

RUSSIAN MUSEUM

IGOR
TCHOLARIA

TAMING THE CHAOS



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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Taming the Chaos <i>Evgeny Usvyat</i> | 5 |
| “Returning to the past, I move forward.” Artist Igor Tcholaria <i>Tamara Chudinovskaya</i> | 9 |
| On the Works of Igor Tcholaria <u>Mikhail German</u> | 13 |
| Painting | 14 |
| Sculpture | 124 |
| Drawing | 134 |
| Autobiography | 143 |
| Solo Exhibitions | 145 |
| Group Exhibitions | 147 |
| Galleries | 149 |
| Private Collections | 151 |
| Publications | 152 |



Igor Tcholaria. St Petersburg. 1991
Photograph
Archives of the artist

TAMING THE CHAOS

Evgeny Usvyat

Igor Tcholaria calls his artistic method “retro-perspective” (not to be confused with retrospective). In essence, this means that he moves forward in his creative work from the depths of time, mastery and tradition. Like an athlete who steps back to take a running start before jumping. The kinetic energy of this running start can be extremely great. All that remains is to land on one’s feet.

Tcholaria feels confident in his flights, even on the quaky ground of contemporary art. He’s resolutely prepared to weed its tangled thickets, accustomed like a true knight to his palette-knife sword and Cubist-form armour. And fairly recently (stepping back to the Bronze Age for his running start?) he turned to what was a new genre for him: bronze sculpture. Combining a classic approach with the vivid forms of sensual improvisations, he managed in a single stroke to create a whole line of original sculptures that have already won popularity in Europe.

Tcholaria was born in the town of Ochamchira, Abkhazia, on the Black Sea coast. He received his initial training at the Sukhumi Art School, where talented pedagogues taught him the basics of the craft and instilled in him a love for painting. Then he continued his education in Leningrad, at the Vera Mukhina School and Academy of Arts.

His work is largely influenced by the French Impressionists along with Pablo Picasso, Amedeo Modigliani and Paul Gauguin. Interacting with each other in the artist’s internal crucible, their creative methods were synthesized into a new quality that became the signature Tcholaria style. In addition, he’s spent years experimenting with the texture of the paint layer, striving for a powerful matte finish instead of glossy garishness.

During his student years the works of old European masters had an enormous influence on Tcholaria, who spent much time studying and copying them in the State Hermitage and the Old Russian Paintings Department of the Russian Museum.

At the same time, he led the life of a typical informal artist, with all the delights and travails of a semi-underground existence. In the mid-1980s Tcholaria was one of the first to begin earning a living drawing portraits of passersby on the street. At that time in the Soviet Union this occupation was not entirely without risk. Once an observant policeman caught him at work in the square in front of Kazan Cathedral. But the vigilant artist noticed the danger in time. Quickly throwing his brushes into his painter’s case, Tcholaria left the girl he was painting to pose in loneliness and disappeared into the cathedral’s colonnade. The law-enforcement officer wandered among the massive columns for a long time to no avail: you can’t catch artists in a maze, for they feel the rhythms of lines better than others.

This feeling of rhythm is a manifestation of Tcholaria’s subtle musicality. Whether calibrating combinations of warm and cool tones, like Cézanne, or painting a broken line with a vibrating hand, like Modigliani, the maestro remains invariably himself. He’s on a first-name basis with these great names, whose ghosts quietly hover over his canvases like spirits in a spiritualist seance.

Tcholaria’s female portraits are worthy of special mention. His heroines are funny, mysterious, sly and reckless. At times exotic in an Oriental way. At times colourful and monumental. Clearly, the artist does not always require live models. Images constantly flicker through his soul, like evening fireflies in a Black Sea park.

Though Tcholaria often deals with the circus theme, he doesn’t depict scenes in the ring; instead, his attention is drawn to the individual characters. Looking at his paintings, one feels the metaphysical longing of Picasso’s harlequins and at the same time their attempt to escape its grip. The artist seems to soothe his protagonists: “You’re colourful and clever. What do you have to be sad about?” One of his works is entitled *Look at Me*. A harlequin suddenly flies onto the scene and freezes in mid-air. Like a dolphin jumping out of the water. Or a sail floating over the ocean’s surface. Contrasting icily with the dancer are the melancholy girl present in the image and a blue surrealistic figure in the background. This is like counterpoint in music, when a contrasting tonality emphasizes the beauty of the main theme. No wonder the artist repeatedly admits that he prefers working mainly to classical music. He’s especially inspired by Antonio Vivaldi and Johann Sebastian Bach.

For Tcholaria, the idea of taming chaos, which he creates on the canvas using an original technique of abstract under-painting, functions as a sort of generator of striking and unpredictable compositions. At first the artist doesn’t restrain his energy in any way. But at a certain moment he suddenly “chokes his own melody” and gazes at the composition like an ancient shepherd at the starry sky, in which not only Big and Little Dippers appear as if on an abstract canvas, but also wild rams, hunting dogs and other phantoms of the imagination. For all its apparent simplicity, this method requires an ideal

sense of colour, outstanding plastic abilities and a highly developed intuition, which allow the artist to discern a metaphysical element in random combinations of coloured patches.

When Tcholaria first found himself in Europe, it was just this method of spontaneous insight that allowed him to astonish the European public. Throughout the ensuing years the artist developed and improved his trademark technique. Working in this manner, he never knows exactly how the final result will look. And this is the most important thing in art. Surprise yourself, and you're sure to surprise the viewer. Even God, according to the Bible, couldn't hide His amazement after creating the Earth.

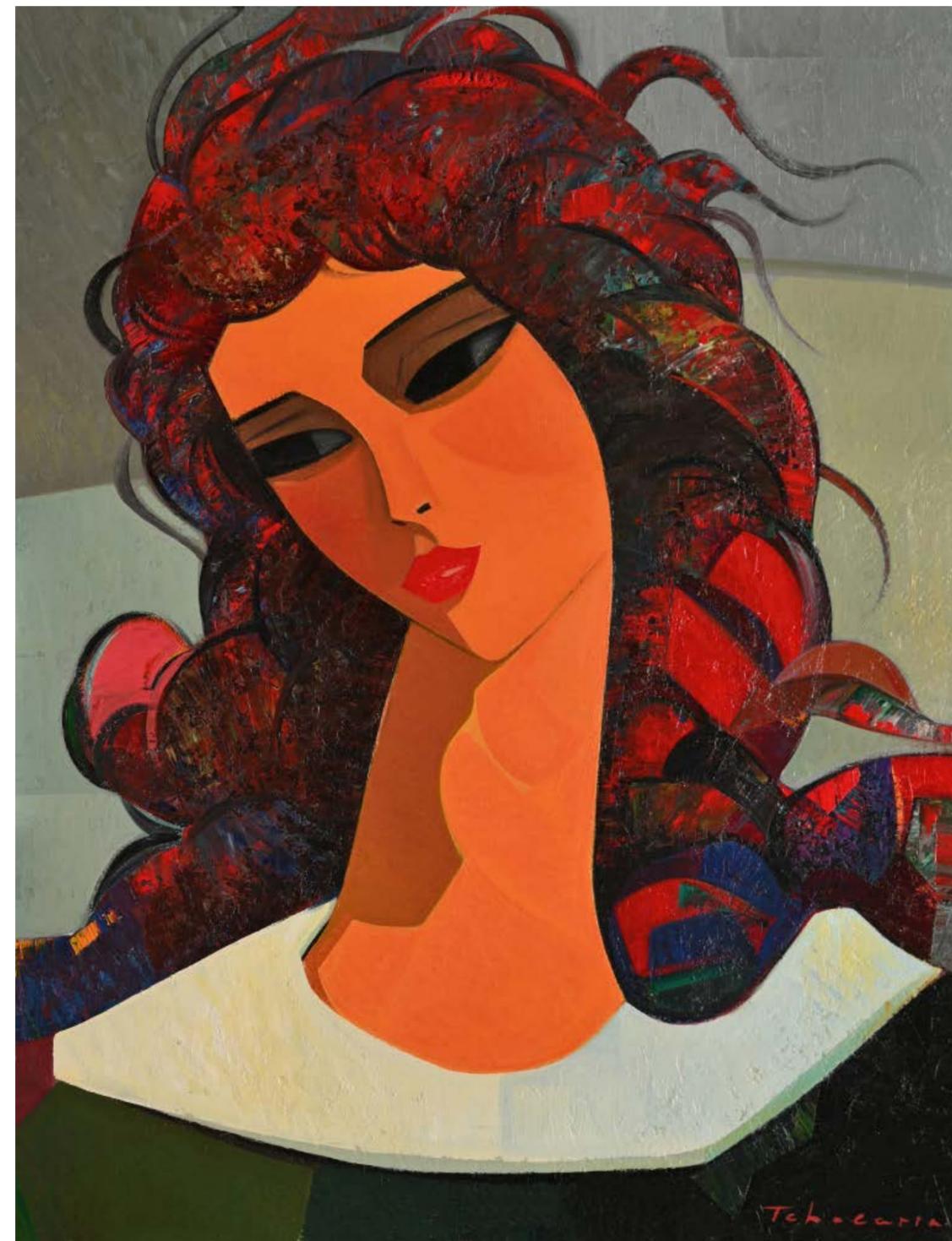
Once Tcholaria became the involuntary coauthor of a hot trend in the fashion industry. John Galliano acquired one of Igor's paintings, a variation on his beloved theme commonly entitled *The General*. Somewhat later the artist witnessed a showing of one of the designer's collections, whose main silhouette in many ways replicated the outlines of his general. Igor took no offence. On the contrary, he was pleased. He realized he'd foreseen a major fashion trend, been on the same wavelength as a celebrated fashion designer. It was probably this shared intuition that led Galliano to acquire Tcholaria's painting in the first place. Perhaps he did borrow Igor's visual ideas in his work. But after all, Tcholaria himself synthesized his oeuvre from the ideas of the great French Modernists, who were inspired in turn by primordial African masks and Oriental themes.

A traveller's biography is made up of conquered mountain peaks, lakes, seas, oceans and African deserts.

A scientist's activity consists of discoveries and inventions.

A poet mostly records marvellous moments, stringing them onto stanzas and constructing his own imaginary life in this way.

A professional artist's career can be visualized by studying the list of group or solo exhibitions he's participated in. Since year and venue are indicated in the list, you can thus discover the history and geography of his movements. Looking at Tcholaria's exhibition roster, we see immediately that his home bases and main places of work are Belgium and Holland. However, England, Italy, France, Luxembourg and the US occupy a worthy place in the registry too. Whilst an explorer leaves his mark on a mountaintop, on the North or South Pole, or at the bottom of the ocean, an artist is commemorated by the people who hold his pictures in their collections. In addition to the aforementioned Galliano, these include the singer Madonna; the late tenor Luciano Pavarotti; actors Pierre Richard, Gérard Depardieu and Anthony Hopkins; hockey player Alexander Mogilny; numerous politicians and businessmen; and most importantly, true lovers of art in all countries and continents.



Mary. 2021
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



“RETURNING TO THE PAST, I MOVE FORWARD.” ARTIST IGOR TCHOLARIA

Tamara Chudinovskaya

Igor Tcholaria has a studio at the famous 10 Pushkinskaya Street in St Petersburg, a former squat occupied by artists back in the perestroika years. These representatives of the “other” culture existing in parallel to the officially approved one were often referred to as Nonconformists. They rejected the principles of creative life that existed in their country, orienting themselves towards the global artistic process they longed to participate in. Tcholaria belonged neither to their ranks nor to those of the officially recognized painters of the time. A non-revolutionary by nature, he wished only to be an artist, not to repudiate anything. Perhaps this is why he met with such success in foreign galleries, where he chanced to be exhibited, noticed and singled out from among other street portraitists from Leningrad, soon to be renamed St Petersburg.

At that time, in 1987, he and his comrades were among the first creators of our country’s own “Montmartre”. Later, towards the beginning of the 2000s decade, he returned to the cultural environment of Russia’s second capital with the rich experience of foreign creative work behind him. “Holland, Belgium, London, Monaco – in these countries and cities there’s great interest in art in every home,” the artist observes. The galleries he worked with then, and continues to collaborate with today, allow him complete creative freedom. Tcholaria strives to stay in the mainstream of contemporary Russian art, defining his creative method by the term “retro-perspective” and adhering to the credo “Returning to the past, I move forward.” In this connection, it’s telling that the artist bought back a number of his works from their Dutch owners to modify and improve decades after their creation. But the essence of Tcholaria’s credo lies elsewhere: in the formal structure of his works and his passion for avant-garde art. “I adore the great art of the early 20th century,” he confesses.

Captivated by turn-of-the-20th-century French art at the beginning of his career, Igor Tcholaria began painting landscapes in the French Impressionist style. Later he made a careful study of the Post-Impressionist masters. It seems that his beloved themes of the theatre, circus, commedia dell’arte and equilibrists were largely influenced by the “French” spirit too, for by the 20th century the “comedy of masks” had extended its influence both to French art (here we must mention Pablo Picasso, whom Tcholaria reveres) and Russian culture of the Silver Age. The theatre, circus and itinerant life: this is a logical collection of themes for a well-travelled artist. In addition, the theatre and circus are attractive for their multicoloured variety, transformations and unending motion. This is Tcholaria’s creative oxygen, his native element. However, the artist treats these themes in a melancholy rather than phantasmagorical vein. It’s no accident that his pensive, seemingly inquisitive figures are often accompanied by masks (held in their hands, appearing to hover nearby, and so forth), which play a significant role in Tcholaria’s world. His most recent mask-portraits bear the tragic imprint of Filonov’s *Heads*, though in the context of Tcholaria’s oeuvre they also express the element of sensuality found in his multi-figure compositions.

Flowers, women and dolls are also favourite themes for the artist. On the one hand, women resembling flowers, or women with flowers. On the other, the image of the doll, which like the mask represents the dark side of feminine nature, its tendency to devolve into a marionette in rapacious hands. The portraits of women, even those with specific names, exhibit a conventionality of feature, a visual generalization. Dazzlingly beautiful, they occupy a place alongside the female images of such artists as Amedeo Modigliani or, in particular, Lado Gudishvili, who wrote: “Woman is the source of life and goodness, ... the crowning glory of nature and embodiment of its inexhaustible abundance.” Of the aforementioned painters Tcholaria rates Modigliani the highest, together with Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse. “We must never forget the classics,” the artist declares.

Female images are present in almost all of Tcholaria’s works, dictating their will in some strange way, taking the helm of world governance, or assisting in recreating the world from chaos. The latter role is especially pronounced in the artist’s

* Works whose ownership is not indicated are the property of the artist

Flowers of Malevich.* 2005
Oil on canvas. 60 x 50

multi-figure compositions from the last decade, which he paints in multiple layers over several sessions. Having invented his own priming method, he's convinced that paintings should be saturated visually as well, so that one can "read" a plot in their forms, lines, fanciful contours and luxuriant colours. "There's structure present even in apparent chaos," Tcholaria explains, describing the synthesis of abstraction and figurality in his works, some of which are exquisitely textured, others, on the contrary, flat and pointedly decorative. In his paintings-narratives he combines texture and laconic patches of colour, later adding smaller details. The world that arises in them is bright and variegated, rich with colour and eddying forms. Encoding "reflections on the realities of life", in the artist's words, it contains in its formal structure echoes and reminiscences of various languages of avant-garde art. In their time, each of the classic artists of the international avant-garde spoke in their own language, and each wove their own original artistic fabric that entered the history of art as a unique visual unit for future generations of painters. Tcholaria's method, which has evolved over the years, uses aesthetic material from the past and organizes pictorial space via a montage technique the artist calls "combinatorics".

However, this organisation is preceded by the chaos of spontaneous abstract improvisation, often using the methods of Jackson Pollock, only after which does work with semi-figurative forms begin. Multiple layers of coloured priming also contribute to the effect of form arising from chaos.

While focusing intently on avant-garde art – so close to us and yet so distant in time, already a classic for today's generations – Igor Tcholaria nonetheless remains a free artist who pays tribute to the joy of creativity and regularly pokes fun at himself. His work eludes precise definition: Postmodernist? Quite possibly. Neo-Eclectic? Neo-Mannerist? In the end, he's just an artist who can't imagine himself in another role. Tcholaria's artistic credo is perhaps most personally reflected in the unexpectedly minimalist work entitled *Flowers of Malevich*. In the mysterious abyss of a black square sunken into the canvas' woven fabric flashes of colour shimmer – brightly, triumphantly, yet with an odd kind of humility. Painting lives on.



Fig Tree. 1979
India ink on canvas. 10 x 14

ON THE WORKS OF IGOR TCHOLARIA

Mikhail German



Antibes. 2020
Oil on canvas. 42 x 50
Collection of Iosif Sichinava

For an artist living at the turn of the millennium, the art of both bygone and modern times is as much an objective reality as the earth, sky and faces of surrounding people. The iconosphere, our visual memory, the “musée imaginaire” of which Malraux wrote – it’s unthinkable for an artist to be free of these things, for such freedom can easily turn into professional deprivation and ignorance.

The famous philosopher Eugenio d’Ors justifiably considered everything devoid of tradition to be plagiarism. In other words, artists who are ignorant of their roots, or attempt to hide them, can hardly lay claim to originality. Igor Tcholaria maintains an open dialogue with art, and his oeuvre exists in a creative space whose visual world is clearly and precisely demarcated.

From a young age he’s been captivated by Picasso, though he loves – and most importantly understands – Paul Cézanne, James Ensor, Amedeo Modigliani and Henri Matisse as well. The paintings Tcholaria creates are not imitations; rather, his art is that of a new reality, one that changed completely after the great Spaniard entered it. Joan Miró once confessed that he was fortunate to be able to create in the same world as Picasso. Such sentiments are probably familiar to Igor Tcholaria too. His characters are seen through his own eyes but undeniably through Pablo Picasso’s “magic crystal” as well, with its perception of reality “from the inside out”, its free juxtapositions of different points of view, its depiction of the known and perceived rather than the visible, and its ability to aestheticize emotional discord and the twilight depths of the subconscious.

Honoré Daumier maintained that an artist is obliged to belong to his time, and the apparent insouciance of Igor Tcholaria’s paintings doesn’t challenge that thesis in the slightest. However, the modernity of his art consists neither in showing us shards of a “devil’s mirror”, nor in eschatological motives, nor most certainly in any collection of fashionable devices used to force entry into today’s artistic “mainstream”. No, his art is modern because of its ability to resonate with today’s cultural codes whilst preserving its own intonation. Both semantic and visual.

Tcholaria doesn’t avert his eyes from the tragedy of existence. But in his variations, which involuntarily bring to mind his deeply revered James Ensor, he peers at the flickering shadows of life like Cabiria in the final scene of Fellini’s eponymous film, seeking and finding in them both poignance and joy. In Tcholaria’s paintings even tragedy retains the flavour of a game or carnival, where the truth hides behind elegant masks and fanciful costumes. Only here the main role is played not by fabric, by clothing, but rather by luxuriant painterly texture, brilliant visual techniques and resonant colour combinations. Tcholaria’s paintings, along with wisdom about the complexity of art and the modern world, are filled with a cheerful, life-giving force, a sense of the invincible beauty of existence.

The most common trap for young and ambitious artists is imitation. Especially if they’re little concerned with the inner substance of their art. But when artists have something to say, it’s easier for them to master not only their visual tools but everything they consciously or unconsciously borrow from the existing iconosphere. The content of Tcholaria’s art is positive, filled with vitality, energy and joy. That holds true both for his early works – sultry decorative landscapes splendidly embedded in their canvas surfaces – and for the later portraits that seem to combine reminiscences of Modigliani’s sitters with the fleeting elusiveness of anxious contemporary faces. The latter are more forceful and dramatic: their fiery chromatic effect and juxtaposition of different viewpoints (*Woman with a Yellow Bird*, 2003) seems to reveal the subjects’ characters at different moments in time. Even more lapidary is *Woman in a Red Hat* (2002), a painting that goes beyond live portraiture to produce a non-figurative impression, revealing the model’s essence in an original way, like an accompaniment. As Ignacio Zuloaga noted, “Art must be vital and free, and under no circumstance the slave of reality.”

Tcholaria, despite his cheerful openness to the world, is not as simple an artist as he might seem. His universe, like any carnival, hides behind its masks, exotic costumes and whirling farandoles a certain alarming subtext, a hidden Hoffmannesque element. And only his generous wealth of powerful colour combinations and elastic, seemingly dancing lines – “the substance of art”, in a word – is able to quell the anxiety that arises from the subtle ambiguity with which every work by Igor Tcholaria is deliberately infused.

PAINTING



Garden in Tsarskoye Selo. 2014
Oil on canvas. 100 x 140
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



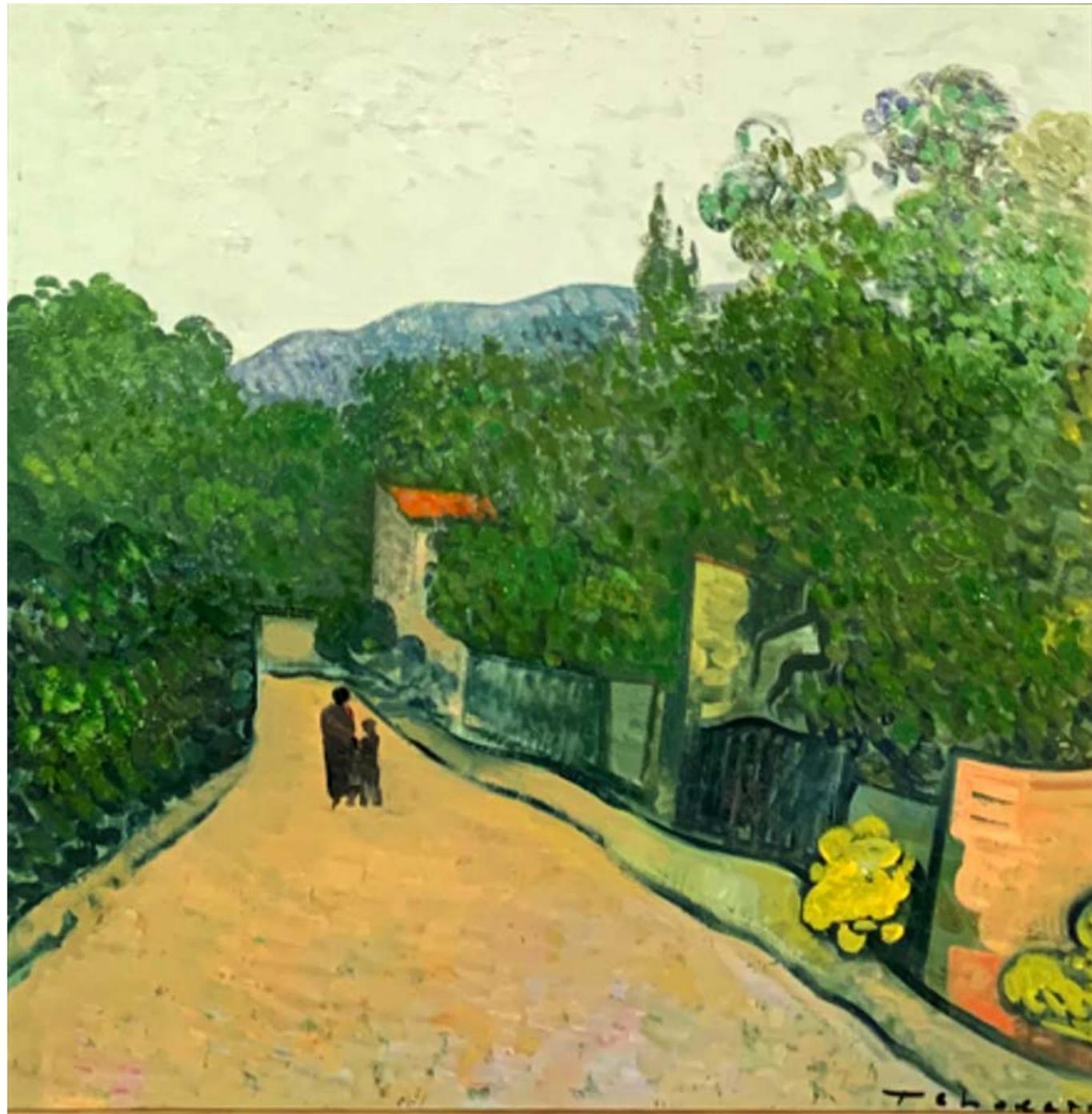
Landscape. 1990
Oil on canvas. 80 x 65



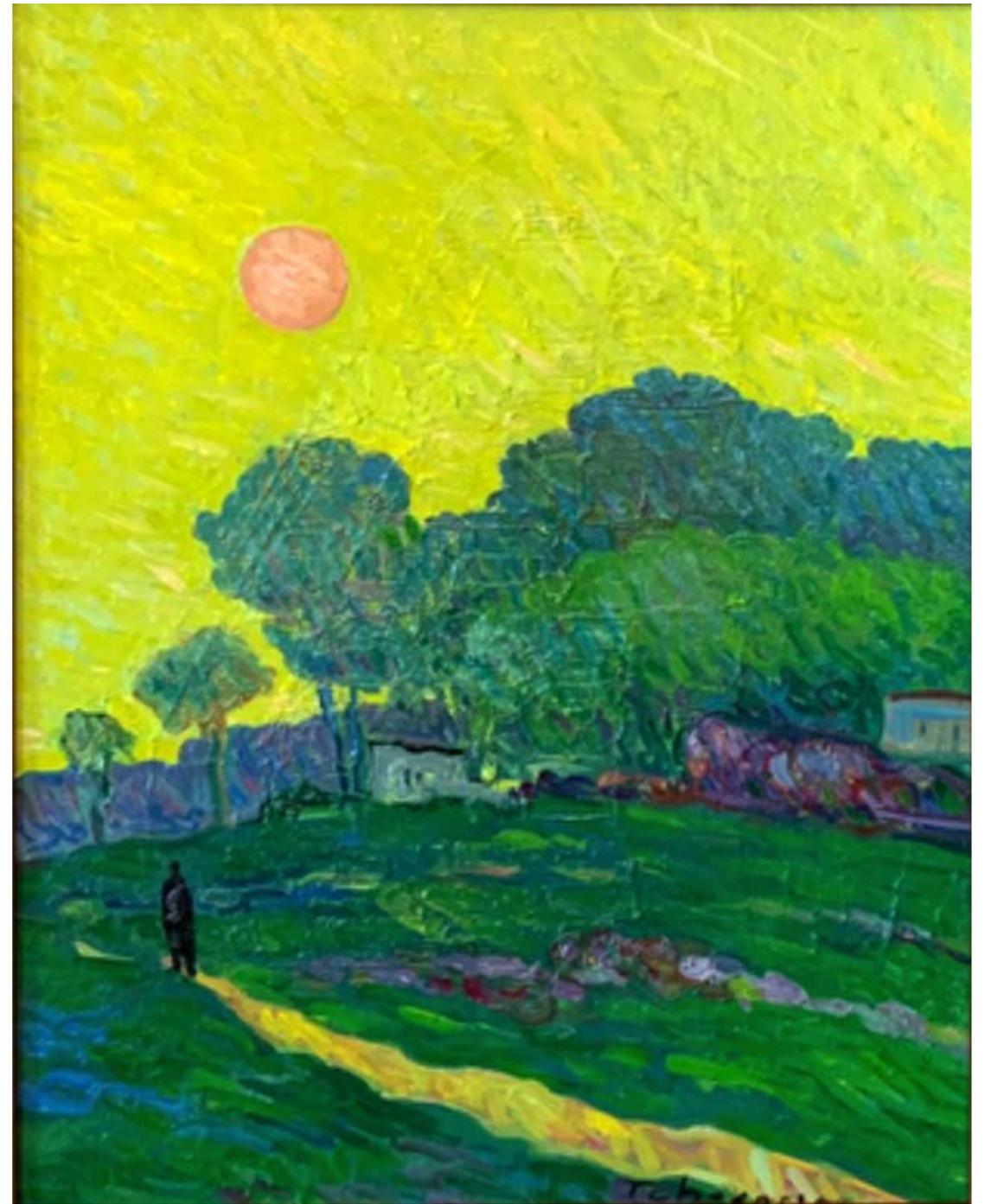
View from the Window. Autumn. 1991
Oil on canvas. 80 x 49
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Landscape. Pushkin. 2012
Oil on canvas. 100 x 90
Collection of Temur Anchabadze

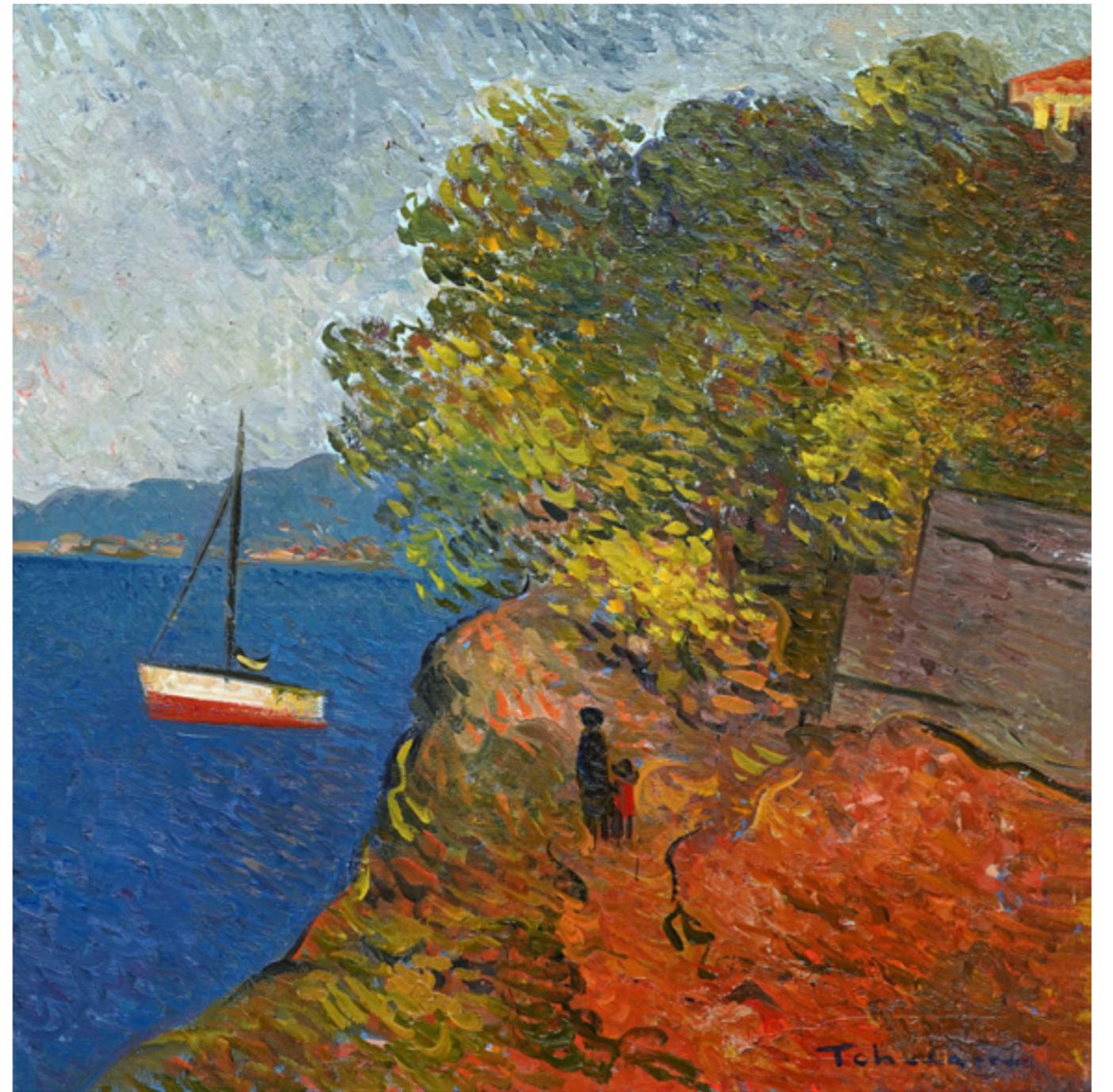


Antibes. 2015
Oil on canvas. 60 x 60
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Provence. 2017
Oil on canvas. 50 x 40

