

FRAMING ARMENIA

Photography by Diana Markosian and Scout Tufankjian

Exhibition reflection essays by

Aghop Der-Karabetian, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology

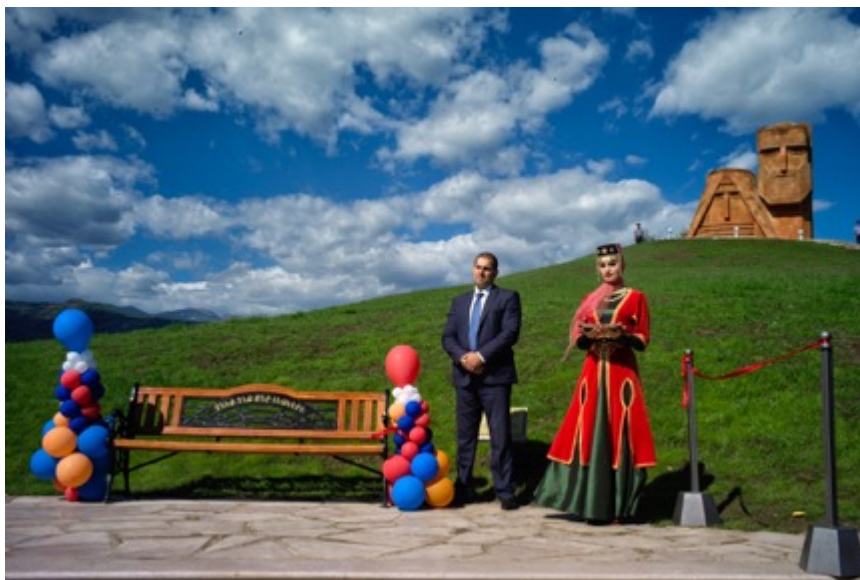
Seta Boghikian-Whitby, Ed.D.
Professor of Computer Science and Computer Engineering

Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography
April 3 through May 26, 2017



Diana Markosian,
Yepraksia Gevorgyan,
2015, from the series *1915*

Tuesday, April 4, 2017,
4:30-5:30 p.m. Morgan
Auditorium. Lecture and
conversation with Diana
Markosian. Reception
following.



Scout Tufankjian,
*Papik and Tatik –
Stepanakert, Nagorno-
Karabakh*, from the series
There is Only the Earth,
2016.

Tuesday, April 18, 2017,
4:30-5:30 p.m. Morgan
Auditorium. Lecture and
conversation with Scout
Tufankjian. Reception
following.

Please do not remove the catalog from the gallery. If you'd like a copy we'll print one for you!

Framing Armenia
About the Exhibition

Framing Armenia: Diana Markosian and Scout Tufankjian brings together the work of two successful Armenian-American women photographers who look at the legacy of the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian Diaspora. This two-person exhibition marks the culmination of the Irene Carlson Gallery of Photography's (ICGP) investigation of the theme of *Tensions and Traditions* during the 2016-2017 exhibition season.

Diana Markosian's project, *1915*, places the Armenian Genocide in a contemporary context through the stories and memories of survivors. Scout Tufankjian's *The Armenian Diaspora Project*, is an ongoing photographic documentation of Armenian communities across the globe. Pairing the work in the gallery initiates a conversation between the past and present of the Armenian people.

Diana Markosian is an Armenian-American artist whose images explore the relationship between memory and place. Born in the former Soviet Union, her family immigrated to the United States when she was a child, leaving her father behind. In 2010, she received her master's degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Her work has since taken her to some of the most remote corners of the world, where she has produced both personal and editorial work. Her images can be found in publications like *National Geographic Magazine*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. In 2016, she became a Magnum nominee.

Armenian-American photographer Scout Tufankjian has spent the bulk of her career working in the Middle East, including four years working in the Gaza Strip and extensive time in Egypt documenting the Egyptian Revolution and its aftermath. Yet she is best known for her work documenting the 2007-2008 Barack Obama campaign in her highly acclaimed publication, *Yes We Can: Barack Obama's History-Making Presidential Campaign* (NY: PowerHouse Books, 2008). Selling out its first run of 55,000 copies a month before its release date, the publication was a *New York Times* and *LA Times* bestseller. Her recent book, *There is Only the Earth: Images from the Armenian Diaspora Project* (NY: Melcher Media, 2015) is the culmination of six years spent documenting Armenian communities in over twenty different countries.

