

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-065-0-5>

**Robert Harris Rothschild**

Art Collector, Art Historian, Art Connoisseur

## **VLADIMIR BUKIYA**

Vladimir Bukiya is a fascinating artistic talent, who constantly explores new techniques, new subject matter and new modes of plastic representation ranging from detailed Renaissance-type frescos to completely abstract sculptural forms attached to panels. He is originally from Georgia in the Soviet Union. He spent close to five decades in Moscow, before moving to the United States a few years ago.

The diversity within Mr. Bukiya's artistic production and his intellectual restlessness and explorations make it difficult to decide where to begin a discussion of his art. However, the genius of his frescos with their masterful stylistic elements such as the draftsmanship, the modeling of forms with light and shade to create their volume, the placement of the forms within the well-established picture space, the vitality and naturalistic movements and expressions of the figures, and the ordered balanced compositions, serve as an introduction to Vladimir Bukiya and his extraordinary talent.

His series of naturalistically rendered portraits of Renaissance artists reference the Old Masters in stylistic characteristics. These classical portraits are imbued with beauty, wonderful observations, naturalistic presentations, adept linear draftsmanship and a masterful use of chiaroscuro to model the forms. These classical elements form the basis of much of Mr. Bukiya's representational work throughout his career. Naturalistic winter landscapes, seascapes, realistically painted still lives and portraits are all part of the artist's production.

Vladimir Bukiya is strongly influenced by the traditional Russian icons of his culture. He has created a spectacular series of them featuring Christ on the Cross, St. George Slaying the Dragon, the Madonna and Child and other religious scenes. These icons reference the Russian Byzantine icons of his heritage and are presented by the artist with freshness and vitality. These scenes are created with

an enamel technique that Vladimir Bukiya has created himself. He uses enamel powder (almost as if using paint) to create the scenes and then he bakes the enamel in special ovens to produce the finished products. This “enamel painting” process is a laborious and distinctive method which the artist employs regularly and lovingly throughout his career in works ranging from total non-objective color pictures to scenes from Georgian life.

The icons that Mr. Bukiya makes are often displayed on a piece of metal that has been tooled and hammered to create a delicate design around the icon. The whole ensemble is often framed by the artist with beautiful wood which completes the entire project spectacularly.

Vladimir Bukiya draws upon life in Georgia as subject matter for an important series of his art. He uses both his enamel technique and oil painting for this group of pictures. These Georgian figures are more abstract than their Renaissance fresco counterparts. These peasants and workers are usually monumental in form. They are rather large and take up a lot of the pictorial space. These Georgian people are treated with warmth and humor. There are many references to drinking, singing and socializing in this series. The hardships of life are conveyed as well as the chickens, jugs, mugs, kitchens, tools and other accoutrements of Georgian existence. Stylistically these slightly caricatured figures are modeled with light and shade making them solidly three-dimensional and volumetric. The figures have vitality and dignity.

Surrealism is another important influence upon Mr. Bukiya. He uses his masterful draftsmanship, his knowledge of color harmonies, his ability to depict forms realistically, his sense of composition and his fertile imagination to make interesting, symbolic, mysterious, humorous surrealist pictures. His images include bizarre shells, floating fish, chess pieces, masked faces, Chagall-like floating figures, violins in landscapes, Salvador Dali’s head itself and other oddly juxtaposed objects. Surrealistic elements permeate many of Mr. Bukiya’s portraits and often cross over into his still lives and peasant scenes.

Vladimir Bukiya’s Still Life paintings form another important and meaningful series in the body of his work. These Still Life paintings showcase many aspects of the artist’s talent. Some of these still lives are rendered very realistically with a polished style and masked brushwork. Details and textures are painstakingly reproduced in these oil paintings. Chiaroscuro is used to create volume in the

forms and the objects are comfortably positioned in a traditionally defined pictorial space. The interplay of light and shadow helps to create the spatial depth in the pictures, as well as the three dimensionality of the forms. This contrast of light and shade adds beauty as well as an evocative dramatic content to these scenes. This group of Still Life paintings usually has the forms arranged in a traditional classical composition.