Antibes. 2018
Oil on canvas. 70 x 70
Collection of Yunis Lukmanov

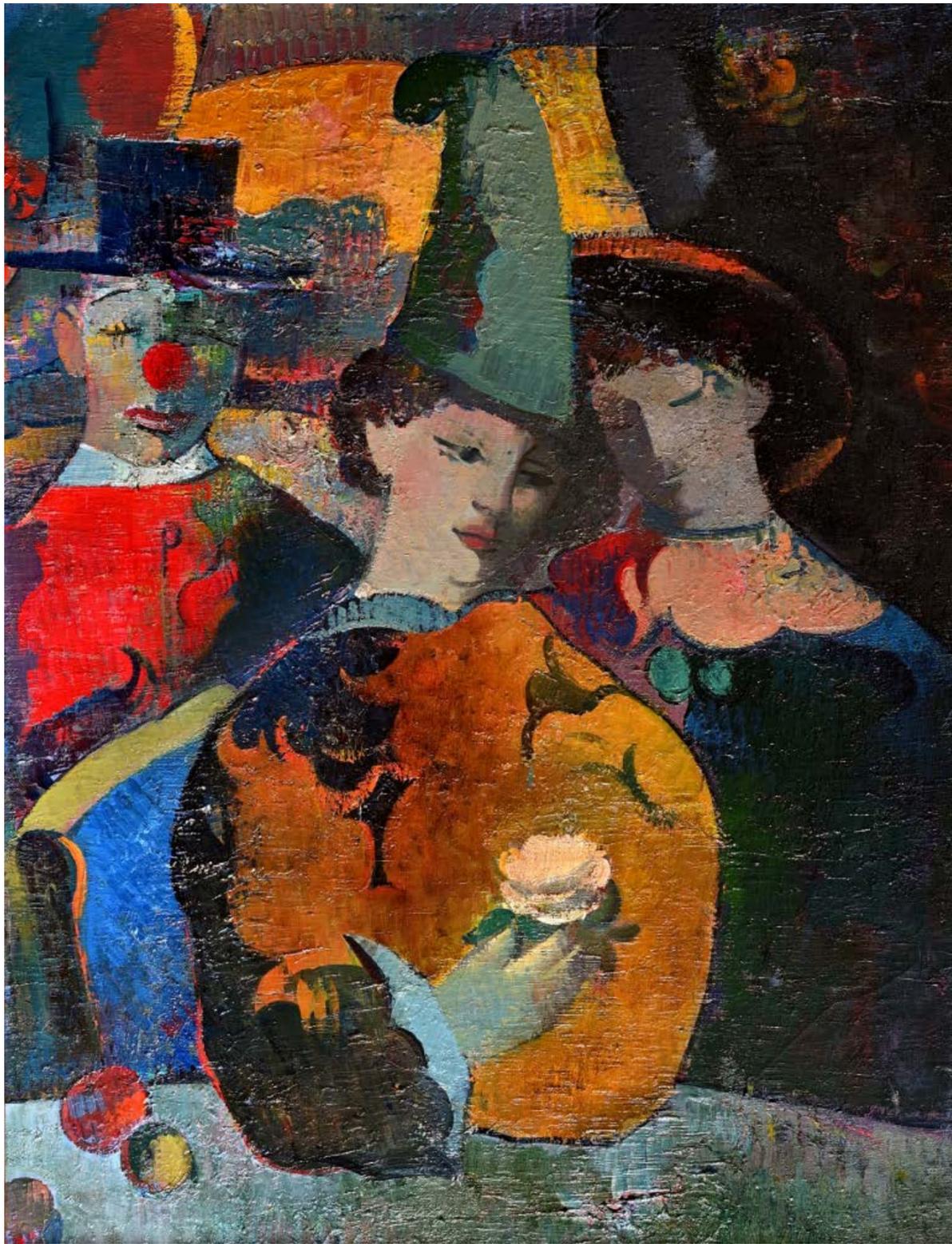




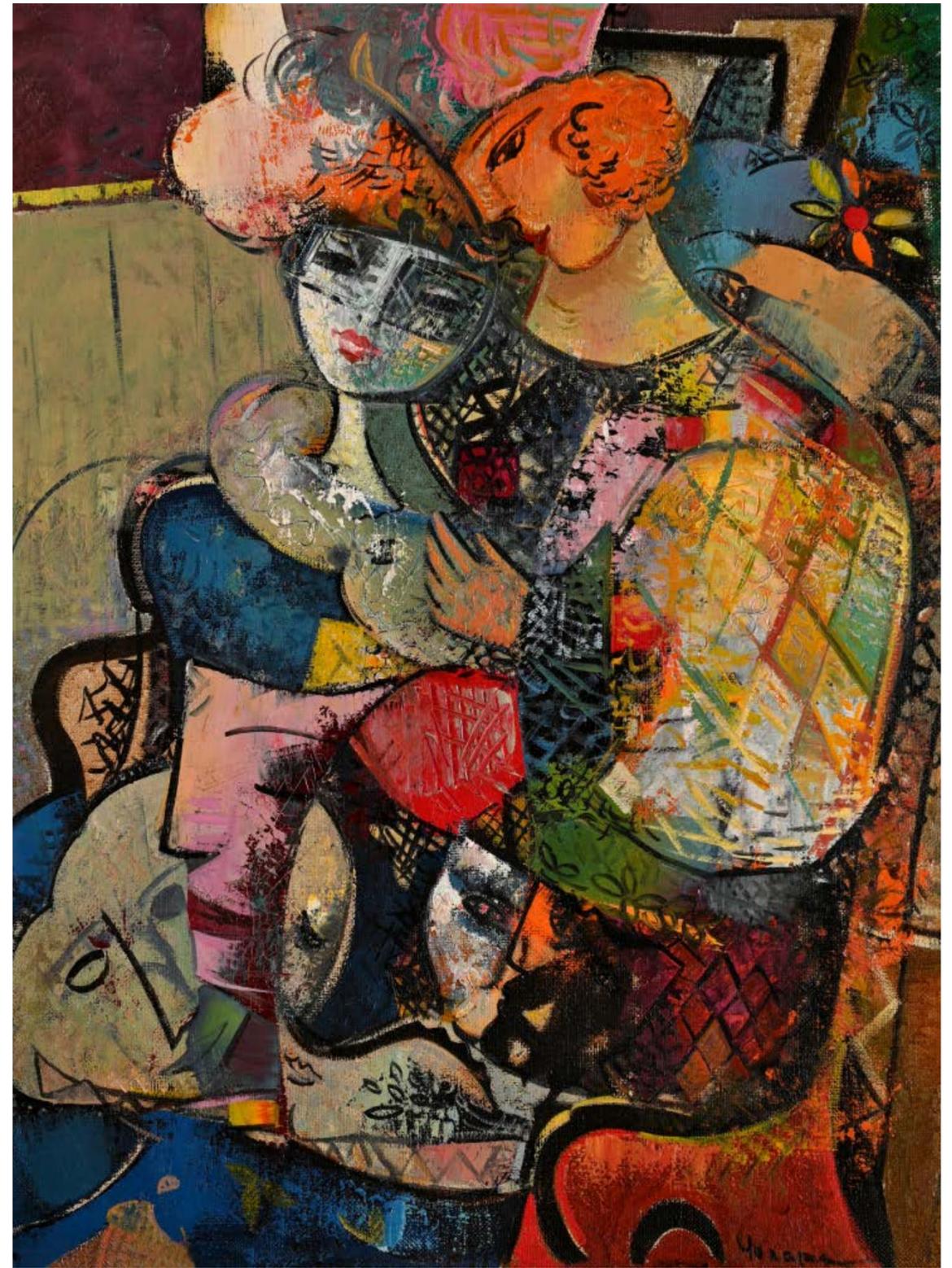
Behind the Scenes. 1991
Oil on canvas. 91 x 110



Flowers and People. 1991
Oil on canvas. 40 x 100



Columbine with a Blossom. 1991
Oil on canvas. 85 x 66
Collection of Igor Mikhailov



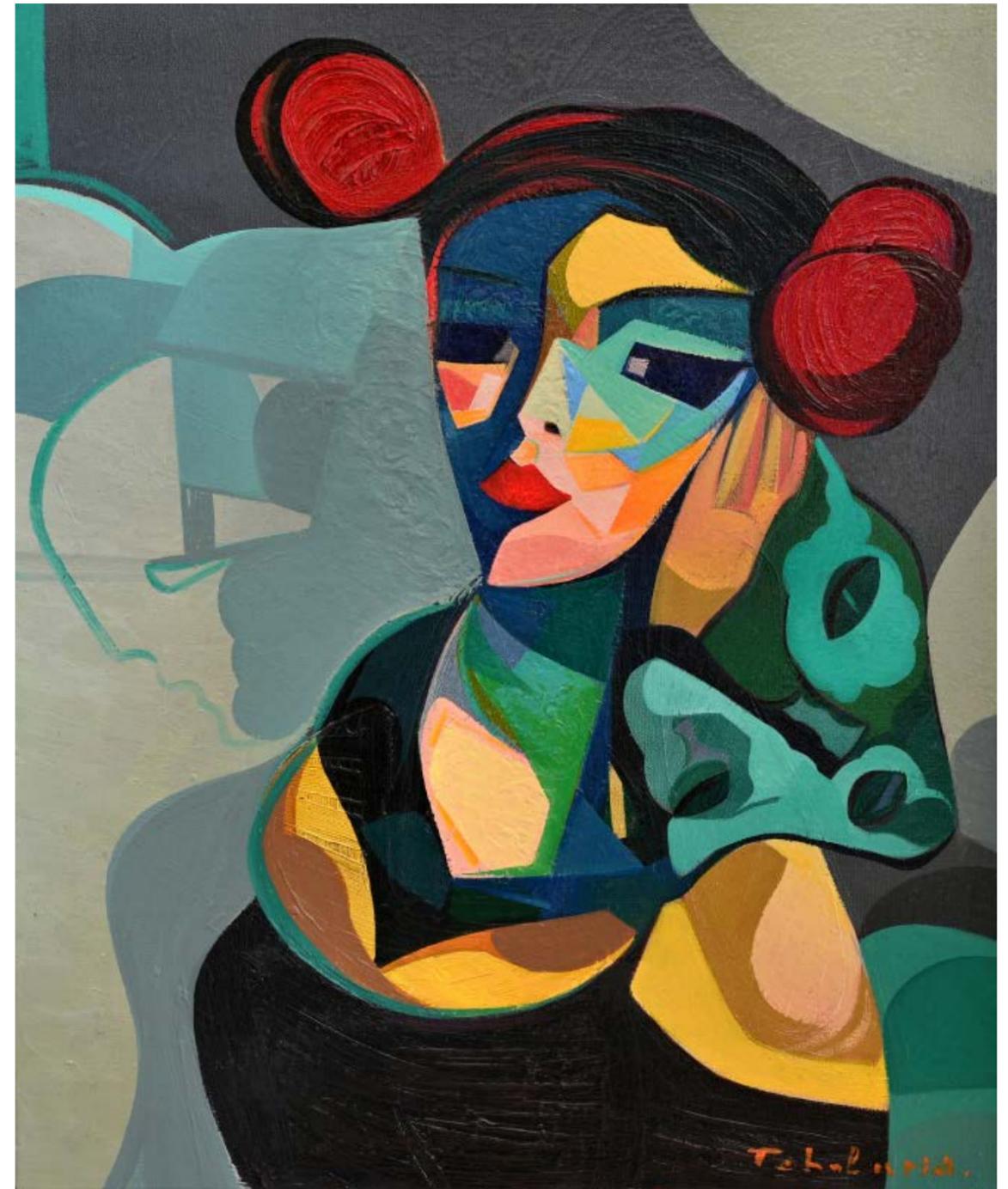
Love in an Interior. 1994
Oil on canvas. 80 x 60



Peaceful Souls of Wanderers. 1996
Oil on canvas. 110 x 80
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Theatre of Living Shadows. 1993
Oil on canvas. 64 x 73



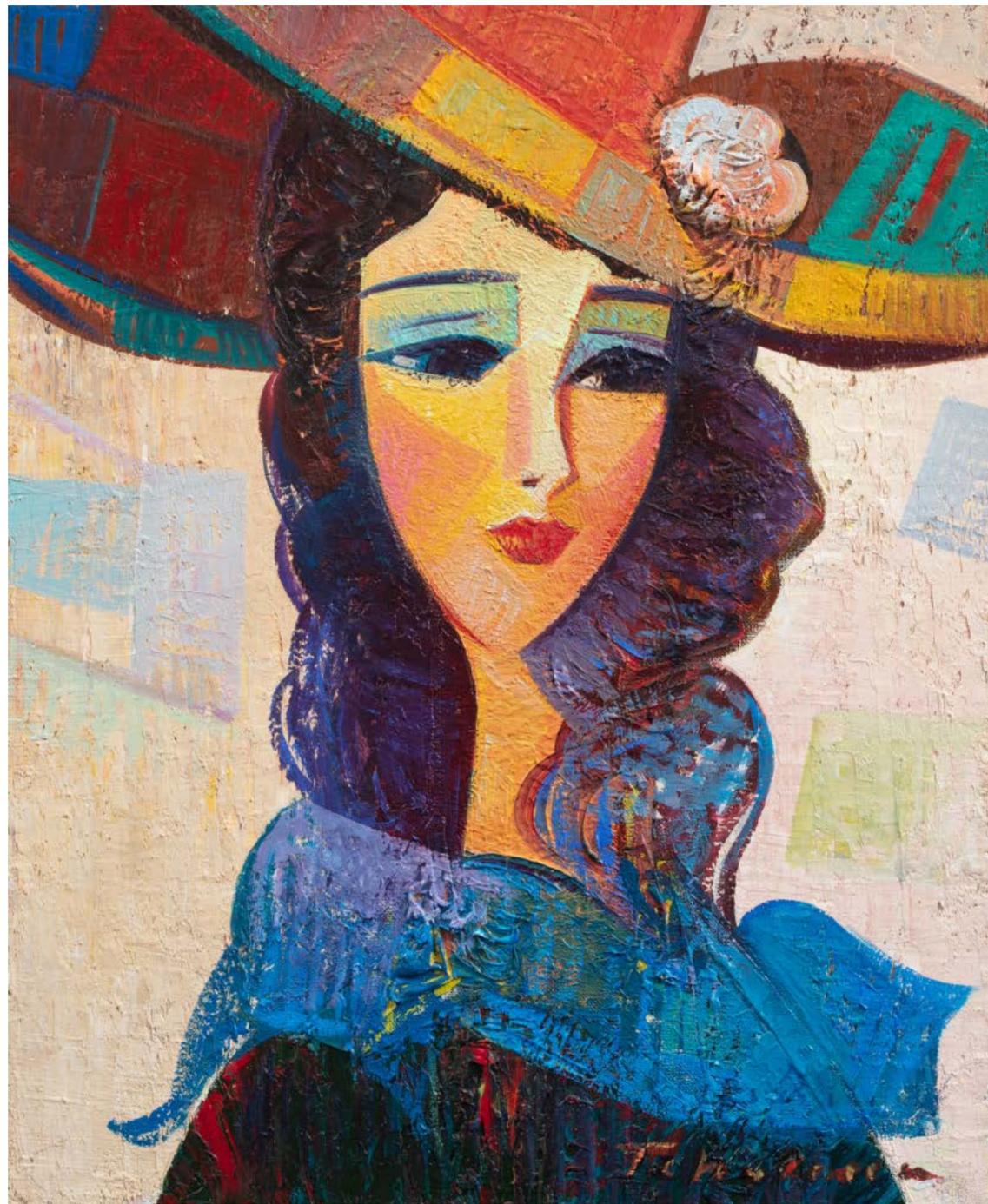
Who Are You, Mask? 2000
Oil on canvas. 60 x 50



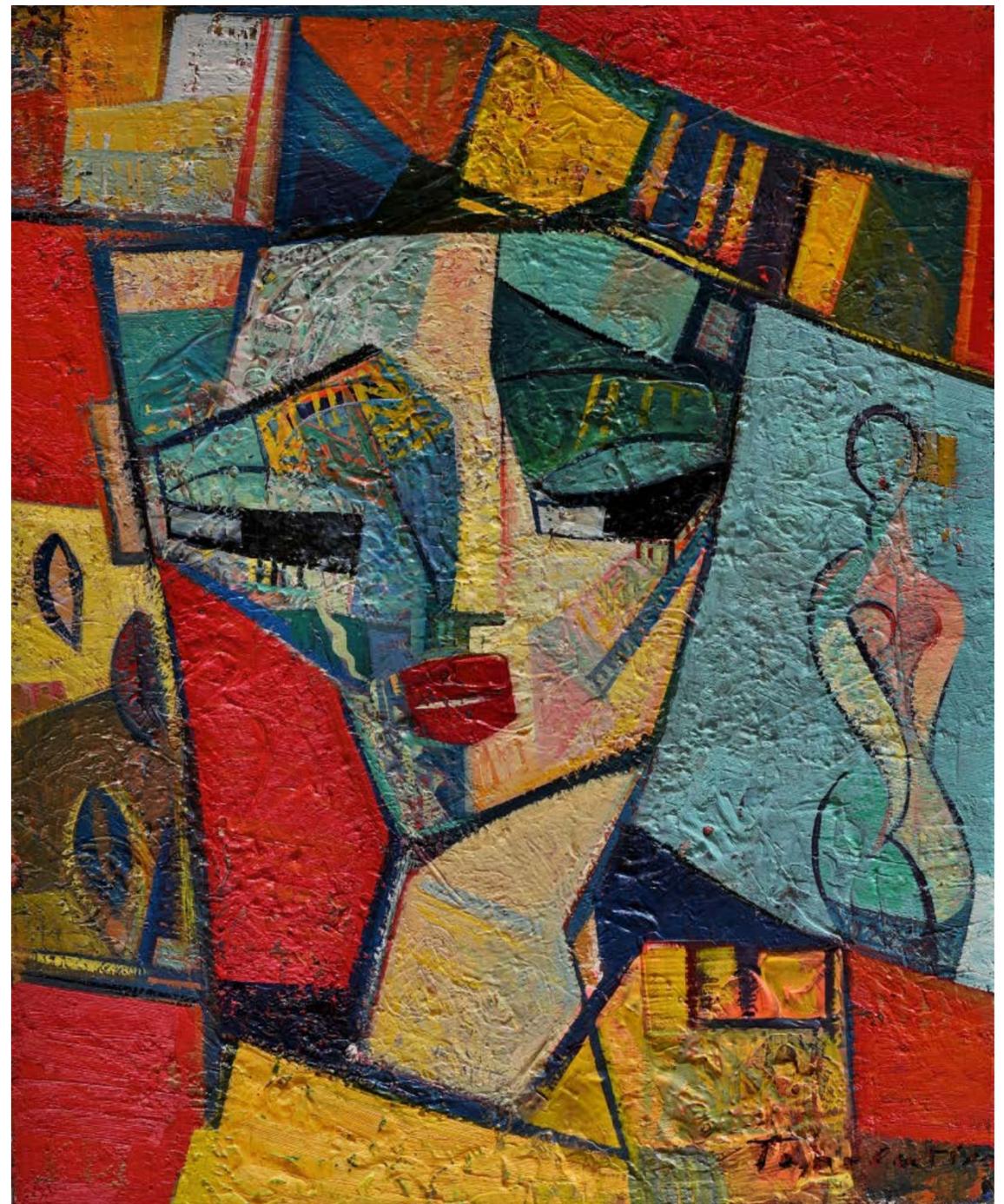
Theatre. 2003
Oil on canvas. 73 x 92
Collection of Andrei Kostin



