

# She Was Meant to Fly High: On Inesa Merabishvili

BY NUGZAR B. RUHADZE

**R**ecently, Gori celebrated the election of Professor Inesa Merabishvili as a full member of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences. She was born and grew up in this lovely old city, situated less than 100 kilometers to the west of Tbilisi, where her maternal grandfather was among the founders of the Gori Professional Drama Theater. Inesa had literally learned to walk on the stage where her beloved grandpa performed, and now, there she goes again, triumphantly walking down the aisle of the theater grand hall and up onto the stage to greet the exalted audience, but this time as a well-known public figure, a famous Anglicist, literary scholar and translator, professor of the Tbilisi State University, newly voted-for academician, and of course, a real pride of Gori: the comeback kid who has become a genuine incarnation of shining success.

The beautiful soirée was kindly initiated and organized by the Gori municipality cultural agency English teacher Tamar Putkaradze, and readily supported

by the Town Hall. Tamar presented a wonderful trilingual montage of Merabishvili's translations, performed by local schoolchildren on an amazing linguistic and artistic level.

The beautiful event was not a solemn encounter of Gori society with its beloved daughter, but an agreeable act of honoring the Academy as a whole for its truly significant scientific contribution to the entire country's welfare. Among guests were seen a solid group of academicians and administrative personnel representing the National Academy of Sciences, and also a number of distinguished guests from the capital.

The house was brimming full and it was taken by storms of applause many a time. Most illustrious among the greeting speeches was the salutation of Mr. Giorgi Kvesitadze, the President of the Academy. Further, there sounded warm and meaningful acknowledgements by Professor Valery Asatiani, the Mayor of Gori Kote Tavzarashvili, his deputy Eka Sukhishvili and the Town Council Chairman, Davit Razmadze. The presentation of Merabishvili's recognition here in Georgia as well as in the West was made by Lela Khubuluri. The welcome greetings were balanced out by fascinating

musical numbers, among them a performance of the famous local female chorus and the nerve-hitting male vocal quartette. A special gift of song came from Lado Ataneli, the world-class opera singer, who amazed his audience once again with his incomparable performance.

Academician Merabishvili read to her extremely loyal listeners some of her translations of English and Georgian poesy. Inesa was accompanied by her grandson Tornike Koplatadze, a young movie director, who also greeted her from the stage, having expressed his utmost gratitude to the city of Gori for giving him such a celebrated grandmother.

Indeed, there is a lot that makes us proud of Inesa Merabishvili – her colleagues, friends, relatives, fellow academicians, her native city, her foreign admirers and the Georgian public in general. And there is a plenty to be proud about: tens of books in literary research and theory of translation, uncountable articles in local and foreign editions, poetic translations, her own beautiful poetry, outstanding public activity, impeccable trilingual mastery, even the pieces of her written music, and finally and most importantly, Inesa Merabishvili gave the Byronic depths and magic to Georgia and the unique poetic



talent of Galaktion Tabidze to the world. And the Byron School of Tbilisi! It is founded, owned and currently headed by this famous pedagogue and intellectual, where the younger generation is learning the English language through western

culture and the western culture via the English language. Incidentally, looking at Inesa in her blissful childhood, her loving parents must have known their girl would someday fly high, but perhaps not as high as she has!

## Homo Urbanus Europeanus: A French Photographer to Include Tbilisi in Project

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY  
GABRIELLE COLCHEN

**F**rom Italian roots, Jean-Marc Caracci was born in Tunisia in 1958 but lived most of his life in France. In 2005, he left the company for which he worked for 25 years and decided to become a full-time photographer. He made his first prints in his parent's bathroom when he was a teenager and learned everything about the art of photography by himself. He is creating a series of photos called 'Homo Urbanus Europeanus' (HUE) in which he takes picture of human beings in different capitals of Europe. His photographic style is inspired by artists such as Henri Cartier Bresson, Elliott Erwitt or Raymond Depardon. He will be in Tbilisi from June 25 to July 5 to photograph the 40th European capital in his project, then in Yerevan. GEORGIA TODAY contacted him to find out more.