A personal reflection on *Framing Armenia*
Aghop Der-Karabetian, Ph.D.
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Markosian's and Tufankjian's photographs do indeed "frame" the history of Armenians in about the last one hundred years, which is just a twinkle of time in the history of the Armenian people that spans over two and half millennia. Their perspectives are as different as they are complementary. They can be thought of as bookends. They capture what was and what is.

Markosian's project captures the yearning for what was lost due to the genocidal attempt by the Ottoman government during the First World War that resulted in the worldwide dispersion of the survivors. Some joined diaspora communities that were already established, and others started new ones in refugee camps. I was born in one in Lebanon. Tufankjian's work depicts the vibrant life of the diaspora communities around the world today spanning all continents and the Middle East. It highlights the resilience and tenacity that is at the core of survival as a people. The Church has been a significant anchor in this regard. The existence of these communities negates the destruction intended by the massacres and the deportations to cleans the Anatolia region of Asia Minor in anticipation of the creation of a homogeneous Turkish republic.

Both sets of photographs are stunning, and have a personal meaning for me as a second-generation survivor of the Armenian genocide. My father survived as an infant. Moreover, I had the privilege of translating into English and publishing my paternal grandfather's and grandfather-in-law's survival memoirs that made the experience real for me. Their works describe the ordeal they went through, and the suffering and murder of their kin and countrymen as they were uprooted and deported from their land. Countless died on the way, and countless children were orphaned. I must say, parenthetically, that members of the Church of the Brethren, the founders of this University, provided comfort and support to many survivors and orphaned children.

I have been to some of the locations depicted in the photographs. As I ponder the impact of the images I am struck by the feeling that it is ultimately about the yearning for a sense of place and affirmation of identity. An important part of my own forty years of scholarly work and publications deals with the different manifestations of Armenian identity in different contexts. Such diversity is essential for the enduring power of identity. This exhibition of photographs made me realize that my scholarly work has really been a journey of exploration of my own sense of identity and place.

Diana Markosian's representation of the Sahakyan family tree was most impactful. The genocide was a truncation of the histories of families that have been lost forever. I cannot go beyond my own grandfather. Somehow, the soil, the land, is what binds individuals to their roots and history. Touching and caressing the image of his homeland by Movses Hanesyan is a way of touching history and place. Creating family trees and genograms by the current generation is a way of touching and reaching out to the future generations to make the past present for them.

-Aghop Der-Karabetian
March 31, 2017

A personal reflection on *Framing Armenia*
Seta Boghikian-Whitby, Ed.D.
Professor of Computer Science and Computer Engineering

Part of the University of La Verne's mission is Community and Civic Engagement, which means giving a helping hand to assist the community and thereby making a difference. With her photography series, *1915*, Diana Markosian did just that. Markosian tells stories, through her impressive life-size landscape photographs, of Genocide survivors, including Movses Haneshyan who was 105 years old from Kebusie on Musa Dagh Mountain, Mariam Sahakyan who was 102 years old from Sason, and Yepraksia Ghazarian who was 100 years old from Ani, the capital of the Armenian Kingdom.

The expectations of a "before" and an "after" picture usually implies that the "after" pictures are improvements over the "before" pictures. This was not the case in Markosian's photographs. Her life-size landscape photographs saddened me immensely because I looked at the same spot a century later and I saw the deserted and abandoned land instead of any live vegetation or developments. Yet, I could not take my eyes off the photographs and I can truly feel Movses, Mariam, and Yepraksia's pain in their facial expressions.

Diana Markosian deserves worthy recognition for providing Movses, Mariam, and Yepraksia a piece of their identity by reuniting them with a photograph of their childhood villages and the immense feeling she brought to these three Genocide survivors. I can only imagine their profound emotions.

Scout Tufankjian's photographs remind me, and the entire world, that Armenians are here to stay, despite the annihilation attempts by the Turks. Tufankjian's series demonstrates that Armenians in the diaspora are spread everywhere. The geographic range of photographs includes: Chatswood, Australia; Berdzor, Nagorno-Karabakh and Karakert, the Republic of Armenia; Sao Jorge –Sao Paulo, Brazil; Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong, China; Alexandria, Egypt; Addis Ababa – Ethiopia; PUGAB – Paris, France; Kolkata, India; Anjar and Bourj-Hammoud, Lebanon; Moscow, Russia; Damascus, Syria; Vakifli Koyu, Turkey; Hollywood, and Glendale, California to New York, New York to Washington, DC, in the United States. I found the details of the photographs incredibly profound.