Dancing with the Sky. 2003
Oil on canvas. 120 x 200
Collection of Igor Mikhailov



Young Woman. 2004
Oil on canvas. 46 x 38
Collection of Viktor Fedotov



Saint-Tropez. 2004
Oil on canvas. 65 x 54
Collection of Dmitry Sichinava

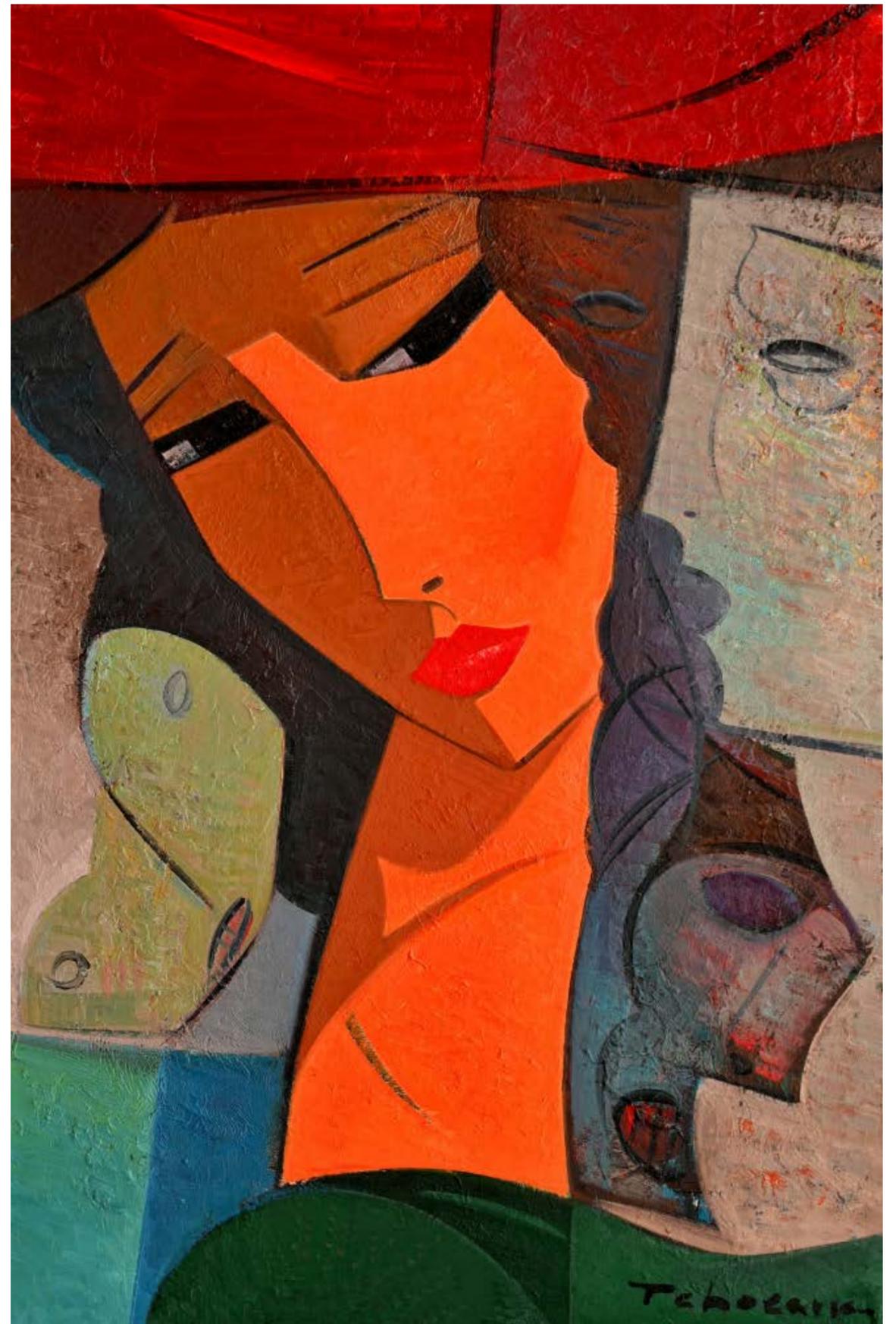


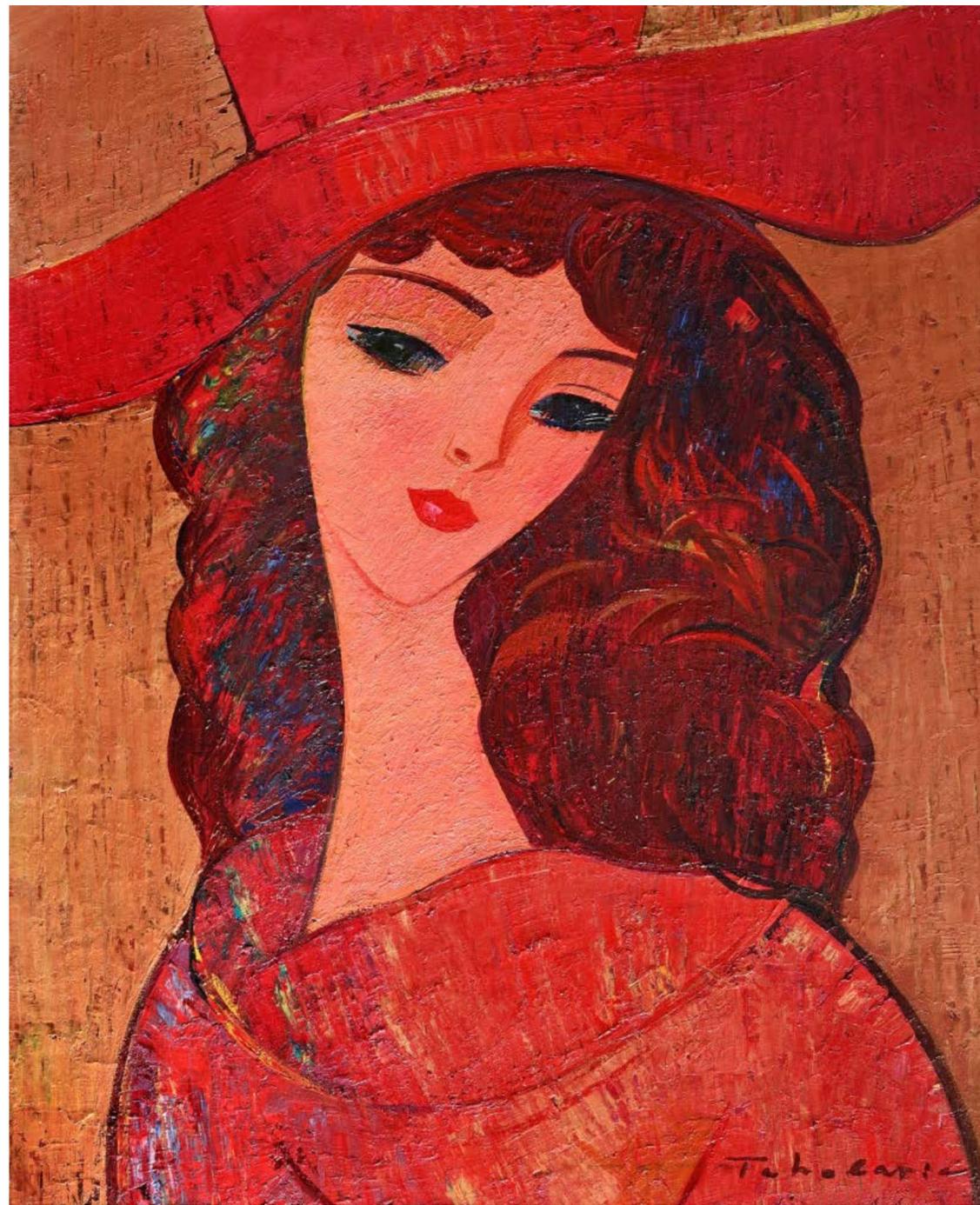
Mask. 2004
Oil on canvas. 60 x 50



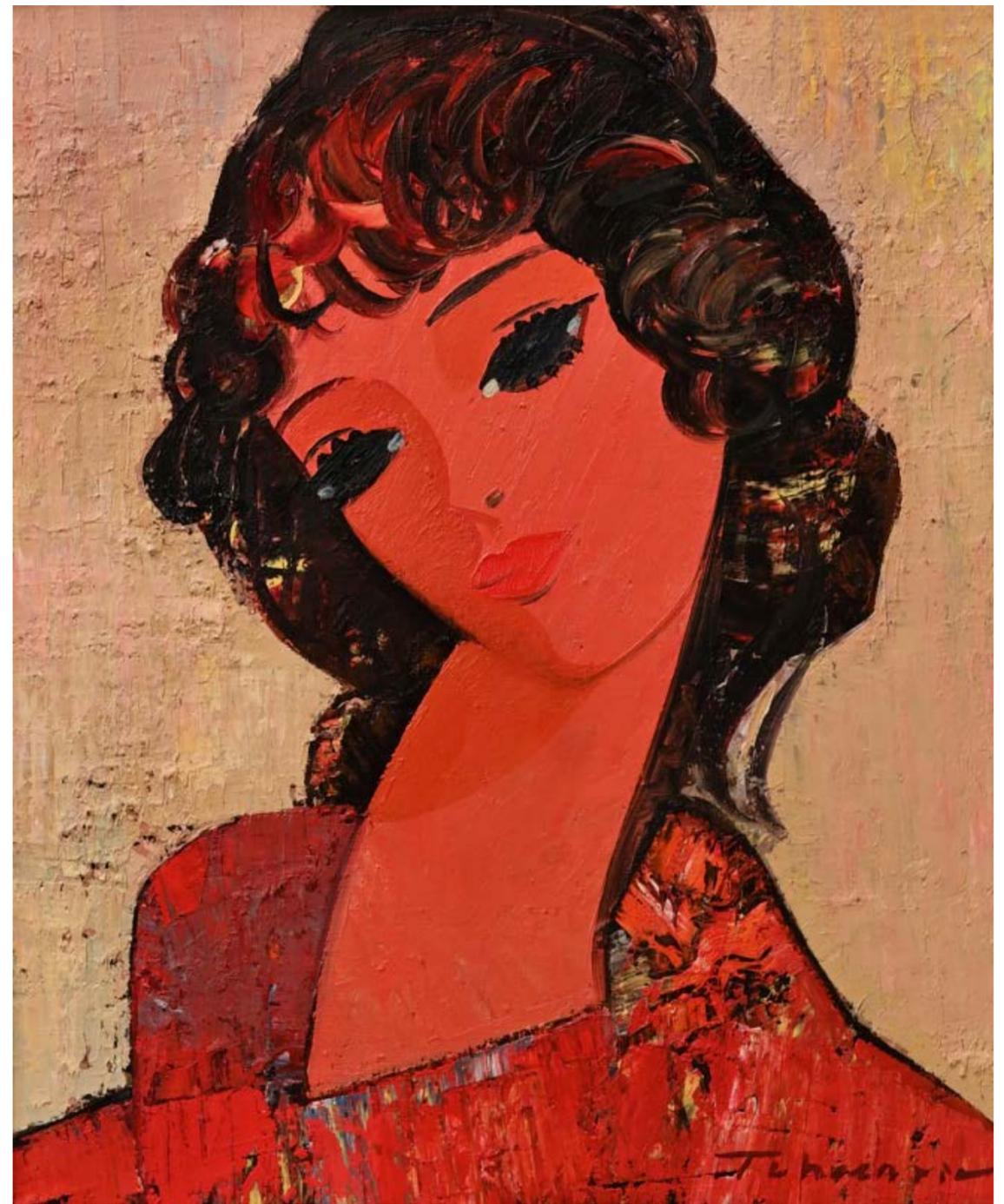
The Woman Who Sings. 2005
Oil on canvas. 65 x 54

Maria. 2017
Oil on canvas. 90 x 60
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev

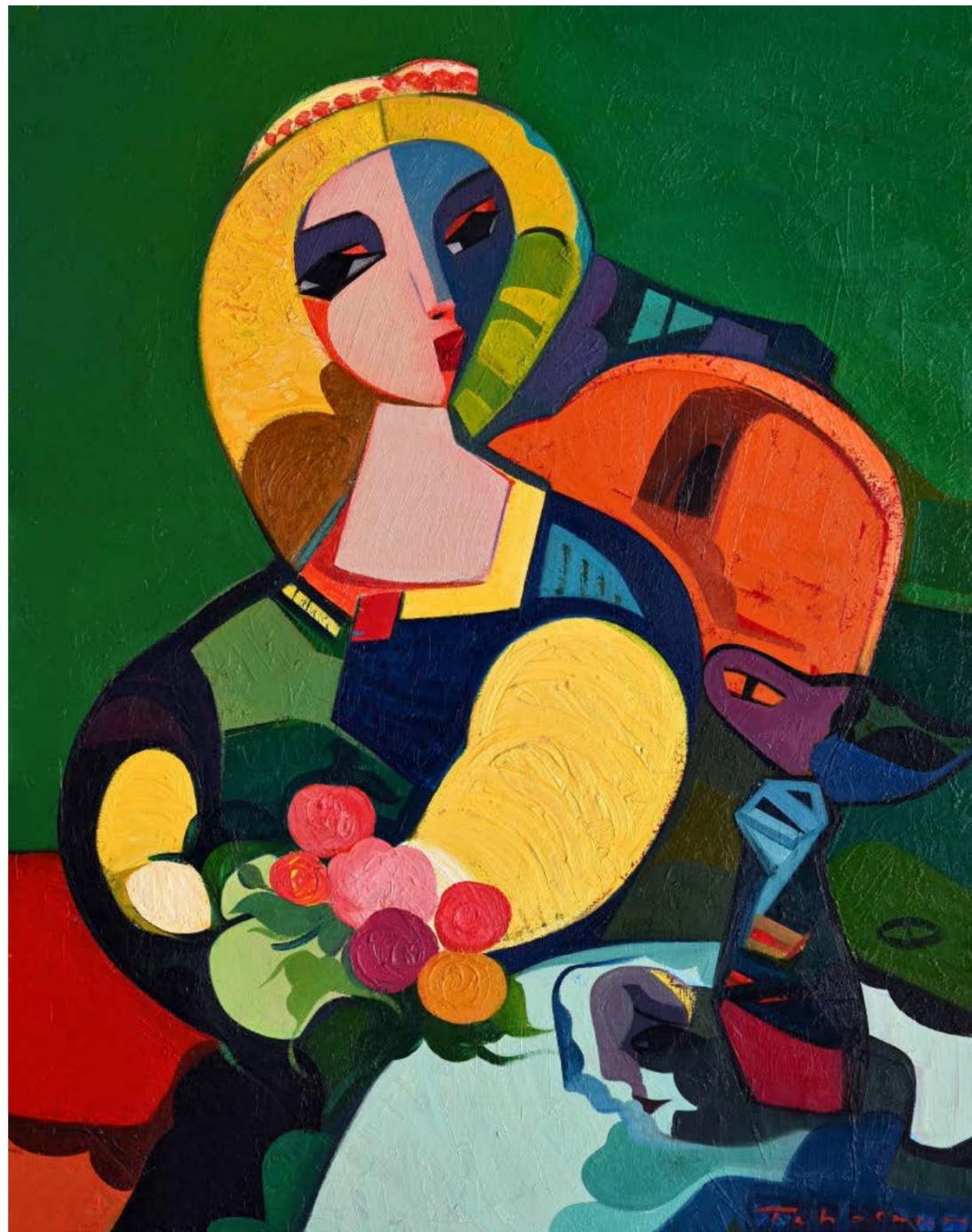




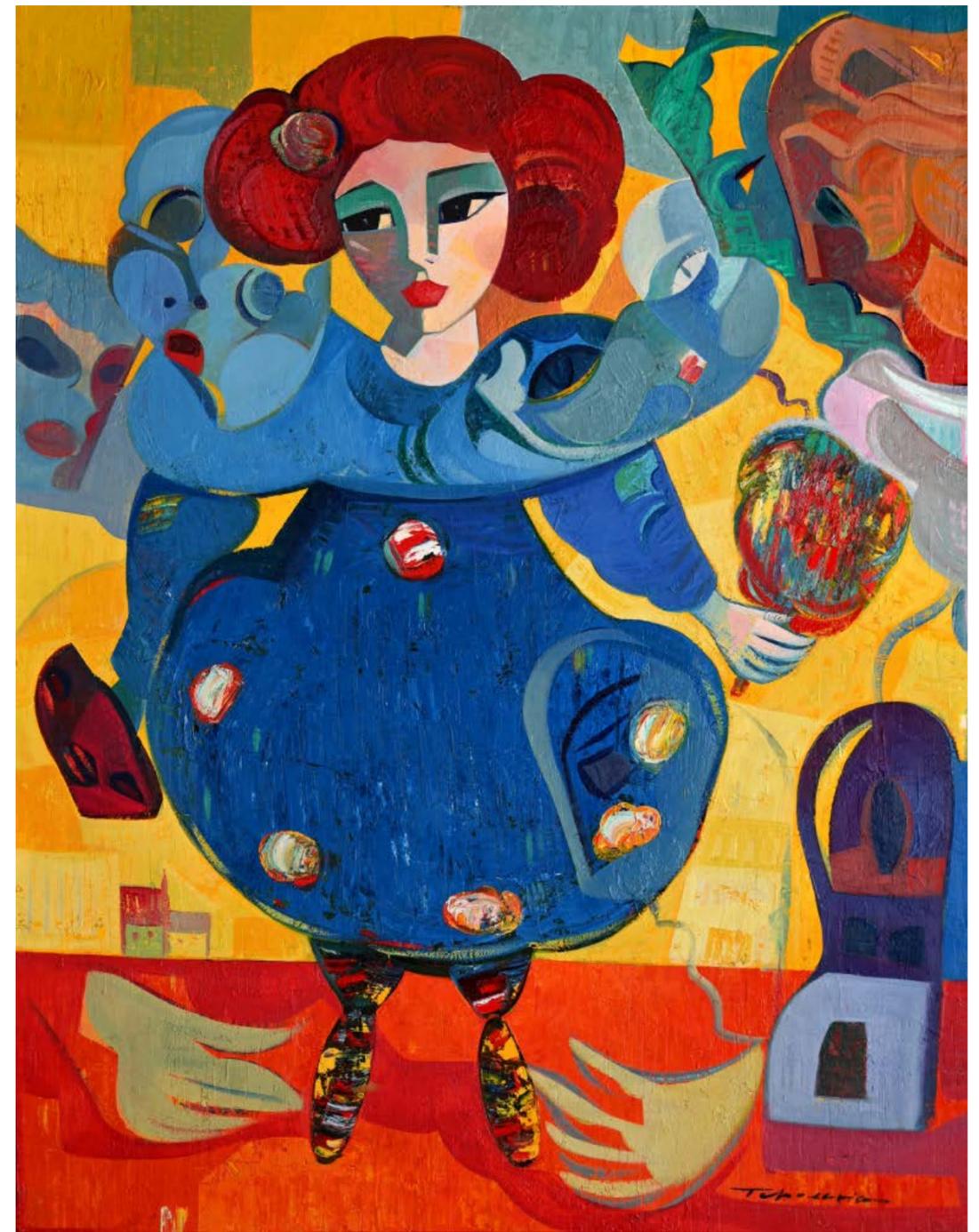
Natalie. 2004
Oil on canvas. 65 x 54
Collection of Iosif Sichinava



