

## A youthful spirit guides the new St. Hagop Church

## Catholicos speaks on religious freedom at the Jefferson Memorial

# Helping the faithful understand their Catholicos

## NAASR to hold presentation on Nakhichevan monuments

## Rep. Schiff meets with his Armenian-American constituents to discuss Armenia's development

# Catholicos Karekin II consecrates Florida's new Saint Hagop Church

by Antranig Dereyan

**ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.** ♡ – By Day Nine of the Pontifical tour, the entourage accompanying Catholicos Karekin II through the Eastern Diocese had settled into an easy familiarity, with each other and with the daily routine of travel, official meetings, ceremonial events, and large public gatherings. As it is for many travelers destined for Florida, the prospect of the more relaxed environment of the Sunshine State begins to express itself even before the plane touches down: one feels the pace of life slowing down, a welcome informality on the horizon.

Touchdown in St. Petersburg jarred everyone back to reality, however. As the doors opened, the camera operators and video crew rushed out first – as usual – to set up on the runway and await the moment when Vehapar descends from the plane to greet his people. It's all very familiar, by now, very comfortable.

But this time, one thing was different. No one was around to greet the Catholicos.



A bouquet of flowers from an excited Florida crowd.

It was not, of course, because the local parishioners had forgotten to come. But in one of those minor, amusing happenings that can thwart even the best-laid

plans, the welcoming committee had gotten tied up at a terminal across the airport. A few cell phone calls were all that was needed to get them all back in their cars, ca-

reen across the tarmac, and show up at Vehapar's doorstep – with flags, kids, costumes, bread, salt,

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## by Anoush Ter Taulian

**NEW YORK** — At the opening reception of the “Armenian Women’s Art Exhibit,” held at the Village Quill in Tribeca on October 4, curators **Anet Abnous** and **Tamar Gasparyan-Chester** said they had been inspired to mount the exhibit when they had been asked: “Are there *really* that many good Armenian women artists?”

In response, they decided to create a network which might give women artists a chance to know each other. The reached out to Armenian women artists in other countries, and she also to older women artists. "I always had the fire to find other artists that doors had been closed to," explained Ms. Abnouns.

The exhibit – the fruit of all that outreach – showcased some 23 artists, and the opening weekend events included a poetry reading and a talk with the artists.

More than 40 people came to the exhibit opening to witness how Armenian history and the multi-generational connections among Armenian women are reflected through art. Close to 100 attended some part of the three-day opening weekend, said the organizers.

**Barbara Yeterian** presented a large, bold oil painting of a Genocide-surviving mother and child left behind in the desert; a glowering dog in the background looks like he wants to eat them. Works from



Barbara Yeterian,  
"Two" (48" x 66";  
oil on canvas).

Yeterian's "Genocide Series" can be seen at [www.legacy-project.org](http://www.legacy-project.org).


**Nora Chavooshian's** sculpture "The Many of Us" involved a mold of one face which was a merging of herself, her mother and grandmother, the many copies of which were organized into a form which looked like a map of Armenia. **Emma Gregorian's** painting "Travelers" signified the tribulations of a mother and daughter while they are traveling through, life experiencing darkness and light.

The faces and forms of Armenian women were also present. **Tamara Khachatarian**, a well-known Yerevan painter, combined lighted curves and multi-dimensional layers of female forms in her painting "Mutation." Nune Aghbalyan, another Yerevan artist, in her piece "Stories" lyrically painted women's faces on silk. **Sonia Balassanian**, an Iranian poet and artist who founded the Armenian Center for

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## Funds come from Armenian Genocide-era insurance settlement

by Alejandro Guzmán

**LOS ANGELES**  —Loyola Law School alumni Mark Geragos and Brian Kabateck presented \$100,000 to Dean David Burcham as part of an effort to help establish the first-ever Center for the Study of Law and Genocide.

At a press conference on the school's downtown campus, Geras, '82, and Kabateck, '89, presented a check along with their colleague Vartkes Yeghiayan to help launch what would be the first program of its kind in any law school in the U.S.

Kabateck, who approached Loyola Law professor Stan Goldman with the suggestion that perhaps the Genocide Studies Program was a subject worthy of a grant, said the donation served as “seed money” for the center.

The center will be home to the study of genocide issues worldwide including the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, and more current events such as those in Bosnia in

the early 90s and presently in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The \$100,000 donation stemmed from a \$20-million settlement secured against New York Life Insurance Co., for its role in unpaid life insurance benefits in the wake of the Armenian Genocide.

The case was filed in 1999 by Geragos, Kabateck, and Yeghiayan, who lobbied to extend and reopen the statute of limitations not only on cases against New York Life Insurance Co., but other companies that allegedly profited from the Armenian Genocide.

In January 2004 New York Life agreed to pay all valid claims relating to the policies and to contribute at least \$3 million to Armenian civic and charitable organizations. Later, the amount was increased to \$7 million because many policy holders and their families had perished, leaving an additional \$4 million in funds after the initial distribution of benefits.

Since then, many more lawsuits have been filed against other insurance companies, some pending against banks that accepted Armenian deposits but ultimately kept the money. Currently, there are suits on file in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California against Germany's

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Community

An exhibit of Armenian women artists opens in Tribeca

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Contemporary Experimental Art, contributed “Portrait 1,” a face with piercing eyes painted on wood.

**Armine Sargsyan**, who moved from Yerevan to Fresno, painted a portrait, “Garineh,” which oozes Armenian warmth and beauty. **Lynne Dian Gulezian**, who has traveled throughout West, East, and Southern Africa, displayed a painting of South African women called “Four Women of Pangola.”