What I esteem about the series is that Tufankjian successfully and accurately reveals the complexity and reality of the Armenian culture. Her story reflected that even though Armenians are associated with the first genocide, they maintain a very vivid and vibrant culture. No matter where they settle in the diaspora, they keep their faith, religion, language, respect, and their culture.

Tufankjian's photographs led me to back in time to reminisce of my own childhood in Syria and Lebanon. I recall holding my father's hand in church, playing in the streets, and going to school. At home the women always congregated in the kitchen to assist in rolling the sarma (grape leaf), whereas the men played cards or Tavli (Greek Backgammon).

Most of all, Scout Tufankjian's message through her photographs shows that no matter how difficult the situations are, Armenians celebrate life with their music, dance, costumes, and food. This reality is revealed in the very details of Tufankjian's photographs.

- Seta Boghikian-Whitby
March 31, 2017



A hand-drawn map of Kebusie, a tiny village on Musa Dagh Mountain, a site of resistance during the 1915 deportations. Movses and his father fled from the village to Syria in 1915. A century later, he asked me to go back to find his church, and to leave his image there.



I followed the map Movses had given to me. I discovered everything he had described: the sea, the tree with the fruit he remembered eating, and the goats he shepherded. I found it all, even the rubble of what was once his church.



A life-size image of Movses' homeland.



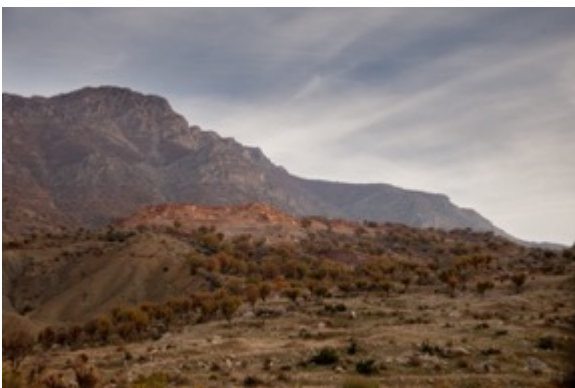
Holding a cane in his right hand, Movses Haneshyan, 105, slowly approaches a life-size landscape. It's the first time Movses is seeing his home in 98 years.



All these years later, he caresses the image, as if by holding it close he will be taken back to the place he called home many years ago.



An image of Movses at the ruins of his church in Kebusie, Turkey.



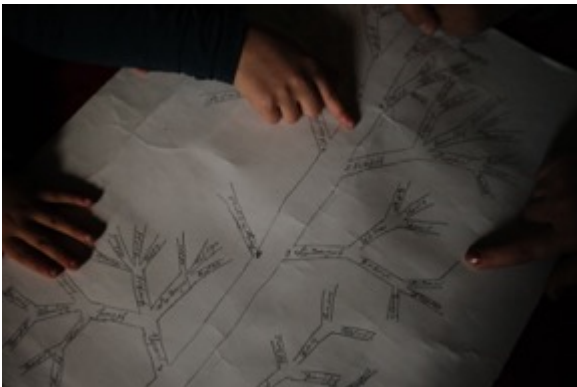
The town of Sason, Turkey was a major site of massacres. Once populated predominately by Armenians, the district is now inhabited by a handful of hidden Armenians, many unaware of their identity or afraid to reveal it.



Mariam Sahakyan, 102, was born in the town of Sason. She was taken in by Kurdish family before escaping to Syria. She recalled sleeping during the day and walking at night.



Mariam spent most of her life moving back and forth between her home in Armenia and visiting relatives in Syria. She never again saw the place where she was born. Her one request for me: *"Go to my village and bring back soil for me to be buried in."*



The Sahakyan family tree depicts four generations dating back to 1915. Mariam spent most of her life separated from her brothers and sisters who stayed behind in Syria.



Mariam and her daughter-in-law visit the genocide memorial in Yerevan, Armenia.



Archival images stored in the Sahakyan home.



Mariam's chair.



Once the capital of an ancient Armenian Kingdom, Ani, was known as the "city of 1,001 churches." After the genocide, Turkey cut Armenia from its history, with no mention of who built or inhabited it. Today, the city remains abandoned, apart from the occasional presence of Turkish border guards.



Yepraksia holds an image of the location from whence she recalls escaping with her family. This is the first time she has seen it in 100 years.



Yepraksia Gevorgyan, now 108, escaped by crossing the river to what is now present-day Armenia. She watched the Ottomans kill the Armenians, throwing their bodies into the water, which she described as "red, full of blood."