Esmeralda. 2004
Oil on canvas. 46 x 38
Collection of Elena Maryash



Young Woman with Flowers. 2004
Oil on canvas. 93 x 73



Doll. 2004
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80



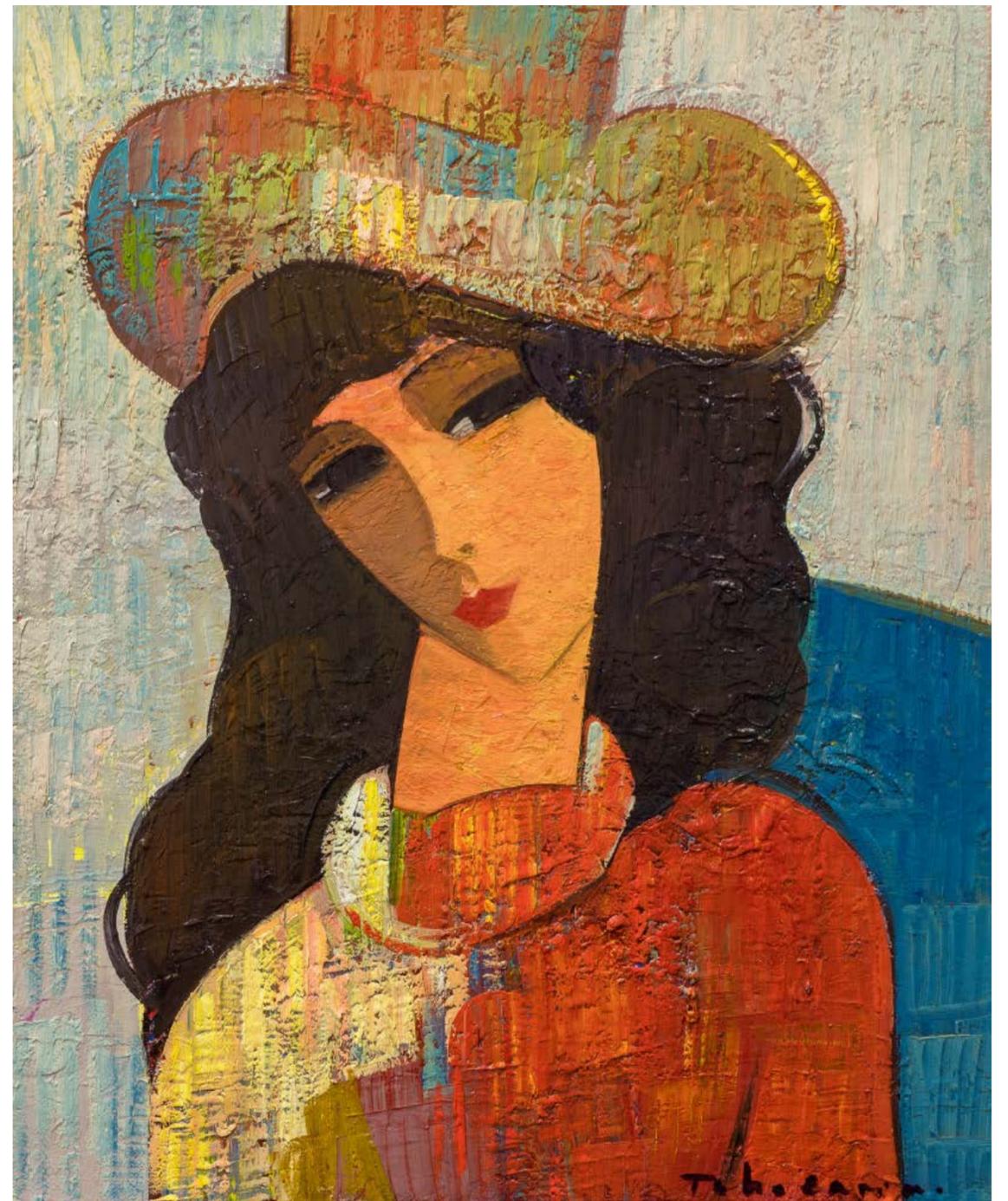
Doll. 2005
Oil on canvas. 55 x 46
Collection of Iosif Sichinava



Caroline. 2005
Oil on canvas. 92 x 73
Collection of Iosif Sichinava



The General. 2006
Oil on canvas. 70 x 60
Collection of Iosif Sichinava



Unknown Lady. 2007
Oil on canvas. 50 x 40



Horse of My Dreams. 2005
Oil on canvas. 73 x 92
Collection of Temur Anchabadze



Dancer. 2005
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80



Composition. 2012
Oil on canvas. 108 x 80
Collection of Viktor Fedotov



Behind the Scenes. 2008
Oil on canvas. 70 x 90
Collection of Mikhail Oseevsky

Mischief of the Moon. 2007
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80





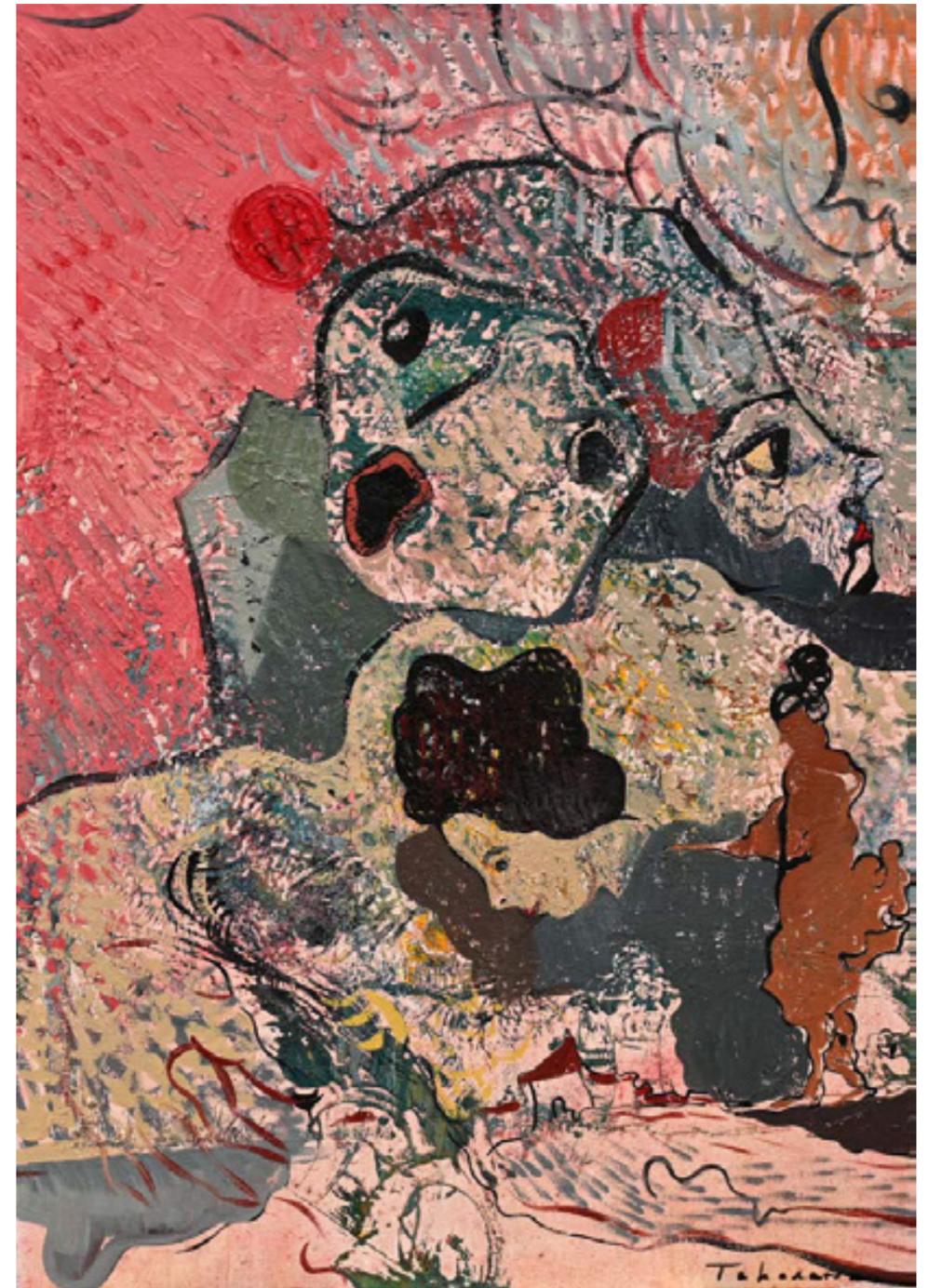
The Great General. 2011
Oil on canvas. 150 x 150
Collection of Alla Usova



Musical Games of the Muse. 2011
Oil on canvas. 100 x 120
Collection of Iosif Sichinava



California, 2013
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100



The Road Recedes into the Sky, 2006
Oil on canvas, 70 x 50



Marie. 2012
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Young Woman with Flowers. 2013
Oil on canvas. 90 x 80
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Theatre. 2014
Oil on canvas. 80 x 100
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Acrobats. 2010
Oil on canvas 100 x 140
Collection of Alexander Monastirli



Reflection. 2015
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Boris Petrov



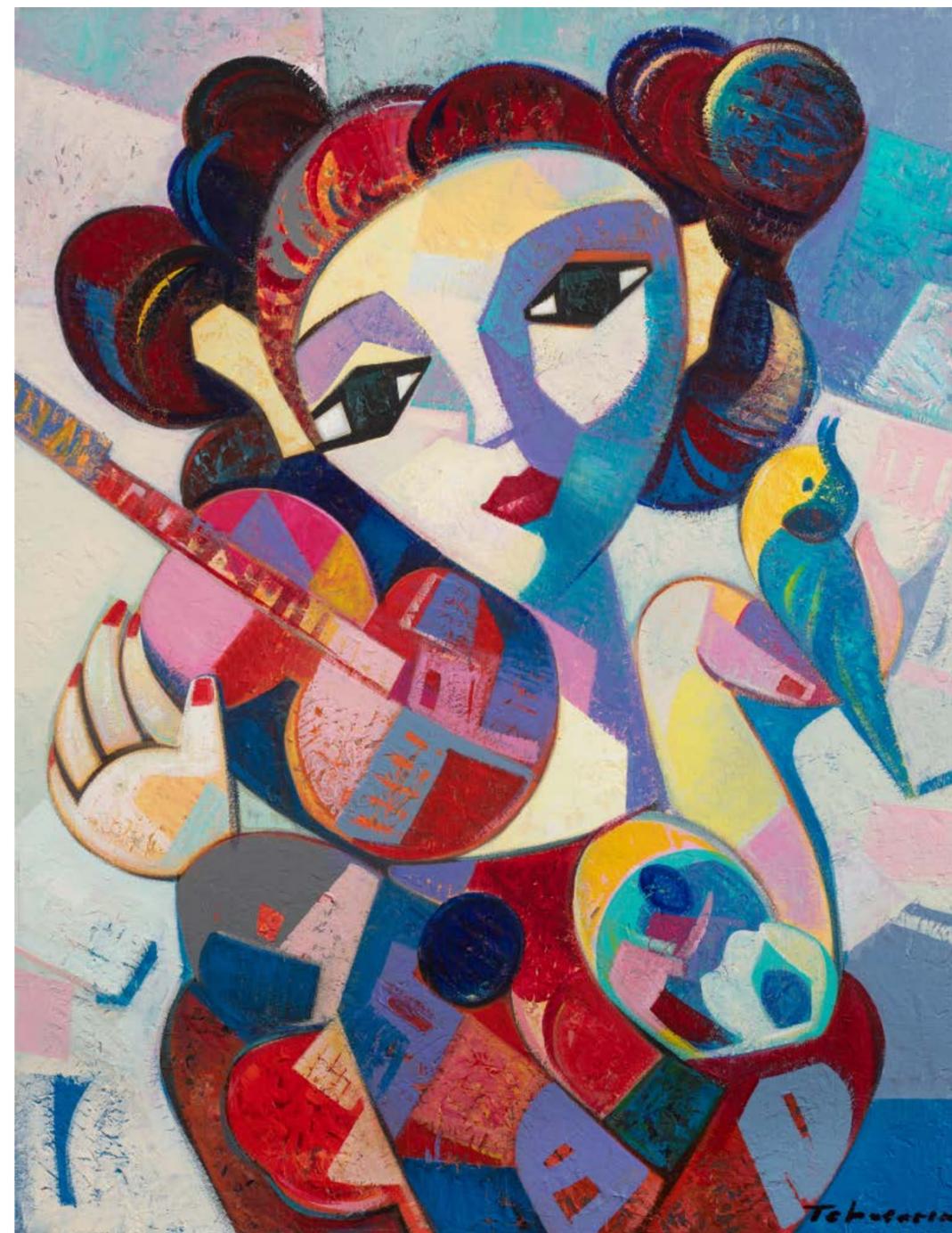
Tightrope Walker. 2015
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Jazz. 2011
Oil on canvas. 79 x 92



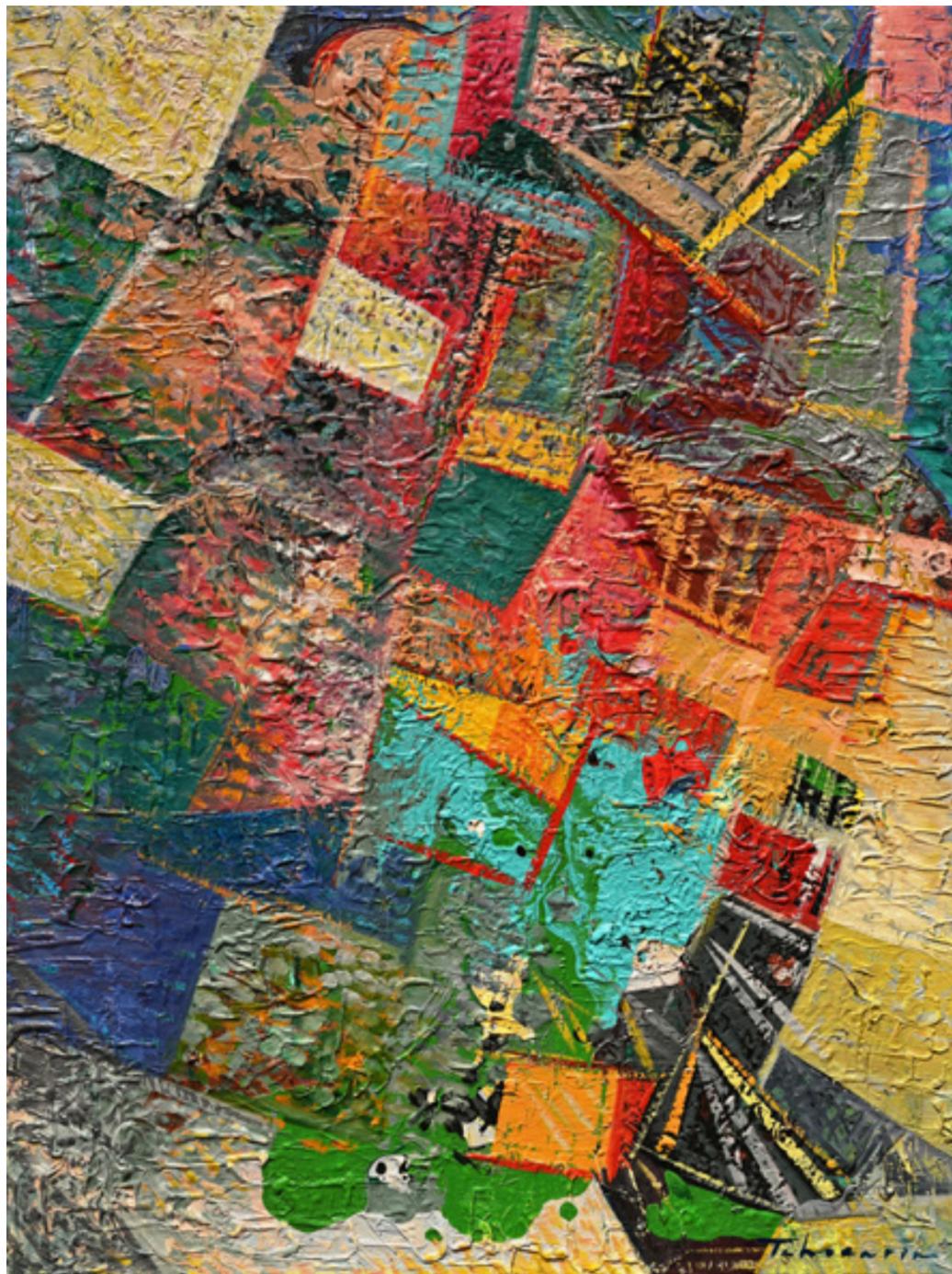
She Lets Love In. 2015
Oil on canvas. 70 x 90
Collection of Viktor Fedotov



Lady with a Bird. 2015
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Viktor Fedotov



Composition. 2015
Oil on canvas. 80 x 108
Collection of Dmitry Sichinava



Elysium. 2004
Oil on canvas. 80 x 60



Composition. 2000
Oil on canvas. 60 x 70



The Show Must Go On. 2015
Oil on canvas. 131 x 196



Skull of Morning Dreams. 2015
Oil on canvas. 150 x 150



Territory of Music and Love. 2020
Oil on canvas. 80 x 60
Collection of Eleonora Stefantsova



