



GALERIA PRYZMAT



B A H R A M
B O D Y L A N G U A G E
H A J O U

B O D Y L A N G U A G E
H A J O U
B A H R A M

Kraków
2020

BAHRAM HAJOU – BIOGRAFIA

autor Jörg Bockow

Droga do malarstwa Bahrama Hajou- syryjskiego Kurda urodzonego w Deruna w Rożawie w 1952 roku- była dość zawiła. W latach 70-tych mieszkał w Iraku, aby tam od 1972 roku studiować inżynierię lądową. Rok później przeniósł się do Bagdadu i zaczął studiować sztukę. W roku 1974 uciekł z Iraku przez Pragę do Berlina.

Od roku 1976 studiował archeologię, najpierw na uniwersytecie w Múnster, a potem podjął studia na kierunku Sport i Sztuka w tamtejszej Wyższej Szkole Pedagogicznej, które ukończył w 1983 roku.

Po krótkim pobycie w Gesamtschule w Ükendorf, na początku lat 90-tych, całą swoją uwagę skupił na sztukach pięknych. Studiował w renomowanej Akademii Sztuki w Düsseldorfie, na oddziale wesfalskiego Múnster. Po uzyskaniu dyplomu został studentem prof. Norberta Tadeusza. Jego pierwsze wystawy miały miejsce w muzeum Bochum już w 1983 roku.

Bahram Jahou pracuje od lat w dużym, przestronnym atelier w Múnster, gdzie obok jego pracowni na terenie Kulturgelände Hawerkamp tworzy także 40 innych artystów.

Jego obrazy zyskały międzynarodowe uznanie i w roku 2014 zostały wyróżnione nagrodą Henry Matisse Muzeum Grimaldi we Francji. Właściwie w przeciągu jednego dnia awansował we francuskim mediach do roli gwiazdy. Znana gazeta le Monde poświęciła mu wówczas całą stronę.

Bahram Hajou uznaje się za jednego z najważniejszych artystów malarstwa figuratywnego naszych czasów. I nie ma chyba żadnego artysty w kręgu kulturowym Múnster, dorównującego mu różnorodnością kulturalnych kontaktów i liczbą międzynarodowych wystaw.

Od połowy 80-tych lat ubiegłego wieku Bahram Jahou miał ponad 100 wystaw w kraju i za granicą m.in. w Dubaju, Damaszku, Londynie, Wiedniu, Budapeszcie, Peubla/ w Meksyku/, Paryżu, Antwerpii, Grazu, Nowym Jorku i Krakowie. Jego prace prezentowane były w licznych muzeach.

Latem 2018 roku artysta przebywał pracując kilka miesięcy w USA. W swoim atelier w Nowym Jorku powstało ponad 20 wielkoformatowych prac, które zainicjowały nowy twórczy okres w życiu artysty.



MOWA CIAŁA

Malarstwo Bahrama Hajou

Cieszący się dużą renomą w Europie, mieszkający w Niemczech kurdyjski malarz Bahram Hajou prezentuje swoje obrazy w Galerii Pryzmat Związku Polskich Artystów Plastyków Okręgu Krakowskiego. Jest to wystawa wyjątkowa, a zarazem wydarzenie artystyczne w Krakowie o dużym znaczeniu. Bahram, nagrodzony francuską nagrodą Henry'ego Matisa, zyskał uznanie i wysoką pozycję na rynku sztuki. Indywidualny, jednorodny styl malarstwa Bahrama oraz jego ekspresja stanowią o sile wyrazu i artystycznej sublimacji. Bahram jest malarzem figuratywnym. W jego malarstwie figura ludzka, ciało kobiety i mężczyzny, stanowią główny element wielu kompozycji malarskich, a szczególnie obsesyjny problem swoistego dialogu, mowy ciała, którą w niezliczonych wariantach przedstawia na swoich obrazach kurdyjski malarz.

W panoramie światowej sztuki XXI wieku - posługującej się wieloma językami i stylistykami, różnorodnymi ikonografiami oraz narzędziami i zmiksowanymi środkami wyrazu – Bahram proponuje malarstwo klasyczne, oparte na tradycyjnym warsztacie i strukturze formalnej, ale mające niezwykle indywidualny obszar penetracji i bardzo osobisty wyraz. Poprzez ciało ludzkie można powiedzieć o człowieku wszystko, zwłaszcza o jego humanistycznym i egzystencjalnym wymiarze. Wszystko, co w człowieku najistotniejsze: tożsamość siebie, intelekt, emocje i lęki, psychiczne i duchowe stany, relacje z innymi ludźmi, poczucie bezpieczeństwa, płonne uczucia – ulokowane są w ludzkim w ciele, w cielesności, która determinuje życie i jednocześnie jest naczyniem, materią zmysłowego doznania, dzięki której „człowiek wie, że żyje”... Bahram tę „cielesność” w swoich obrazach przedstawia i tworzy jakby pantomimiczny dialog gestów i zachowań międzyludzkich w ich archetypicznej postaci. W jego obrazach obcują ze sobą nagie ciała i wyrażają raczej smutek, odrętwienie, brak porozumienia, aniżeli radosną euforyczność czy czułą namiętność. Czasami (w zbliżeniu twarzy) są to tajemnicze portrety, również autoportrety... Ten dialog, odbywający się poza słowami, jest tylko „obrazową” opowieścią o subiektywnych doznaniach i komentarzem do teraźniejszości, kiedy do niegdyśszych przeżyć, malarz uzyskuje dystans, wraz z upływem

BODY LANGUAGE

painting of Bahram Hajou

Mr. Bahram Hajou, Kurdish painter residing in Germany who enjoys a great reputation in Europe, exposes his paintings in the Gallery Prism (Pryzmat) of the Association of Polish Visual Artists for Krakow District. It is an extraordinary exhibition as well as an artistic event of a significant importance. Mr. Bahram who has been awarded the French prize of Henry Matisse, gained recognition and high position in the art market.

