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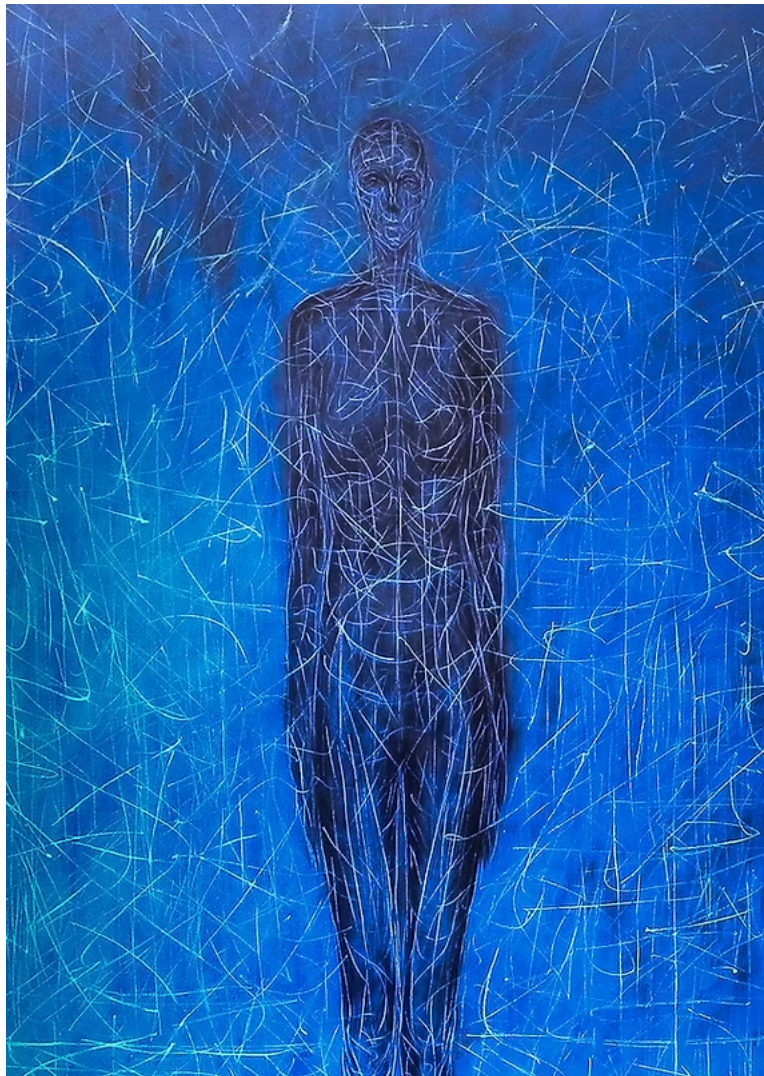
Michele Tufigno

Jun 25, 2020

**Crossing a Line – An**

# Appreciation of Atom Hovhanesyan's Artistic Endeavors

At times, it is difficult to separate the artist from his creations. The two are often, one hopes, reflections of the artist's experience and his spirit. Atom Hovhanesyan's (Hovhannisyan) work, obsessively personal, is an honest expression of his complex personal story, which concluded abruptly in 2018 after a brief life of globetrotting, by chance or by design.





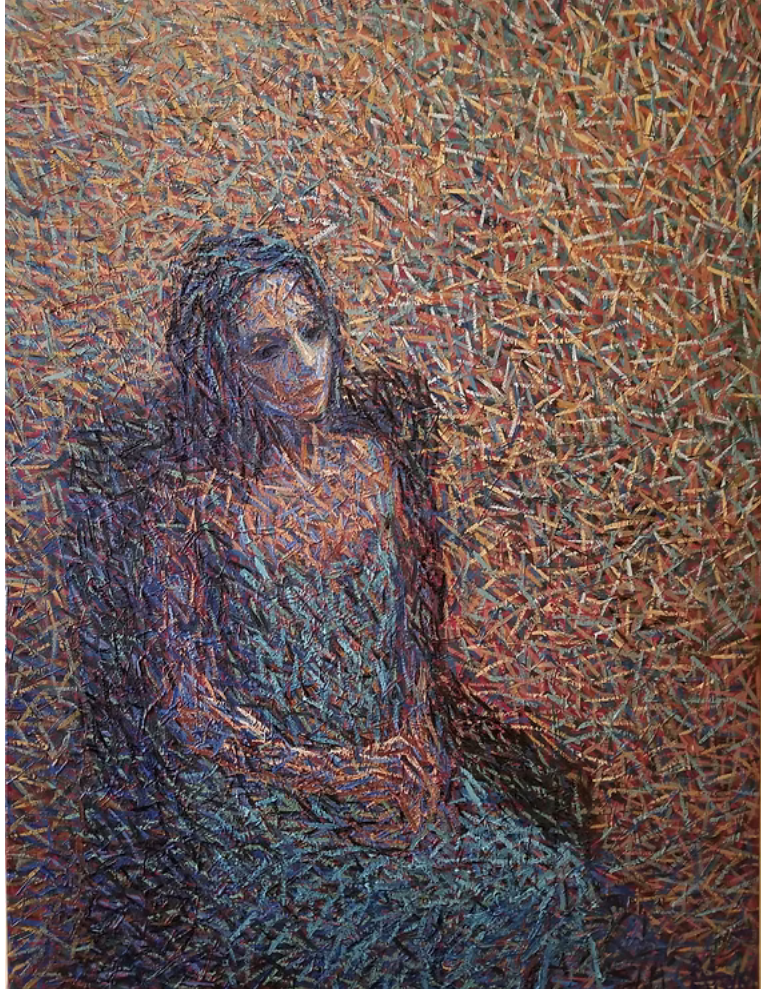
Hovhanesyan (known as Hovhanesyan, which his father Armenian last name misspelled: Hovhannisyan) was born in Yerevan, Armenia in 1981, and he would go on to grow up in Algiers and later in his native land until permanently moving to the US with his family as

