունվար-ապրիլ, Երևան, ՀՀ ԳԱԱ «Գիտություն» հրատ., 2023, էջ 350: