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The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova

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Abstract. *This article deals with the conceptual and methodological models of fine arts works during the period of independence in the context of national identity through the examples of work of the artist S. Suleimenova. Based on the application of phenomenological-hermeneutic methods, a philosophical and art analysis of her paintings is conducted.*

Currently, there are two trends in modern culture: integration and differentiation of cultures. One of the most important tasks today is to counteract the ideology of globalization, aimed at the formation of averaged, standardized concepts of values.

Creating in art, reconstructing their own idea of the universe, the origins of which are associated with traditional values, on pictorial canvas through color, composition and texture, the artists seem to gather the lost and disjointed phenomena of their ethnic culture in a certain set. In this process, dealing with the form of artwork is actively involved. In the works of artists, who create in the mainstream of various styles and manners, there is an intensive increase in the importance of new forms of formation that would enhance the factors of decorative expressiveness, often through the rejection of the established aesthetic criteria of artistic expression. This process is associated with the creation and construction of a new artistic language that would correspond to the ethno cultural discourse of the Kazakh people. As a rule, the construction of this language acquires the character of the game of various metaphors and symbols, which are basic for national mentality and identity.

Keywords: Kazakhstan's artistic situation, the period of independence, scratchboard works, artist S. Suleimenova, philosophical and art analysis, ethno cultural discourse, postmodern discourse, national identity, hermeneutics of the Other.

Hypothesis

A feature of the contemporary artistic situation in Kazakhstan is that a salvation idea of national identity has arisen in the continuously escaping, fluid everyday situation based on tradition. Perhaps, therefore, the eastern forms of philosophy, adapted to the understanding and needs of the Western man, have suddenly become necessary. Therefore, today another strategic line is also in demand - "postmodern", oriented towards "artistic and intellectual nomadism", which relies on overcoming the philosophy of the subject.

Introduction

Kazakh artists' understanding of the worldview acquires particular relevance at the present stage of development of the national art culture of Kazakhstan. The situation in which the national fine arts is developing is unique. As a rule, original artistic creativity is determined by involved interaction processes

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

of traditions and innovations. After gaining state sovereignty, the artists faced an unusual task – creating of their own national pictorial tradition. In methodological treatment, this task appears as a problem of creating artworks in which their own conceptual grounds should be appeared, created, performed, invented rather than incarnated.

Contemporary Kazakh art is faced with the need to critically review traditional concepts of art history, develop and apply new philosophical and methodological strategies in understanding the conceptual foundations of fine art.

The authors believe that in the philosophical and art analysis of the most significant works of Kazakhstani artists in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, the most fruitful is the interpretation of these works from the standpoint of the "hermeneutics of the Other."

We tried to clarify the artistic features of ethno-cultural discourse in works of S. Suleimenova from the point of view of the possibilities of affirming the originality and self-identity of Kazakh culture through the means of postmodern conceptualism.

Main part

The conceptual plan of postmodern discourse in the actual art of the Central Asiatic region

At the present stage, according to G. Deleuze and F. Guattari¹, the culture of the Western model is "tired" of its own orientation to universal rigidity and certainty. The peculiarity of the current cultural situation is that there is no pre-determined universal goal and uniting idea. Perhaps, therefore, the eastern forms of philosophy, adapted to the understanding and needs of the Western man, are unexpectedly in demand. In this situation, the actual art of Kazakhstan is affirmed.

The identity of a person was defined in terms of the absolute Other. Now the very other has become the goal of a person's self-identification. His existence has turned into a becoming selves open to the Other. Identity is not a given, but a task, a challenge that cannot be handled. The Other wins the Identity, not allowing the world, language and culture to be locked up in the frozen universal forms. Modern creative thought loses the character of identity, repetition, representing a discrete field of disjoint discourses. This is expressed in the constant concern about the growing number of differences and the discourses of the Other, which arising where people for centuries have seen only similarities. From all identities there were only simulacra, i.e. the concepts that "simulate" unity are such only in appearance. On the ontological level, any Identity contains the condition of the possibility of transition to its Other. We proceed from the fact that creativity is the manifestation of difference, because creativity is impossible if we are not ready to accept something new and the lifeworld in its whole. The return to the lifeworld should return their appearance to the state of affairs, e.g. to the subjects - their way

¹ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

of relating to the world, to find that moment of life experience through which the Other and the artistic system of things at the moment of its inception is given to us for the first time. Only through such an experience of reading artistic creations life begins to be felt as a constant novelty, and every sensation is full of freshness and uniqueness. Only art takes us beyond the horizon of the possible and only by going beyond this framework, we become able to see the reality. To experience what actually happens is possible only through an artwork – this is another life inside the current or apparent life.

The artist's eye is capable of discovering the inner, invisible essence of a thing, can express all nuances and shades, which is simply impossible to encompass and take into account, if one starts from the physiological or anatomical possibilities of sight. The artist sees not only things, but also what makes thing a thing, sees the atmosphere in which they are immersed, the atmosphere of the vital world, which is the most direct expression of being. An artist is the first person who sees the nature of a thing. In this vision, old and habitual associations, and the reality sparkles with fresh colors that appear as Other in relation to the well-known clichés and formal side of the matter. The social body must be understood as Other, as an open system of signs.

The Other is present in the cultural system and is clarified by it "as the text by means of context." The Other manifests itself as an immanent phenomenon, which we can understand hermeneutically through the context of the world. At the same time, however, the Other manifests itself differently, as another kind of being, meaningful in itself without context. "The phenomenon of the appearance of the Other is the face" (E. Levinas)².

In aesthetics, it became necessary to decipher and rewrite the fundamental traditional discourse as an expression of the hierarchy of cultural values, the primacy of the soul over the body. Central Asian artists of contemporary art presented their vision of the hermeneutics of the factual Other in their work in different ways, synthesizing the problem of self-identity and the Other in one way or another. Their appeal to questions connected with the collective unconscious and with the social body, is in a certain sense revolutionary in nature (Latin *revolutio* from *re-volutio*, which means a reverse movement back to the original), appealing to the heterogeneous arches of human existence—here as an openness to the Other.

In order to illustrate some features of the development of various postmodernist strategies in their aesthetic expression in Kazakhstan, consider some of the works of the Kazakh artist – Saule Suleimenova, in which the problems of the aesthetic conception of the Other in the context of the regional art situation with regard to contemporary art are vividly highlighted.

The artistic discourse of the Kazakh artist S. Suleimenova

² E. Lévinas, *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris, Seuil, 1967.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

In modern culture there are two trends: the integration and differentiation of cultures. One of the most important tasks today is to counteract the ideology of globalization, aimed at the formation of average, standardized ideas about values.

To this end, Saule Suleimenova in her work focused on identifying ethnic and regional identity, seeking answers to the questions: "Who are we - Kazakhs, Russians, Ukrainians ...?". What makes us different from people living in other regions of the planet? In other words, what is our *otherness* and what is our *Other*.

In connection with the hermeneutic problem of the Other as a creative impulse of many prominent artists of Kazakhstan faced by us, first of all it is necessary to understand that their inner poetic space is not some amorphous, faceless aesthetic intention. As a rule, it acquires a personal character in their work. It is filled with voices and movements, already as if they separated from the author, not quite belonging to the author's voice. The author's ontological setting is twofold, acquiring the structure of a dialogue with itself as the Other, as a result of which the works of artists become a kind of scene of the internal plastic theater. One of such theaters was presented by S. Suleimenova in her work.

In S. Suleimenova's ethnocultural postmodern art discourse, the subject matter of the fundamental question of the illusory or reality of the world in which a person lives is also discussed: what does it mean, is it a full-fledged, self-sufficient reality or just the area of the struggle of mankind for his own survival. In this sense, the works of S. Suleimenova, as it seems to us, are the milestones in solving art problems of our Kazakh identity.

The artist's works from the series "*Kazakh Chronicle*" unfold in front of modern consciousness an alternative picture of the world that gives new outlines and new significance to everyday reality. S. Suleimenova focused on everyday human existence, on its inescapable uncertainty, spontaneity and independence. In a sense, in these works, a general movement of modern ethno-cultural discourse to the world of everyday life is outlined. The mission of S. Suleimenova's art was the desire to reflect the true nature of modern life in her lived reality, not limited to the sphere of ideal or traditional plots taken from classical and mythological sources. In the "*Kazakh Chronicle*", it implements earthly and mundane art, but not devoid of poetry and mystery in the very most of the concrete examples of everyday life – even in the low and ugly. Its goal was to show the "heroism of modern life" (Baudelaire³), as well as its anti-heroism. Moreover, she seeks not only to display photographically various scenes of everyday reality, but also to open them to the viewer through various artistic forms and techniques invented by her.

Declaring the existence of other realities than positivistic or mythological, S. Suleimenova shows a multidimensional world of phenomena of her aesthetic consciousness aimed at building communication strategies with the symbolic

³ Ch. Charles Baudelaire, *On the Heroism of Modern Life*, from *Salon of 1846*. Available at: http://mariabuszek.com/mariabuszek/kcai/High_Art_Pop_Culture/BaudelaireHeroism.pdf, accessed 12. 02. 2018.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

system of urban space, into which heterogeneous ethno-cultural characters from the nomadic past of Kazakhs are inscribed.

Life in modern cities, proceeding under the sign of autonomy, when the feeling of rootedness, the sense of cultural identity disappears, aggravates the problem of the Other within the framework of the sociocultural difference. It seems to us that the presence of these sociocultural frameworks is indicated in the works of S. Suleimenova through the walls of various buildings and buildings that form a prose background. Ethnic characters, depicted on this background, is the face of the Other, symbolizing the historical collective unity and integrity of the people. These two elements – the city walls and ethnic characters – form a certain force field in which alienation and even some hostility of these elements in relation to each other is expressed. In the works of S. Suleimenova, such an indispensable attribute of urban space as a wall becomes a cultural sign expressing the disappearance from the urban space of ethnic symbols and its replacement by the multicultural symbols of a large city where the presence of cultural elements of an ethnic character is perceived as an anachronism.

In the ethno-cultural artistic discourse of the author, there is also an immanent indication that the urban space with its multicultural signs on "fortifications" (graffiti) can contribute to the further process of urbanization as a process of cultural unification of various groups of the urban population that is capable of eroding the last vestiges of ethno-cultural unity.

We believe that Suleimenova in her conception of life, reflected in her works, expressing "everyday artistic consciousness," and, at the same time, recreates her picture of the world, her inner individuality, the impulse of feelings and moods – in short, what shapes the spiritual interests and needs of the individual in its being-there, which manifests its open character in relation to the Other as the fundamental concept of all genuine artistic creativity. Her art "can be regarded as a model of the uniqueness of being, creatively representing to us a sensually rational comprehension of the world"⁴.

We believe that in her works, Suleimenova has made a successful attempt to express the features of the existence of traditional ethno-culture through innovative artistic methods and techniques, which has become for the cosmopolitan city a completely different culture in its otherness, which, in fact, is historically our own, the one from which we, Kazakhs, are originating. Truly, the urbanistic Spirit of modern being-in-the-world is a tough form of suppression of cultural ethno-genesis. In this connection, in her works Suleimenova, in a lyrical and epic key, subjects re-description and reveals the line between the total-urban element of being and the private ethno-cultural sphere, which the author, undoubtedly, assumes on the basis of her worldview position, prefers. The ethno-cultural discourse of Suleimenova proceeds from the critical orientation towards the established urban form of being of the subject in its alienation and provides an alternative form of subjectivity, proceeding from the traditional formative and

⁴ A.G. Zakhovayeva, *Art: a socio-philosophical analysis*. Moscow, Kom Kniga, 2005.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

creative principle of individual activity, however, reinterpreting its boundaries in a new way. Having absorbed the ideological spirit of the modern social situation, the ethno-cultural discourse of Suleimenova opens up to the audience the space of other opportunities than before and gives everyone freedom in their choice.

This existential and artistic position, read from the works of Suleimenova, who have an openly humanistic content, forces viewers to take a different view of what is now called "traditional values", namely, to perceive them in the mode of endless everyday life, in their commonness. The picture of the world in its commonness, presented by Suleimenova is not a bare imprint of a momentary mood. By no means. Her visible world becomes a reference point for mastering the Other's culture in whatever regional and marginal forms it was, an internal transformation of the artist's personality capable of creating "open" works of art. The openness of an artwork is evidenced by the artistic and ideological strategy of its author to demonstrate not alienation-from-something, but alienation-in-something, meaning "denying oneself and giving ourselves to some alien force, the desire to become another in something different and, consequently, no longer act within the bounds of something, but undergo the impact of this something that is no longer us"⁵. And the most important paradox, identified in Suleimenova's works, is that Other, otherness in fact is nothing more than our traditional past, which is forgotten by the imperious power of what now determines our being-in-the-world as alienated from our own essence of the subjects of cosmopolitan megapolis.

It should also be noted that Suleimenova, when exhibiting daily life in her works, managed to achieve such an aesthetic effect, in which the spectator's emotions acquire a completely special character, which has nothing in common with our usual sensations and our reactions to everyday life. And this mainly happened because in its artistic compositions the organic essence of the figurative processing of the semantic, spiritual and physical material of art was represented, demonstrating the continuing disappearance of the face of its Other in the ethno-cultural dimension, the cultural identity of the Kazakh people, who found themselves in the cold, empty and limited in itself social space of modern megacities.

