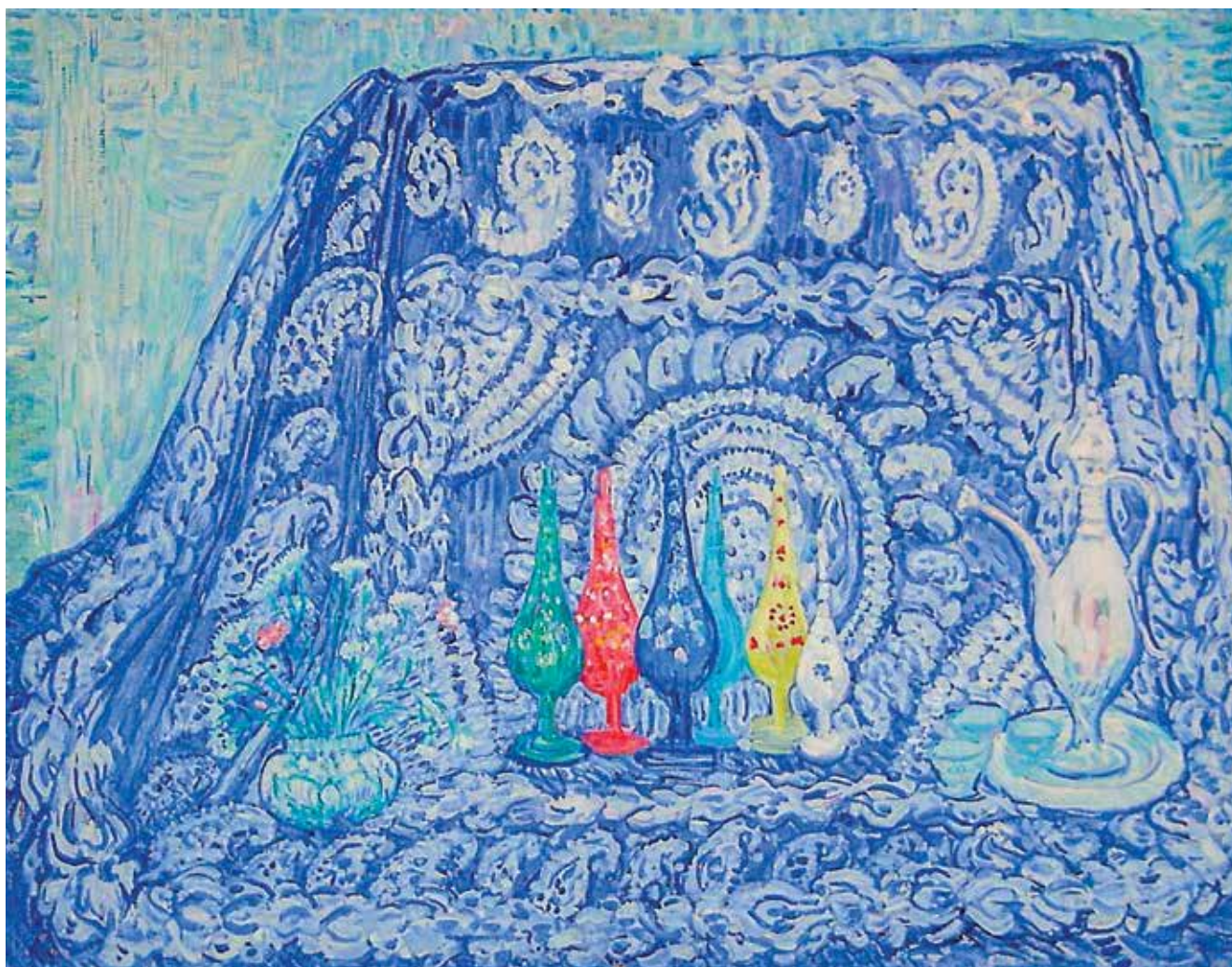


KELAGHAYI AND COPPER VESSELS IN SATTAR BAHLULZADE'S PAINTINGS

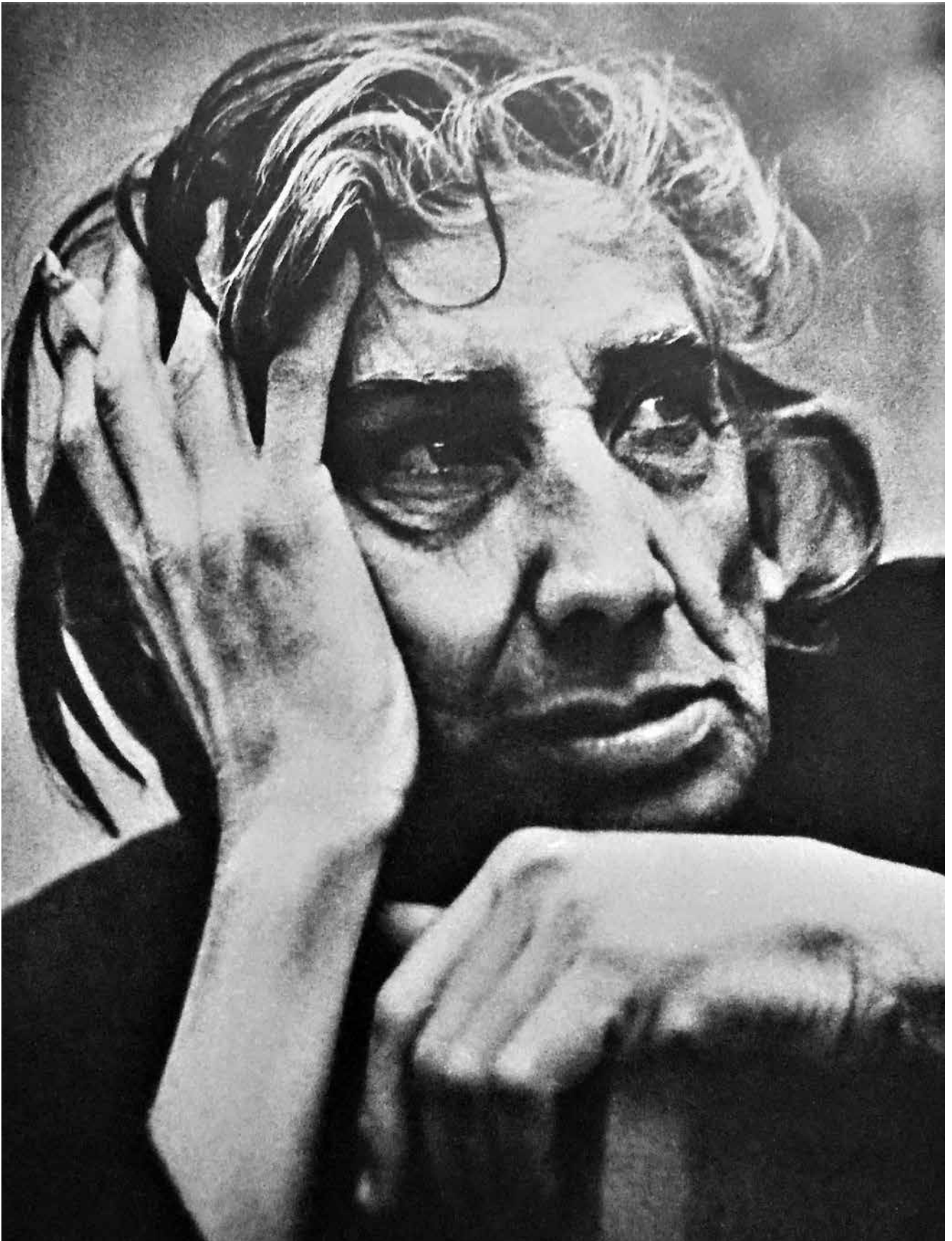
(dedicated to the 110th birthday of artist Sattar Bahlulzade)

Sattar Bahlulzade, an outstanding Azerbaijani landscape painter and People's Artist, created pieces of art contributing to the promotion of the national folk art, historical and architectural monuments,

