



## Redefining Logic

Every once in a while you stumble across works of art which capture your heart, mind and imagination. I knew I was in the presence of something special when I stood in front of Alex Berdysheff's mysterious, charming and thought-provoking paintings, writes Maya Coppen

**W**e were introduced by a mutual friend and met several months later in his somewhat shabby, but orderly and busy studio on the top floor of a Soviet era apartment block in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

Georgia is a small country nestled in the South Caucasus mountain range, the mythical land of Colchis, where Jason found the Golden Fleece and fell in love with Medea. Situated on the crossroads of

Europe and Asia where the Silk Road connected China with Europe, Georgia has rich a historical heritage that embodies the finest cultural and artistic traditions of both East and West.

Alex Berdysheff was born in Tbilisi in 1964. He spent a nomadic childhood travelling around his native Georgia, Russia and Egypt, his love of art drawing him to Russia's greatest galleries and museums, which later influenced his artistic choices and tendencies.



But, more than anything, Alex loved to spend time at the workshops and in the studios of the artists and craftsmen where his father would often take him. "The smell of fresh timber and paint; those fantastic tools; busy, but friendly people my Dad was talking to and, sometimes, drinking with. These places, where chaos and order reigned, made me feel good and I decided that this was the life I wanted to live," muses Berdysheff.

In 1988 he graduated from the Tbilisi State Academy of Fine Arts with a diploma in Graphic Design. Later, in 1990, he went on to study at the Glasgow School of Art under a post-graduate programme. It was in Scotland, the country he grew to love, that his personal odyssey as an artist began and where he received his first recognition.

opposite: Chamber  
left top to bottom: Vox Populi  
Riot  
Flight Attempt

Berdysheff refers to his artistic talent as "an anomaly". Art for him represents the sole expression of his inner-self, the important means through which he conveys his sentiments, be it a political leaning (*Vox Populi*), human or social angst (*Riot*), or the impossible dream of human endeavour to reach for the sky so touchingly reflected in his small, but endearing work entitled *Traveller 2*, as well as in a much larger canvas called *Flight Attempt*. It is through his art that Alex continues his quest in seeking sense, his *raison d'être* in this ever-changing and often troubled world.

"My art is just a pessimistic game," says Berdysheff. "I create worlds where identifiable and abstract objects co-exist, interacting beyond any physical or logical limits."

Although influenced by the European surrealists and abstractionists of the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the Russian constructivist artists such as Rodchenko, Lissitsky and Malevich, Berdysheff's artistic style is unique and highly individual. His works display strength, confident use of geometric lines, shapes and proportions, and, above all, skilful draftsmanship. He makes extensive use of vivid colours, explaining that for him "the form and colour define the content". Sometimes the form dominates and other times the colour; in his works abstraction opens up, giving way to fantasy and unexpected conclusions. He employs the use of contrasts to great effect. "I like the opposition of chaos and order in my paintings," he explains. Today, Alex credits prehistoric rock paintings as being one of his strongest influences, and this is evident in his extensive representation of symbolised, anthropomorphic structures.

The art of Alex Berdysheff is as much about subject as it is about the feeling it invokes. His paintings contain a depth that offers profundity to the absurdity of life, creating spiritual and intellectual enlightenment. He is, without doubt, a talent worthy of widespread and major recognition.

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