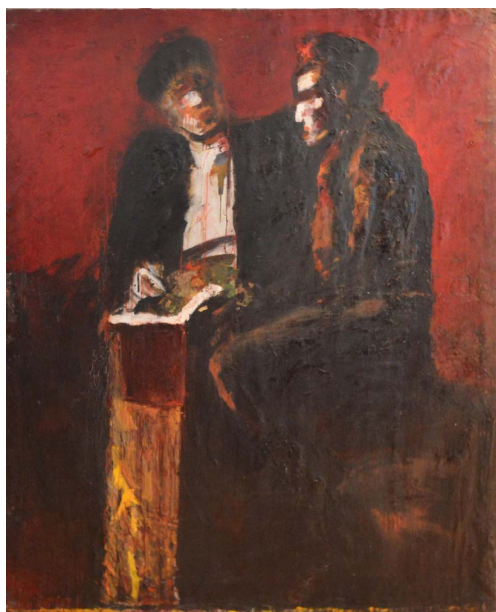


GAZELLI ART HOUSE



Ashraf Murad, *Father and Son*, 1973. Oil on Canvas, Courtesy of United Artists Club, Azerbaijan. Farhad Khalilov, *From the Cycle "Unexpected view"*, 2015

The New Verge

Ashraf Murad / Farhad Khalilov

Private view: February 27th, 6-8pm

Exhibition: February 28th – April 4th, 2020

Artist Talk: March 2nd, 6-8pm

Gazelli Art House presents 'The New Verge', the first joint exhibition of Ashraf Murad and Farhad Khalilov, two of Azerbaijan's most significant artists of the last century. Although the two artists are contemporaries, they have never been exhibited together, and 'The New Verge' (a title inspired by the article Kazimir Malevich published in a daily newspaper 'Anarchy' on 30 March, 1918, called "K Novoi Grani") aims to finally establish a multi-dimensional conversation between them. "At first glance, it might appear that Ashraf Murad and Farhad Khalilov are strikingly different. Indeed, both artists had their own separate paths, but 'The New Verge' is not merely a juxtaposition of two masters—these two outstanding Azeri artists are kindred spirits; one matches the other in power, depth, and relationship to the canvas itself. United by a political epoch, these artists managed to remain freethinkers, maintain their individuality and internal independence despite the framework of Soviet ideology." - Farah Piriye (exhibition curator). Mila Askarova (gallery director) adds, "it's really exciting to be able to show such important artists from Azerbaijan and give voice to the region's history in the UK. In an uncertain geopolitical time we benefit from looking beyond the Eurocentric." The show marks the beginning of a conversation that will be expanded upon in January 2021, as part of Gazelli Art House's series of annual art historical exhibitions.

Avant-garde non-conformist Ashraf Murad is shown here in London for the first time. Underrated during his lifetime, Murad's work has only recently gained recognition, becoming part of large private collections and the subject of a number of museum shows. Each one of his works served as a protest against the Soviet regime and its tenebrous reality; imbued with his humanity, mystery, sincerity, and boundless courage. Murad experienced

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persecution, arrest and torture (traumas that have echoed in his body of work ever since), and stylistically his practice can be divided into different periods on either side of tragic life events. The first part of his career was typically socialist realist, and his later phase can be described as true avante-garde. His works from a “protest” period contain harsh and planar black and red tones, later works convey an almost mystical secrecy. Despite this backdrop of struggle Murad was known for his luminous personality and childlike innocence. He somehow succeeded in resisting the stifling atmosphere of Soviet rule.

Farhad Khalilov’s work has been shown twice in London but never in dyadic exchange with a master who has inspired and influenced his work this deeply. It features Khalilov’s early portraits and landscapes, as well as his new abstract colour fields, including the infamous ‘Meeting’ series. The continuous expanses of colour evoke the nostalgic scenery of the Absheron peninsula and reflect the artist’s own reality. Following on from experiments in colour and form that began with Malevich’s ‘Black Square’ Khalilov draws instead from nature, vast skies and seascapes that disrupt the expectation of realism or contemporary conceptual art. Art historian and critic Grigory Anisimov has described Ashraf Murad’s work as magical realist, which can also suit the spirit of Khalilov—for whom this exhibition is a long-awaited encounter: “It is an honour for me to be exhibited with a master like Ashraf Murad. He was truly one with his canvas; no distance existed between the two—it was a dense unity”.

Notes to Editors

Ashraf Murad (1925-1979). Graduated from Azim Azimzadeh College of Art in Baku and later in 1948 from Repin Leningrad Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture.

Farhad Khalilov was born in 1946 in Baku. In 1961-66 he studied at the Azim Azimzadeh College of Art, then continued his education in Moscow at the Stroga-nov School and in 1969-75 at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute. He lives and works in Azerbaijan.

Farah Piriye - London and Milan based curator, co-founder of research led socio-cultural platform Zeitgeist19, focusing on art and sustainability. Graduated from Sotheby’s Institute of Art (2011) and UAL: Central Saint Martin’s (2017), in art history and curating.

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