Very individual and homogeneous style of Bahram's painting and his demonstration constitute its expression power and artistic sublimation. Mr. Bahram is a figurative painter. A human figure (shape), body of man and woman, are fundamental elements of many compositions in his painting, and in particular an obsessive problem of a human dialogue, body language which is presented by him on his paintings in the countless number of different configurations.

In the panorama of the world art of the 21st century which speaks and uses many languages and styles, different iconographies and instruments as well as mixed measures of expression, Bahram is proposing a classic painting, based on traditional technique and formal structure, but characterised by unusually individual field of penetration and very personal touch. One can say everything about human with her/his body, in particular about his/her humanistic and existential dimension. To say everything what is the most essential in him: self-identity, mind, emotions and fears, mental and spiritual condition, relations with other people, sense of safety and security, ardent feelings which are located in the human body, in the corporality, which determines life and, at the same time, is a vessel, fabric of sensual experience, due to which "The man knows he is alive"...

That "corporality" Bahram presents in his paintings and creates like a pantomime dialogue of gestures and inter-human behaviours in their archetypal forms. Naked bodies interrelate in his paintings and express rather sadness, numbness and lack of understanding, than cheerful euphoria or a tender passion. Sometimes, in face close-up, there are mysterious portraits, also self-portraits.... That dialogue which is ongoing out of the words, is only a "pictorial" tale about subjective experience and a comment about present, when

czasu i świeżością zobaczenia tego, co może być najważniejsze i jednocześnie najtrudniejsze, a co w istocie stało się budulcem terażniejszości w czasowej linii życia...

Oglądam obrazy Bahrama z dużym zaciekawieniem i smakuję ich malarski język. Swoboda i swada w położeniu czarnych linii i barwnych plam, zawężone tonacje, konstruowanie kompozycji obrazu poprzez przeplatanie plam kolorów rysunkową kreską, niedomówienia stref, które zmiękcza gęsta lub laserun-

the painter achieves distance to the past experiences due to passage of time and having a fresh look at that, what may be was important and most difficult, but has become a stuff for present in the timeline of life.

I watch Bahram's paintings with a great interest and I taste their painting language. Freedom and fluency (zest) in putting down black lines and colourful spots, narrowed tones, constructing of compositions of painting by interlacement of colourful spots with drawing lines, understatement of areas, which are soften by



kowa gradacja warstw farby... Średnie i bardzo duże formaty obrazów wzmacniają totalność odbioru. Wszystko drąży jakąś bezpośrednia nuta szczerości i nagiej prawdy. To swoisty sposób malowania Bahrama - wciągający, pozwalający z napiętą uwagą oglądać obraz, ale równocześnie odgadywać go dłużej, w nieoczywistych i ukrytych znaczeniach, w owym, wszechistniejącym w tym malarstwie, dialogu ludzkich postaci ...

Jeżeli miałbym szukać pewnych analogi z malarstwem Bahrama, w stosunku do twórczości polskich artystów XX wieku, to zauważam je w malarstwie Teresy Pągowskiej. Widzę podobną uporczywość w podejmowaniu motywu ludzkiego ciała. Tworząca w Warszawie polska artystka również stosowała w swoich figuratywnych obrazach bezpośredni, gwałtowny ślad pędzla, niedopowiedzianą brutalność syntetycznie ujętej postaci ludzkiej. Jak Bahram - pozostawiała nietknięte farbami płaszczyzny gołego

dense or glaze gradation of paint levels....Medium and large size formats of paintings strengthen a total reception. All is drilled by a kind of direct tone of sincerity and the naked true. That is a unique style of Bahram's painting, addictive and enabling to watch the painting with tense attention, but at the same time, to guess it for a longer time with its unexpected and hidden meanings, in that, omnipresent in this painting, dialogue of human characters...

If I would be tasked to look for some analogies with Bahram's paintings related to the work of Polish artists of the 20th century, I can observe them in the paintings of Teresa Pagowska.

I notice very similar persistence of Bahram and Pagowska in undertaking the motive of a human body. This Polish artist, working in Warsaw, has applied in her figurative paintings very direct, sharp brush trace, unspoken brutality of synthetically captured human figure. Like Bahram, she left some surfaces of bare

plótna, a ludzka postać była dla niej najczęstszym motywem do twórczego wyrażania się w malarstwie... Obrazy Bahrama dają się także kojarzyć z figuralnymi plótnami i akwarelami austriackiego malarza Eгона Schiele. Można to zauważyć w kadrach pojedynczych postaci lub parach kochanków zaplątanych w miłosne uściski. Oczywiście, dostrzegam duże różnice w sposobie malowania. Teresa Pągowska zestawia, ryzykownie i kontrastowo, plamy i płaszczyzny. Egon Schiele łączy finezyjną linearność i płaskość rysunku z transparentnym modelunkiem kolorów. Natomiast Bahram, rzeźbiarski rysunek swoich męskich i kobiecych aktów łączy z nieokreślonymi płaszczyznami pastelowego koloru, kontrapunktując wszystko akcentami surowych i nasyczonych plam koloru. Tworzy pustą, nieodgadnioną przestrzeń wokół wyrazistych ciał i głów, ujętych w światłocieniową bryłę...

Jak wyżej wspomniałem, w przewadze monochromatyczne i oparte na białych, szarych i kremowych tonacjach obrazy Bahrama posiadają często akcenty jaskrawych, kolorowych plam żółci, błękitu, fioleto, oranżu, czerwieni, zieleni, czerni - co bardzo ożywia je i wywołuje wrażenie, że zarysowane ludzkie postacie podlegają jakiejś odmiennej, psychicznej determinacji. Używając w swoim malarstwie klasycznych środków wyrazu, czyli malując farbami na płótnie i papierze, Bahram wprowadza do swojego malarstwa także elementy wklejone, kolażowe. Są to chusty, a może kawałki kolorowych tkanin w drobne wzorki.

canvas untouched by any colours and human figure constituted for her the most frequent motive for creative expressing in paintings...