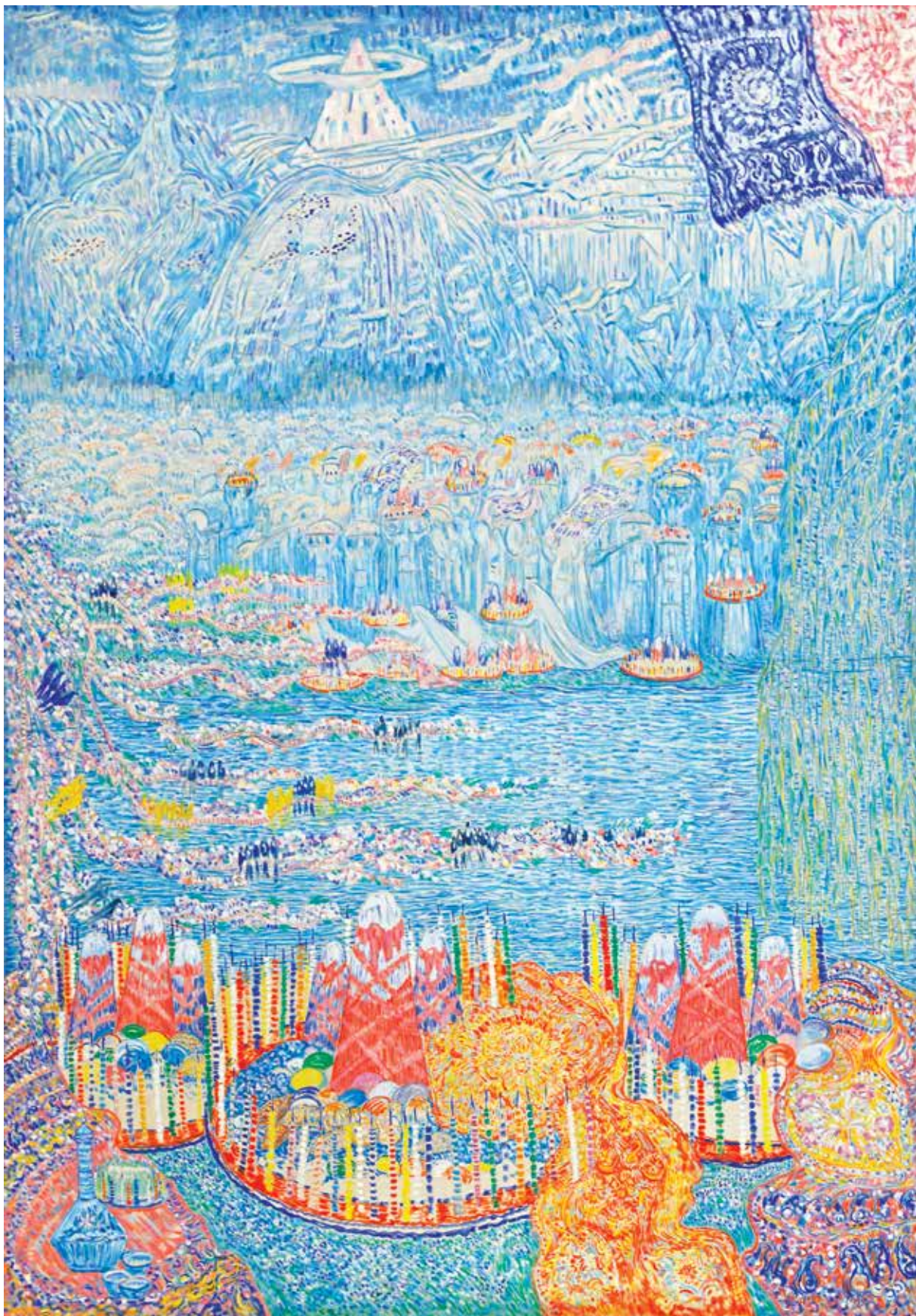
the history and traditions, as well as the nature of his homeland. The samples of decorative-applied art created by Sattar Bahlulzade, which mainly included still life paintings, were aimed at demonstrating the ancient



Sattar Bahlulzade



"Azerbaijani fairy tale". 1973. 250 x 180 cm



A drawing from the artist's diary. 1970s

traditions of art and the exceptional talent of our nation. S. Bahlulzade wrote in his diary on May 16, 1972, "Cherishing folk art is a manifestation of great respect for the people. You should honor national treasures as you all are little parts of this nation. You were raised, nourished and brought up by this nation!" (1)

Just like in many Azerbaijani households, there were decorated bowls, jewelry samples and beautiful carpets lined up in a row in S. Bahlulzade's home. Bahlulzade's creative work was profoundly linked to folk art. From his childhood, Sattar had been fascinated by various items "skilfully decorated by national craftsmen...along with colorfully decorated chests, woolen socks with delicate patterns, different toys, etc." (6, 5).

The painter had been exposed to samples of national art and handicrafts from the early years of his life. This connection is reflected in such national elements as carpets, kelaghayi, copper trays and vessels, tirma (wool fabric), rose water vessels, pear-shaped glasses and khoncha (a tray with different sweets).

Some of the artist's still life paintings show fruit and flowers drawn upon "jejim" (a type of national carpets), covers and kelaghayi. Such items include "Still life painting with kelaghayi", "Still life painting with Shamakhi cover", "Bride's corner", "Still life painting with rose water dishes" and the "Absheron still life painting".

In 1972, Bahlulzade received the Azerbaijan State Award for six pieces of work, including the "Still life painting with kelaghayi". Kelaghayi, Azerbaijani women's headwear, has been produced over several centuries in some Azerbaijani regions, including primarily Shamakhi, Ganja, Shaki, Ismayilli, as well as in Baku.

"Sattar expressed his views regarding this type of ancient folk art upon the canvas called 'Kelaghayi'" (7).

In the "Still life painting with kelaghayi", piales and a pail were drawn on the right-hand side, while flowers in a small green bowl are seen on the left. Colorful rose water vessels were drawn in the middle of the composition. The white strokes applied upon the blue rose water vessel in the middle contributed to the overall white-blue palette of the painting. This still life painting, which featured blue colors, reflected elements that are inherent to the Azerbaijani culture.

"The painter had travelled to Shamakhi to get a kelaghayi of the desired color and asked the workshop to weave a white-dark blue kelaghayi for him exclusively, because these colors were suitable for the choice of col-



ors he had made for that particular painting. The red, yellow and greenish rose water vessels drawn on that canvas further boost the play of blue and white colors" (7).

Images of kelaghayi were also used in such pieces of the artist as "My mother", "Azerbaijani tale" and "Bride's corner".

