

DOGU BANKOV

BETWEEN FICTION AND REALITY

Art philosophy texts by Tomas Kavaliauskas
Pictures by Dogu Bankov



Edited and compiled by Tomas Kavaliauskas
Layout designer Rasa Vilimienė

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PART 1

Dogu Bankov Between Fiction And Reality From The Perspective Of Art Philosophy

CHAPTER 1

The Multi-Layered Biography of Dogu Bankov

INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to disclose art philosophy, which is behind the literary story and collage pictures of a Bulgarian artist Dogu Bankov. The analysis is divided into three dimensions: the first dimension – the multi-layered biography of Dogu Bankov; the second dimension – the dialectics of the original picture and its fake; the third dimension – collage pictures as indirect illustrations to classic literature. This chapter is devoted only to the analysis of the first dimension – the biographical part, which is highly cosmopolitan. The other dimensions will be analyzed in the second chapter.

Topophilia of Paris, Plovdiv, and Kaunas along with the documentary resurrection of true interwar intellectuals is an inseparable part of Bankov's biography. Real people and places like streets and cafes that existed in reality in 1920s and 1930s are combined with invented events and characters. The biography of Dogu Bankov serves as a plethora of cross-cultural references to true writers and artists even if the biography itself is artistically created, even invented.

THE MULTI-LAYERED BIOGRAPHY OF DOGU BANKOV

Let us start with the question: did Dogu Bankov exist at all? If his biography is invented, then was the biography invented for a person who never existed or for a person whose biography is different? The person as such seems to have existed, because the curator of Dogu Bankov exhibitions, Gøran Ohldieck, in an interview to Rytis Zemkauskas in a documentary film “Almost totally unknown artist” said that he personally found by pure chance a collage picture signed by Dogu Bankov in a flea market in Sofia, Bulgaria (Zemkauskas 2011). Moreover, in the back of the picture he found a photo of him standing together with the classmates from Sofia's art academy in 1910. However, this is about all that we know about the existence of this Bulgarian artist.

His last name is very common in Bulgaria; therefore, it does not say much. His first name is more Macedonian, than Bulgarian, and seems to have been used by local Muslim families in 1880s. The biographical traces have disappeared. The date of death is unknown,

although the Bulgarian Embassy in Budapest, Hungary, seems to have contributed financially to the funeral of a Bulgarian person, who had this name in the year 1970. It is not known if this is the same Dogu Bankov. Nor the exact date of birth is known. In spite of this, Dogu Bankov's biography accompanied with his list of oeuvres of an artist is exceptionally prolific. Naturally the question is: where does it all come from? What is the source of Dogu Bankov's biography? More importantly, what is the source of his picture collections and numerous exhibitions that a few times included a hundred pictures and once included as many as three hundred pictures? The three hundred picture exhibition was dedicated to Petronius "Satyricon", pictures serving as indirect illustrations to the text. Another a hundred picture exhibition was dedicated to Federico Garcia Lorca's play "The Public", also as indirect illustrations to the text. A hundred fifty picture collection was exhibited together with the memoirs by Agnes Schaunegger, a cook, who described the events in Paris cafe L'Ane Rouge where Dogu Bankov and Bulgarian emigre artists used to meet. According to these memoirs, Bankov created his collage pictures in this cafe, often inspired by various events and personalities.

This is where the biography of Dogu Bankov develops and *supposedly* reaches its peak – in the Paris cafe L'Ane Rouge.¹ The word "supposedly" is not coincidental, because here starts the invented narrative. But the invented narrative on the biography of Bankov is based on the idea that his life of an artist *could have* developed in such a way. The principle *could have* is based on two ideas: the first is that Bankov, who had education in Sofia's Art Academy and who had produced a collage picture, *could have* continued his artist career namely in the genre of a collage, with time making them better and better; the second idea is that Paris at the time had many Bulgarian emigres, thus, he *could have* been one of them. The pictures made by Bankov contain Paris interwar periodicals, namely clippings from various journals, newspapers or posters. Sometimes one can detect elements of Bulgarian origin, like a pack of cigarettes or Bulgarian newspapers.

This principle of "could have" contains historic logic – Bankov, who could have lived in Paris, indeed *could have* used that particular material for his collage pictures, namely clipping from periodicals of 1920s and 1930s. The historic logic opens the possibility for documentary. Suddenly we are no longer on the ground of pure fictional and invented biography. Suddenly here is the realization that fiction can be interwoven with documentary. The imagination of the one, who invented Bankov's biography, is mixed with the real documentary artifacts which *could have* been used if the story were true. Thus, just like in literature novel there are stories that appeal to the reader because they sound

so convincingly, by the same token, the life story according to the memoirs of the cook Schaunegger also sound as if it were true.