Paintings of Bahram can be also associated with figurative canvas and watercolours of the Austrian painter Egon Schiele. It could be noted in frames of single figures or pairs of lovers entangled in love hugs. I note too, obviously, substantial differences in their painting styles and techniques. Teresa Pagowska compiles, in risky way and by contrast, spots and plane/surface. Egon Schiele combines fine linearity and flatness of the



drawing with transparent modelling of colours. While Bahram combines sculptural drawing of his male and female nude with undetermined, unestablished plane of pastel colours counterpointing everything with accents of raw and unsaturated spots of colour. He creates empty and inscrutable space around expressive bodies and heads captured in a chiaroscuro block. As I already mentioned, paintings of Bahram, predominantly monochromatic and based on white, grey and creamy mode, often have accents of bright, coloured spots of yellow, blue, violet, orange, red, green and black – which brings painting to live and creates the impression that outlined human figures are subject to some variant, mental determination.

By using some classic techniques, it means painting on canvas and paper, Bahram includes into his paintings also pasted and collage elements. There are scarves, or may be pieces of coloured fabric with

Artysta stosuje swoistego rodzaju technikę mieszaną, obecną w malarstwie kubistów, surrealistów i abstrakcjonistów XX wieku. Tym elementem Bahram ożywia swoje malarstwo i urozmaica jego formalną strukturę. Zauważam także nieufność do słowa. Często artysta nie znajduje odpowiedniego określenia, aby nadać tytuły swoim poszczególnym obrazom. W katalogach z wystaw, pod wieloma reprodukcjami prac Bahrama widnieje napis „bez

small patterns.

The Artist applies a specific mixed technique which is presents in the paintings of cubists, surrealists and abstractionists of 20th century. By that element Bahram diversifies and revives his paintings and its formal structure. I notice also his mistrust of the word.

The Artist very frequently is not in the position to find a right term in order to give titles to his paintings. In the exhibition catalogues under many Bahram's repro-



tytułu”, co charakteryzuje sposób podejścia malarza do tematu ludzkiego ciała, które z innym ciałem prowadzi milczący „dialog”, ale ta intymna „rozmowa” jest z gruntu pozawerbalna... A zatem, dużo jest milczenia w obrazach Bahrama, sztuki milczenia... Wydaje się, że artysta zawierzył swoistej „mowie ciała”, którą psycholodzy rozszyfrowują jako pierwszą informację o kondycji i samopoczuciu człowieka. Mowa bez mowy. Dialog bez słowa. Milczące istnienie ciał: w zbliżeniu, ekstazie, cierpieniu, niechęci, odwróceniu, tęsknocie, pragnieniu, w niemożliwych do określenia stanach psychicznych i duchowych, gdzie niedaleko siebie paraliżują się nawzajem: rozkosz i wstręt, miłość i nienawiść, tliwość i odrzucenie...

Bardzo ciekawie interpretują malarstwo Bahrama osoby, które pierwszy raz je widzą. Oto ich krótkie wypowiedzi na temat tego, co to malarstwo przedstawia: „Ludzie spowici mgłą i niepewnością jutra”. „Ciała zawieszane w rzeczywistości bez kontekstu”... To kolejny trop interpretacyjny. Bohaterowie obrazów Bahrama jakby opuścili kraj swoich narodzin i zatrzymali swój naturalny, kulturowy rozwój. Są nadzy i wykorzeni, jak emigranci. Ich ojczyznę i schronieniem jest kruche i cierpiące ciało. Dowód

ductions one can find a sign “without title” what characterises his approach to the issue of human body, who has a silent “dialogue” with another body, but that intimate “conversation” is essentially extra verbal.... So, there is a lot of silence in Bahram's paintings, art of silence....

It seems that the Artist has trusted the unique “body language”, which is decoded by psychologists as the first information about condition and frame of a human mind.

Language without language. Dialogue without words. Silent existence of bodies: in close-up, ecstasy, suffering, dislike, reversal, longing, desire, in the mental and spiritual states which are impossible for identifying, where located not so far away from each other, pleasure and repulsion, love and hate, affection and rejection paralyses each other....

Persons who see for the first time the paintings of Bahram interpret it in the very interesting way. Here are their short comments what his painting represents:

“People shrouded in fog and uncertainty of tomorrow”, “Bodies hanging in reality without any context” This is another interpretation track. Characters of Bahram's paintings look like they left their countries of birth and

tożsamości. Wokół pojawia się pustka, nieokreślona i otwarta przestrzeń oraz niekiedy strzępy tkanin ze wschodnim ornamentem... Bahram maluje swój los i egzystencjalne stany, czasami być może w nadmiernie narcystycznym nastawieniu. Maluje dramat ludzkiej cielesności, w sposób bardzo wyrazisty, poruszający i ekspresyjny...

Prof. Stanisław Tabisz

Kraków, 1 marca 2020.

completed their natural, cultural development. They are naked and uprooted like immigrants. Fragile and suffering body is their fatherland and shelter. Identity card. Emptiness appears around them, unidentified and open space and sometimes shreds of fabric with oriental ornaments... Bahram paints his fate and existential states, sometimes maybe in too narcissistic approach. He paints a drama of human corporality in a very distinct way, expressive and emotional...

Professor Stanisław Tobisz

Kraków, 1s of March, 2020



couple | 2020 | mixed media/canvas | 120 cm x 140 cm



couple | 2020 | mixed media/canvas | 200 cm x 150 cm



untitled | 2010/20 | mixed media/canvas | 190 cm x 140 cm



couple | 2020 | mixed media/canvas | 140 cm x 120 cm



she | 2020 | mixed media/canvas | 140 cm x 120 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 140 cm x 120 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 200 cm x 160 cm



untitled | 2020 | mixed media/manvas | 140 cm x 120 cm



couple | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 200 cm x 150 cm

BAHRAM HAJOU

Preliminary Remarks

To present Bahram is a multi-faceted challenge and pleasure, strongly determined by the specific quality and complexity of Bahram's life and work. And it is of course a pleasure and a challenge to do this as a personal account and in reflection of my way to look at the world, at the arts and artists, reflections depending on my own cultural roots and aspirations.