Referring to his family in his diary on June 15, 1972, Bahlulzade wrote while describing his mother and their household, "She would cover herself up with a white kelaghayi. In winter, she would wear a thick shawl, which would be multi-colored. Everything in the house was in order. She would arrange the bowls in a way as if they were lined up by a painter. She would place the bed covers in the inside wall inlet so that their colors would match. She considered that to be a beautiful piece of art" (1).

The fact that Bahlulzade precisely described the clothes of his mother and grandmother in terms of its colors and material indicates that the artist was fond of beauty since his youth. These observations were reflected in landscapes and still life paintings throughout the years of his creative activity.

"My mother", a painting drawn with oil paint on a canvas sized 2mx2.3m, shows Bahlulzade's mother, Hokumekhanim, with a white kelaghayi upon her shoulders. While working on this piece in September-October 1972, Bahlulzade made notes about it in his diary (1). In those notes, the notions of a mother and motherland converge and the sacredness of a mother blends with the image of the homeland, i.e. the beautiful Azerbaijan. While rever-



"Pottery and fruit". 1975. 56 x 75 cm

ing the beauty of Azerbaijan, Bahlulzade honored the image of a mother, "once again recalling the beauty and the mother concept cherished in people's hearts" (1).

As Bahlulzade mentioned in his diary, he reflected a mother's pure image in a painting. The elderly woman drawn amongst depicted flowers is not only Bahlulzade's mother but is also an image symbolizing an Azerbaijani woman.

The depiction of kelaghayi (headscarf) in "My mother" symbolizes people's commitment to their homeland and patriotism, which is also noted in Bahlulzade's diary.

Bahlulzade wrote in his diary in 1973, "...this is my mother and I depicted her in the background of the mountains in Nakhchivan, the most beautiful land of Azerbaijan. Underneath the image is followed by gardens and trees with blossoming flowers and birds. In front, there is water, which means clarity and life. These are the wonderful waters of Nakhchivan, which are known to everyone and famed...My mother looks afar and into the future tranquilly. She has experienced happy days and is bound to see more happiness. Her kelaghayi is covered with soil on both sides as if it merges with and embraces soil, which means the Motherland and one's connection to it; our Motherland, which is pure like water, will be further exalted and enriched" (February 1 and 6, 1973).

Another piece with an image of kelaghayi is the "Azerbaijani tale". In this painting, Bahlulzade depicted

the Novruz holiday, which has been marked for many centuries by a number of Oriental nations, including Azerbaijanis, demonstrating the advent of spring, the awakening of nature and the rejoicing of the Azerbaijani people. In front, the still life painting shows three festive Novruz khonchas (trays with sweets) in the background of Azerbaijani nature.

A blue bud-shaped, blue-violet colored kelaghayi is seen by the khoncha to the right, while an orange-yellow kelaghayi is seen in the middle. Presumably, the middle section is red on the left-hand side, with a lined-up decorative cover with interchanging colors extending sideways. Given the direction of the patterns upon the cover, it is clearly round-shaped.

"Such Azerbaijani sweets as shekerbura, shekerchorek, pakhlava and noghul-nabat upon the khonchas seen in front create a festive spirit on the canvas" (7).

The part of the painting that is closer to the viewer on the front side shows a river bank. In the middle ground, young Azerbaijani women celebrate the awakening of spring and nature with khonchas in their hands on the other bank of the river.