"I remember the river," recalls Yepraksia Gevorgyan upon seeing the panel. "I saw the Turks kill the Armenians, throwing their bodies into the water."



Yepraksia with her grandson and daughter in their home in Armenia.



A drawer of photos, including a family portrait taken in 1909 of Yepraksia's family in the city of Kars, now Turkey.



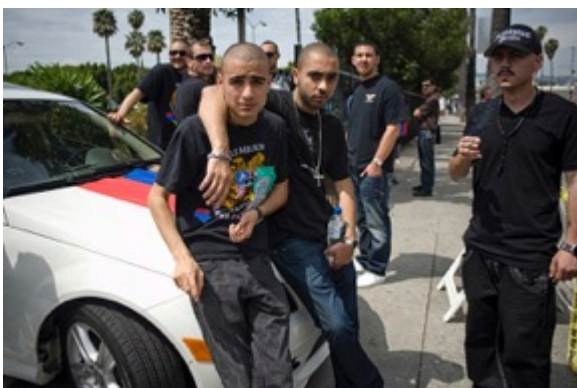
Catedral Apostólica Armênia São Jorge - São Paulo, Brazil



Syrian Refugee - Berdzor, Nagorno-Karabakh



Paris, France



Little Armenia Parking Lot - Hollywood, CA, the United States



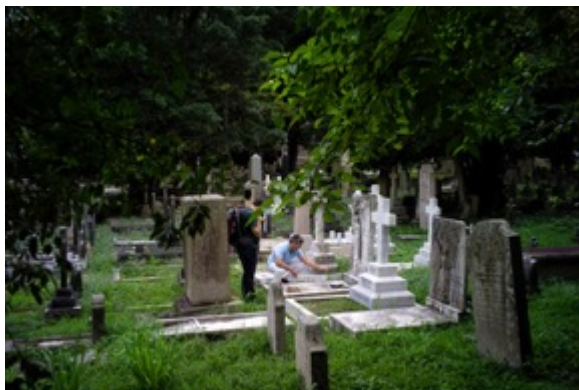
Vakıflı Köyü Çay Bahçesi - Vakıflı Köyü, Turkey



The Hart Senate Office Building - Washington DC, The United States



Culturel Alex Manoogian de l'UGAB - Paris, France



Armenian Cemetery - Hong Kong, China



Armenian College and Philanthropic Academy - Kolkata, India



Karakert, The Republic of Armenia



Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection - Chatswood, NSW, Australia



COAF Summer Soiree, DREAM downtown - New York, NY, the United States



Boghossian School - Alexandria, Egypt



Vakıflı Köyü, Turkey



Surp Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church - Damascus, Syria

There is a small area of land
in Asia Minor that is called
Armenia, but it is not so.
It is not Armenia, It is a place...
There are only Armenians,
and these inhabit the earth, not
Armenia, since there is no Armenia...
There is no America and
there is no England, and no France,
and no Italy,
there is only the earth...

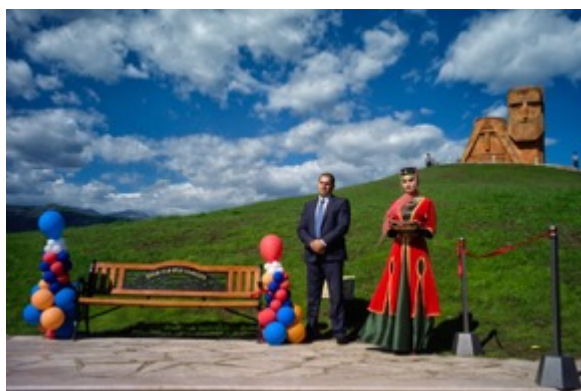
From *The Armenian and The Armenian*
by William Saroyan
New York, August 1935
Inhale & Exhale (New York: Random House, 1936)



St. George Armenian Apostolic Church - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



April 24 Candlelight Vigil - Glendale, CA, the United States



Papik and Tatik - Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh



Sanjak Camp - Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon



*The Union of Russian Armenians Sporting Club -
Moscow, Russia*



Sarkis Zeitlian Center - Anjar, Lebanon



*Kowloon Park Swimming Pool - Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong
Kong*



*Surp Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church - Damascus,
Syria*



School - Kousakan, Nagorno-Karabakh

Acknowledgements

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Megan Peralez: student exhibition installation assistant
Kurt Bowman: exhibition installation assistant
Lawrence Potter, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences: exhibition co-sponsor