Bahram's biography and the evolution of his work do not reflect the influences of just one region or of one of the cultures of the world, though dominant influences of Western civilisation should not be denied or underestimated. The course of his life and work prove him, however, to be a true internationalist, or, to use the German term created and used in earlier centuries, to be a *Weltbürger*, a citizen, at home in the multitude and variety of a more and more fragmented and at the same time united and often claustrophobic world – a *Weltbürger*, an artist in the middle of a new world in progress, whatever the risks, pitfalls, and promises of globalisation and of culture and arts in a globalising world might be.

There is no doubt that Bahram, at the right time and by whatever coincidences, has reached a ripeness in his art and personality that corresponds perfectly to the challenges and dangers globalisation is confronting us with as human beings and as human kind as a whole, across the borders of countries or cultures and beyond vital economic needs – and it is not the least challenge for an artist like Bahram to insist on visions and new horizons, to allow for pains and honest struggles in human relations, to make loneliness and despair a source for reconciliation and inner freedom and for a peaceful life in the world around us. Bahram's life and work rose to this challenge.

Latest achievements of Western cultural theory and the dialogue between an artist and his audience

With reference to Terry Eagleton I should like to summarize some gains and achievements of Western cultural theory, not unimportant for the nurturing of dialogues between cultures, between artists and their audiences.

1. Cultural theory has "disabused us of the idea that there is a single correct way to interpret a work of art" (Terry Eagleton: *After Theory* 2004, p.95).
2. It has "persuaded us that there are many things involved in the making of a work of art besides the author. Works of art have a kind of 'unconscious', which is not under the control of their producers. We have come to understand that one of those producers is the reader, viewer or listener – that the recipient of a work of art is a co-creator of it, without whom it would not exist" (ibid., p.96).
3. One of the most controversial gains has been "the link between culture and power. As social life fell increasingly under the rule of utility, culture was on hand to remind us that there were things which had value but no price." In a market dominated civilisation "culture has acted as a precious remembrance of utopia" (ibid., p.97).
4. It has been "exploring issues which were of a vital concern to humanity as a whole" – not just pragmatic ones, not just parochial ones (ibid., p.98).

The city where Bahram lives and works

Where does Bahram live and work? The place where most of his life and work has happened during the past thirty years is a city in the Western part of Germany, somewhere in the middle of Cologne and Hamburg. The history of this city started with the foundation of a monastery more than thousand years ago. The name was derived from this foundation: *Monasterium*, *Münster*. Compared to the urban strongholds of the world this is a provincial place with about 250.000 inhabitants, giving however home to one of the biggest universities in Germany with about 60.000 students and with an almost complete classical spectrum of study and research fields. *Münster* and the neighbourhood city of *Osnabrück* were the places where

the treaty for The Peace of Westphalia was reached in 1648, marking the emergence of a modern state system in Europe and bringing an end to long-running wars. For an artist like Bahram it is of course vital that Münster is an open minded, multicultural city with a heterogeneous and dynamic cultural, intellectual and political life and with a number of renowned galleries and museums. Much of this free atmosphere, and of course much more, you would experience when you entered Bahram's studio.

Bahram's Studio

Abounding with light and classical music, large canvases and smaller, even tiny ones, only a few paintings on the walls, most of them hiding their faces, with and without signature, date, or figures of seize. A hilarious mixture of dedicated arrangements and chaos - exactly the way we are expecting a studio to be, at least since the invention of photography gave us an idea of what studios are like. And at the same time quite different for those visiting this place: A marvellous smell of Arabian coffee, exhibition posters, few only, one showing Bahram's portrait of Arthur Rubinstein. Huge speakers up on the walls, directed towards the great, white wall with a newly fixed canvas - just as if the intensity of the music inundated it with colours and figures, with an atmosphere of harmony and an all disturbing power – new colours and arising figures or landscapes painted upon earlier works; colours, figures, and atmosphere on new canvases without any idea of how often they will experience a renewal, without knowing how provisional those pictures are that seem to be completed – transitory, in detail or in total, searching for a new expression, nourished by the past and hiding it well at the same time: Vitality, strength, and existential risks expressed in every corner. Talks. Emotions. Dialogues. Assurance. Questioning. Not an office and not a solemn place. Neither ghetto nor public space. A mixture of vibrant passions. Most things concealed somewhere, but nevertheless present, including those of days passed – pictures, drawings, letters, postcards, music, and, of course, catalogues. Relics past and present, ultimately at hand and well hidden, they contribute to the strength and sensibility the absorbing intensity and inspiring endurance Bahram's work relies on, day by day.

A long way to go

It took Bahram a long way to arrive at this studio. No blueprint for life, but lots of coincidences and chances. And at the same time a continuous search for conditions and situations that promised him the freedom and independency to pursue what he was striving at – to work as an artist. This route was not his real destination, but it brought him to a haven he was looking for to become the artist he aspired to be. Tentative, provisional, his search being dominated by doubts, despairs and strong convictions.

Was it the "right" choice to leave his heimat and family, his Kurdish social and cultural setting, the familiar landscape, the people and culture of his childhood and youth? - The Syria of the early 1970s, arriving at Baghdad and ending his study at the famous Fine Arts Academy in the turmoil of a war before it had really started. From there to Prague, a highly instable place at this time, strongly affected by world politics. From there to the German Democratic Republic, to East Berlin. And from there to West Berlin. This route of transition brought him to Münster where he started to study archaeology in 1976 and Fine Arts in 1977. After he received his diploma he studied Free Painting at the Münster branch of the Düsseldorf Arts Academy. He finished his studies in 1987 with a thesis on the life and work of Vincent Van Gogh and in 1988 became master disciple of Professor Norbert Tadeuzsch. In 1989 he took another important step to come closer to his life's dream and decided to start a career as a freelance artist.

On the road, he was passing countries and cultures in times of cold and less cold wars, of ethnic marginalization and integration, meeting trustworthy people he was able to convince of his search for a way of life as an artist. A young internationalist on his way to new homes in times of xenophobia, of new waves of nationalism in times of a bitterly cold war. A Kurd who did not want to be perceived just as a Kurd. A Syrian who did not want to be perceived just as a Syrian. But how to protect oneself against such external classifications? How to transform all this into a new identity? How to develop a self-image, which would not neglect these roots and sources, but integrate them? Not in harmony. As tension and struggle. In despair and with perspectives. And full of hope to reach a new identity. How and when might it happen that

this new identity as an artist were accepted in private and in public life?