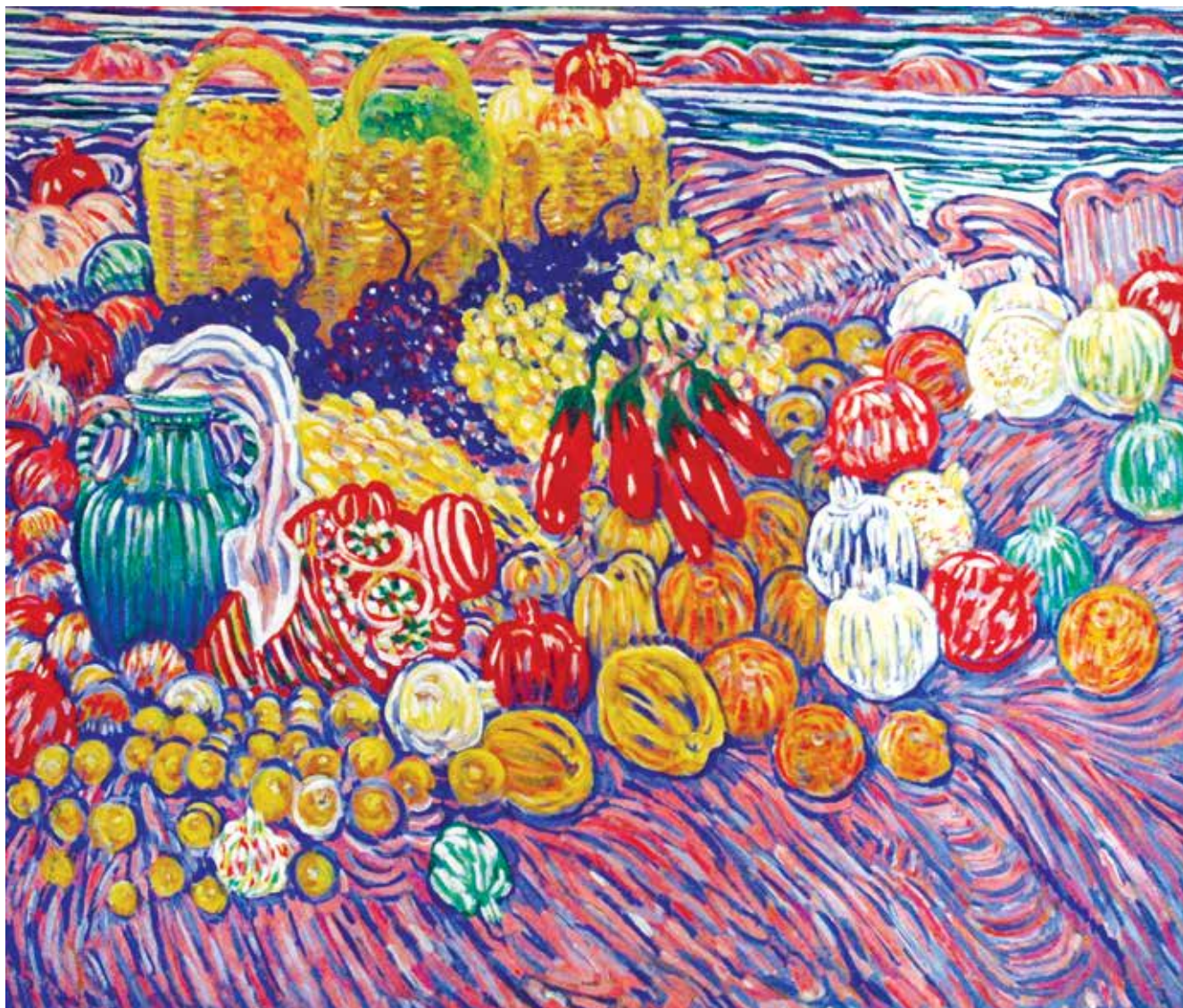
In addition to the kelaghayi seen by the trays, two dark blue and red kelaghayi samples were depicted in the upper right corner. It appears as if someone released these items from the top and left them hanging in the air, while the blowing wind of spring carries those kelaghayi above the people happily celebrating the holiday.

The painter mainly used the blue color throughout the painting, while the palette of colors on the front side essentially includes all colors.

"In general, you can say that this piece of art describes native land as a place possessing legendary, romantic, captivating beauty as if it is described in a fairy tale. The harmonious simplicity accomplished with different strokes of blue, pink and green colors further intensifies the fabulous impression on the canvas...The Motherland shows the purity and cleanliness of nature and its people. All of those looking at the canvas are delighted and rejoice" (7).

It is worth mentioning that the artist's "Azerbaijani tale" painting, created in 1973, has essentially the same compositional structure as the piece called "My nation's spring" drawn in 1969. The artist added khoncha trays on the front side of the "Azerbaijani tale" painting and kelaghayi headscarves on its upper right corner, using relatively lively and colorful shades.

“Absheron still life”. 1973. 115 x 135 cm



The “Bride’s corner” still life painting stored in the Moscow-based State Museum of Oriental Art is another piece depicting *kelaghayi*. A *kelaghayi* decorated with colored buds constitutes most of this artistic composition. The *kelaghayi*’s yellow, dark blue and orange colored almond-shaped patterns are seen in front. Density is inherent to the next dimension of the painting. Colored rose water vessels, looking glasses, a pail with sea buckthorn on the inside, a comb and a case for it, a perfume bottle and a small box were drawn upon the *kelaghayi*.

The *kelaghayi*’s palette of colors prevents viewers from clearly identifying some of the items with the naked eye and requires a closer look at this still life painting; that is, one would need to thoroughly observe the headscarf’s patterns and the items drawn over it. Each

of these items “is beautiful not by itself but because it is part of this great and harmonious completeness” (8, 26).

One of the artworks depicting samples of national art is the “Still life painting with a Shamakhi cover” created with the use of orange colors in 1974. The centerpiece in this painting is a high, flat, green pail, which was one of the keepsakes available at the artist’s home; it significantly emphasizes the choice of orange shades. All of the composition’s elements (a green pail, an orange pail, orange pomegranates) were drawn over a Shamakhi cover. The red, dark blue and green shades used to create the buds upon the cover and the patterns do not facilitate perceiving the overall tonality but add playfulness to the painting. The still life composition is symmetrical and the flow of interchanging multi-colored buds in the cover lies at the core of the



"Fairyland". 1973. 200 x 230 cm

artwork's rhythmic style. Sketches of this still life painting were found in the painter's diary content dating back to November 1971. The painting was drawn with red, green and dark blue pens.

A painting referenced on the next page stands out for the balance of colors. Bahlulzade actually repeated the composition of the initial sketch while working on this piece. "The composition of the still life painting that I will repeat in the future" is an expression written by the artist under that painting.