Needless to say, the cook, who supposedly watched Bankov closely and described him and his work style in her memoirs, is a personage herself. But the book, titled Dogu Bankov, provides her texts as excerpts in the genre of memoirs. These excerpts are provided as explanatory texts for the collage pictures. Or vice versa – perhaps the pictures are indirect illustrations to the memoirs of the cook. It contains the moments of vivid and entertaining life inside the L'Ane Rouge cafe: marriage, flirting, prostitution, intellectual conversations, habits of the regular clients, cooking recipes, discussion about food.

As we see, the first voice narrative of the cook provides the illusion of a true documentary memoir. It opens the windows into the inner world of the interwar Paris cafe. This approach is fundamental for the establishment of Bankov's biography. This is the main source, whereas the true author of these memoirs could be someone else.

The book, titled "Dogu Bankov: Don't Shoot a Waiter before Lunch", was published in Lithuania in 2011 by M.K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum (Bankov 2011). This museum has arranged a number of the most fundamental Bankov's exhibitions in Kaunas in its gallery of Žilinskas. The book "Dogu Bankov: Don't Shoot a Waiter before Lunch" nowhere says that it is fictional, rather it is portrayed as documentary in the genre of memoirs about Bankov, written by the cafe chef Agnes Schaunegger. The book includes her cook recipes so that the reader could taste what Bankov tasted in that place in 1920s and 1930s. In addition, the first opening pages are supposedly written by art experts. One of them is Carl Th. Weiner, German origin Argentinian art curator who has worked with Dogu Bankov's collections. It is of interest that a very large Bankov's exhibition was shown in Buenos Aires.² Not coincidentally Carl Weiner becomes the main personage in my own novel "Originalas" [The Original] (Kavaliauskas 2017), which is about the story of Dogu Bankov, but much more about fictional character Carl Weiner (but based on a true person), the curator of exhibitions. Carl Weiner, as a curator of Bankov's exhibitions, is a part of a detective story. He travels to Bulgarian town Plovdiv in search for missing pictures. It is Carl Weiner who makes the story colourful. Dogu Bankov is just a pretext for intellectually entertaining adventure in the colourful fields of art.

According to the story-line, in my novel "The Original" (when the title of the book in itself indicates the irony of what is "the original" and what is its "fake"), Carl Weiner lives

¹ It should be mentioned that the Danish writer Henrik Cavling in his book about Paris tells about L'Ane Rouge cafe, where valuable artworks can be seen on the walls (Cavling 1899).

² Exhibition "Dogu Bankov" in Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires, 2000.

in Kaunas, Lithuania, and being in a great relationship with the director of M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum, successfully exhibits Dogu Bankov's collections, supposedly restored. He tells that his challenge is to restore some of the damaged pictures, for the restoration sometimes he travels to Sofia's antique shops where he searches for needed details, interwar publications. The story-line also includes his fictional Bulgarian competitor Goran Goranov, who in Bulgarian city Plovdiv works as a director of the local art gallery, and his assistant, Liraz Sotnikova, who is an imposter of a daughter of a historically true Vera Sotnikova, who lived in Kaunas during interwar and was a Lithuanian Russian-Jewish, theatre expert, also a girlfriend of Finnish-Swedish writer Henry Parland, who at the time resided in Kaunas. Henry Parland and Vera Sotnikova as the intellectuals of Kaunas in 1930s are resurrected in a documentary fashion, but then their life stories are interwoven with Dogu Bankov in a fictional way – supposedly Dogu Bankov and Henry Parland exchanged letters from Kaunas to Paris for both of them were interested into theatre – one being a writer (in the case of Parland), the other being a visual artist (in the case of Bankov).

Thus, interwar Helsinki (the native place of Parland), Kaunas (the place for Parland's creative residence where he meets his girlfriend Vera Sotnikova and lives in the house of a famous philosopher Vasyli (Vasilius) Sesemann), Paris (the place for Bankov's creative residence where he meets his patron Russian-Jewish Amchiel Goldstein, an uncle of Vera Sotnikova (this is how she learns about Bankov in Paris and tells to Parland)), Sofia (the place of Bankov's studies at the art academy before he emigrates), Plovdiv (the town where some Bankov's pictures are kept in the 21st century) become all interrelated.