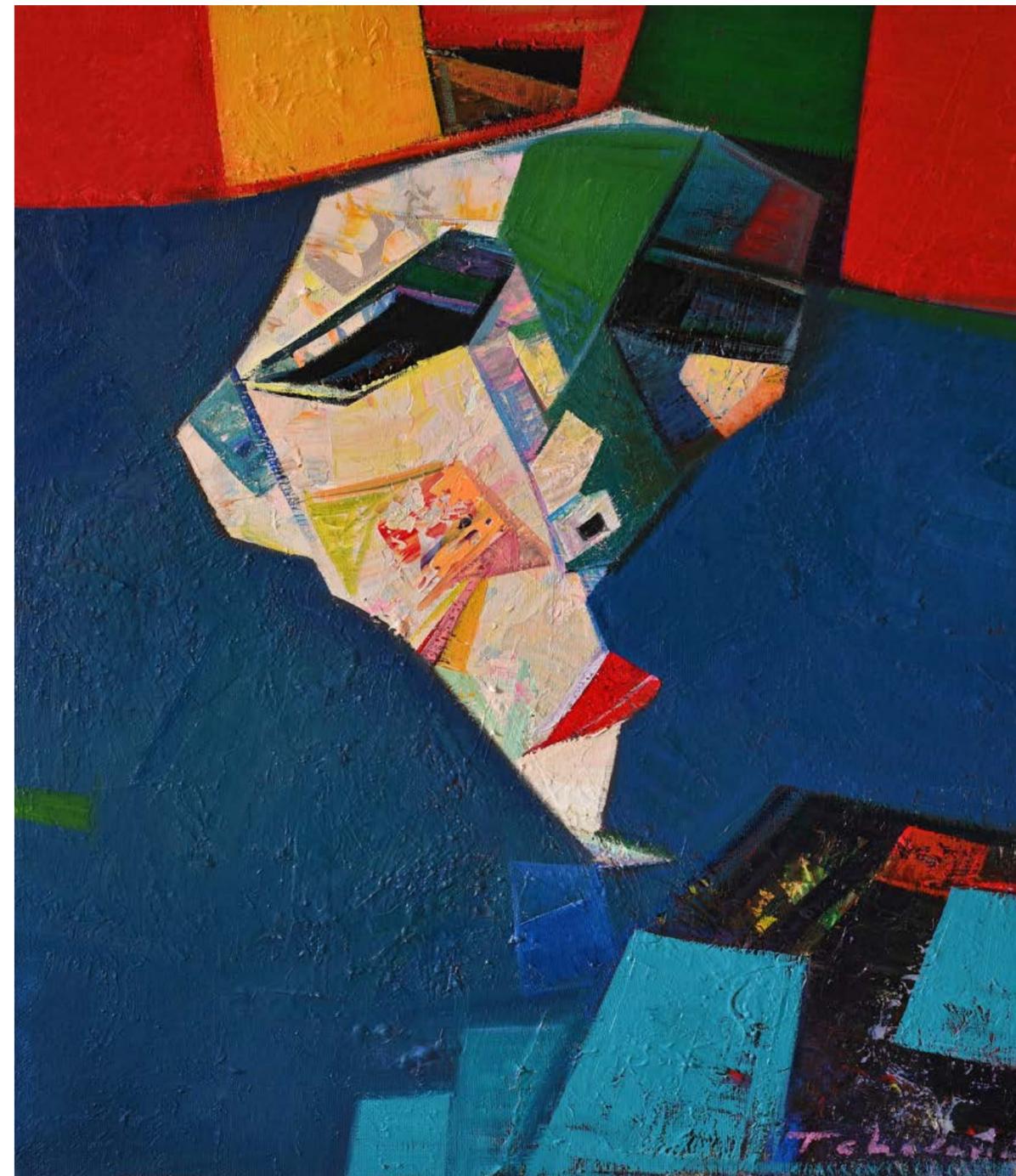
I Am Everywhere. 2015
Oil on canvas. 60 x 60
Collection of Roman Panchenko

Quasimodo and Esmeralda. 2016
Oil on canvas. 92 x 73





Where Are You? 2016
Oil on canvas. 60 x 60
Collection of Dmitry Sichinava



Desire. 2016
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70



Fiesta. 2016
Oil on canvas. 120 x 140



The Winter Wind of His Hands. 2017
Oil on canvas. 195 x 134



Love Story. 2016
Oil on canvas. 100 x 120

Goddess of the Sky, 2017
Oil on canvas, 100 x 80





Red Horse. 2017
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



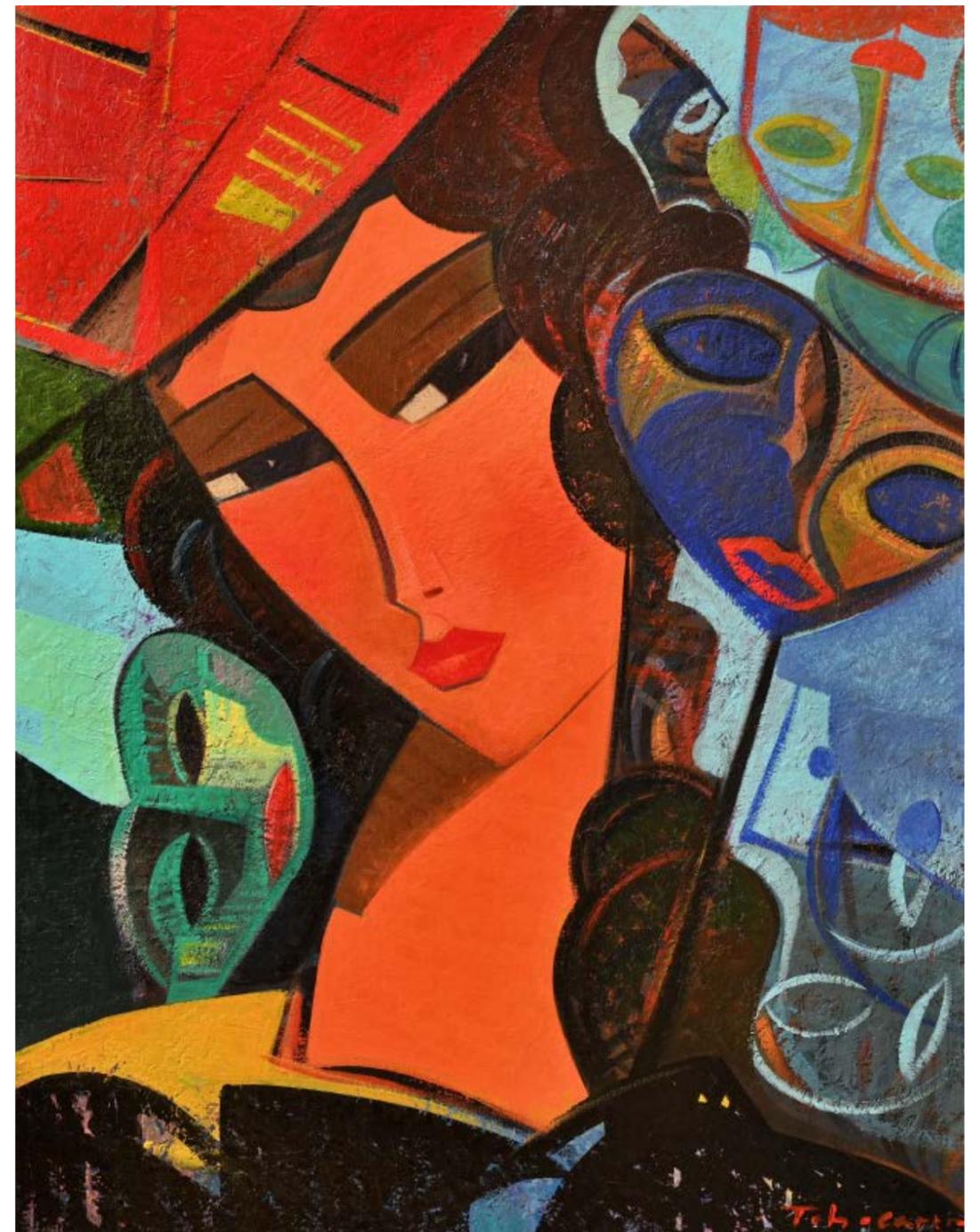
The Yellow Parrot's Concert Tour. 2017
Oil on canvas. 70 x 90

Steps of Light. 2017
Acrylic on canvas. 195 x 135





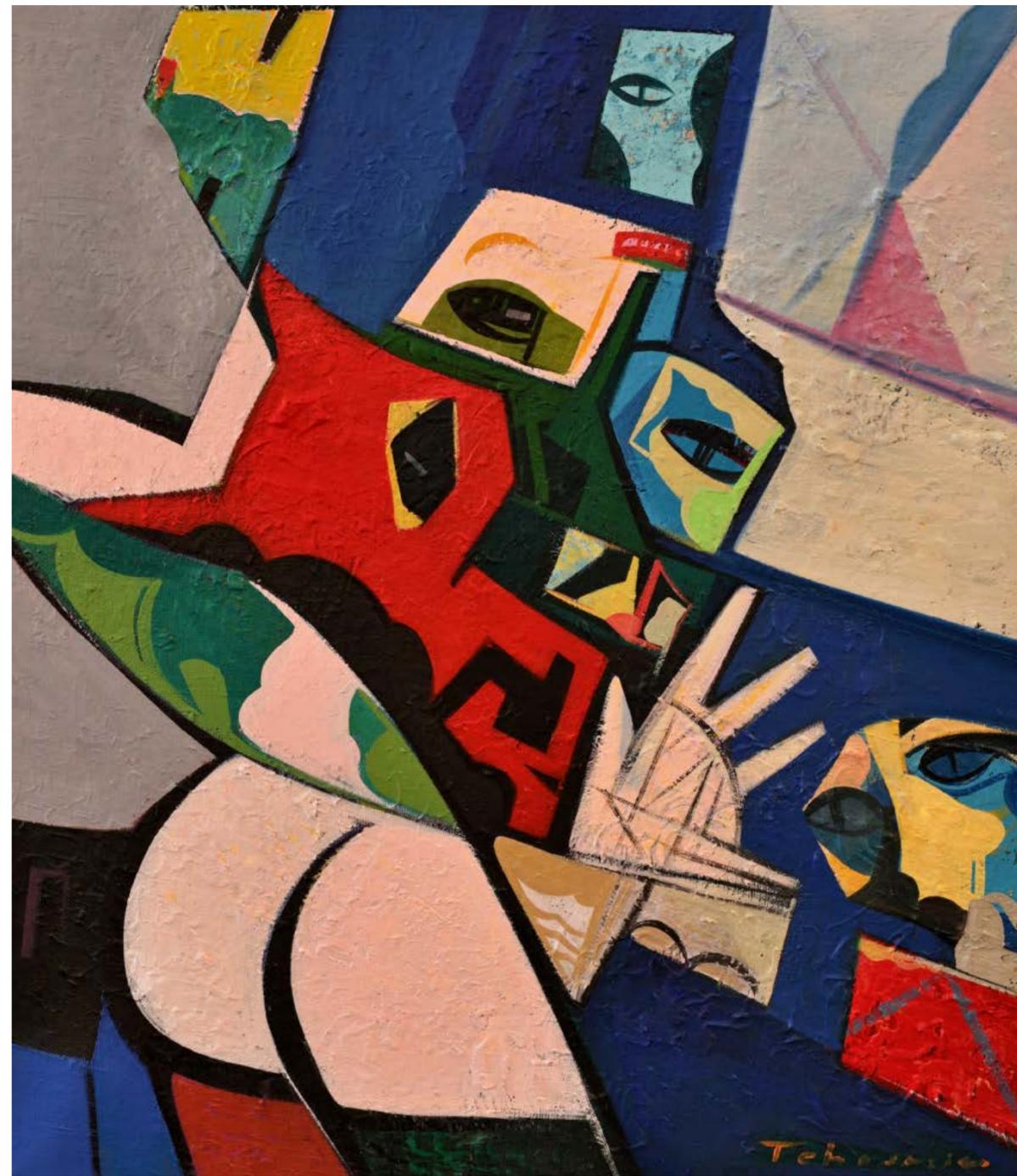
Sonya. 2018
Oil on canvas. 60 x 50
Collection of Alexandra Muravyova



Caroline. 2018
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Girl with a Parrot. 2018
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80
Collection of Arkady Vladimirtsev



Harmony in Silver. 2017
Oil on canvas. 80 x 70



Whirlwind of Freedom. 2018
Oil on canvas. 195 x 135



A Night in Paris. 2018
Oil on canvas. 160 x 180



The Toreador's Dream. 2018
Oil on canvas. 80 x 100
Collection of Boris Petrov



Love Is an Entire Universe. 2018
Oil on canvas. 80 x 100
Collection of Sofya Grebenshchikova



Strong People of the Day. 2019
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80



Amazons. 2018
Oil on canvas. 80 x 80



Demons and Diamonds of Love. 2019
Acrylic on canvas. 89 x 115



Dreams of an Eagle. 2019
Oil on canvas. 160 x 220



Women of Late Rendezvous. 2019
Oil on canvas. 134 x 195



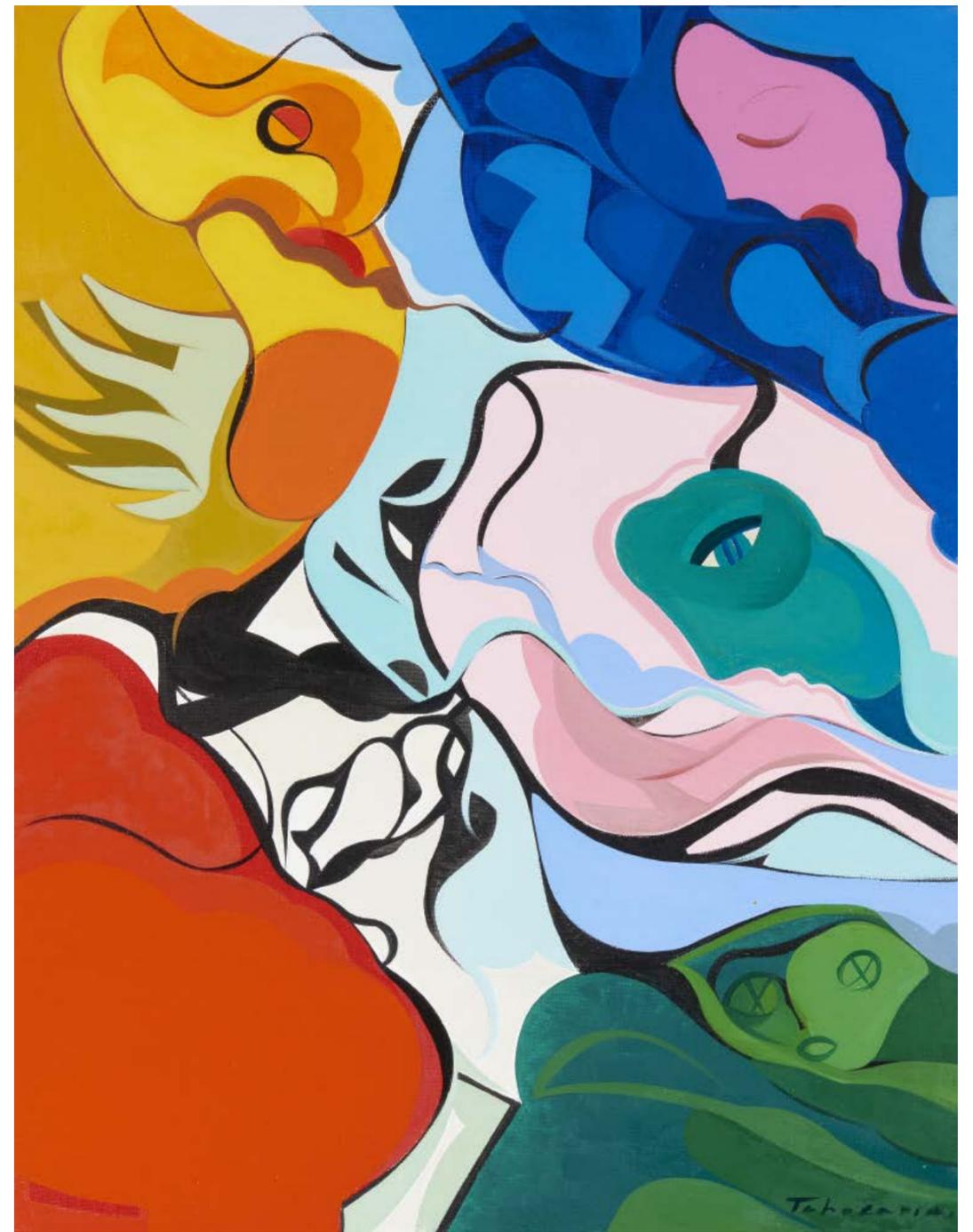
Russian Roulette. 2019
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Sofya Grebenshchikova



I Know Your Secret. 2020
Oil on canvas. 197 x 135



I Can See the Future. 2020
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70