For Suleimenova, the space of the metropolis is the realm of the disclosure of the Other's being in its deeply ethical dimension. In her works, the concept of the Other arises in connection with the necessity of existential care for the Other and justice towards him, in connection with the theme of love and desire, which takes us beyond the bounds of being-in-the-world. However, the concept of the Other can arise only in the sphere of inter-human relations. In the words of E. Levinas: "Inter-human relations ... are similar to the two-dimensional interface, on one axis – "worldly" – the phenomenological reliability is indicated, which is compared with the other axis – "otherworldly" – with terms of ethical responsibility ... One can understand God as an alternative and transcendental

⁵ U. Eco, *The open work*. St. Petersburg, Symposium, 2006.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

being only in terms of inter-human relations, which although present in the phenomenological and ontological perspective of the conceptual world, but strive to overcome the universality of the presence in the direction of absolutely Other"⁶.

Scratchboard works of S. Suleimenova in the context of two artistic strategies: traditional and postmodern

Saule Suleimenova is a famous Kazakh graphic artist and painter, one of the authors representing Kazakhstan art abroad. She took part in the exhibition "*A est di niente*" ("The East Out of Nowhere", 2009), held in Turin, where, among other authors, she tried to acquaint the European viewer with the real face of the Central Asian country. In this exhibition, she presented her works from the series "*Kazakh Chronicle*", which are made in the scratchboard technique – engraving on paraffin– and have a pronounced conceptual plan, due to the acute setting and the development of ethno-cultural artistic discourse, associated with a particular creative transformation of the Kazakh arts and crafts techniques art and lessons of Western European expressionism and trans avant-garde.

It is known that the source material for scratchboard works is a photograph. Photography is, as it were, a product of molding, where the predetermined form organizes the internal forces of the object so that at some point they come to a state of equilibrium, representing a fixed slice of reality. By applying certain layers of paint to the photographic image, the artist achieves such an effect that equilibrium does not stop, and the modulation of the image begins to continuously modify the shape, making it changeable and fluid. Thus, working with a light imprint, the artist is engaged in forming a certain duration, thereby introducing in the pictorial plan the relief and perspective in time.

These lessons are curiously refracted in the work of S. Suleimenova, who managed to most clearly represent the ethno-cultural element through new technologies of contemporary art. In this regard, it should be noted that in the work of S. Suleimenova, the question arises as to what role in the modern urban life of the majority of Kazakhs is played by their traditional worldview and cultural archetypes, as far as they are subject to cultural transformations.

In our opinion, today the main task facing the representatives of the national artistic culture is to use the heterogeneous, manifold artistic language of the tradition as effectively as possible in order to freely articulate individual and collective cultural projects. In this direction, at least two strategic lines are being discovered in Kazakhstan at the moment: one of them is the so-called "*humanistic*" line, tending to the values of the individual "*ego*" of the artist, as well as to traditional spiritual values. Another line, which can be called "*postmodern*", is focused on "*artistic and intellectual nomadism*", which relies on the overcoming of the subject of philosophy with its supposedly unproductive concepts, such as authenticity and originality. Adherents of the last lines indicate the possibility of building *other* aesthetic language, *other* artistic practice that showed the rejection of

⁶ E. Levinas, *Time and the Other. Humanism of the Other*, St. Petersburg, Higher Religious and Philosophical School, 1998, p. 123-258.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

the "great truths" of humanized discourse on the one hand, and the belief that the autochthonous culture of Kazakhstan is a kind of quasi-substance that can only be described by means of mobile and multivalued "floating signifiers" on the other hand.

We believe that by conjugation of these, in our view, complementary worldview Saul Suleimenova develops its own particular strategy, successfully integrating the postmodern discourse of "here and now" and the artistic language of the tradition.

In a series of works "*Kazakh Chronicle*" (2008) Saule Suleimenova uses an archive photo, equalizing the steppe images of the XIX century with the photographic portraits of her contemporaries. Prescribing different portrait groups with acryl, she places all the characters along a uniform photographic background - these are the walls of houses, garages, fences dotted with street graffiti. Thanks to the uniformity of backgrounds, the characters communicate with each other, despite the epoch's separation. Insisting on their dialogically, the artist collects from multiple paintings the multi-part installations, the configurations of which are subject to change: a separate picture is not a verified puzzle, but a rough smalt of a mosaic. Installed depending on the exposition space, its compositions record not the cosmos of historical chronology, but the chaos of the flow of time, briefly pulled into the point of fleeting perception. The program openness of the project, the possibility of its addition or truncation, the diversity of the characters and, at the same time, their unity, accentuated ethnicity, the vibration of individuals, emotions, costumes, accessories create a mobile, volatile environment of the incessant process of life, which actually gives the cultural and anthropological effect of the identity sought ... Humanitarian dialogue in time does not exhaust the need to analyze the relationship of the individual with the society, especially in connection with the market relations that radically changed its former order⁷.