This process of reinventing oneself relies on personal experiences often full of pain, often perceived as a chain of defeats and losses. And this process relies on new insights. On more knowledge about oneself and the world as a whole. And on the rediscovery of worlds passed – of people, landscapes, and cultures. And recollections. Not least on the recollection of the vital presence also of Western European culture in his parents' home in Syria, on the melting of different cultural sources in one home, at one place. So Bahram lived up to a classical dilemma: there is hardly any great artist who had forgotten or denied his/her cultural roots and who at the same time had allowed these roots to become an idle niche or even a prison.

It was a long way Bahram had to go, a way he is still going and searching for – in a world where a new dimension of international exchange and a thrilling speed of new forms of a global dialogue of cultures is developing.

The exhibitions

Much of the achievements of an artist may be reflected, for better or for worse, in a listing of his exhibitions. The continuity and variety of exhibitions are an important public proof for an artist and his evolution.

In times of digitalisation and virtualisation, of new media and state of the art communication and information technologies classical exhibitions may even gain momentum as a kind of anti-dote. They slow down the speed of and for our perception we have become used to. They offer a face-to-face experience in a real public space. They enable immediate talks and discourses. They allow for distance and for closeness, for shared emotions and personal retreat in a public room. And they allow each and everyone of us to return again and again, to concentrate on one specific painting or aspect within a variety of others. And they offer a possibility for decisions – artistically and economically.

Bahram's list of exhibitions starts with the year 1983 and sums up to a number of more than 75 solo and collective exhibitions and to an almost incredible continuity – national and international, smaller and bigger events,

collective and solo exhibitions, open or with a thematic focus.

Of the recent international exhibitions those at Riyadh in 2006, Dubai, Damascus, Puebla (Mexico), and Paris in 2007 should be mentioned, of the earlier years those in London, Budapest, Graz, New York, and Paris.

It should also be noted that works of Bahram are publicly present not only by continuous exhibitions. A number of his paintings are the property of public institutions and private companies, displaying his works permanently at places where people come and go, day by day.

Avoiding Traps and Seductions: Biography, Markets, and Marketing

It is not just an academic question, if a reader, a listener, or someone looking at a work of art should really know something about an artist's biography. Or whether she or he may even claim a right for this knowledge to satisfy his or her curiosity in a way that the work of art reveals what the biographical knowledge suggests.

Reflecting the relationship of biography and a single work or even the oeuvre of an artist is particularly delicate and intriguing in times where the borderline between the private and the public is fading away, is almost brought to extinction. These are the times when the private is seen as the really promising field to play the marketing and market game with artists, past or present, and with their works. And these are times where short-term success may often depend to a great deal on the exploitation or even invention of biographical details. Be it gender, ethnicity, colour, or creed.

For Bahram as an artist with his given culturally complex, multilayered, and not invented biography these times are challenging times - on art markets as well as with respect to the exploitation of biographical details and his interest to preserve the biographical identity in its full diversity and its contradictions for his creative process – ever and ever again, from one painting to the next. Indeed an interesting and rewarding challenge for Bahram, intertwined with the delicate task to resist superficial market promises and

seductions and concentrate on his authentic artistic development.

How could an artist be able to cope with the challenge not to see single works or his whole oeuvre narrowly reduced to his biography, to a promising public acclaim and to an instant economic success? For Bahram there doesn't seem to be an alternative to a constant, tormenting and liberating struggle for his internal and external freedom, he relies on as a creative and ambitious artist. This struggle seems to be the very shelter he needs for the creation of his distinctive, authentic works and to protect himself against the exploitation of the surface or of details of his biography, to whatever phase of his life and work these may belong to.

Bahrams oeuvre and the phases of his artistic development

The continuity and internationality of Bahram's exhibitions are depending in content and quality on the continuity

and the ambition to develop his work, connected with a search and strive for freedom and honesty in personal life. A glance at the main phases of his artistic development may illustrate this.

The early years, starting in 1989 with his decision to work as a freelance artist and with his explicit decision against other professional careers he could have pursued, e.g. as teacher: his work in this phase, a phase which lasted almost ten years, was strongly dominated by recollections related to his Kurdish-Syrian past and by his existential situation to be an immigrant. His perception of the world around him, living among and together with Germans, made him aware of people with a similar fate and history. He painted marginalized people and was looking for sujets and evidences of sub-cultural solidarity and strength, either defined by ethnicity or by a merging of different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds, e.g. symbolised in a young punk lady with a head scarf. And he went to the places where homeless people found their "public homes", giving them a place in his work. It



proved to be decisive for Bahram's personal and artistic arrival in a new political, social and cultural milieu that he had the opportunity to share a studio with two German artists in these years, artists of different age and artistic standing.

The phase from 1998 to 2001. An important starting point for this phase was the decision for a new studio. It is the place depicted above. This studio gave Bahram the opportunity to find new ways for his expression on big formats and, at the same time, to throw new looks at his earlier works. So his new working conditions were a result of and a means for his work. A new phase could be started for new expressions and for an examination of those of his earlier phase. Bahram started to re-paint his works, to integrate old paintings into new ones, to preserve traces of his earlier works, dominated by his new aspirations and expressions. Moving rapidly forward, but keeping the essence of his earlier work alive, is a crucial feature of this phase.

The phase from 2001-2003. In these years Bahram created abstract paintings. It was a phase in which his work turned away from faces and human beings, in a way imagining what was going to happen.

The phase starting in 2003/2004. This phase indicates a return to strong figurative expressions, mixed with partially abstract elements. Many of the paintings are dominated by colourful and by black and white contrasts, depicting towers, void landscapes and isolated human beings. Many of these are pictures of separation and loneliness, of open and vulnerable souls, and of the experience of being left alone and without any significance for the person you love. Many of these are an anticipation of what would finally happen – separation. Bahram was left by the person he loved.

