
Development of Portrait of Uzbekistan During the Early 20th Century

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Abstract

The given article examines one of the insufficiently explored problems of art history of Uzbekistan – The formation of a genre system in local painting at the beginning of the 20th century through the example of portrait. Authors investigate such aspects as formation, specificity of themes and traditions, the historical and cultural situation, nature of artistic processes, its main tendencies as well as the role and influence of cultural traditions.

Keywords: *painting of Central Asia, portrait, avant-garde of Uzbekistan, art of 20th century, formation of impressionism in painting of Uzbekistan.*

Introduction

The problems of the history and theory of genres represent a wide range of issues, where various aspects of the development of art are interwoven. They are related both to the history of art and its current process. In development of genres not only the historical and cultural situation is reflected, but also the artistic process, directions, they are shaped by trends, traditions, as well as the personality of a bright master is influenced by genres. In this regard, in each national school the formation of genres, the dynamics of their development has a specific character. Meanwhile, investigations devoted to this issue are insufficient.

Materials and Methods

In this article used research methods observation, work with documents, analysis and synthesis, forecasting.

Review and Discussion

At present considering the new historical and cultural period in development of Uzbekistan, it is necessary to actualize the issues of genre formation in Uzbek painting, to reveal its specific evolution on the background of difficult processes of the 20th century. In the context of updated approaches to the development of the genre system in the painting of Uzbekistan, it is possible to correct a number of outdated views on the period of formation, the development of style directions and future trends. During the development of painting in Uzbekistan in the twentieth century, a genre system which has a unique character and thematic principles, was formed, which in its own way reflected the nature of the mentality of the people, its value orientations and ideals.

This problem is investigated in two aspects - in problematic and chronological, or historical and theoretical approaches. The genre is expressed both in the special structure and content of images, in the principles of communication between us, in special genre-defining features, in the nature of general cultural contexts that stimulate and motivate one or another type of genre structure. In this sense, special system of unity and development of genres is formed in each national art.

A number of monographs were devoted to the development of portrait genre of Uzbekistan, besides there are significant treatises created by a number of art historians like A. Hakimov, N. Ahmedova, S. Gorshenina, V. Rakitin on the Central Asian avant-garde (its representatives, terminology problems, the way of formation). However, the issue of approach of Uzbek avant-garde towards human nature through the portraiture entails debate once again. The artistic heritage of avant-garde which was avoided by art critics before, arousing a large interest in recent ten years. Dozens of works from the State Art Museum of Uzbekistan, the Karakalpak State Art Museum named after I.Savitskiy, the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow prove that there are portraits reflecting various artistic concepts of the avant-garde. Referring to this statement there was an effort for another consideration on the subject.

New artistic forms and aesthetics of European culture (theater, graphics, symphonic music, opera and ballet) were evolving slowly in the first decades of the 20th Century at the same time easel painting was on process of formation. According to the researchers, the peculiarity of the genesis of the Central Asian art is largely based on a "mechanism" - a dramatic collision of two cultures - medieval Muslim culture on the one hand and the European culture of the New Age (which

is contrary to one another – author), on the other. This process not only changed the traditional system of art, but also motivated to discard the old model while assimilating Western culture [1, 41]. There were two options towards Uzbek painting – either creating a professional artistic school or exploration and extension of the artistic processes of the global arena. There were artists with the idea of western modernism (A.Volkov, M.Kurzin, O. Tatevosyan, V.Ufimtsev, O.Podkovirov, U.Tansikbaev) and artists who continued the traditions of realism (P.Benkov, A.Nikolaev, Z.Kovalevskaya) at the beginning of national art. Their perception to human and portrait, especially their explorations on creating the image of new man of the East were multifarious. Especially this process occurred in a very interesting way in Uzbek avant-garde as it was the echo of modernism. For western avant-garde artists, the attempt to revolutionize the world through art is linked to utopian ideas; in contrast, creative experiments for Uzbek avant-gardeurs became a unique way of perception and expression of the Central Asian national culture. Applied art with decoratively saturated, abstract forms filled with symbolic essence served as a finished composition, rhythm and complex of colors. Artists found as “creators” made radical experiments in landscape and genre painting harmonizing traditions and innovations, however this radical studies were applied carefully on portraits. This can be explained by the fact that the portrait genre impedes these types of experiments with its own system of rules. Creative experiences are often observed in self-portrait and portraits.

