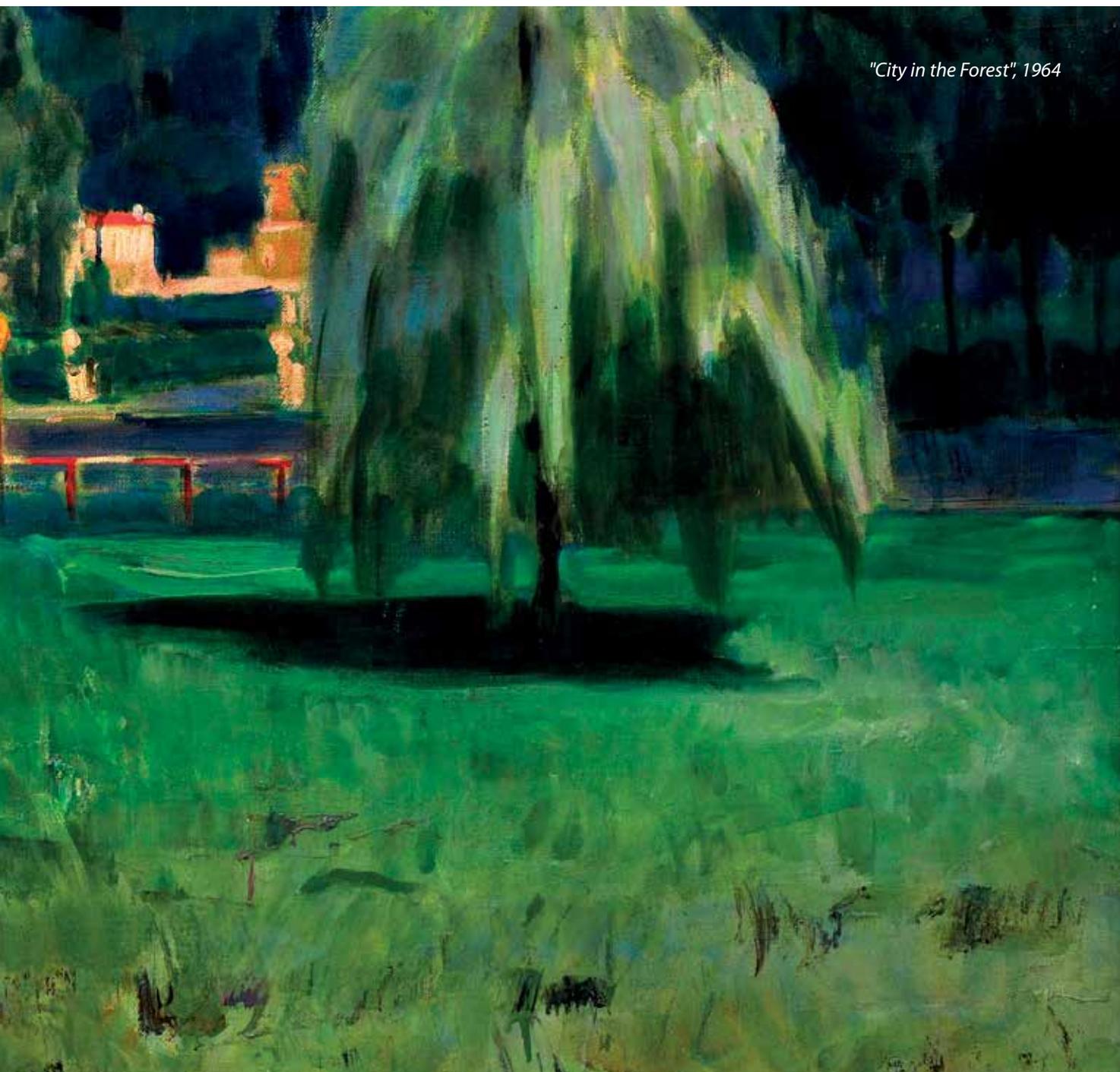




By **Togrul AFANDIYEV**,
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A master of colorful panels



"City in the Forest", 1964

Baba Aliyev was born in Zira settlement near Baku in 1915. In 1937, he graduated from the A. Azimzade Azerbaijan State Art School, before being admitted to the V. Surikov Moscow State Academic Art Institute. From the very beginning of his artistic career, the artist remained committed to realism. He widely addressed the topical themes of his time and created vibrant works in a number of genres, primarily preferring still lifes and portraits. Overall, the artist showed

a penchant for the vibrant, colorful style of depiction characteristic of the Azerbaijani school of art.

Baba Aliyev's oeuvre centers on scenes of work. The artist addressed this theme from an early stage of his career, and with considerable success. In 1939, Baba Aliyev, together with artist Boyukagha Mirzazada, created the board "Rest of Collective Farmers", which reflected Baba Aliyev's inherent skill in solving complex multi-figure compositions, observation, bold perspectives

"Portrait of a Girl", 1956



"Sketch. Girl on a Motorcycle"

and poses, a diverse and rich color palette, and meticulous elaboration of portrait features.

Along with that, the young artist's original works on the then-relevant theme of Nizami Ganjavi, whose 800th anniversary was being prepared at the highest level, testified to the artist's promising future. In 1941, Baba Aliyev created the panels "Sick Nizami Surrounded by People" and "Nizami Among Craftsmen", which already displayed the masterful style and manner of depiction that would later become his signature. In these works, the artist clearly established himself as a representative of realism in the visual arts, emphasizing sharp and yet richly nuanced color transitions that, in accordance with the canons of classical painting, convey space and volume. Both works are based on multi-figure compositions and serve as a testament to the artist's talent.