The novel is narrated from the perspective of the 21st century by a young doctoral student from Kaunas Art Faculty at Vytautas Magnus University. As he learns from the curator Carl Weiner about Bankov's biography, the reader gets references to the memoirs of Schaubnegger leaving the impression that the memoirs do exist and serve as the original source on Bankov's life story. However, the memoirs as the genre could be used as a fiction narrative as well, but strengthening the impression of the supposedly provided true, documentary-based story.

The cafe L'Ané Rouge in Paris existed. It also appears in documentary photography.³ Thus, the first person narration by the cafe's cook seduces the reader at least for a moment to consider that possibly the memoirs are the true memoirs:

3 Henrik Cavling (Paulus Olsen) (1858–1933) was called Denmark's first journalist. He wrote a number of books from Paris, London, Greece, the U S A, and the West Indies. The photo of the cafe L'Ané Rouge can be found in the book "Paris" (Cavling 1899).

"Sometimes Bankov would be very excited about something he had found on the street or in the garbage. Very often these things would appear in his pictures, which nobody liked, maybe apart from Goldstein who was actually buying these things for money.⁴ [...] One day it was announced that Bankov was to have an exhibition." (Bankov 2011: 13).

It is also important to underline that the multi-layered story of Dogu Bankov is based not only on the documentary of 1920s and 1930s, but also on a contemporary documentary that was created additionally in the 21st century in order to promote the discourse of Dogu Bankov:

- ♦ the documentary film about the case of Dogu Bankov that includes interviews with artists and administration from M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum as well as a Bulgarian ambassador and a Bulgarian art expert (Zemkauskas 2011);
- ♦ numerous factual exhibitions in the name of Dogu Bankov that were exhibited in Kaunas, Lithuania: 1. "Don't shoot the waiter before lunch" (2010, Žilinskas Art Gallery, M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum) 2. "Romeo could be a grain of salt, Juliet could be a map" (2015, Žilinskas Art Gallery, M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum). "War Requiem" (2018, Devil's museum, M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum). "300 pictures to Satyricon" (2020, Žilinskas Art Gallery, M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum (without an artist's name, however, due to style, composition, material of the collage, provides sufficient reasons to include to the list));⁵
- ♦ journalistic reportage of the exhibition openings on Lithuanian national TV news which included interviews with the museum administration and the curator of the exhibitions;
- ♦ Grigorijus Kanovičius literature prize award for the best cosmopolitan novel of the year, "Originalas" [The Original] about the story of Dogu Bankov (Kavaliauskas 2017);
- ♦ reviews of the exhibitions of Dogu Bankov in cultural weekly newspaper Šiaurės Atėnai [Northern Athens] (Jacytė 2015) as well as in local daily newspaper Kauno diena [Kaunas' Day] (Milkova 2010).

4 It is important to mention that in reality the pictures of Dogu Bankov are not for sale. They belong to M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum.

5 It should be mentioned that two more collage projects of this kind exist unsigned and to be exhibited: 100 picture collection as indirect illustrations or simply as "pictures to" "Querelle de Brest" by Jean Genet. The pictures in their style are closer to the pictures to those that are devoted to Lorca's play "The Public" than to the collection of "Satyricon", but much more tragic than in any other Bankov's art work. Querelle is never shown, but indicated by blue stripes à la Breton. The other project is "Homage a Serge Lifar – Composed, Created, Constructed and Controlled Movements." The pictures are of different size and they are to be put together 2, 3 or 4 to form one picture, which Bankov has never been known to do so elsewhere. Also the style has simplicity that would indicate that this must have been his latest project – if at all by him.

The reviews have a special place in the discourse of Dogu Bankov, because they demystify the story. Aistė Jacytė titled her review “The Invented Artist”. The review itself is about Dogu Bankov’s exhibition in Kaunas Žilinskas gallery, titled “Romeo could be a grain of salt, Juliet could be a map,” – the words taken from Lorca’s play “El Público”, in English known as “The Public”, although a more correct translation could be “The Audience”. Jacytė says the following words:

“D. Bankov (who supposedly lived 1884-1970) – is not a nickname of G. Ohldieck, but rather a fictional person, an artist of a Bulgarian origin; according to carefully placed biographical facts, he had a number of colorful friends in Paris at the beginning of the 20th century where he lived and created. In one of his interviews about the idea to invent a fictitious person G. Ohldieck stated:

‘Art works have a right to exist independently, why should I be introduced next to the pictures? Besides, I do not hide. I simply do not wish to advertise myself. If I had to play a piano, then it would be a different matter, because I would not have a choice to be invisible, not to be present.’ [...] An artist created another artist, then the latter one created objects, which are extended by the interpretations of a spectator. A never ending process” (Jacytė 2015).