It is worthy of note that a small sketch called "Fruit and kelaghayi", which was drawn in red color and included in Bahlulzade's 1967 album, was one of the pieces considered to be preparatory work for the still life paintings featuring kelaghayi that date back to the following years. The content of the other pages of that album indicates the painter's quest on this topic.

Some of Bahlulzade's still life artworks show certain items that people tend to disregard in their everyday life. The rose water utensils seen on the "Still life painting with kelaghayi", "Bride's corner" and "Rose water vessels" could be cited as examples of such images.

Bahlulzade drew two rose water vessels with a black pen in his diary on June 29, 1970, indicating their colors below each of these items ("light turquoise and gilded red").

"I went to a funeral," Bahlulzade wrote on the page featuring that painting. "They provided rose water there. There were great rose water vessels of the most beautiful Azerbaijani colors and different shapes. These are varieties unused in my still life paintings!" (2)



"Still life". 1970s. 90 x 103 cm

Bahlulzade depicted the rose water vessels drawn on his diary pages in several still life paintings created using colored paint. The dark blue, red and green vessels were drawn in the background of kelaghayi head-carves ("Bride's corner").

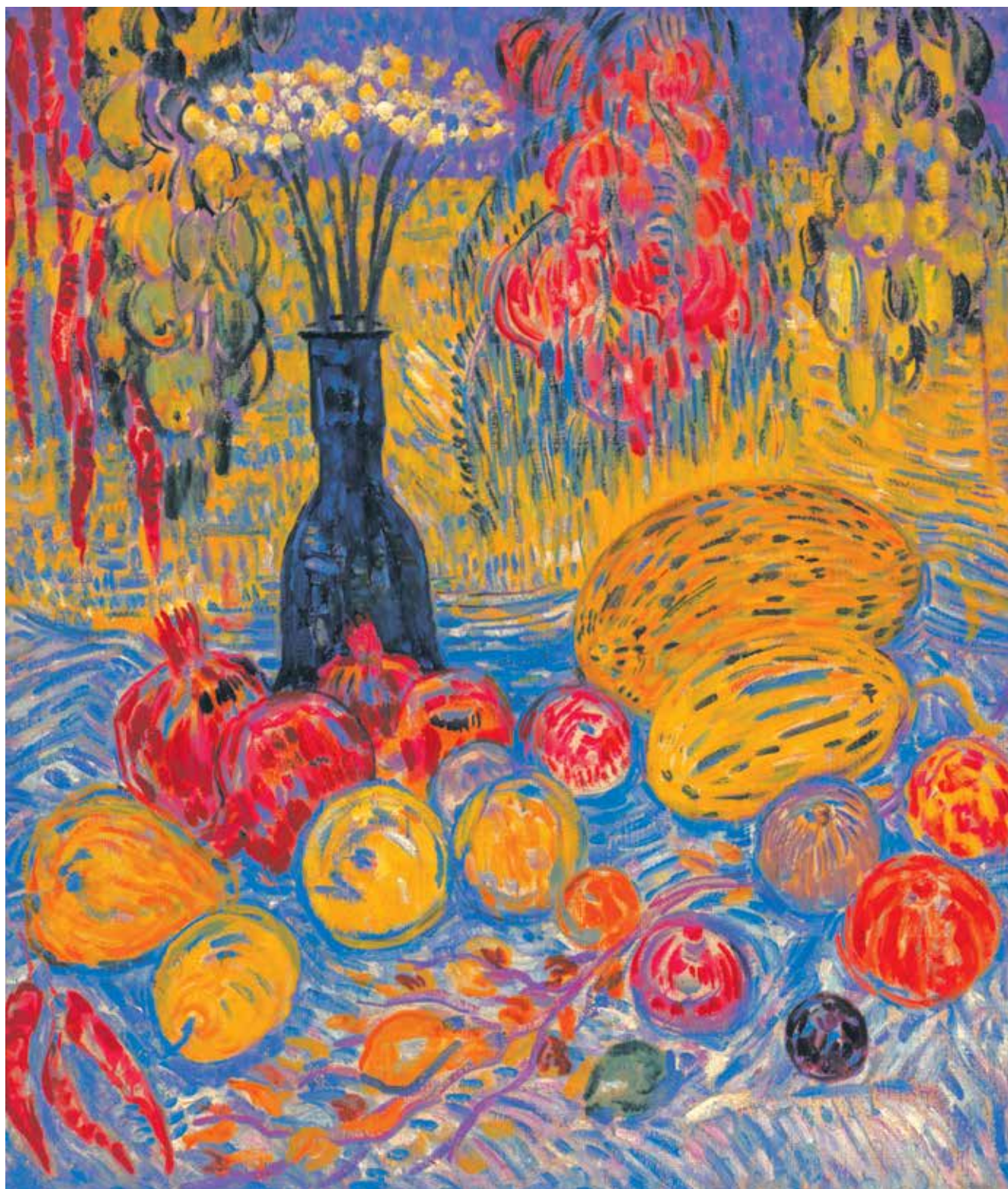
A wide orifice copper vessel with flowers inside is one of the decorative-applied art samples featured on the "Still life painting in plain air", which is stored at the Azerbaijan State Museum of Art. Bahlulzade described his experiences with regard to this painting in his diary on September 3, 1974.