Among the other artists displayed were graphic artists **Suzanne Anoushian** (“July in Twin Lakes”) and **Hera Marashian** (“Yerevan-Construction and Yerevan-Wall”); **Nina Katchadourian** (“Self Portrait of the Artist as an Artist”); **Lara B** (“Maternal Hearth”); **Taleen Berberian** (“Shoe Lineup”); **Armine Sargsyan** (“Garineh”); **Talin Megherian** (“Braids: Tied”); **Arpie Gennetian Najarian** (“Penelope”); and **Marsha Odabashian** (“Little Red Riding Hood”).

Words and pictures

On the second day of the opening weekend, Friday, October 5, the exhibit space at the Village Quill was home to a reading of contemporary Armenian poetry, hosted by **Lola Koundakjian**, creator of the Armenian Poetry Project blogsite ([www.Armenian-poetry.blogspot.com](http://www.Armenian-poetry.blogspot.com)). The site’s 15,000 visitors testify to “how much people care about Armenian poetry,” said Ms. Koundakjian.

During the reading, the young poet **Zepure Arman** recited a poem whose central image, the kawing of crows, suggests a flight from abandonment. Her poems appear on a website ([www.zepspetry.com](http://www.zepspetry.com)) that Arman shares with her mother, **Varteni Mosdichian**, painter of translucent, ethereal abstracts also on exhibit at the show.

**Nora Armani**, an actress known for her one-woman shows like “On the Couch” and “Snowflakes,” did a collaborative performance with the painter **Sari** where paintings and poems were done independently and then paired. One of Armani’s poems emphasized risk taking: “Don’t look for nets; look up,” she said.

Writer **Nancy Agabian** read a poem about the Armenian tradition of eating a salty cake and dreaming that the person who brings you water will become your partner in marriage. In her characteristically off-beat take on the myth, she asked: “What if you dream of an animal, or a crowd of people, or another woman?”

Yerevan-born **Narine Karamy**, who writes in Armenian and Russian, read poems in Armenian with English translations. In “I Never Get Enough of You,” she figuratively paints her feelings as the color of a pomegranate when it surrenders to earth. Many of her poems are dedicated to her son.

**Sharon Olinka** read a painful poem relating the true story of an honor killing in Turkey, where a woman who was raped by a man was slowly stoned to death by her father, brother, and uncle to “save the honor of their family.” It powerfully related the depths of female repression in male-oriented Muslim society.

Comments and questions

The final component of the opening weekend was an “Art Talk and Discussion” held on Saturday, October 6, was attended by a dozen people and featured a panel of four of the exhibiting artists.



Lola Koundakjian and Nora Armani. Photo: A. Ter Taulian.



Lana Eurdolian, Varteni Mosdichian, and Zepure Arman.



Nora Chavooshian, “The Many of Us” (54” x 61”x 6”; cast forton).



Anet Abnous, “Constrained” (30”x 36”; mixed media on canvas).



Artist and exhibit co-curator Anet Abnous. Photo: A. Ter Taulian.

**Hilda Witherspoon** discussed the difficulties she encountered with her male art professors at the Corcoran School of Art, including apparent acts of sabotage. But she let none of these stop her goal to produce a series of 16 charcoal drawings on the Armenian Genocide. Ironically, her subsequent

painting on the Armenian earthquake was accepted by a Russian exhibit which had rejected a submission by one of her professors. New York sculptress **Taleen Berberian** related how she was inspired by the stones and clay of the Armenian sculptural legacy. Her work celebrates female anat-



Taleen Berberian, “Satellite-shroom shoe” (10” x 11” x 5”; ceramic, poly resin, oil paint and ribbon).

omy configured as anthropomorphic, surreal shapes. Her exhibit of fantasy clay shoes depicted what Berberian called the irony of something beautiful being painful at the same time.

**Marsha Nouritza Odabashian** told how she explores themes of identity by recreating mass media images, like children’s fairy tales, using hybrid animals, people, and plants in an Armenian context. As an illustration, her “Little Red Riding Hood” painting included birdlike Armenian winged shoes and pomegranates in the composition.

Finally, Iranian-born **Anet Abnous**, explained that she works with female nudes because in Iran women don’t have freedom; nobody can see them on the street because they are required to be covered. Building on a fashion design background, her paintings include pieces of pictures she has taken of nude models, to which she adds color and texture to express sexuality, joy, or depression. She said she felt fortunate to have a very supportive husband, who also created the catalogue for the exhibit.

While many of the exhibit pieces showed undeniable quality, the exhibit itself raised some questions – principally “What do Armenian women artists have to say that is *exclusive* to them?” A number of “classic” women’s issues – such as violence, sexual harassment, forced prostitution, and economic disparities – did not receive the attention one would expect in such an environment. Some artistic media, too, seemed under-represented: there were no videos or textile works on display, for example, and only a single photographer.

More generally, though the exhibit was conceived to be “inclusive” in the broadest sense, the very fact that submissions went through a selection process meant that voices would necessarily go unheard. The resulting lack of diversity did undercut to some extent the curators’ stated aim of amplifying those ordinarily muted voices.

But these critiques should be taken as suggestions for future exhibits. In the meantime, New York’s inaugural “Armenian Women’s Art Exhibit” is open through November 3 at the Village Quill, 106 Franklin Street (2nd floor), between Church Street and West Broadway. For directions log onto [www.villagequill.com](http://www.villagequill.com). Information on the exhibit is available at [www.razleen.com](http://www.razleen.com). ☞