Our ethno-cultural identity against a background of flat, surreal urban space has become for us only a simulacrum, an empty sign that does not refer to anything real, except to our Other alienated and buried in oblivion. We live in an era of transition from our lost Other through alienation with our cultural identity to an absolutely Other as a game of creative possibilities hidden in human experience. The creative intention of S. Suleimenova's series of works "*Kazakh Chronicle*" is not aimed at the notorious search for the cultural identity of the Kazakh ethnos, but on exposing the hidden form of this identity as its Other, the Face of the Other at the level of its conceptual reproduction by means of artistic expressiveness. This artistic strategy develops on the basis of an interpersonal communication turn within the framework of postmodern discourse, where the phenomenon of the subject's relation to himself can be manifested only through the concept of the Other, literally against the background and on the "bottom of the Other" (G.

⁷ *Interview with Paolo Colombo. Self-identification: futuristic forecasts*, Catalog of the First Annual Exhibition of SCCA. Almaty, SCCA, 1999, p. 3-5.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

Deleuze)⁸. Other is revealed as a sphere of the unconscious, as the sphere of the economy of desire, which is "not beyond reason, but within" (J. Lacan)⁹. In Suleimenova's works, an entirely new attitude to the artist's ego is developed on the aesthetic level, which creates itself through the movement of one identity to another through the procedure of enclosing the external as an illusory reality. In our opinion, it is the fences, the walls of houses and garages that perform the function of fixing of external to the artist's ego, represent his mental boundary, but such an external one that pretends to be his own.

The space reproduced in the works of S. Suleimenova is the space of meeting with one's self and at the same time with the phenomenon of the Other. The Other here is the very space of the urban environment, which loses its connection with human life, turning into an empty container of abstract individuals who, deprived of their traditional "soil", their ethno-cultural identity, experience a sense of estrangement and existential mistrust towards other, which is an ontological risk.

Let us turn to some of the works of S. Suleimenova's series "*Kazakh Chronicle*". The composition "*Three Brides*" (2008) depicts sitting figures of three girls-Kazakhs in pointed headdresses (saukele), in traditional national robes and ornaments against the wall of brick color, which is dotted with various children's drawings, in which there are images two men holding their hands, the "smiling" sun, a playground, the outline of buildings and various inscriptions. The gracious and thoughtful faces of brides and their outer clothing, made in light brown tones, blend harmoniously with the general background. The images of brides, hovering above the wall inscription *Kazakhstan*.

In another work "*Apalar*" (2009), we see a photograph of the construction site, vertically and horizontally overlapped by powerful steel beams. In the right-hand corner of the acrylic composition, two figures of seated old women in white headdresses (kimesheks) and dark robes are depicted with a sweeping brush. The face of one apache with an ironic smile is turned towards the viewer in the full-face, the detached face of the other, immersed in a sleepy reverie, we see in the half-face. The presence of old women brings a certain dissonance into the general composition, which gives it an alarming character and leads to mixed feelings.

Another most striking work of "*Dalağasığamız*" (2008) reproduces two standing figures - grandmothers-Kazaks and her granddaughters. The grandmother is depicted in a white turbaned kerchief and a pink-lilac dress. She holds the hand of her granddaughter standing in a green T-shirt and a light yellow skirt with a pink bow on her head. The background is a gray-blue iron door with highlights, shadows, torn ads on which a black padlock is hung. In the upper right corner is a fragment of a gray concrete wall, to which a fresh scrap of advertisement is glued.

⁸ G. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, New York & London, Continuum, 2003.

⁹ J. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality; The Limits of Love and Knowledge Book XX, Encore 1972-73*, New York, London, WW Norton & Company, 1998.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

The relevance of painting from the photo of S. Suleimenova is that she skillfully transferred the tenderness of color, the blurriness of the contours and the effects of light propagation. These, in our opinion, unconditionally, artfully and carefully executed works differ in their compositional unity due to the organic tonal and black-and-white solution.

The success of these works lies not only in the use of innovative technologies, but also in the fact that they demonstrate the artist's innovative vision, poetic freedom, which allows to combine different event moments in one work. On the one hand, these are characters taken from the past era, and on the other hand, objects that are typical of the modern urban environment. First of all, in these works the artistic insight of the irrational side of the world has manifested itself.