### WHY THE GOAL OF PHOTOGRAPHING PEOPLE IN CITIES?

I'm a real city-dweller as well as a European fervent. I wanted to realize a positive project on human beings and their place in the city in Europe. I began my project in 2007. The goal is not to identify the city in which the photo is taken by showing its particularities but rather to work on what is common to these places: the urban setting. We don't usually recognize which city has been photographed, but we always feel it is a European one.

In each picture, only one or two people are represented, just like a landmark, enabling the public to understand the scale of the picture. I avoid as much as possible convergence lines in my compositions: I essentially focus on horizon-



Photo Source: <http://homo.urbanus.free.fr/portfoliagal/>, Belgrade 2014

tal and vertical lines. This way, I am able to realize clean and clear images, ones that are easy to read.

### YOU HAVE ALREADY PHOTOGRAPHED 39 EUROPEAN CAPITALS. WHY SO MANY?

While HUE is an artistic creation, it does not hide its political side. Indeed, 39 capitals of Europe have already been photographed, each of them in an identical sober style, without special cultural or social details. This way, the cities are united under their European characteristics instead of being separated by their specificities. The HUE series clearly expresses a positive feeling towards the European Union: these uniting images anticipate the future unity of the majority of the European countries.

In light of this spirit of cohesion, I have to integrate all European capitals in this project. After Yerevan and Tbilisi, I plan to photograph in Kiev, Bern, Vaduz and Tórshavn. I still don't know what to do about Moscow because I can't decide if Russia is also somehow a European country or not.

### WHY DO YOU ONLY PHOTOGRAPH CAPITAL CITIES?

I think that capitals are the symbolic representation of each country. The other reason is because it is practical and economic since most international airports are in the capitals.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO ONLY BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS?

There are a lot of colors in cities and they would interfere with the esthetics of my images. By using black and white, I can better focus on the lines, shadows and lighting.

### WHAT DO YOUR PHOTOS REPRESENT?

Maybe they are a record of our world before anything else... just like any street photography, since photos exist.

Every image of the series, thanks to its special composition and its sober style, looks like a hymn to the splendid city-dweller. This person who walks, stops, sneaks across the city, often solitary, but no less proud and determined. The pride he demonstrates of being a city person rather gives him the stature of a conqueror. Besides, this human presence,

captured in all its delicacy, always in the right place at the right time, gives the city an unexpected majesty.

### WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO FIND IN TBILISI?

Nothing special. I just want to add Tbilisi's pictures to my series. The only thing I hope to achieve is to take at least one good picture, just as I do in any other city where I go to chase the HUE.

### IS IT GOING BE YOUR FIRST TIME IN TBILISI?

Yes, just like it will be in Yerevan, and it has almost always been the case in each of 39 capitals where I have been to take photos. People often tell me I'm very lucky to visit all these countries, but I never visit the countries I photograph: I just make a brief stop in their capital city and go back home. I don't do tourism in these cities: I just walk, walk and walk again, hoping to be in the right place at the right time to take the best picture possible.

### ARE YOU GOING TO SHOW YOUR PHOTOS IN TBILISI?

Nothing is planned yet, but I will try, just like I try to do in each capital.

### CAN YOU LIVE OFF YOUR ART?

I would rather say "survive."

Thanks to Homo Urbanus Europeanus, Caracci has already participated in 46 exhibitions that have been held in 26 countries so far, including three European Capitals of Culture: Malibor 2012, Plzen 2015 and Pafos 2017, and 10 Delegations of the EU bought the rights to organize exhibitions.

For more information: <http://homo.urbanus.free.fr/portfoliagal>

The interview has been translated from French to English and edited for more clarity.



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