It is impossible to determine the specificity and formation of genres in Uzbek painting without taking into account the nature of the historical and cultural situation. The regularities are directly dependent on various conditions and factors. The example of the avant-garde and others demonstrates a complex internal evolution and a combination of different concepts. During the era of cultural change, when there was a need for a transition to a new paradigm of art, the way and nature of the functioning of the main factors of artistic consciousness changed as well.

The formation of the genre system in the painting of Uzbekistan has specific features, many of which are explained by the nature of the historical and cultural situation at the beginning of the 20th century. They, in fact, are directly depend on the special historical, political and cultural conditions and factors of the formation of European art forms in Uzbekistan. As the researchers note, “the peculiarity of the genesis of the fine arts in Central Asia is largely contained in its very “mechanism”- the dramatic junction of cultures different in stadial type - on the one hand medieval Muslim and modern European times on the other. This provoked not only a structural change in the entire traditional system of art, but, in

fact, assumed the rejection of the old model, in the process of establishing a new European one” [1, 78]. In the new model, the easel painting became the main typological form with which the genesis of the fine arts of Uzbekistan began, retaining its main status in the future.

In Uzbekistan, unlike the experience of other national schools, the so-called accelerated development, the formation of painting did not begin with the development of realism: masters of the avant-garde were at its origins. Therefore, the formation and evolution of genres proceeded quite specifically and here we cannot draw a direct ascending chronological line of their development.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, A. Volkov, M. Kurzin, V. Ufimtsev, U. Tansykbaev, N. Karakhan, N. Kashina clearly showed a tendency towards an independent concept of the East, each of them was looking for a purely individual plastic equivalent, have experimented a lot. Naturally, it was not in the spirit of the avant-garde, which deviated from all norms, to adhere to the principles, "boundaries" or norms of this or that genre. But in the course of the general laws of that historical period, when the transition from the traditional world to the new one took place, great attention was paid to the personality, to the new person, and brought big interest among artists.

The excretion of the portrait genre in the painting of Uzbekistan in the 20s and 30s, related to the problem of the formation of the genre system investigated in this article, indicates its significant role in the work of mentioned masters. It is firmly connected with a complex of specific features of the ideology and culture of the first revolutionary decades, reflected the complexity and nature of the adaptation of European experience, the mixture of various trends - from realism, impressionism to the avant-garde. The portraits of that time became not only one of the valuable documents of a difficult era, but vividly reflected the extraordinary world and the appearance of a man of the new East. They became the foundation on which many figurative and stylistic principles of painting in Uzbekistan will be formed in the future. In past years, for ideological reasons, the assessment of this period did not always correspond to his real creative practice, but with the approval of more free views on the development of art, materials about the portraits of that time published in monographic publications devoted to the masters of the 30s. The combination of various trends and directions, their conflicts, a wide range of traditions on which they developed, created that unique situation that gave impulse to the development of a variety of modifications of the portrait genre in the future.

Results

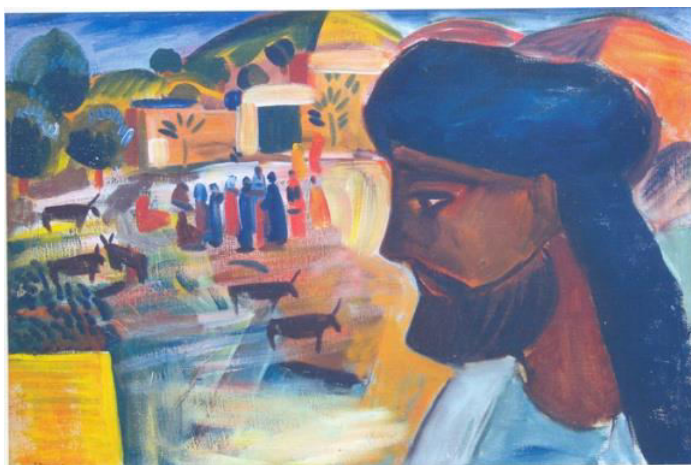
In the 1920s A. Volkov went through a period of interesting searches. Cubism in the artist's painting played the role of a foundation, giving special features to his searches in the mainstream of neo-primitivism. Taking the principles of folk art as a basis and creating compositions from geometric shapes and bright, local color, he strove to achieve flatness. It was flatness that became the most important condition for the implementation of the plastic ideas of the avant-garde. In the 30s, in A. Volkov's painting, there was an appeal to the "portrait-type", which was reflected in the works "Girls with Cotton" and "Collective Farmer". These bust portraits are frontal, turned to the viewer, very expressive in the faces, and, undoubtedly, have real prototypes.