In her works, S. Suleimenova, touching on the ethnocultural aspect, makes attempts to point to the deep "person in person", striving for an open world and able to enter a wide free universe that opposes the closed totalitarian systems of the twentieth century. Moreover, the "*Kazakh Chronicle*" is the author's testimony about a certain effort to reveal the inner space and to reveal the original meaning of the Other-for-us by way of going "outwardly", going into space of another person. This deep creative procedure gravitates to a kind of openness to the problem of the Other, which is revealed in the space of the picture as a clash of heterogeneous ethno-cultural and social fields, thereby showing us the artist's intention to overcome the world of a self-contained person.

The poetics of contemporary art allows S. Suleimenova to avoid the subject-object duality in the most effective way and to introduce an element of a new world outlook into her artistic images, and to reveal through them a meeting with the Other as a unique aesthetic event. In addition, this meeting leads the viewer to other decisive definitions that help a person to see himself as a party, "from the inside out," thereby realizing a way beyond a certain homogeneous and therefore dynamically unstable personality, in a state of creative stagnation. In the works of S. Suleimenova pathos expressed not as much meeting with the Other in his transcendental dimension, as meeting with the Others in their festive and everyday manifestation. "Therefore the Other is held not only by the continuous effort of love, but by the non-vanishing heat of akin that implies love, but also contains something more: the being of the possibilities of expanding your being as the Other. Looking at the other, we see not the black failure of the broken mirror, behind which the man of the underground of your inner "ego" disappeared into the nonexistence, but the depth of the starry sky that unfolds through the eyes of living people looking at you, like you. This is actual you, the other you, who no longer resist your "ego". You penetrate into yourself and return to another yourself ..."¹⁰

¹⁰ V. Aristov, *That man in man ... (Idem-forma and the poetics of the Other). Semiotics and Avant-garde: Anthology*. Moscow: Academic Project, 2006, p. 1117-1126.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

Through the representation of the face of the Other as her own "inner world", Suleimenova managed to identify in her works the phenomenon of the Other by addressing the topic of everyday life, viewing it through the prism of the invasion of the festive event. Especially successfully, this invasion is expressed in the work of "Nauryz" (2008), where the images of two boys sitting on a horse, and a shepherd holding a horse's bridle harmoniously inscribed in a steppe terracotta landscape, stand out against the everyday matter of commonness.

In our opinion, in this work S. Suleimenova with artistic means tried to express an understanding of the new forms of everyday life that routinized, turned the festive moments of the once truly festive mood of the steppe people's life into mundane one.

With regard to the theme of everyday life, the previous series of works "Buses and stops" by S. Suleimenova, which is also performed in the scratchboard technique, preceding the "Kazakh Chronicle", also seems interesting to us. This series is an artistic processing of photographic images that show people with greased faces standing at bus stops in public transport, the pandemonium of cars in rush hour, dreary unpopulated courtyards – in short, everything that forms a "motionless-mobile" raw matter of everyday urban life.

In her picturesque fragments of everyday life S. Suleimenov "captures the vibrations, pulsations and swings of mental energies of a big city ... Saule is not so much about plots, as energy states, perception events – sound, color, taste, suddenness of the moment. The artist's eye eagerly feels the city and rhymes with the flashes of its reflections. Framing the field of view, compressing the space, dynamic or suddenly frontal poster angle, urban themes – formal and substantial qualities of Saule Suleimenova's painting speak of its proximity to modern post media pictorial culture.

The work "At the traffic lights" (2007) differs with special expressiveness, where the evening street stretches to the front, on which a chain of cars is depicted. The vertical dark line on the left edge makes it clear to the observer that the view of the contemplating subject is rammed by the window of the transport coming from the front, through which the perspective of the street, immersed in the violet space is seen, and the space is thinned by the white, yellow, red car headlights. Thus, the artist managed to convey the subtle effect of shifting the inner space of the picture to the plan for expressing the special attitude of artist's view, so that the attitude could then be consumed by the observers' view. The attitude of the artist, presented to the viewer as an immersion in the urban routine of everyday life, is distinguished by a feeling of deep melancholy, in which every citizen who is constantly under the power of a technically equipped world is cast. In this world, from time to time, he feels himself a stranger thrown at his periphery, as, in fact, pushed to the periphery of the urban space and the image of a pedestrian present in the picture, lonely and doomed standing at the roadside, filled with arrogant cars.