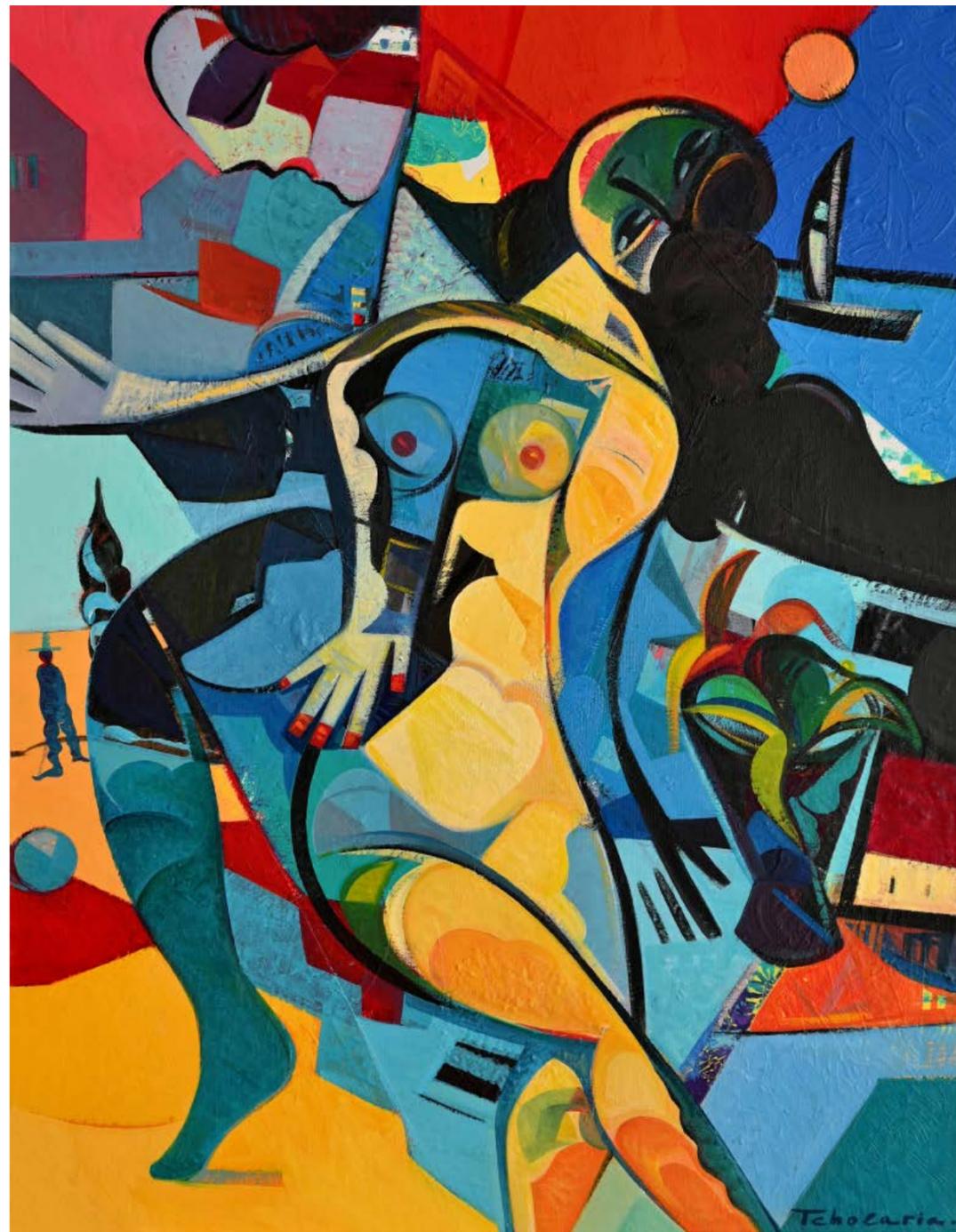
The River of Time. 2020
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70



All My Dreams Are with Me. 2020
Oil on canvas. 80 x 80



Treasure Island. 2020
Oil on canvas. 60 x 80



Double Adventure. 2020
Oil on canvas. 90 x 70
Collection of Boris Petrov



The Red Song of Her Lips. 2020
Oil on canvas. 100 x 80



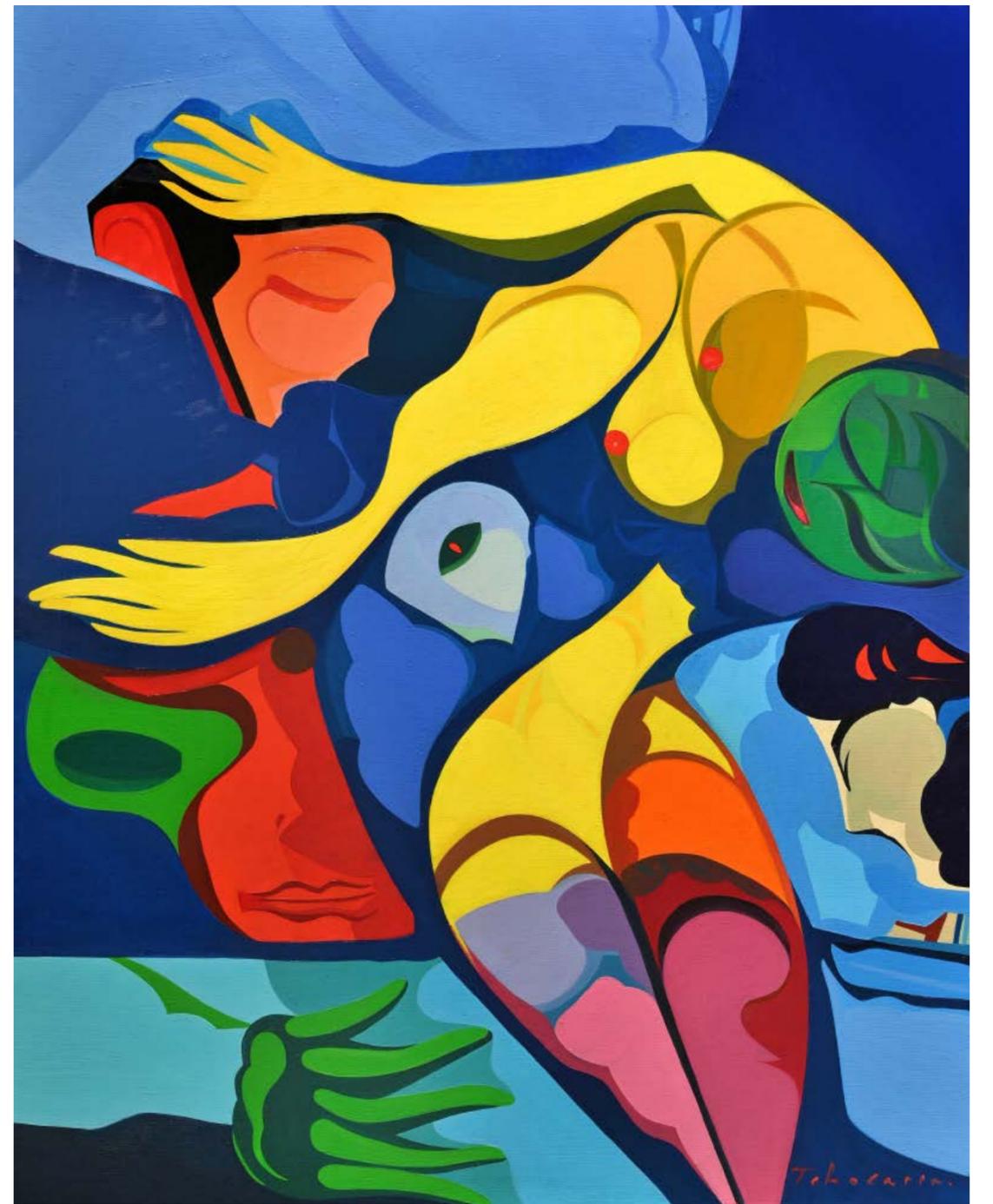
Dreams Among the Trees. 2021
Poster
Colour printing on paper. 100 x 100



My Music Is Inside Me. 2020
Oil on canvas. 100 x 100



What Do You Feel? 2020
Oil on canvas. 80 x 80



Red Guitar. 2020
Oil on canvas. 60 x 80



Carnival. 2021
Oil on canvas. 145 x 200



Wanderers of the Silver Night. 2021
Oil on canvas. 100 x 121



The Red Light of Passion. 2021
Oil on canvas. 80 x 90



Life Is a Stream. 2021
Oil on canvas. 80 x 90



People and Shadows. 2021
Oil on canvas. 80 x 60
Collection of Natalya Maksakova



I Am a Fire in Your Soul. 2021
Oil on canvas. 100 x 100
Collection of Tatyana Lukyanenko



I Love Her Singing. 2021
Oil on canvas. 100 x 120

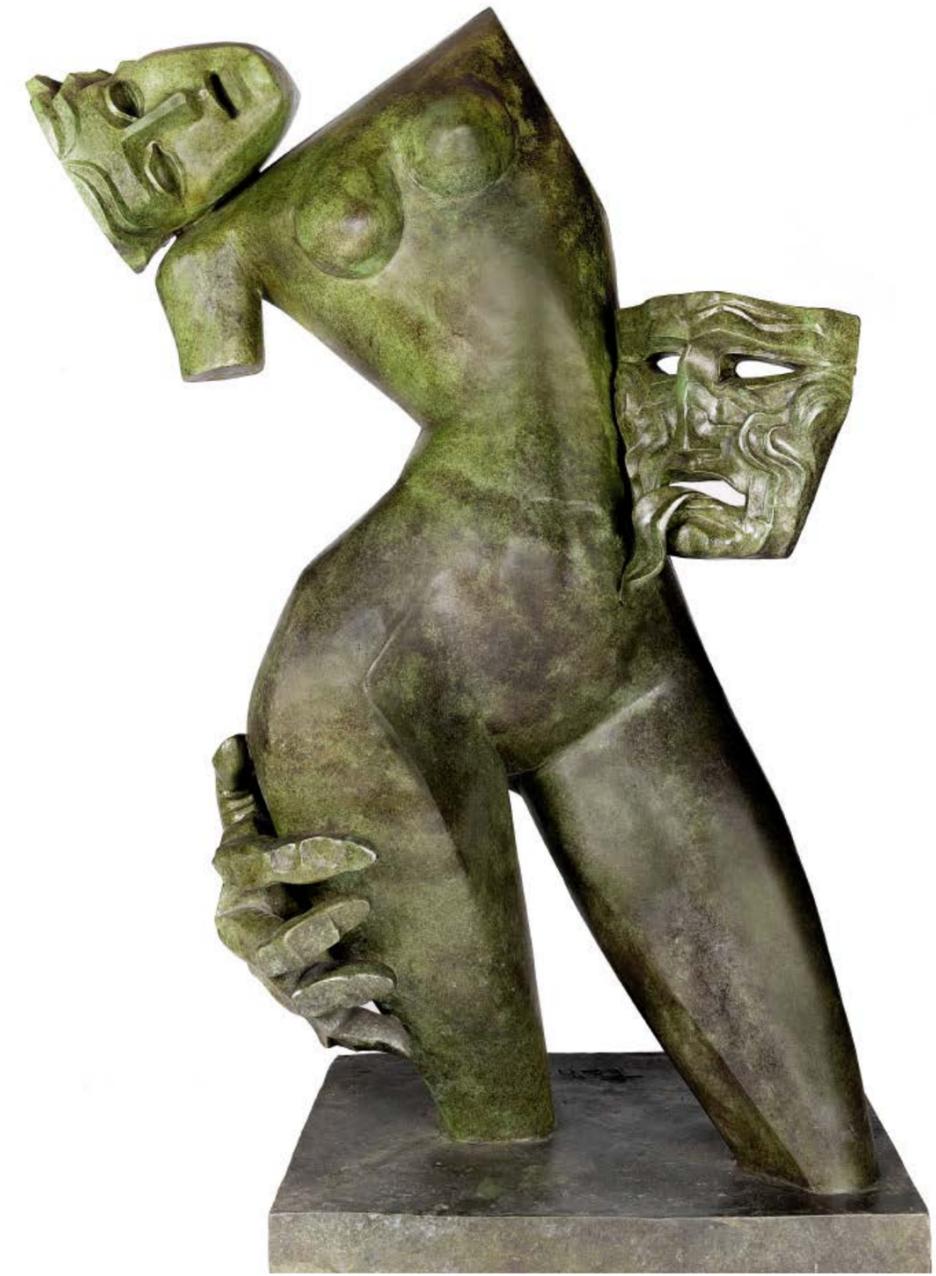
SCULPTURE

The General. 2019
Bronze. Height: 70; base diameter: 63
On a moveable wooden base