Emphasizing the typical sides of the image may be seen almost in all avant-garde artists' works. This is often the reason of arguments whether works belong to portrait genre or not. For instance, A. Volkov who had his own system of worldview, showed his relevance on the local representatives through widely summarizing, exaggerating the typical lines and enhancing decorative tones of the color. A.Volkov's works like "Two Kyrgyz girls" (1927), "Girls with cotton" (1932), "Collective farmer" (1933) represent bright set of colors, largely generalized forms and artist's original creative language may be seen through its compatibility with the artistic means of applied art. Artist's creative temperament is shown in musical tone which is created by form and rhythm of color. For example, in his sincerely appealing work named "Girls with cotton", along with creating a monumental wall-painting type work, Volkov reveals individual characters of girls. Artist tried to convey the joy of the moment and smiles on the girls' faces through repeating emotionally saturated red and blue colors on the clothes and white cotton.

In monumentalized portrait-type work "Collective farmer" (1933) interesting compositional solution was found by the author (honest farmer full of strength holding a hack). Portrait represents the character of a certain person – cheerful but shyly smiling young man's image. Dark green background which is not too dusky emphasizes bronze – golden tone of peasant's head part. Realistic shapes harmonized with delicate coloring influenced by iconography [2, 112]. Volkov sets the image-types of Kyrgyz or Uzbeks as an analytical approach to their century-old life and explains this intention saying: "I want to have conversation with people using a language which is clear to them" [3]. The artist expressed simple, open natured collective farmers or cotton growers as "builders of new society" using the most ordinary artistic tools. A. Volkov's extensive display of reality through simplistic means is radically different from A.Nikolaev's (Usta Mumin) attitude to eastern man. The artist did not try to give a figurative interpretation of the images

as Usto Mumin did in such works as “Portrait of a young Uzbek” (1924), “Tea house keeper (Choyxonachi)” (1928), “Quail owner (Bedanaboz)”. Master created hard-working, rough, and simple-minded, with slender eyes, dusky people’s portrait-types not idealizing them.

Philosophical and meditative comprehension of the world, the expression of special symbols and concepts, the roots of which Usto Mumin saw in poetry, philosophy and religion, were embodied in his works of the 1920s early 30s - "Spring", "Groom", "Friendship, Love, Eternity", "Bedanabaz". Based on the poetry and traditions of the Middle East, the artist created his own concept of painting in Uzbekistan, which reflected the subtle aesthetic feeling, intuition and plastic culture of Usto Mumin. In his work, he combined the spatio-temporal principles of various plastic systems - miniatures, Old Russian icons and early Italian painting. Inspired by the idea of their synthesis, the artist strove to develop a new language of painting, boldly introducing symbols and associations inherent in medieval art. The portraits "Boy with a Quail" and "Dutarist" (Dutar player) vividly reflected the views and style of the master, at the same time his understanding of the portrait as the embodiment of the ideal, images inspired by traditional ideas, far from reality.



1. *U. Tansiqbayev. Uzbek. Samarkand. M., oil, 1934 (Karakalpak State Art Museum named after I. Savitskiy).* 2. *U. Tansiqbayev. Portrait of Uzbek in a yellow background. M., oil. 1934 (Karakalpak State Art Museum named after I. Savitskiy).*

Form and stylistic experiments in portrait genre may be seen in works by young artists from Volkov’s Team, which was named “Uzbekistan’s artistic front” by Moscow art critics. Regardless his young age Ural Tansiqboev was a painter, who was not afraid using methodological and color researches in portraits. Beginning with the portrait of A. Tashkenboev till the middle of the 1930s, the painter intensely overcame nearly all the main lines of the European painting of 19-20th

centuries and made numerous researches on the image and technique in portrait [4, 13]. The works in neo-primitivism created in different years: "Portrait of Uzbek in a yellow background" (1934), "Uzbek. Samarkand" (1934), "Kazakh woman" and other self-portraits (1931, 1932, and 1935) created in impressionism, divisionism and expressionism is a bright example of this statement. In portraits of Uzbeks artist simplifies the image of a person, exaggerates generalized lines and through these techniques creates portrait-types. For this reason, it is controversial question to define them as traditional portraits. "Portrait of Uzbek in a yellow background" is built on a mutual contradiction of shape, color, contour and background. On a bright yellow background which reminds sunny country image of the suntanned Uzbek is placed in profile. Keeping the balance in building color and shapes of the composition, perceiving the world in a monumental epic way shows the experienced qualification of the artist, while facial expression, decorations of the clothes and particularly the ornamental frames and image of the tree at the background proclaim artist's childish creativity. According to N.Ahmedova, the most important in Tansikboev's works are image-character and symbols from national perspective.

