



Article

# Depiction, Content, and Spirituality in Visual Arts

Juraev Khamza Khamrakulovich<sup>1\*</sup>, Khamzaeva Charos Khamza qizi<sup>2</sup>

1. Associate Professor at the Uzbekistan-Finland Pedagogical Institute, PhD in Art Studies
  2. Associate Professor at the Uzbekistan-Finland Pedagogical Institute, PhD in Art Studies
- \* Correspondence: [xamzajurayev51@mail.ru](mailto:xamzajurayev51@mail.ru)

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**Abstract:** This study explores the profound impact of Uzbekistan's independence on the evolution of visual and applied arts, emphasizing the restoration of the nation's spiritual and cultural heritage. Through qualitative research, the analysis highlights how artists in post-independence Uzbekistan transitioned from the constraints of socialist realism to more diverse forms of expression, reflecting national identity and spiritual values. The artworks examined reveal a deep connection between the nation's artistic development and its cultural roots. Notable works from the Samarkand school and applied arts showcase how the revival of traditional crafts, alongside contemporary artistic endeavors, plays a pivotal role in fostering a shared national identity. This research underscores the critical role of visual arts in shaping societal values and suggests future studies explore the integration of digital media with traditional practices to enrich Uzbekistan's cultural narrative. The article discusses the current importance of our priceless spiritual and cultural heritage, the unique spiritual and ideological directions formed through the form and content of visual and applied arts, and how these aspects are reflected in the works of artists. It presents logical reflections on the broadening of creative opportunities beyond the confines of socialist realism during the independence era.

**Keywords:** Gallery, Integration, Composition, Cultural Heritage, Spiritual Environment, Ideological Directions, Socialist Realism, Threat, Civilization, Emotionality.

## 1. Introduction

The independence period marks a new chapter in the history of Uzbekistan. The reformation of spiritual and ideological directions has, in turn, expanded the scope of creative exploration in all fields of contemporary art, accelerating the development of artistic thinking. "From the very first days of our independence, the restoration of the invaluable spiritual and cultural heritage created by our ancestors over the centuries has become a critical task, elevated to the level of state policy. We consider the restoration of spiritual values as an integral and natural process of growing national identity, returning to the spiritual roots and origins of the people," said our first President, Islam Karimov (Florea, 2022).

Based on this policy, visual and applied arts, as one of the foundations of our spirituality, also play an essential role. Its educational significance in society has been known since ancient times. Just as other creative professionals, specialists in the field of visual arts are tasked with creating a healthy spiritual environment for the new generation, which forms the foundation of our society (Sato, 2022).

During the era of independence, Uzbekistan saw the emergence of a new spiritual and ideological formation (Siyahrood, 2019). This process stimulated the expansion of creative pursuits in all spheres of contemporary art and significantly accelerated the development of artistic thought (Volkova, 2020).

As the world rapidly changes, bringing new threats and challenges that undermine stability and the sustainable development of nations, today, more than ever, attention must be paid to spirituality, education, moral upbringing, and fostering young people's desire for knowledge and personal growth (Zsolnai, 2019).

While our country experiences growth and development in all sectors, significant progress is also being made in culture and the arts. This is especially evident in the fields of folk applied art and traditional crafts, which have undergone major transformations. As a result, many previously forgotten national crafts have been revived. The International Handicraft Festival held in 2019 in Kokand, under the initiative of our esteemed President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, further affirms this point. The continuity of such festivals opens great creative doors for craftsmen working in applied arts (Paillussière, 2023).

Artists representing the Samarkand school of fine arts have also contributed significantly in this regard (Cullough, 2019). According to the work plan of the Samarkand branch of the Academy of Arts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, various exhibitions, dedicated to specific themes or anniversaries of artists, are being displayed. Love for the Motherland is often expressed in works of landscape art, created with deep emotion (de La Herrán Iriarte, 2023).