a teenager. His work is a journey in itself. From oil to ink, from imitation to intimate expression, his paintings display the growth process and artistic trajectory of a promising young talent. While appreciating the continuum of change in his work, Hovhanesyan's art remains grounded in a very simple geometric component: the line. Straight or delicately curved, Hovhanesyan's juxtaposition of innumerable linear strokes serves to build up images in oil, ink, or even pen, transcending media and serving as a very personal form of expression.



Employing the canvas in its entirety, it is his repeated overlapping of thin brushstrokes or ink lines, which allows figures and landscapes to emerge from the saturated and seemingly accidental application of his linear strokes. Color is used amply in earlier, quasi-impressionistic works, gradually giving way to controlled palettes mainly composed of blue and yellow and to the complete absence of color in Hovhanesyan's ink works.





While he dabbled in both the abstract and the portrayal of natural landscapes, Hovhanesyan's strongest and most effective works remain his depictions of the human form. His languid-eyed women, as well as other subjects of almost indeterminate gender, proffer to the viewer their deep gazes and elongated androgynous bodies. They appear to be looking into the distance, away from the immediate here and now and into deeper, more intimate thoughts. Clearly a reflection of the artist's personal struggles with mental health, these multi-linear figures, particularly

those executed in pen and ink, reveal a darker side to the human condition and are meticulously executed in his signature method.



Hovhannesyan's paintings and drawings appear to draw from

isolation and stark personal torment in order to present a searingly honest depiction of the average human being's often hidden, even secret emotions. It is this very same window into his innermost psyche and emotional turmoil, no doubt reflecting the unstable, at times violent environment he experienced as a sensitive child growing up in war torn, Soviet Armenia. This understanding allows views to identify with Hovhanesyan's art, which is the product of a shifting society and an itinerant family. His work is expressive, intimate, and immediately relatable to the self-

aware viewer. Often almost eerily photographic in the way they replicate the play of light in dark spaces, his line drawings, particularly those executed in monochrome, appear to represent the human condition and its inherent struggle, made only too poignant by the artist's untimely and tragic demise. Having taken up painting as a form of therapy to temper his depression and anxiety, investing time and uncommon care in the preparation of his works, Hovhanesyan was known to prepare his own colors in the manner of his much admired

European masters, mixing pigment and adhesive to then saturate his canvases in paint. His method of creation is described as being in natural evolution, with works developing instinctively rather than in a pre-planned fashion as is often the case with classical painters.





Hovhannesyan was in fact known to spend up to 72 hours drawing at a stretch, contributing to the haunting and quasi-obsessive quality of his works. Self-trained and undoubtedly passionate about his metier, Hovhannesyan's work is testament to personal and artistic evolution, ranging from the modernist to the post-impressionist via cubism in inspiration. These artistic movements, now historical rather than contemporary, are distilled in Hovhannesyan's masterly strokes

and mathematically successful compositions and reinvented to suit his own narrative. Despite his self-professed 'luminosity,' his expertly crafted work remains dark, personal, and oftentimes harking to very intimate struggles. Inspiring and technically accomplished, Atom Hovhanesyan is an artist who is being re-evaluated in light of his portrayal of the human condition, arguably one of Art's most valuable contributions to civilization and the world as we know it today.





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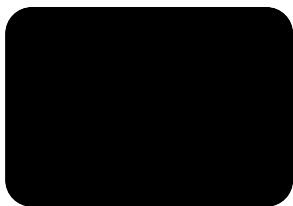


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