The universal language Bahram develops in this phase is a courageous, honest language full of energy – to express, without fears and taboos, deeply felt existential pains and needs, thus reflecting a situation, which can happen again and again to people in love. This phase has not yet come to an end, but changes in the artistic expression are of such a subtle quality that throws a powerful light at

the end of this phase and at the beginning of a new one: e.g., among two human beings, clearly separated from each other, the woman emerges as a strong, self-reliant and no longer vulnerable figure, in a black suit, bigger than the man - both looking separately but reconciled for horizons they were not able to see before, neither separately nor together.

A new phase emerging in 2007/2008. To see a new phase develop, parallel to the end of the preceding one, is a fascinating experience and in my view strongly connected with the dimension the search for horizons will gain in Bahram's future work. To discover horizons, to offer horizons in works of art is a sign of hope and can stimulate visions. Among Bahram's latest works (e.g. Antenna to Heaven, 2008) we find landscapes, disturbing and powerful, with an incredible expression of darkness and light, with an uproar of energy hinting at horizons and perspectives that lead you beyond the miseries of life and the often too miserable state of human kind as a whole – horizons and perspectives we can detect as co-creators of Bahram's paintings.



A look at Bahram's ways to work and at specific artistic aspects of his oeuvre

Working process and techniques

The techniques an artist applies are mirroring his approaches to his work as a whole and to every single painting.

Bahram's expressionist art depends on his spontaneity and on his craftsmanship, applying techniques only in accordance with the dialogue he is able to initiate with the emerging work of art.



His great canvasses, well prepared by himself, are put on the floor, colours are dispersed without any regard concerning composition, layout or the structure of space. Acryl colours serve as the basis for a first intuitive

approach, followed by sand, ashes and pigment powder to give spice to the canvas. Charcoal drawing and brush elements are added. Parts of the canvas stay untouched. These "raw" parts become their signature in the continuation of the working process and they stimulate Bahram's intuition, when he is surrounding the canvas.

He continues the process of his work at those points of his painting, which capture and attract him most. This is a crucial phase for the development of a dialogue between the artist and his emerging work of art, between him and the canvas. Bahram starts to read his creation, to discover new ways, to see windows thrown open for a spontaneous dialogue. This is Bahram's way to overcome his horror vacui, his fear and anxiety when he faces a void canvas.

In a next phase in the working process Bahram fixes the canvas to the wall, again and again, in varying positions, ready to discover something new and elaborating on it. This is the moment, after roughly two-thirds of the working process, when Bahram is able to see in which way the painting will develop – and where he will develop. His trust in his unspoiled expressiveness, his enduring power and strength to give room to spontaneity and coincidences, and his sound, elaborated and disciplined craftsmanship – all this contributes to the creation of Bahram's unique works of art.

And only a small part of what is characteristic for his working techniques and process can be adequately put into words – at least by me.

Some specific aspects may illustrate Bahram's ingenuity to invent his own artistic cosmos and the ways we are invited to participate.

Eyes and Faces

Looking at eyes is confronting oneself by a confrontation with some one else - in life as in the arts. What happens with me, when I look at eyes depicted by Bahram? Are they judging what they see – me? Where and what are they looking at? What stories do they tell to me? What stories should I tell them? Were they really painted or

were they on the canvas before the picture emerged? Or did they find their place in the “raw” space of the canvas at the moment when Bahram started his dialogue with the emerging painting? Isn't there a pensive expression and impression in the way these eyes convey to me something of the inescapable riddle of life? The eyes we are confronted with in Bahram's art seem to contain much of the riddle of his paintings, because they allow for a unique experience: to slow down and to be stimulated, to escape the dynamics of time and to preserve time, to grasp the importance of moments of revelation, and to experience the simultaneity of the passing of time and of recollection.



among human beings means to be able to create a genuine public sphere for dialogue and to overcome isolation, loneliness and claustrophobic fears. The eyes depicted by Bahram may remind us, in a variety of forms, of this capacity human beings have.

Figures, Bodies, and Space

Another and quite different way Bahram's pictures are confronting us with ourselves is by making his figures indiscernible, be letting groups of people appear as outlined shadows and by completely concentrating our attention on the intensity of the expression. To achieve this, Bahram has expanded his formats and created a space structure, which enables him to give expression to a central theme: that the human being as the centre of his art is confronted with the danger of oblivion or even extinction – massive, expressive bodies and figures “lost in space”. And at the same time we are invited to share his unconquered pleasure in being existent, his absorbing intensity and his aspiring endurance manifested in his bodies and figures. Space, bodies and figures also seem to pose questions: Where to find rest and shelter? Where is our visionary strength in all the ups and downs of the world and of our lives? How can we reach a new discernible profile and how can outlined, anonymised groups of people regain a real, interpersonal coherence?

Landscapes

Through all phases of his work Bahram has been dedicated to the painting of landscapes. Landscapes are objects of personal recollections and they are a metaphor for a continuity of changes induced by the forces of nature and by men. The way they are depicted by Bahram, landscapes symbolise losses and hopes at the same time. Vanishing villages, a hardly discernible church tower, dark rivers or mountains and colourful areas full of hope, though without people or houses, not even in outlines, show again his mastery of creating a space for contradictory artistic expressions and for a deep longing for hope and reconciliation. The landscapes emerging in his latest works have a stronger visionary quality.



Their stimulating colours and overwhelming figurative elements give room for a discovery of horizons.

cultural roots and influences, both oriental and western. His own standing and achievement, the rich and promising perspectives of his work and his modesty can explain why Bahram does not hesitate to express his full esteem and adoration for a number of artists, past and present.

Among these artists and groups, which Bahram admires and respects most for their artistic achievements, for their strength and intensity, for their honesty and courage to do what they felt obliged to do, often risking their lives, are expressionist artists like Beckmann, Pechstein, Kirchner, Mueller, or Nolde, and the Blaue Reiter and Brücke groups. Among artists of a later generation Bahram expresses high esteem for Baselitz, Kiefer, Richter, Penck, Lüpertz, and Tadeuzsch.