During World War II, Baba Aliyev, like many other artists, was mobilized to the front. He was wounded several times in battle, and each time he strove to return to the front line as quickly as possible to help his comrades and fulfill his duty to his homeland. It's worth noting that the theme of war, its dramatic and majestic aspects, as well as the heroism of soldiers, occupy a prominent place in the artist's work. Already during the war, which coincided with the beginning of his artistic career, he created a "Portrait of the Hero of the Soviet Union S. Suprun" (1942), a work that brought the author widespread acclaim. The painting represents a realistic depiction of a soldier with strong-willed and determined features. The portrait is executed in subdued colors, and a certain static quality permeates the main character's figure. During the war, Baba Aliyev also created a portrait of the Red Commissar Novruz Aslanov.

Baba Aliyev also explored military themes in other genres. In particular, in 1947, he created the panel "The Commander's Crew", which depicts a real-life incident involving renowned Azerbaijani pilot Mazahir Abbasov and his crew. After a successful aerial battle, the crew was forced to abandon their damaged aircraft and parachute into the sea, where they escaped in a rubber dinghy. This very moment is depicted in the painting, and the artist successfully conveys the tension of the situation through a stark color palette, sharp angles and a complex composition. Overall, the composition is vibrant and expressive, and somewhat theatrical. Nevertheless, the painting was hailed as a significant success for the artist and became a starting point for his subsequent creative explorations.

"New Forces", 1963

In post-war years, Baba Aliyev created a number of multi-figure panels depicting workers and peasants, the selfless labor and rest of oil workers. It is these themes, which constitute the main direction of the artist's work, that brought him wide fame. Among such works one can especially note "Shepherds", "In Search of a New Oil Deposit", "Before the Shift".

In 1951, Baba Aliyev, together with fellow artists Abdul Khalig and A. Zarubin, went on a creative trip to Aghdam district of Azerbaijan, where they observed the hard work of peasants harvesting cotton. The result of this trip was a monumental panel "Supply of Cotton to the State", which was presented at a nationwide exhibition. This canvas became a huge event not only for that time, but also in the history of Azerbaijani fine art in general. One of the important features of this painting is a very bright and optimistic color palette, which was intended to emphasize the glorification of peasant labor. Among other things, the creation of such works indicates that Azerbaijani artists have reached a level of mastery that allows them to solve complex creative problems.

Along with scenes of rural labor, Baba Aliyev devoted considerable attention to depicting the everyday life and difficult, often dramatic activities of oil workers. He devoted a series of works to this theme in the 1950s and 1960s, including the panels "New Forces" (1963) and "Oil Workers at Rest" (1964). It should be noted that the theme of oil, oil production and the work of oil workers is among the most popular in Azerbaijani fine art, with virtually all professional artists exploring it and creating a number of significant works. Many of these have become part of the golden fund of Azerbaijani fine art. Baba Aliyev's works depict not only the labor process but also scenes of rest and the daily life of oil workers, as well as their human emotions and experiences. The artist strove to convey the difficult work of oil workers with optimistic pathos, demonstrating high skill in this. His canvases are distinguished by a complex and intense palette, a complete and interesting compositional solution, and a unique monumental plasticity. Many of the characters represent, in some way, generalized images of the working class. In this way, the artist sought to imbue the ordinary genre with a certain lofty symbolism and elevate it to an epochal level.



"Chukhur-Yurd", 1965





"Oilmen having rest"

The panel "Mother's Heart" (1963) is undoubtedly a creative success for Baba Aliyev. This work, with its horizontal compositional structure, is remarkable for its monumental expressiveness and profound subtext. The

compositional center is formed by three female figures positioned on the lower horizontal line and possessing a generalized character. Younger figures are positioned to either side of the central figure, balancing the main character and simultaneously emphasizing her significance.



"Girl with sherbet", 1976

Alongside such monumental works, Baba Aliyev also created a number of portraits and landscapes of a lyrical nature. For example, the panel "Girl with a Basket" (1976) is distinguished by its plasticity, which is appropriate to the theme, and its subtle color transitions that echo it. In this work, the artist departed from harsh realism and succeeded in creating a romantic and poetic image.

As for the landscape genre, the artist established himself as a master of both lyrical and expressive painting. Works such as "On the River Bank" (1951), "View of Shahdagh" (1963), "A Pasture" (1963), "An Evening on the Caspian Shore" (1964), "Mountains" (1965), "Chukhur-Yurd" (1965) and "A Mulberry Tree" (1965) clearly demonstrate the artist's ability to construct both form and space, drawing on his inherently subtle sense of color. Thanks to this, the artist was able to tackle a variety of, often vastly different, landscape-related tasks.

En plein air painting holds a special place in Baba Aliyev's oeuvre, offering ample opportunity to con-



"The Karlovy Vary Church"

vey what he saw on canvas. In 1960, he and artists S. Salamzade and Abdul Khalig went on a creative assign-



"Mother's Heart", 1969

ment to Zagatala district in the mountainous northwest of Azerbaijan. This resulted in a 1962 exhibition "Nature and People", which showcased the landscapes and portraits created during the assignment.

In the 1960s, Baba Aliyev also went on creative assignments outside of Azerbaijan. Among the many paintings inspired by what he saw on these assignments are "A Monument to Beethoven" (1964) and "A Church. Karlovy Vary" (1964). The artist also paid tribute to the historical themes with which he began his artistic career, creating the paintings "Koroghlu Riding the Gyrate" and "The Genius of Uzeyir Hajibayov". Baba Aliyev's work received public and official recognition: he was awarded the honorary titles of Honored Artist (1964) and People's Artist of the USSR (1982).

Along with his artistic work, Baba Aliyev was also involved in public activities. He served as a long-time board member of the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan, and in 1951 was elected its chairman. An artist of exceptional talent and yet humble, Baba Aliyev died on May 27, 1991. His name occupies a worthy place in the history of Azerbaijani art. ❀