Music of Desire. 2019
Bronze. 67 x 23 x 54



Obsession. 2019
Bronze. 140 x 70 x 40



To Be or Not To Be. 2019
Bronze. 140 x 70 x 40



To Be or Not To Be. 2019
Bronze. 140 x 70 x 40



Woman on the Summit. 2020
Bronze. 67 x 70 x 40

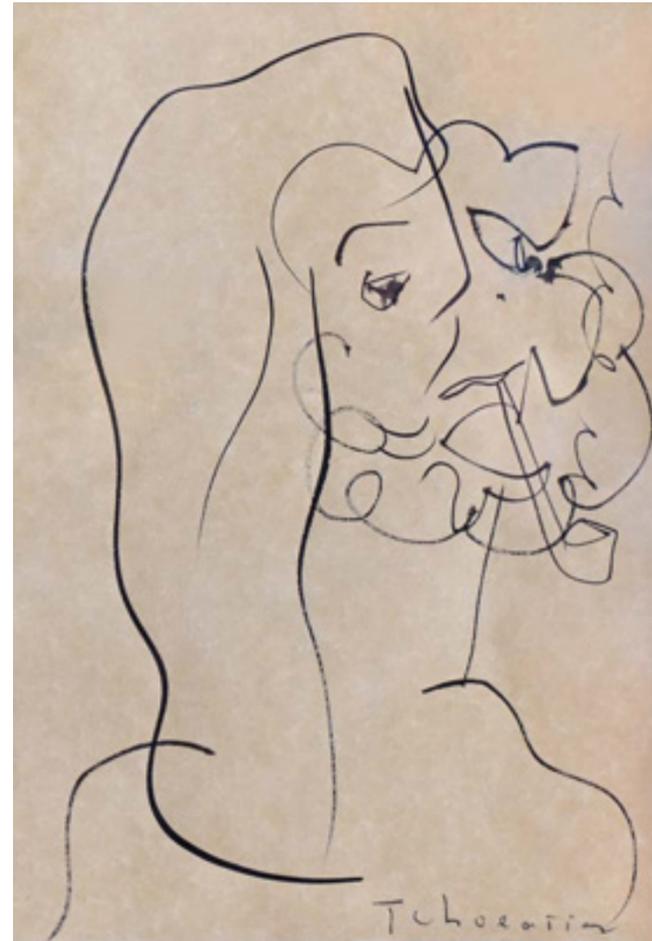


Music Is Freedom. 2020
Bronze. 55 x 70 x 40

Music Is Able To Fly, 2020
Bronze. Height: 40; base diameter: 25

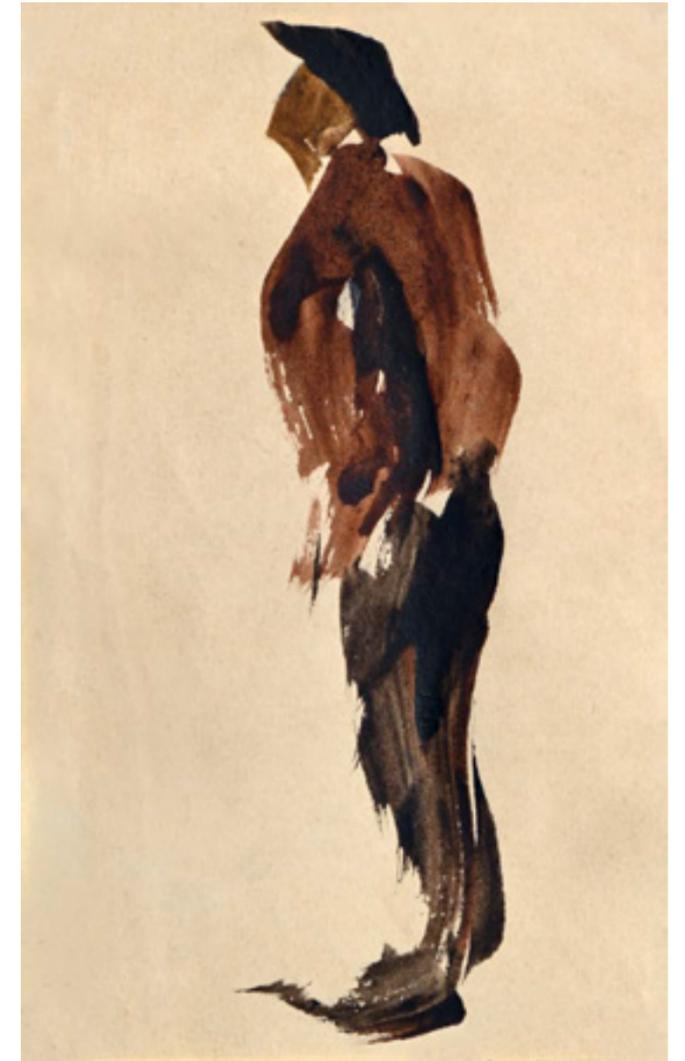


DRAWING



My Friend. 2015
India ink and pen on paper. 20 x 15

Man with a Pipe. 2015
India ink and pen on paper. 29 x 20



Portrait of a Performing Artist. 2001
India ink and pen on paper. 20 x 13

Spaniard. 1975
Watercolour on paper. 17 x 10

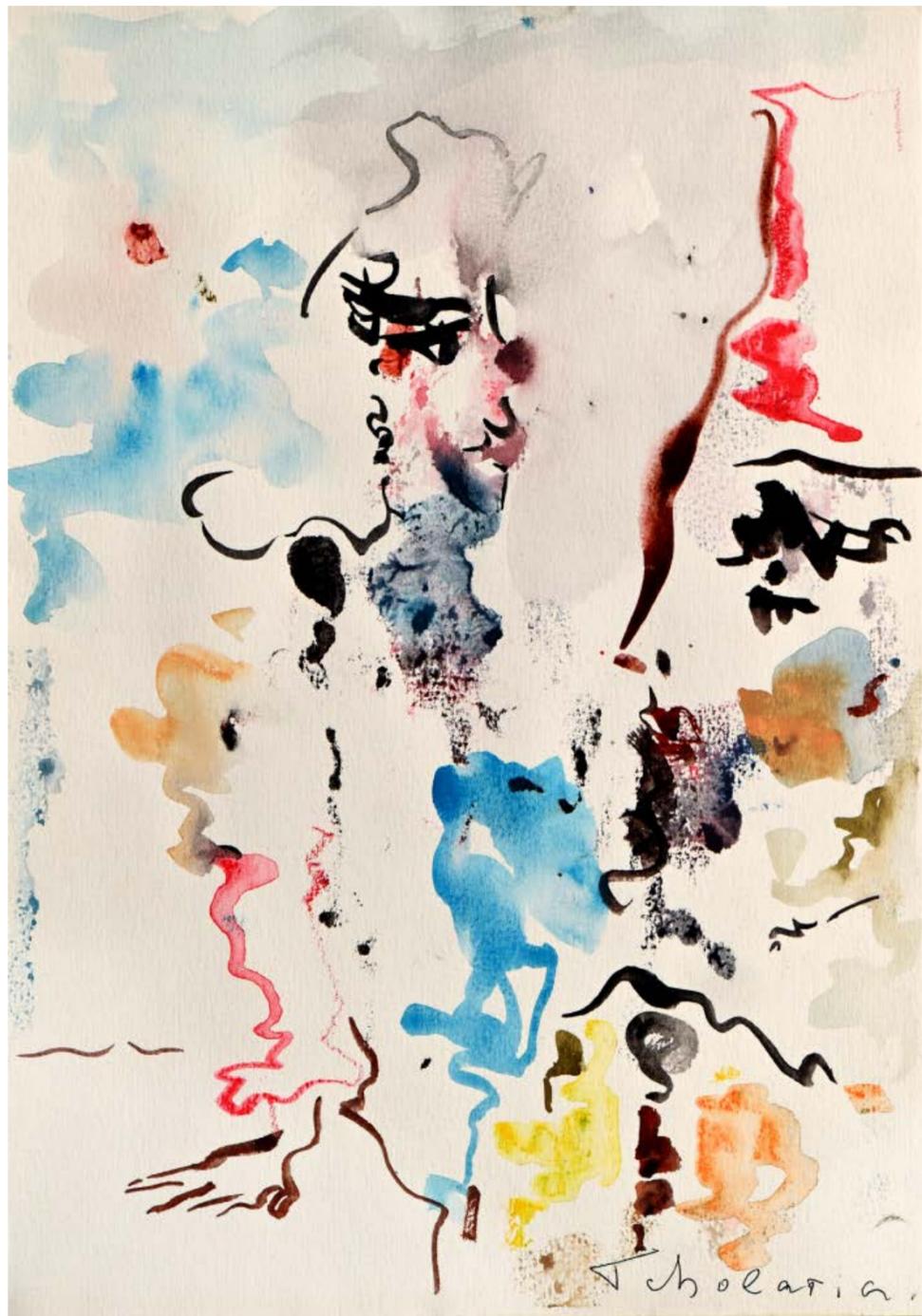


Horse of My Childhood. 2001
India ink and pen on paper. 40 x 29

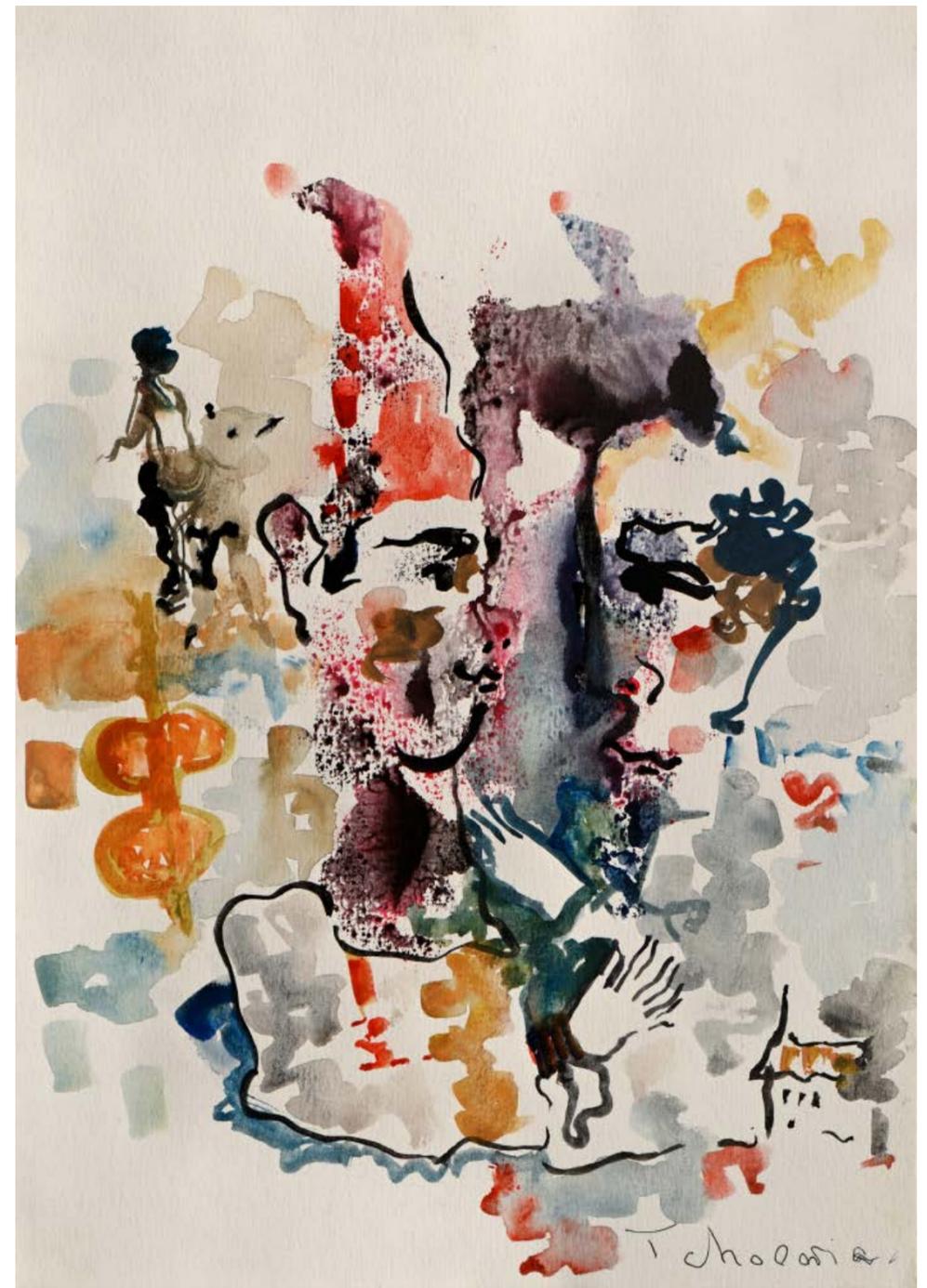
Black Eyes. 2001
India ink and pen on paper. 58 x 40



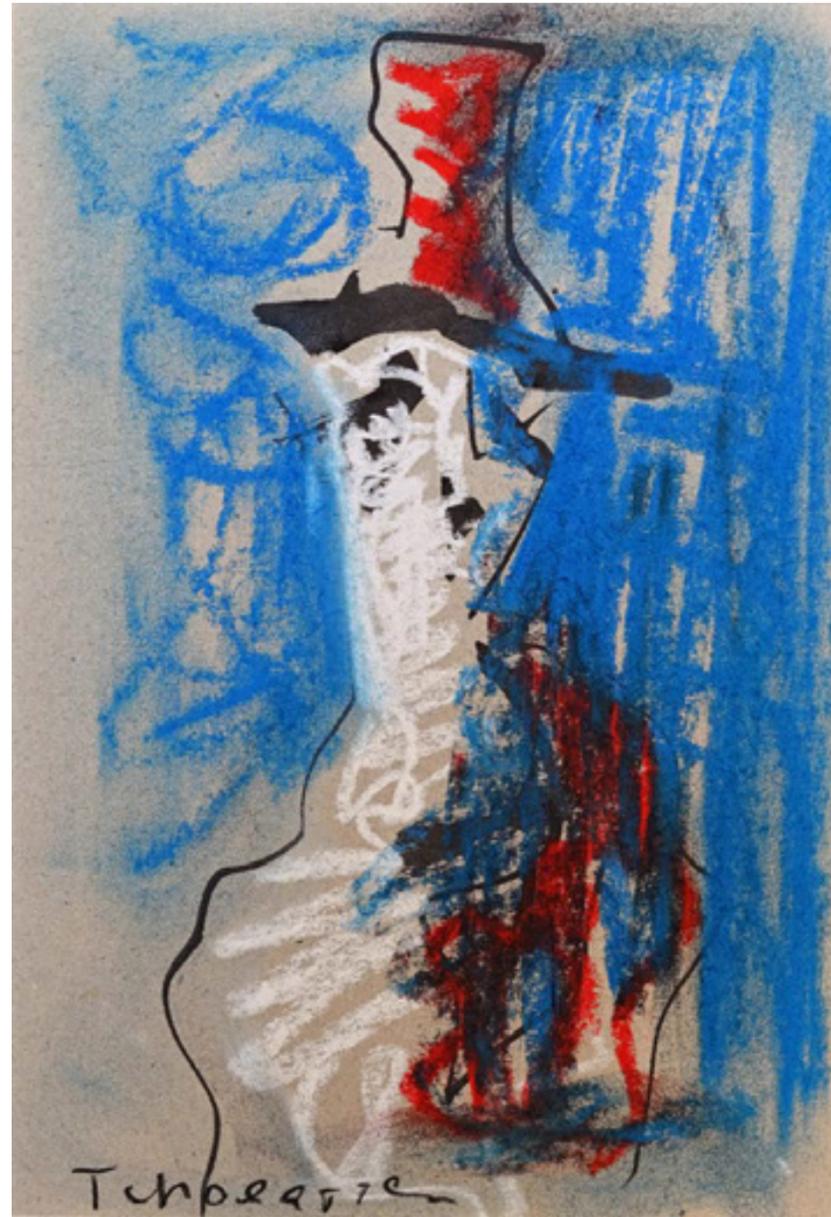
Portrait of a Teacher. 2013
Charcoal on paper. 40 x 29



Reflection. 2013
Watercolour on paper. 29 x 20



Two Clowns. 2015
Watercolour on paper. 29 x 20



A Young Lady from the Bar. 2011
Pastel on paper. 20 x 14



Unknown Lady. 1987
Pastel on paper. 35 x 25



Igor Tcholaria drawing a portrait of an American ballerina on the street
Harlem. 1991
Photograph
Archives of the artist

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born in 1959, in the Black Sea coastal town of Ochamchira in the Caucasus. My father was a farmer and my mother, a court secretary. My childhood was fun. We climbed mountains. When the river flooded, we built small dams and staged pirate fights. However, life, on the whole, was fairly patriarchal, and so the biggest event of the year was when the Moscow Circus came to town. The animals, clowns in their vibrant costumes, and agile acrobats fired my imagination and became favourite characters of many of my paintings.

My artistic skills were noticed at school and I gained a place at the Sukhumi School of Art. In those days getting in there was quite competitive and the teachers were excellent. Far away from the strictures of capital life, we were taught about artists who did not enjoy official approval. It was there that I first discovered and came to love great early-20th century French art. My teacher, the artist Givi Ghergaya, had a huge influence over me.

After graduating from the Sukhumi School, I continued my studies at St Petersburg's Mukhin Institute, but spent just as much time at the Hermitage, studying and copying the Impressionists and European Old Masters.

When perestroika started, I became one of the first artists doing street portraits. I was spotted by a gallery owner from Italy where I was to put on my first solo shows. Next followed invitations to Robinsons, a leading gallery in the Belgian town of Knokke, and my collaboration began with Dutch gallery owner Mark Peet Visser. I also exhibited at celebrated dealer Roy Miles's London gallery. Over the past 25 years I have taken part in a great many international shows in various countries, as well as in Moscow.

From 2021, member of the Union of Artists of Russia and honorary member of the Russian Academy of Arts.

My artworks are now in collections all over the world, including those of celebrities such as Luciano Pavarotti, Pierre Richard, Gérard Depardieu, Madonna, and John Galliano, well-known sports and business personalities, and simply art lovers.



Ballerina. 2005
Charcoal on canvas. 70 x 50

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1990 PIACENTA Gallery, Piacenta, Italy
- 1991 PIACENTA Gallery, Piacenta, Italy
Gallery 47, London, UK
PALITRA Art Gallery, Leningrad, Russia
- 1992 City Hall, Athens, Greece
- 1995 Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 1996 Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 1997 Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
Classic V Exhibition, Kortrijk, Belgium
Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 1999 Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 2000 Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
Peace and Colour Gallery, London, UK
Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 2001 Alla Bulyanskaya Gallery, Moscow, Russia
Peace and Colour Gallery, London, UK
Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
- 2002 Vinizki Gallery, Munich, Germany
- 2003 Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
Eden Gallery, London, UK
- 2004 Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
- 2005 Alla Bulyanskaya Gallery, Moscow, Russia
Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
- 2006 Alla Bulyanskaya Gallery, Moscow, Russia
- 2007 Alla Bulyanskaya Gallery, Moscow, Russia
- 2008 Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
- 2009 Sokol Fine Art, Hay Hill Gallery, London, UK
Sokol Fine Art, Oriel Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
Mark Peet Visser Gallery, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands
- 2011 "Reflection of Love" Exhibition, Natasha-Li Gallery, Helsinki, Finland
- 2012 Yusupov Palace, Cholaria Gallery, Moscow, Russia
- 2014 Hay Hill Gallery, London, UK
Creutzberg & Van Dun Gallery, Oisterwijk, Netherlands
- 2015 Creutzberg & Van Dun Gallery, Oisterwijk, Netherlands
Goers Gallery of Fine Arts, Luxemburg, Luxemburg
- 2017 Van Loon Galleries, Vught, Netherlands
- 2018 Animamix Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
- 2020 Galerie Mourlot, New York, USA
- 2021 Van Loon Galleries, Vught, Netherlands



Meeting Gérard Depardieu in St Petersburg, 2015
 Photograph
 Archives of the artist

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1988 Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Leningrad, Russia
 Central Exhibition Hall, Tbilisi, Georgia
 Central Exhibition Hall, Sukhumi, Abkhazia
- 1990 PALITRA Art Gallery, Leningrad, Russia
 Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Leningrad, Russia
 Modern Art Biennale, Leningrad, Russia
- 1991 ART-MYTH International Exhibition, Moscow, Russia
- 1993 Manege Central Exhibition Hall, St. Petersburg, Russia
 Museum of Modern Art, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 1994 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 1995 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 1996 MiArt International Fair, Milan Exhibition Centre, Milan, Italy
 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
 Galleri Flessner, Helsingborg, Sweden
 Asger Maariensson Gallery, Lund, Sweden
- 1997 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 1998 Roy Miles Gallery, London, UK
 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 1999 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 2000 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
 Bloxham Gallery, London, UK
- 2001 London's Art 2001 Exhibition, London, UK
 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2003 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2004 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2005 London's Art 2005 Exhibition, London, UK
 Realism'05 Art Fair, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2006 Realism'06 Art Fair, Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2007 Realism'07 Art Fair, Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2008 Realism'08 Art Fair, Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2009 Realism'09 Art Fair, Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
 Art and Antiques Fair, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands
 Millionaires Fair, Manege Central Exhibition Hall, Moscow, Russia
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2010 Realism'10 Art Fair, Exhibition Centre, Amsterdam, Netherlands
 Art and Antiques Fair, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2011 Art and Antiques Fair, 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands
 Utrecht International Exhibition, Utrecht, Netherlands
- 2012 LINEART Art Fair, Ghent Exhibition Centre, Ghent, Belgium
- 2014 "Colourful Russian Music" Exhibition, World Museum, Rotterdam, Netherlands
- 2015 Art Fair, Rosmalen, Netherlands
 Winter group show, Hay Hill Gallery, London, UK
- 2016 Veghel Biennale, Exhibition Centre, Veghel, Netherlands
- 2019 Veghel Biennale, Exhibition Centre, Veghel, Netherlands



Luciano Pavarotti holding a painting by Igor Tcholaria. St Petersburg. 2005
Photograph
Archives of the artist

GALLERIES

Mark Peet Visser Gallery, Heusden, Netherlands
Van Loon Galleries, Vught, Netherlands
Robinsons Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium
Old Establishment Zavieh S.A., Mechelen, Belgium



Anthony Hopkins. New York. 2017
Photograph
Archives of the artist



Pierre Richard and Igor Tcholaria. St Petersburg. 2016
Photograph
Archives of the artist

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Temur Anchabadze
Gérard Depardieu
Viktor Fedotov
John Galliano
Sofya Grebenshchikova
Anthony Hopkins
Andrei Kostin
Yunis Lukmanov
Tatyana Lukyanenko
Madonna
Natalya Maksakova
Elena Maryash
Igor Mikhailov
Alexander Mogilny
Alexander Monastirli
Alexandra Muravyova
Mikhail Oseevsky
Roman Panchenko
Luciano Pavarotti
Boris Petrov
Pierre Richard
Dmitry Sichinava
Iosif Sichinava
Eleonora Stefantsova
Alla Usova
Natalya Usvyat
Arkady Vladimirtsev

PUBLICATIONS

Debruyne J. *Tcholaria. Paintings 1995–1996*. Album of reproductions. Belgium: Robinsons Art Gallery, 1996

Van der Soomen B. *Igor Tcholaria*. Album of reproductions. Holland: Marc Peet Visser Gallery, 2011

Usvyat E. *Igor Tcholaria. Retrospective 1995–2013*. Album of reproductions / Edited by GLNK Consult. Belgium, 2013

Debruyne J. *Igor Tcholaria*. Album of reproductions. Belgium: Robinsons Art Gallery, 2015

Jallal Z. *The Obsession*. Belgium, 2019

German, M. *Igor Tcholaria*. Album of reproductions. St Petersburg, 2003

Usvyat, E. "The English Seasons of Artist Tcholaria." *London Russian Courier* 197 (03.10.2003)



Igor in his studio. St Petersburg. 2007
Photograph
Archives of the artist