"Despite being tired, I couldn't help it," Bahlulzade said in the diary. "I applied an approximate still life image upon Absheron sand. Now I have to arrange the fruits properly into a group and with colors! I want to show a welcoming connotation on the main part of a Khile carpet on the left side of the composition, as well as autumn Absheron flowers in a copper vessel on the right-hand side, and this variety of colors will make this still life painting more appealing. Moreover, there will be groups of red eggplants" (3).

Nevertheless, the artist did not use the image of a Khile carpet in this composition. As for a copper vessel with flowers, such an item was not depicted on the sketch drawn with a pen in his diary, but it was added to the composition later.

Bahlulzade sometimes depicted the same item in two different artworks. For instance, he drew a blue tray in the "Still life painting with saffron" and also used this image in the "Absheron still life painting" and "Mardakan

“The Corat’s melons». 1971. 90 x 70 sm



gardens". The color of the tray is essentially the same in all the three paintings and the location and color of the fruit is the same in the "Still life painting with saffron" and the "Absheron still life painting".

Saffron with lilac-colored flowers was depicted upon the pails in the middle of the "Still life painting with saffron", which was created with red shades.

In the middle ground, a decorative cover was drawn

by combining dark-red and partly black colors in the section stretching from the upper left corner toward the central part of the composition.

The painter drew *jejim* (fabric) and national carpets in several landscape and still life paintings. *Jejim*, which is one of the samples of folk art, was used in the "Absheron still life painting" (pic. 1). The *jejim*, which is distinguished by a variety of colors and occupies about a half of the composition, appears to be close visually. In addition, decorated bowls, a red tray, a small box, a pail with a long neck and *piyale* vessels were depicted in this still life painting, which created the image of the domestic life and lifestyle of the Azerbaijani people.

A sketch of this still life painting was drawn by the artist with a color pen in his diary on October 24-25, 1971. Unlike the drawing, Bahlulzade added some elements to the piece created with the use of paint. The other pages of Bahlulzade's diary indicate that he was searching for suitable images and contain various drawings featuring bowls, copper trays and boxes.

"I have cherished this still life image in my heart for a long time but I haven't done it yet," Bahlulzade wrote next to the sketch of the 'Absheron still life painting' drawn by a color pen in his diary. "Now it seems closer than ever, it is before my eyes, as if I am prompted to talk by this entire composition and its colors..." (4)

Bahlulzade also depicted a *jejim* in the graphics of the "Ceramics and fruit" piece.

Bahlulzade's grandmother and mother, Hokumekhanim, made patterns, creating the well-known Khilebuta carpets; some of his relatives used to sow beautiful headpieces with patterns.

Bahlulzade said in his diary on May 26, 1972 while referring to his paternal grandmother, "They would make check-work ready for her to work on a *palaz* (a type of carpets); she would weave a little and then leave for the home of her family members in Surakhani. The check-work would still be there and my mother would say, 'Look, this rug was started by your grandmother and then I took over and did the rest of the weaving work'" (1).

The women's carpet-making practices in his household were embedded in Sattar's world view and later reflected in his creative activity.

Carpet-making, which has a history traced back to the period before the Common Era and is the most widespread type of folk art, was a theme employed by Bahlulzade in his artworks titled "The land of fairy tales" and "Mardakan gardens" (pic. 2).

The images of two carpets amount to about half of

the "Mardakan gardens", stretching from the front side toward the middle of the composition. The middle section is comprised of the rugs drawn in the foreground and still life images depicted above them. The carpet with geometric ornamental patterns in the middle is presumed to have been a Khile rug, considering its composition and colors.

Carpets with a myriad of colors are spread over the floor in the evening at a Mardakan garden with a tea table set up on a carpet, teapots on trays with pear-shaped glasses, lemons and jam.

A combination of correlating orange-red, green, emerald green, yellow and dark blue colors was used with a common background consisting mainly of blue, violet and white shades. The person who created this cosy environment is not depicted. However, it looks "as if someone had come here to set the table and then walked away for a moment to call the others...Now everyone will sit down on soft sand and velvet cloths to have a meal and tea. You feel refreshed and at ease when you look at this artwork" (7).