Vladimir Bukiya produces another group of Still Life paintings that are characterized by more painterly brushwork and a simpler composition of forms, often with just a plain spatially limited backdrop. Light and shade model the forms and space, but less dramatically. The overall emotive effect of these floral arrangements is romantic with asymmetrical compositions and less clearly defined pictorial space.

Vladimir Bukiya is a master colorist. He creates beautiful color harmonies in each of his paintings. The color palettes that he chooses for his Still Life pictures assist in creating the classical or romantic ambiances that emanate from the scenes. He varies the mood and emotions of his still lives with his color harmonies and his treatment of the dialogue between light and shade. Many of the artist's Still Life paintings have surrealist influences in the forms selected and the way they are presented.

Vladimir Bukiya's intellectual and artistic curiosity results in his experimentation with many kinds of abstract and non-objective styles of artistic expression. He employs the enamel technique, oil painting and sculptural assemblages to create different types of artistic abstractions. Some works are completely non-representational, while others reference the abstraction of forms and space from the Post-Impressionistic period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These works are widely diversified in style and type. They include various elements such as forms and shapes reminiscent of Kandinsky and Miro, the cubistic treatment of forms and space, the flattening of pictorial space, and lyrically linear abstracted figures.

The artist's completely non-representational works also show a large variety in styles and types of expression. Mr. Bukiya builds his compositions with the patterns and movements of colors. The compositions are also created by linear patterning using the elements of two-dimensional linear design as well as the rhythmical movement of the lines and shapes.

Mr. Bukiya has painted in the style of Optical Art composing shapes of small colored squares. These shapes intertwine, recede and interact in a sometimes three-dimensional pictorial space. Mr. Bukiya's non-representational pieces often have a flattening of the background plane which emphasizes the forms, shapes, lines, colors and design in the front. The classically trained artist utilizes his knowledge of composition, perspective, movement, draftsmanship and color theory to make some exciting and captivating abstract and non-representational works of art. The artist balances elements such as positive and negative space, black and white forms, wavy and rigid lines and shapes, tightly drawn and loosely painted brush work, tranquil versus energetic designs, and soft and strong color contrasts and harmonies.

Vladimir Bukiya also has a series of works that incorporate actual three dimensional sculptural elements such as wooden sticks, metal ribbon, string, rope, metal animal figurines and abstract ceramic shapes of the artist's own making. These forms are mounted on flat panels and displayed as wall pieces. The important characteristics of these pieces are the movement of the shapes, the textures, the composition, the colors, the overall design concept and the evocative effect of the work. These elements are essential not only to these sculptural installations and presentations, but also to the rest of the artist's abstract and non-representational works.

Vladimir Bukiya is a prolific extremely talented artist who creates high quality, imaginative and intriguing pieces of art in a variety of styles. His Russian/Georgian heritage is evidenced in his distinctive enamel religious icons and in his entertaining paintings with Georgian life as their subject. His love of his cultural tradition is further shown by the series of artistic plates that Mr. Bukiya has created. These plates and the motifs painted upon them are traditional objects found in Georgian culture. Mr. Bukiya is heavily steeped in the techniques of the Old Masters and he is adroit at creating Renaissance frescos and drawings. Vladimir Bukiya is armed with an arsenal of knowledge and talent stocked from diverse sources such as his Russian artistic heritage, Renaissance traditions, lessons learned in the abstraction of forms and space from the late 19th and early 20 centuries, as well as the non-objective artistic theories and products of the last 100 years. Vladimir Bukiya selects which elements of his artistic talent and knowledge he wants to utilize in the creation of each piece of art that he produces.

His fountain of creativity is continually bubbling over enabling him to be a prolific, entertaining, multi-talented and multi-faceted visual artist.

#### **REFERENCES**

1. Janson H. W., Janson A. F. (2001). *History Of Art*, Sixth Edition.
2. *Fun, fine art and Fantasy: The Robert Harris Rothschild Collection*, 2012.