The plot line of the series "Buses and stops", however, implicitly conveys to us some element present in them of a subtle if deep irony conveyed by a sensitive attitude to seemingly imperceptible details, such as: branches of trees inexorably

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

emerging from atmospheric futility, metal structures, which consists of the image of a bus stop, orientation to the image of small objects, etc. The ironic strategy of the artist is directed, first of all, to an imaginary identification with the details of the life of others, which is the ability to notice someone else as their own.

The installation on small object in works of S. Suleimenova creates an artistic and hermeneutic platform for comprehending the role of the ironic artist in our day, when he demands from himself to reproduce not something of a conventional, large, timeless that has exhausted his possibilities, but an immediate, peripheral, everyday, which assumes a certain sensitivity to the states and experiences of the other, thereby opening the Other for them through mastering the low threshold of sensitivity. In fact, this kind of ironic position "proceeds from the formative and creative principle of individual activity, but at the same time reinterprets the object and boundaries of the latter in a new way. Having absorbed the ideological spirit of the modern social situation, this strategy opens up for the person a space to other opportunities, and gives everyone freedom in their choice"¹¹.

Noteworthy, in our opinion, is the concept, present in the title of the series, namely, the concept of "stop". The fact is that this concept fixes on the ethno-cultural level the significance that it had for the Central Asian nomads. We believe that in this case the "stop" plays a constituent role, first, to understand the meaning of the traditional mode of existence of the nomad, which consisted of advancing along the route and stops on the way planned for the Kazakh steppe. Secondly, the stop is a certain metaphor of the creative way of understanding the mobile matter of reality, when the act of conventional convergence of subject-object oppositions stops, which denotes a photographic snapshot in the form of an artistic experience of spontaneity as its other, in which its marginal, borderline character as an affect artistic thinking, over-reactivity, the micro logic of thought, where there is a "stopping", "residual" identification with its Other at the simulacra level, a "banal" postmodern travesty.

Contemplating the work of Suleimenova, we can confidently assert that they implicitly contain a fundamental question regarding our postmodern cultural situation, largely related to the feeling of complete or partial ethno-cultural disintegration. In these works, there is a call for seeking an intimate unity with the Other, the desire for love, the desire for friendship, brotherhood and other symbolic motives of human existence in the world.

The image of the salon of public transport, in which people are alienated from each other, are nothing but a symbolic allegory serving to designate the mother's womb – the original commune, the restoration of which we always dream of. We dissolve in the mother's womb, merge with the original unity, which was once associated in the embryonic state. That is why it, the womb, being for us our Other, from which we all came to light, moves us, autonomous isolated urban

¹¹ M. Amvrosova, Saule Suleimenova. *Catalog "Buses and stops". Exhibitions*, Almaty, IntelService, 2007, p. 3-4.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

individualists, to the satisfaction of our thirst for contact, to interpersonal communication in which the view of the Other aimed at us refers to the original view of loving mother. This phenomenon was described very accurately by B.V. Markov in his book *"The Culture of Everyday Life"*: "The experience of being in the form of "eye to eye", undoubtedly, precedes the stage of the mirror. Only after learning to integrate the face of the mother, the child is able to perceive himself as such a "good object" as the mother thinks it is"¹². That is where, as we believe, a concept of perception of the surrounding world as a native emerged, which closes us on the family, relatives, and, ultimately, on our ethnos.

In addition to this concept, however, there is another one, which presupposes the impact on our vision of other cultural patterns that form our aesthetic tastes, and which we incorporate in the process of the formation of our being experience, the experience of communication with the world of other standards and samples, and within the framework of a given society capable of performing both a positive and a deconstructive function, depending on how we conduct in relation to the phenomenon of the Other, how we manage to or fail communicate with it, while preserving our own and identity, as well as taking into account natural and cultural differences, especially in a strictly differentiated urban society. It is known that a nomadic person was identified by his mother, whose womb was the gateway to the world, and also a symbol of returning. Who are you, where are you going from, to which tribe and family do you belong? Such questions were identified by the ancient people.