History, including the history of the Fine Arts, is going to be perceived and written differently in times of a radically globalising world. Transcultural and multicultural aspects have reached a new importance and are going to establish new standards and perspectives, no longer dominated by single nations or by once hegemonic regions of the world. Bahram's life and work is, humbly speaking, a small but fascinating facet in these processes and should be reflected as such – across nations and civilisations, with authentic, genuine personal standards and expressions, nurtured by resources from different cultures, and as part of a worldwide collective humane artistic tradition and heritage.

Dr. Dieter M. Keiner

Artistic contexts of Bahram's Work

When I look at Bahram's works I see fascinating, disturbing and elevating paintings – and I don't see influences.

Nothing what I know from discussions with Bahram on artists of high esteem and importance for him can distract me from the spell of his works. And no knowledge about the classical period of German expressionist artists and their paintings I have adored in Munich or Amsterdam or elsewhere makes me look for similarities or analogies in the face of Bahram's works.

His work stands for a style of his own, for a new expressionism, and this is exactly what makes him part of a long, renowned tradition, enriched and brought forward by artists like him, in a different age and with his specific



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 160 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 160 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 160 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 120 cm



untitled | 2019 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 120 cm



couple | 2010 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 120 cm



she | 2008 | mixed media/canvas | 60 x 70 cm



he | 2008 | mixed media/canvas | 60 x 70 cm



untitled | 2011 | mixed media/manvas | 150 x 120 cm



untitled | 2011 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 120 cm



couple | 2012 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 160 cm



Witnesses to the current violence | 2012 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 170 cm



couple | 2013 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 120 cm



Ohne Titel | 2013 | Mixed Media/Canvas | 160 x 130 cm



man | 2013/14 | mixed media/canvas | 120 x 110 cm



wife | 2013/14 | mixed media/canvas | 120 x 80 cm



couple | 2014 | mixed media/canvas | 120 x 100 cm



untitled | 2014 | mixed media/canvas | 120 x 100 cm



couple | 2014 | mixed media/canvas | 120 x 100 cm



Paar | 2015 | Mixed Media/Canvas | 140 x 120 cm



Bahram/015

untitled | 2015 | mixed media/canvas | 210 x 150 cm



untitled | 2015/18 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 170 cm



untitled | 2015 | mixed media/canvas | 80 x 60 cm



untitled | 2016 | mixed media/canvas | 170 x 200 cm



untitled | 2016 | mixed media/canvas | 200 x 170 cm



couple | 2018 | mixed media/canvas | 145 x 125 cm



untitled | 2017 | mixed media/canvas | 140 x 95 cm



couple | 2017 | mixed media/manvas | 140 x 70 cm

EXHIBITIONS

- 1983 Museum Bochum (Germany)
1984 cultural Center Arnheim (The Netherlands)
1985 Parish center Münster (Germany)
1986 castle Villa Winkel, Ochtrup (Germany)
1986 Design Zander, Emsdetten (Germany)
1987 Museum Bochum (Haus Kemnade) (Germany)
1990 1. Price,
 Quadrat (Josef Albers-Museum),
 Bottrop (Germany)
1990 Le Centre Culturel Regional Wallon,
 Liège (Belgium)
1991 City Theatre, Münster (Germany)
1991 Gallery AAI, Wien (Austria)
1992 Künstler Haus, Graz (Austria)
1993 World Circuit Arts, Kufa Gallery, London (U.K.)
1993 Gallery Artforum, Wien (Austria)
1993 Gallery Frankenstein, Berlin,(Germany)
1993 Helderse Kunstliga, Den Helder (the Netherlands)
1993 Residential park am Tibusplatz,
 Münster (Germany)
1994 VHS Münster (Germany)
1994 Kunsthaus Pinx, Bochum (Germany)
1994 International art exhibition,
 Budapest (Hungary)
1995 Gallery Artopia, New York (USA)
1996 Art gallery of the Dominican Church,
 Osnabrück (Germany)
1997 State Representation of Hessen, Bonn (Germany)
1997 Brandenburg City Theater (Germany)
1997 Arco Budapest (Hungary)
1997 Breitbach Gallery, Unna (Germany)
1998 AKAD art, Stuttgart (Germany)
1998 Art Frankfurt/Main (Germany)
1998 Art Düsseldorf (Germany)
1999 Gy Crété Galerie, Paris (France)
1999 District president, Münster (Germany)
1999 town hall, Wiesbaden (Germany)
1999 Gallery König, Münster (Germany)
1999 Culture and sculpture park, Katzow (Germany)
1999 Gallery Kunsthaus Pinx, Bochum (Germany)
1999 Gütersloh district house (Germany)
1999 Zentrum Asept in Königslutter (Germany)
2000 Kunst Uta Dingethal, Merklingen (Germany)
2000 Gallery König, Münster (Germany)
2000 Kunstwerkstatt, Cloppenburg (Germany)
2000 Foyer town hall, Wiesbaden (Germany)
2000 District foyer government Münster (Germany)
2000 Culture and sculpture park Katzow (Germany)
2001 Art hall, Ahlen (Germany)
2001 OFD Münster (Germany)
2001 Neue Galerie im Artforum, Offenburg (Germany)
2001 Art hall, Offenburg (Germany)
2001 Kulturspeicher Oldenburg (Germany)
2002 State Museum Vienna (Austria)
2002 Gallery Kunstfabrik, Düsseldorf (Germany)
2002 Science park Gelsenkirchen (Germany)
2002 BRH Bonn (Germany)
2003 Gallery Blau , Palma d. Mallorca (Spain)
2003 National Museum in Krakow (Poland)
2003 Kulturspeicher Oldenburg (Germany)
2004 Town hall Kamen (Germany)
2004 Kunstraume Norbert Bauer,
 Velbert-Langenberg (Germany)
2004 Art fair Osnabrück - Impulse (Germany)
2004 Haus der Kamener Stadt Geschichte,
 Kamen (Germany)
2005 Gallery Kreuziger, Worbswede (Germany)
2005 Gallery Zeugma, Cologne, (Germany)
2005 Atassi Gallery, Dubai (U.A.E.)
2006 Art hall Faust, Hannover (Germany)
2006 Gallery Holbein, Hannover (Germany)
2006 Gallery Carolyn Heinz, Hamburg (Germany)
2006 Kunstkompakt 4, Gladbeck (Germany)
2007 Gallery Zeugma, Cologne (Germany)
2007 Gallery Green Art, Dubai (U.A.E.)
2007 Gallery Michael Nolte, Münster (Germany)
2007 art club kunstverein,
 Burgwedel/Isernhagen (Germany)
2008 Hewar Art Gallery - Total Arts Gallery in the
 courtyard - Dubai (U.A.E.)
2008 Kunstkompakt 5, Gladbeck (Germany)
2008 Gallery Zeugma, Cologne (Germany)
2008 Kunsthandel Antonia v. Fraunberg,
 Düsseldorf (Germany)
2008 1. Price
 Mediterrane Artbiennale in Trogir,
 Croatia (Symposion)
2009 Artfestival Amman, Jordan (Symposion)
2009 Artfestival Patra, Greece (Symposion)
2009 Karim Gallery, Amman (Jordan)
2010 Aida Cherfan Fine Art Gallery, Beirut (Libanon)