Ural Tansykbaev was, undoubtedly, unique and in some way premature for young Uzbek art. He independently and dynamically formed into a bright creative personality with a deeply national outlook. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the artist created a number of portraits originally representing two artistic concepts: impressionistic ("Portrait of A. Tashkenbayev", "Self-portrait") and neo-primitivist ("Portrait of an Uzbek", "Kazashka" (Kazakh woman), "Uzbek. Samarkand"). The image-sign, symbols coming from the depths of traditional consciousness constitute the essence of these neo-primitivist works. This principle is fully realized in the background, faces, figures, in which the ultimate brightness of color and bold convention comes from the traditions and experiments of the young artist. Therefore, primitivizing is not only in stylistics, but also in the feeling and demonstration of simplicity, play and power in showing these generalized "human-schemes". Here it correlates with the decline inherent in the avant-garde, the archaization of the image.

N. Karakhan was an artist who was close in creative concepts to A. Volkov and U. Tansykbaev. His understanding of plastic form came from a somewhat naive, direct perception of life, and the decorativeness of color came from folk art. The master's work was dominated by modern themes dedicated to the work and life of collective farmers. During these years, N. Karakhan creates his best works - "Laying a water pipeline", "Building a dam", "Waterman", "Building a road", "Picking cotton". The main effect of the paintings is in the scale of the figures, the

impression of a close-up. Clear, sharp, as if illuminated by a bright light, the figures and the stiffness in facial expressions bring the motive of eternity to these ordinary scenes. Being not a good draftsman N. Karakhan often used his favorite method of geometrizing the nose and eyebrows, simplifying the monotonous faces of collective farmers, their emotions. As a result, the “Karakhan’s” iconographic type developed. The saturation of decorative color characteristic of N. Karakhan, contrasting sonorous, pure colors were combined with the principles of thematicism, picturesqueness, rather than portraiture of images.

Talking about gallery of portrait-types with interesting artistic solution a work by A. Podkovirov named “Kurboshi”, 1933 (Chief of the armory, in some sources it is also called “Bosmachi” (The lawbreaker, gangster)) may be pointed out. The artist who attached great importance to generality in form building and coloring questions created the symbolic and stylized images. Despite the fact that the piece was created on the theme required by the epoch, it appeals attention by its complicated shape, composition and coloristic solution. Hero’s face with massive eyelids and almond eyes give impression of a sculptural relief and illustrated with certain, extensive plastic lines. Artist emphasized psychological condition through common shapes and contrary decorative colors like red, brown, white and yellow. The facial expression, beard of the image and rotating lines on the turban contradict the vertical lines on the neck, at the same time by the outlook of a strict and tough person artist illustrated an inner world and nature of a person who experience the tragedy of the epoch. By giving more stylization and symbolization of the image artist achieved expressiveness and strong emotional sensitivity.



3.

3.V.Ufimtsev. Tea party. Applique, reed. (Karakalpak State Art Museum named after I.Savitskiy.

Exit from the boundaries of art, the degradation of the artistic space is one of the signs of avant-garde. This process may be noticed in works by V.Ufimtsev, who has chosen large stylized way in creating portrait-types of local people. In creating national types of Kazakh people artist had not only composition and plastic experiments, but also technical experiments using oil, applique, and reed. Such works like “Kazakh lady having tea”, “Kazakh girl holding a bowl” were created on a cardboard and gouache and may be considered as a template for the piece “Tea party”. These works reflect artist’s inquiries in nature of avant-garde which are generalized shapes, absence of volume and archaization of the image.

When addressing to portrait-types, observer artist asks himself several questions, his thoughts get busy by the analysis of the environment and he makes an afford to express the essence of nature in summarized lines. The static appearance of the viewer, the compositional-plastic researches, the hidden rhythms of the live motion, the decorative saturation become the main feature of the portraits created in avant-garde.