In the works of S. Suleimenova not only these traditional questions are articulated, but also the current fundamental ontological question: "How is symbolic integration possible with the Other"? This interrogative situation hangs in a scratchboard picture, a snapshot that is a momentary cut from human existence, imbued with general alienation and a violation of the general communication system. This issue, which is definitely filled with humanistic messages, is an urgent issue for human survival and unites two series of works of such an indisputably talented Kazakh artist as Saule Suleimenova. In the *"Kazakh Chronicle"* and in the series *"Buses and stops"*, demonstrating the ethno-cultural artistic discourse she not only pointed to the tragically alienated nature of being in a huge metropolis, but also presented a possible, virtual strategy aimed at replacing vital energy with spiritual, socio-cultural transformation of the mentality of a city dweller. A city dweller needs to work out a critical discourse in relation to what is manifested both as an Identical, his own, and as Other, forming in us a spiritual, creative principle and by means of communication with which we become capable of fruitful creative development. Steady interest in artistic activity to the phenomenon of the Other as an expression of the inner world of man creates the conditions for creativity. Hence, a purposeful interest in art even among those people who do not have pronounced artistic abilities, but who, in the process of communicating with artistic

¹² B.V. Markov, *Culture of everyday life*, St. Petersburg, Piter, 2008.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

values, can develop an aesthetic need for visiting museums, concert halls, and contemplating works of art arises.

The works of S. Suleimenova show us another destructive aspect of the Other phenomenon, which is associated with a significant loss of modern society of traditional ties and common values when in a mass society a person feels isolated and lonely when the total power of stamps and clichés is affirmed from the media, when the only thing that connects people is their commercial interests. A person oriented to "mass art", in fact, does not perceive life with all the beauty that it has, but only shows a consumer attitude towards it. In this case, we can say that there was that tragic in its consequences the case when our Identity "swallowed" the Other without experiencing any change in substance. A person capable of self-change can only be in front of the Other (say, divine, transcendent, near, etc.). In our opinion, the modern, enlightened "man of the crowd" has lost the ability to distinguish these fundamental, existential and creative dispositions, largely due to "mass art" and the media.

However, we believe that the assertion of mass art does not mean the disappearance, death of art, its degradation at all. It is only a new form of art, a natural stage of its historical development. H.G. Gadamer on this occasion notes: "Great artistic achievements in various ways descend into the consumer world and participate in the aesthetics of the environment. Moreover, not only descend, but also spread, thus providing a well-known stylistic unity of the world transformed by man"¹³. In Suleimenova's works, a deliberate departure from the "dehumanized" element of "mass art" is carried out in the direction of the primordial "human" life, perceived and recreated by the artist in her everyday dimension, in her primitive matter, a matrix bearing the seal of the Other's face. All that we said above regarding the ethno-cultural discourse of S. Suleimenova, expressed in her works, attests to its humanistic character, which shows the connection between man and the world, his human understanding. This layer of works by S. Suleimenova reveals the essence of the humanizing function of art, which consists in communication between the person and another person, the person and the social environment, the person and the ethno-cultural historical environment surrounding him, in the interaction "Me – You".

Conclusion

Speaking of Kazakhstan's contemporary art, it should be noted that it is generally based on the traditional striving of Kazakh fine arts to the formulation of the essential questions of life and artistic deployment existential themes related to the expression of the artist's ideas about national identity.

Ethno-cultural intention of works by Suleimenova are a reference to cultural roots, origins, assumes the character of a logically coherent system of artistic and aesthetic forms, recreating anew the world of ethnographic symbols and signs of nomadic Kazakh culture which were buried to oblivion. In the works of S.

¹³ G.-G. Gadamer, *The relevance of the beautiful*. Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1991, p. 266-323.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Suleimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511

Suleimenova's pathos is expressed not as much meeting with the Other in his transcendental dimension, as meeting with the Others in their festive and everyday manifestation. Works of S. Suleimenova made by means of innovative artistic techniques and technologies of modern art, and at the same time full of profound poetry of the artistic language of symbols and signs of ethnographic nomadic culture of the Kazakhs, they are significant milestones in solving the problems of the Kazakh artistic means of self-identity.

The humanistic pathos of Suleimenova's work with respect to the Other's face brings to his sensory perception, his contemplation the feeling of inner enlightenment. These works are a kind of deeply intimate dialogue with the Other, which arises from the elusively small territory of a new view of life, where dialogue is sustained by the continuous dynamic effort of love and the warmth of affinity that love implies. The underlying "message" of Suleimenova's works is that the presence of Other alleged and expand the creative possibilities of the artist, the presence, which does not make you hide in the underground, basement of our inner "Ego", and leads us to the path of return to the updated themselves.

Summing up the analysis of S. Suleimenova's creative work, we can say that artistic discourse of Suleimenova in her scratchboard works, which represent the processed instantaneous sections of plans and images of everyday life in an expressive way, is revealed as a humanist desire to find alter ego in the ethno-cultural sphere of being-in-the-world.

"The Art of Kazakhstan during the Period of Independence in the Context of National Identity through the Examples of Work of Artist S. Sulcimenova," *Astra Salvensis*, VI (2018), no. 12, p. 497-511