



picturing life that integrates time and space in one image.

"We all have our childhood in us," he says. "This is a symbolic image and proceeding therefrom I think one can convey the simultaneity of two states being of one and the same image, in short, demonstrate their unity. This, in principle, is more than a symbol. After all, when we come to think of it, we all have within ourselves simultaneously several states of being. Psychologically, HUMANITY lives in all of us. At worst, this is an invented hero." Rudolf chainsmoked, seated in a low armchair, and continued: "Adam is the entire human race, its source. By combining all within one image, you again get Adam. However now, not the Biblical personage, but another intricate being, who has absorbed the full range of feelings, forms and contradictions. Though this may be a surrealist Caliban, still it will be Adam. What chiefly makes him look like that is the time that is compressed within him. True, I simplify the task and do not try to 'piece Adam together backwards.' For me, it is enough to symbolically convey time within the plane of the

mother-and-child biunial state of one character, which is the union of past and present. How will one more organically convey that if not by means of integrating in one image the source of life and life itself? I have tentatively termed my Caliban the 'small-big one.' At the outset that was but one monumental character. Subsequently, I populated it with other 'small-big ones' to produce something reminiscent of an anthill. Against the background of an almost static giant, they all lead their fussy lives. The most astonishing thing about this is that neither the monumental character nor the 'ants' care an iota for one another, while at times or rather virtually always, one half cares nothing for the other half, although they all harmoniously integrate into one united image. Indeed, they simply cannot exist autonomously of one another."

When during another visit we sat there talking in his studio, it appeared to me as if his latest series picturing the aforementioned human anthill was the highpoint of his creative oeuvre. I thought the artist was of the same view, that he had attained the critical point of discovery. A dilettante, I suggested a continuation, and asked him whether it would be possible to separate the "small one" from the "big one" and combine them by means of a spatial background.

"That's out of question, for that would spell the end of the human race," Rudolf replied in full earnest. "One cannot tear up time as that spells death," he emphasized. Returning home, I sadly thought the artist had sunk into a crisis, from which he would find it extremely difficult to extricate himself. I was amazed when next week he called with his usual "this will drive you crazy" remark. "You're a true genius!" I observed, studying his new series. "Had you any doubt?" he retorted. "After all, I have come here to conquer London."

Apropos the "small-big one"

Back in the 1960s, Khachatryan started his fascinating world of people in whose bodies holes are cut to offer an "open form into space." However, the powers-that-were frowned upon this "holy" world, which almost cost him expulsion from the USSR Union of Artists. Still he stuck to his guns, eventually arriving at a concept which became his life-long love, to wit, the quest for a plastic means of conveying time. He portrayed an odd creature, a prostrate figure with two heads, one asleep, the other awake. These were two states of being of one character, a concept that subsequently ran like a red thread through his entire creative endeavour. "This was still not the discovery. It was still too proportional," he told me, showing a photograph of this twin-headed monster. "What I needed was a link between past and present; a spatial movement, however one plastically, not mechan-

ically, conveyed." Scratching at his thick, silvered beard, he continued: "More and more often now I recall my teacher, Ervand Kochar. Back in the 1930s, he sought to convey the simultaneity of two states, to which end he was obliged to invent a new trend of spatial painting. Imagine figures set in different planes. As you turn these planes, you see one figure becoming the other and one state the other. But as these figures are fused in one image, you obtain the simultaneity of their presence within it. Kochar produced an amazing effort wherein a woman simultaneously stands and sits. However, all these works were physically spatial. What tormented me was how to produce such an image in a two-dimensional plane."

As the artist flipped over several pages of his home-made album, there flitted by as if in an animated cartoon a number of photographs of his efforts, serving to bring to life his unreal world of characters. "At last," he said, "here you are. I called this piece 'Motherhood.' Take a good look at it." I peered at this representation of a mother tenderly clasping a child to her bosom, the eternal image of Virgin and Infant. Suddenly I saw that the child and the mother comprised one integral being. "Drives you crazy, doesn't it?" Khachatryan exclaimed.

The presence everywhere of the "small one," in this case the child, introduces the time factor; however, not literally, as with Kochar, but figuratively, in the language of painting. What you have here is the super imposition of two epochs, as, for instance, we have in the Bible wherein a host of texts written at different times generate ultimate harmony when read. With Khachatryan, the child symbolizes the past. In one effort, he depicts the mother, or the "big one" seated on a chair, and the child, or the "small one" standing in full stature and looking at a mirror. Again, as in Kochar's effort, the figure raises from the seated position, but within one two-dimensional plane, due to the child's smallness.

"I think the discovery of the 'small one' and the 'big one' presented the key," the artist observed. "Just look how naturally the small arm rests on the support, and how the small leg generates a harmony, which the big leg would have upset otherwise. The seated figure obtains its monumental architectonics only when my 'small one' emerges. This is reminiscent of the Temple of Garni, whose steps are enormous as though once bestridden by a race of giants, whereas by itself the temple is small. Armenia has a wonderful piece, the Convent of St. Ripsime, an impressive, majestic structure, attached to which is a tiny chapel that complements the overall harmony and accentuates the eternity of the entire complex. Should I seek the source of my ideas there? Or is this divine? Now, don't grin. After all, what would you know about it?" At this point he grinned, peering at me from behind his massive spectacles.

Sergei Babusenko,
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Rudolf Khachatrian's formula

Rudolf Khachatrian's future was decided in the youth when he met with Ervand Kochar, a noted painter, who had previously worked in Paris and adhered to the principles of classic prewar European avant-garde. The aesthetic views of the young painter were shaped to a large measure under the influence of the master.

Khachatrian began to take part in exhibitions when he was 18 — first in his native Armenia, then in different cities of the Union and abroad.

Having started his creative work as a painter, he then became proficient in graphic arts.

In the 1970s Rudolf moved to Moscow. Many people wanted to get into his studio and, if they got lucky, to order a portrait.

The London period in Khachatrian's creative work began in the autumn of 1990. Having received an invitation from "diamond king" Oppenheimer, he went to London. With the help of friends Rudolf found a studio in which he works from morning till night. During a year he created up to 300 works in different techniques. He was offered to display some of them in small galleries. However, the master expects a real proposal from one of the large museums so that people could get a true idea of his creative work.



Conqueror of space and time

Rudolf Khachatrian's studio is packed high with finished efforts that lie there in expectation of the time when he will make the world gasp. For meanwhile he has no time to break away from his basic quest, for the formula of HUMANITY.

I have time and again sat down to my typewriter to write up Khachatrian's grand discovery. However, each time I visit his studio he tells me: "Now, this will drive you crazy." As a result, I tear up my almost finished copy, as I simply cannot keep up with his creative quest. One day he showed his latest series of elegant stamped black-and-white studies to a publisher, who had undertaken to put out an art book devoted to his London period. The publisher said it would be hard to get the tridimensional effect across. However, a fortnight later I was afforded one more confirmation of the artist's genius, when these sheets virtually sprang to life.

"I have come to conquer London"

What I for one think the artist's basic talent is his ability to breathe life into nonexistent imagery and forms. His chief discovery is his graphic representation of history. He has evolved a formula for