Another artist, who was the representative of Volkov’s Team, was Nikolay Karakhan. The artist had singularity of creating molded images through his unique



plastic-volumetric painting formula. He builds the spirit of the era on the basis of artistic, expressive means in the unique combination of the rich heritage of the people and the traditions of the 20th century. The artist often summarizes the outlook and inner feelings of the farmers in the same form, and often uses the favorite method of geometrical nose and eyebrows. As a result, there are iconographic images specific to Karakhan’s works. In artist’s masterpieces set of decorative colors, the harmonious combination in contrast of pure colors with the theme of the works make primary importance rather than portrait type of the images. From the analysis of the most portraits of M.Kurzin created during the 1920s and 1930s, it is noteworthy that in some cases experienced avant-garde artists started creating in realism. Most of his portraits were created on the basis of the traditions of Russian realism. The reason for this might be his constant political persecution. L.S.Zinger says following on this idea: in

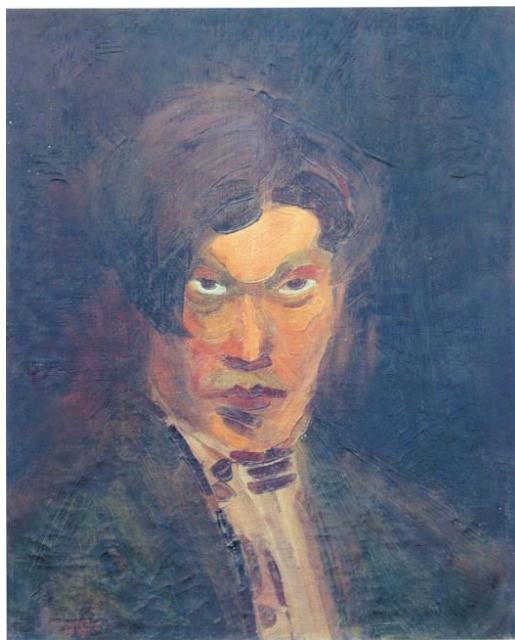
the context of modern formal flows, with abstractionism and other traditions, appealing to portrait is not only creative, but also political courage [5, 185]. The

idea of Renato Guttuzo also confirms this: "... in modern times, just to paint a man is political" [6, 2].

4. A.Volkov. *Self-portrait. 1916.*

In most cases it may be seen that artists made shape and plastic investigations and tested them on self-portraits. (A.Volkov, "Self-portrait" 1916; V.Eremyan, "Self-portrait", 1917; U.Tansikbaev, "Self-portrait", 1931, 1932 and 1935). Self-portrait by A.Volkov was created after his education in Kiev and there may be seen influences of Byzantine iconography and accordance to M.A. Vrubel's art. The hands of the artist looking down upon the audience are desperately joined consonant with Vrubel's "demon". His gaze is proud and quiet. There is an old man who lowered his head, with eyes closed and his figure is even more dignified than Volkov's. This image expresses the eastern wisdom and repeats the image of a prophet from the piece created in Kiev named "Satan and image of Jesus" (1913-1914, "New Jerusalem Museum") [7]. The artist experiences the inventions of European cubism (color intensity, dark colors, size exaggeration) by using mosaic effect. It makes impression as if these two works were built of dark sapphire, reddish ruby, and green emerald reminding fresh spring green. A small effect of colorful glass cubes causes the color melody and tingling of the tones. The golden background, which is characteristic for iconography gives the image unique solemnity and at the same time gives an opportunity to escape from the real life.

"In the search for new expression, art does not get poor and the truth he wants to understand does not diminish" [8, 135-136]. We may also see unique particular search of expression tools, shape stylization experiments in N.Karakhan's "Self-portrait" (1933). Self-portrait created on the background of the decorative carpet painted in warm and dark colors gamma with sharp lines and radical changes in face expression. The light and shadow play on the artist and dynamism created by the changing rhythm of the colors and the sharp gaze in the wide-open eyes make the image more tension. Karakhan tried to emphasize emotional expression through facial plastic.



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6.

5. Self-portrait. Oil, canvas. 1935. Karakalpak State Museum of Art named after I.Savitskiy.

6. Self-portrait. Oil, canvas. 1935. Karakalpak State Museum of Art named after I.Savitskiy.

The constant self-renewal of the artistic language is common process in avant-garde. It may be witnessed by comparing two self-portraits created by U.Tanskibaev in 1935 with two different picturesque solutions. First work illustrates young artist in harmony with nature full of the sunlight shown by impressionistic bright colors, while second portrait depicts artist's experiments in avant-garde. By self-consciousness artist showed braveness in applying shape and methodological experiments. Bold and sharp brushstrokes, eyes with strict gaze under the eyelids, demonstrativeness peculiar to artists – these all were attempts to understand the creative personality through explicit forms and demonstrating unique inner world to the audience,

According to I.L.Rempel, U.Tansikbaev's feeling of dissatisfaction with his work in recent years was so great that at some moments the artist decided to return to the beginning of his creative work. For seeing his first works, artist visits the I.Savitskiy museum and comes to Nukus leaving everything. Observing his own works at the museum, artist gets such a great impression, that soon he passes not being able to stand it. Perhaps this story exaggerated and turned into a legend, however it fully illustrates the mental hardship and suffering experienced by the talented artists of that period.