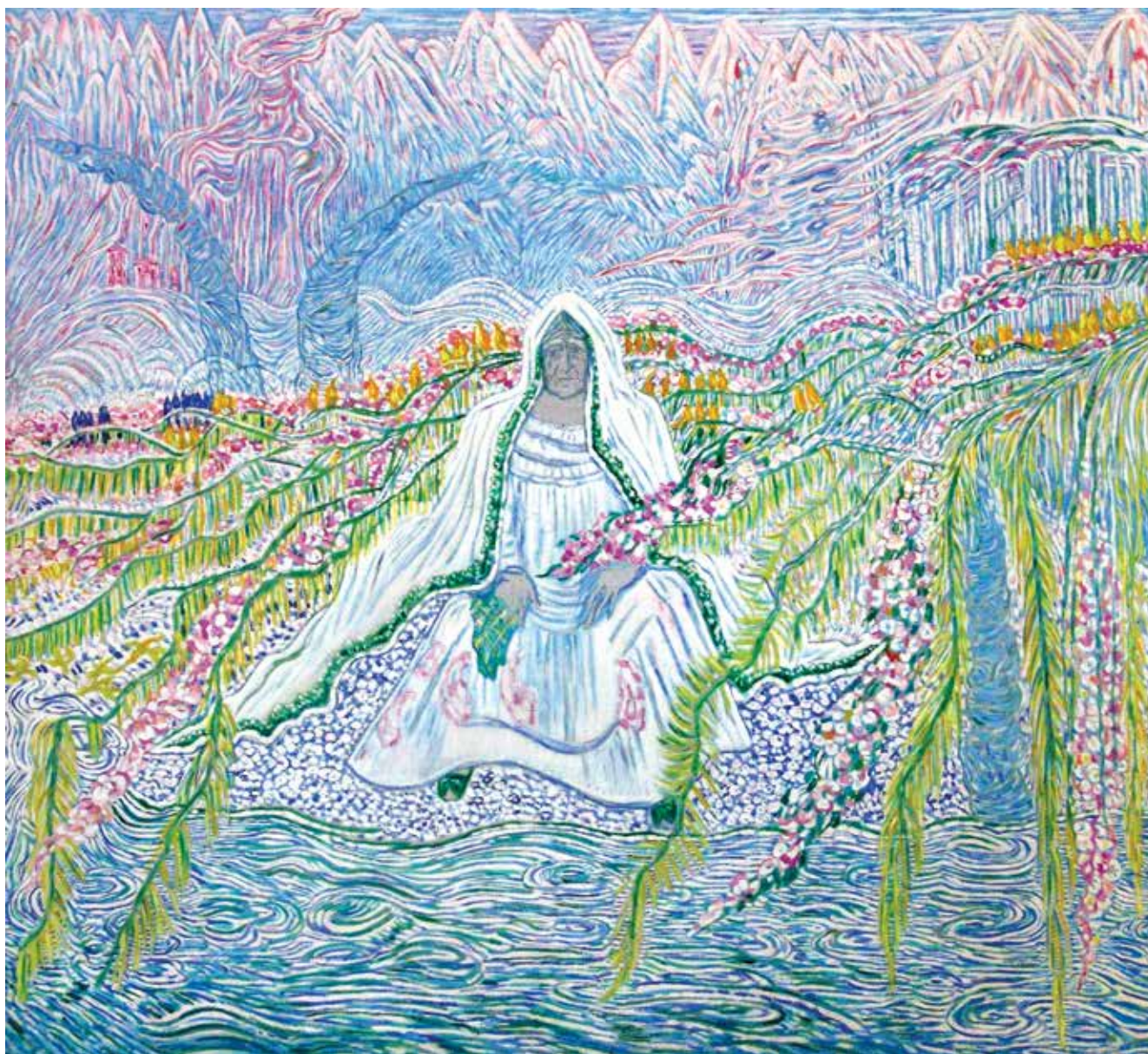
In "The land of fairy tales" (1973), Bahlulzade drew a still life image with a landscape in the background. Two rugs, two vessels with long necks, a tray and fruit are seen in front.

On February 9, 1971, Bahlulzade drew a sketch of "The land of fairy tales" with a color pen in his diary, using the "My land" title instead. Bahlulzade noted below the sketch that the two mentioned rugs had originated from Guba.

"There are Azerbaijani mountains, including Shah, Murov, Kapaz and Gabala, in the back, while lively plane trees are seen in the background of waterfalls in front. There are also gardens with fruit such as apples and pomegranates; limpid water flows from the waterfalls in front. In the foreground, there are two Guba carpets in the middle -- a red one and a blue one. In the inside part, field flowers are seen, in particular, white *Heracleum*, followed by dark-violet, yellow and red flowers and fruit" (5).

In contrast with the drawing in the artist's diary, green and blue shades were used to paint the mountains in the back instead of the pink color. However, the structure of the composition is the same in the painting and the sketch. While pink tints dominated the scene in the painting, the colors applied on the sketch were spread out equally.

The fruit in the lower part of the canvas and the trees on the outside resemble a frame for the pink-colored mountains seen from afar in the back.



"My mother". 1972-1973. 200 x 230 cm

Bəhlulzadə, who depicted decorative-applied art samples primarily on still life paintings, sought to promote the Azerbaijani traditions of art and also indicated that these artworks are an integral part of the Azerbaijani people's life. 🌟

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