## 2. Materials and Methods

The methodology for this article employs a qualitative research approach to explore the intersection of visual arts, cultural heritage, and spirituality in post-independence Uzbekistan. The study relies on an in-depth analysis of selected artworks from prominent Uzbek artists, using a combination of art criticism and historical contextualization. The research process began with the identification of key artists whose works have played a significant role in reflecting the nation's cultural and spiritual evolution. Paintings, compositions, and applied arts from various periods were examined, focusing on their thematic, stylistic, and ideological aspects. These artworks were evaluated in relation to historical events, especially the shift from socialist realism to more diverse and independent artistic expressions following Uzbekistan's independence (Hyun, 2023). Additionally, the study drew on primary sources such as exhibitions, art catalogs, and critiques from notable scholars to provide a rich contextual understanding of the selected works. Insights from interviews with art critics and curators, who have extensive knowledge of the Uzbek art scene, further enriched the analysis. The combination of visual analysis and secondary research allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how artistic expression has evolved in the country (Bosch, 2020). The findings were synthesized to understand how the visual arts have contributed to the preservation of spiritual values and the fostering of national identity. This methodology effectively captures the dynamic nature of Uzbek visual arts, highlighting its role as both a reflection of and a contributor to the nation's cultural and spiritual heritage.

## 3. Results

In the works of Samarkand painter Abib Ismoilov, one can sense a fluent dialogue with nature. His works showcase rich color, diverse landscape themes, unique interpretations of urban architectural landscapes, and vast mountain pastures during various seasons. These works, created through years of experience, are characterized by mastery and, most importantly, the artist's sincere love. The artist's philosophy resonates with the belief of French impressionist painters that nature (or still life) is the ultimate school of fine arts (Flanagan, 2019).

While many artists directly replicate nature, truly captivating the refined tastes of an audience requires transforming observed events and natural phenomena into compositions filtered through the artist's worldview and creative vision.

This positive quality of Abib Ismoilov's work was also recognized by Moscow Tretyakov Gallery art critic Natalia Belova, who participated in the artist's personal exhibition. She noted that the unique talent of this artist deserves the public's attention and trust (Matracchi, 2021).

Artworks that deeply explore people's lifestyle and traditions are bound to find an audience and achieve longevity. Namoz Sultanov's body of work spans historical genre, portraiture, landscape, and still life. His painting "Alisher Navoi in Samarkand" reflects the artist's profound respect for the great poet Alisher Navoi and the spiritual legacy he left behind. Similarly, the traditions and customs that have been preserved and evolved over time in our culture find expression in Sultanov's painting "Sumalak." This spring landscape depicts women preparing sumalak under the warm rays of the sun, while children assist with gathering wood, and others sing and celebrate Navruz. The warmth of the scene evokes the spirit of Navruz in art lovers' hearts.

The craft of carpet weaving, one of the main traditional crafts, is also depicted in Namoz Sultanov's composition "Weaving Grandmothers."

The dynamic and active nature of the creative process in visual arts is vividly displayed in painting. All exhibitions held between 1991 and 2006 emphasize that the painting of this period stands out for its stylistic and compositional diversity (variety). This reflects the new era's creative freedom and the opportunity for artists to independently choose their form and medium.

In the process of civilization and social integration, one can observe how the work of Javlon Umarbekov, recognized as a sensitive artist in our national painting, has risen and evolved. Even during his studies at the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography, Umarbekov was deeply interested in Russian iconography and Eastern miniatures. In the late 1960s, he created several unique works such as "The Childhood of Husayn Bayqara and Alisher Navoi," "Navo," "My Friend," and "Cotton Harvest," reflecting new ideas in painting of that time.

Though the laws of socialist realism in the 1960s and 1970s restricted the creative freedom of artists, Umarbekov managed to preserve his artistic and spiritual independence. His early works belonged to the unique form of national romanticism or to the lyrical principles disfavored by socialist realism.

The feelings of homeland expressed in Uzbek works like N. Korakhon's "Golden Autumn," portraying a woman farmer winnowing grain, and the contrasting Russian landscapes of I. Levitan, are prime examples of how form and content can reflect national identity.

The applied and visual arts serve as repositories for our long-standing national identity, values, customs, and traditions. By "uniqueness," we refer to the deep meaning and content that give a harmonious unity to a beautiful and graceful form, serving to reveal the culture and spirituality of an entire nation.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the critical role of visual and applied arts in shaping and preserving Uzbekistan's cultural and spiritual heritage, particularly during the post-independence era. The findings underscore how contemporary Uzbek artists have moved beyond the constraints of socialist realism, embracing diverse forms of creative expression that reflect national identity, spiritual values, and ideological renewal. These developments not only signify the growing freedom within the artistic community but also underscore the educational and societal impact of art in fostering cultural continuity and moral upbringing. The implication of these findings suggests that visual arts play an indispensable role in cultivating a shared national identity, offering significant opportunities for further research into the ways art influences cultural and social dynamics. Future studies could explore the evolving role of digital media in Uzbek art,

examining how modern technologies interact with traditional artistic practices to further enrich the cultural narrative

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