Among the works created by the representatives of Uzbekistan there were not observed examples of abandoned individual similarities or fully desist from figurativeness as it was common among the western artists. Their images were not

demonstratively against of public tastes, had neither scandalous nor disputable nature. Italian artist Amadeo Modigliani illustrated loneliness, vulnerability and weakness in the society through his fragile and sick heroes; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner from Germany who depicted a dramatic depression of human; Marc Shagal – the fictional grotesque world; Austrian Oscar Kokoshka, who combines tragic depression with genuine humanism and lyricism; the unfortunate and miserable images of English artist Winchem Lewis, one of the founders of the new "vorticism" trend occurred in mixture of Cubism and Futurism – these and other images were created as an ideological echo of the great social sequences of the 20th century. Among the works of first group of artists who could see possibilities of artistic expressions of modernism in national lifestyle and art, there was new point of view, diversity in color and individuality in portraying men. In the avant-garde images of A.Volkov, who called Uzbekistan “my motherland”, and his contemporaries A.Podkovyrov, N.Karakhan, U.Tansikbaev the lyric poetry, decorativeness, artists’ love towards surrounding shapes and colors and attempts for creating archaistic images may be observed.

Conclusion

Analysing aforementioned samples, the diversity of individual research and creative concepts in the avant-garde painting may be seen. New view at the World was the central theme of avant-garde art. Being representatives of new epoch, these artists made new investigations in art relying on traditions of East and West. Each shape and color is a sign with its own meaning and symbols. The representatives of avant-garde emphasized the importance of plasticity and symbolism, without relinquishing anthropomorphic forms while creating portraits in the newest methodological way. The color became the main decisive artistic expression of portraits. Because of the fact that in the images of Kirgiz girls and girls with cotton or musicians by A.Volkov, image of Kazakh man by V.Ufimtsev, image of Uzbek man by U.Tansikbaev were based on the study of nature, and built on the process of foreseeing the typical and individual lines (sometimes even exaggerating). This process is often associated with the artistic life of the people, rich experience in life and a broader outlook. Elements associated with national aesthetic were transformed into avant-garde motives. Western artists quickly discovered the most characteristic features of a man from Central Asia, each with its own plastic shapes and colors. This proves that artists could feel national characteristics by heart and reflect their attitude towards East using the leading artistic styles of the West. But the avant-garde concept was far from the only component in the development of the Uzbek portrait, specific in its genesis and characteristics.

Pavel Benkov is a bright representative of impressionism, one of the first artists in Uzbekistan who began to paint portraits in the open air ("Portrait of an old collective farmer", "Girl with a dutar"), thereby reflecting one of the important aspects of being a man of the East - his harmony with nature. The combination of landscape and portrait, which became characteristic of the artist's painting, laid the foundations for plein-air and genre type of portrait in the development of painting in Uzbekistan.

One of the features of impressionism of all national schools, which researchers note, is that, due to the equivalence of pictorial and plastic components, the national specificity was not stylistically manifested in it. At the same time, in understanding the national identity, Benkov was close to the principles of Russian realistic painting, according to which the embodiment of a nationally distinctive motive, type, natural environment exhaust the problems of national identity in art. Thus, it can be accepted, assuming certain simplifications, that the establishing of the portrait genre in the painting of the republic began with a variety of trends associated with the search for the upper mentioned masters - Volkov, Benkov, Usto-Mumin, Tansykbaev, Karakhan. At different stages of the development of this genre in Uzbekistan, each of these tendencies either came to the fore, was in the lead, or gave way to others.

Consequently, the portrait genre was one of the first genres diversely represented at the stage of the formation of painting in Uzbekistan, which determined its enormous place and significance in future. Its development reflected the leading tendencies of the 30s - 80s, certain stable features and variants, new types appeared, updating the old versions. At the same time, the most important figurative and aesthetic constants, which in their own way reflected the character and mentality of the people, their value orientations and ideals, were revealed more and more vividly. It was on them that all changes in genre forms and their components were "strung together".

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