2010 Gallery Kula, Museum Split (Kroatien)
2012 Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum
Bratislava (Tzechoslowakia)
2013 Gallery Ludwig Trossaert, Antwerpen (Belgium)
2013 Gallery GNG Gilles Naudine, Paris (France)
2013 White Box Gallery, New York (USA)
2014 Art House Wien, (Austria)
2014 Henry Matisse Price,
Château Musée Grimaldi, (France)
2014 Gallery Ludwig Trossaert, Antwerp (Belgium)
2015 Gallery GNG, Paris, (France)
2015 Kunsthaus Langenberg e.V. Alldie Kunst
(Norbrt Bauer), Düsseldorf (Germany)
2015 Office Kleine Galerie (Art against violence)
Wien (Austria)
2015 Art Élysées, Petit Palace Paris (France)
2015 Art Fair, Istanbul contemporary, Istanbul (Turkey)
2016 Foyer des Stadttheaters Münster/Germany
2016 Gallery Karsi Sanat'ta, Istanbul (Turkey)
2016 Gallery Ludwig Trossaert, Antwerpen (Belgium)
2016 Sollefteå konst förening, (Sweden)
2016 Überkopf Kunstbegegnen, Münster (Germany)
2016 Palagio Contemporaneo, (Italy)
2017 Cultural center in Manama (Bahrain)
2017 Art Karlsruhe (Germany)
2017 Karim Gallery, Amman (Jordan)
2017 Artfair Beirut (Liban)
2018 Artfair Beirut (Liban)
2018 The Fire Station, Doha, (Qatar)
2019 GNG, Paris (France)
2019 International contemporary art fair, Paris (France)
2019 Im Dialog, Akademie Franz Hitze Haus,
Münster (Germany)
2019 Artfair Beirut, (Karim Gallery), Beirut (Liban)
2019 Gallery Bab, National Cultural Centre Cairo Opera
House, (Egypt)
2020 Art Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe (Germany)
2020 Gallery Pryzmat, Krakow (Poland)

PUBLICATIONS AND CATALOGS

A selection

Bahram, Katalog, Text: Dr. Dieter Büter,
Quadrat Bottrop, Bottrop 1990

Dialog – Bahram 2002, Katalog,
Bundesrechnungshof, Bonn 2002

Bahram – Menschenbilder, Katalog,
Oberfinanzdirektion Münster,
Text: Prof. Dr. Christoph Miething,
Dr. Dieter Büter, Münster 2002

Bahram Hajou, Katalog,
Text: Dieter M. Keiner,
al-Adib Publishing House, Amman 2009

Bahram Hajou – Ustanova u Kulturi, Katalog, Gale-
rie Kula, Split 2010

Bahram Hajou, Katalog,
Rudifredlinkegalerie, Münster-Wolbeck 2012

Dupré La Tour, Marie-Jeanne: Le perverse narciss-
que le couple, in: Sainté Mentale, Magazine,
Paris, Mai 2014

Bahram Hajou: L'humanité en miroir, in: Miroir de
l'Art, Magazine, Auréoline éditions, 2014

Bockow, Jörg: Bahram Hajou – Der Meister der
Übermalung, in: Kontur Kunstmagazin 13, 2015,
Tecklenborg Verlag, Steinfurt

Bahram Hajou – The Haunting Imagery Of The
Painter, Katalog,
Text: Jörg Bockow.
Binoche Fine Art, New York 2017

Wolff, Constanze: Aus dem Herzen gemalt, in:
Stylus - Magazin für Architektur, Interieur, Design,
Fotografie und Lebensstil, Nottuln 2/2017

Bahram – Vis-à-Vis, Katalog,
Text: Stephan Trescher, Hania Zawaneh,
Alfred Simms-Protz, Münster 2018

Bockow, Jörg: Bahram Hajou – Von der Verletzlich-
keit des Menschen, in: Kontur Kunstmagazin 21,
2019, Tecklenborg Verlag, Steinfurt

IMPRESSUM

layout: Hermann W. Konradt

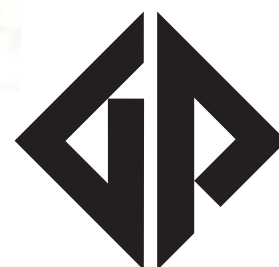
texts: Professor Stanisław Tobisz
Dr. Jörg Bockow,
Dr. Dieter M. Keiner

copyright: The copyright of the texts lies with the authors
© of the art works by Bahram Hajou
are located at Hajou / Konradt

artist: Bahram Hajou
Am Hawerkamp 31Z · Haus A
48155 Münster/Germany
244 Fifth Ave Suite: A285
New York, NY 10001/USA
mobil: +49 (0)170 22 03 110
bahram.hajou@hotmail.de
www.bahram-hajou.com

photos: Hermann W. Konradt

organizers



GALERIA PRYZMAT

Honorary patron of the exhibition



Sponsor of the exhibition





GALERIA PRYZMAT