On the other hand, Jacytė in her review is concerned with the idea of the creation of another artist and his biography, rather than demystification for the sake of it, although, as the title of the review indicates, it includes that as well. But her review is not a typical report of a journalist who alarms society about forgery, but an intellectual analysis of an exhibition where a discussion about forgery or fakes does not have a room, instead the focus is on the technique and the ideas, including Bankov’s biography.

Five years before this review was published, Lithuanian daily Kauno diena [Kaunas Day] published a review of another Dogu Bankov’s exhibition. The exhibition was titled “Don’t shoot the waiter before lunch”, which included 152 collage pictures with explanations by the café L’Ane Rouge cook Agnes Schaunegger. The review by Vaida Milkova was titled “The Exhibition of a Really Unrealistic Dogu Bankov” (Milkova: 2010).

She shared her impressions as follows: “By going through the exhibition all the time the feeling was that the works were created considerably later than 1920s or 1930s [...] The suspicion is that Dogu Bankov is merely an artistic fiction” (Milkova 2010).

But an artistic fiction in some cases has the effect of reality. Once upon a time an intellectual reader of the novel “Originalas” [The Original] admitted to the author an unexpected revelation: “Before I started reading the novel I did not believe that Dogu Bankov existed, but after I read the book, I believe he existed.”

Needless to say, there is no data provided by sociologists on how many exhibition visitors actually believe in the biography and authenticity of Dogu Bankov’s works. There is no such a thing a survey with a question: “Do you believe that Bankov’s biography is real or do you believe it is an artistic fiction?” However, it is very likely that the majority also believes in his authorship, just as the above-mentioned reader, who admitted in his conversion into the belief of Bankov’s existence.

It is a documentary reality, nothing invented, that when Dogu Bankov’s pictures were exhibited in Bulgaria, Plovdiv’s City Art Gallery, the pictures were not returned. After the curator Gøran Ohldieck made his investigation in 2011, the City Art Gallery of Plovdiv agreed to return those “withheld” pictures back to M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum, however, the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture blocked it. The Bulgarian Ministry of Culture sent an official letter to M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum stating that Dogu Bankov’s pictures are national heritage of Bulgaria, therefore, will remain in Bulgaria. Indeed, there was a period when a couple of Dogu Bankov’s pictures were exhibited in Sofia’s Foreign Art Gallery in the section of Paris school to which also belong such artists as Georgi Papazov (Georges Papasoff) (1894–1972) and Julius Pincas (Jules Pascin) (1885 – 1930). The latter also worked with collage in Paris in 1920s.

CONCLUSIONS

The principle of “could have” contains historic logic – Bankov, who *could have* lived in Paris, indeed *could have* used that particular material for his collage pictures, namely clipping from periodicals of 1920s and 1930s. The historic logic opens the possibility for documentary. Suddenly we are no longer on the ground of pure fictional and invented biography. Suddenly here is the realization that fiction can be interwoven with documentary. The imagination of the one, who invented Bankov’s biography, is mixed with the real documentary artifacts which *could have* been used if the story were true.

The multi-layered story of Dogu Bankov is based not only on the documentary of 1920s and 1930s, but also on a contemporary documentary that was created additionally in the 21st century in order to promote the discourse of Dogu Bankov.

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CHAPTER 2

Dogu Bankov's Inventionism

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter analysed created biography as the first dimension of Dogu Bankov's project. This chapter will analyse the second and the third dimensions: the second dimension – the dialectics of the original picture and its fake; the third dimension – collage pictures as indirect illustrations to classic literature.

The first dimension – Dogu Bankov's biography – is important in order to understand how the biography of the Bulgarian artist was constructed and how it is interpreted by the media, artists, and local exhibition visitors nowadays. The second dimension is important in order to comprehend an intellectual play with the dialectics of the original picture and its fake, i.e. usually the fake is the copy of the original, but in this case all the “fake pictures” are the original pictures. How is it possible?

Invented or created biography⁶ of Dogu Bankov makes the exhibition visitors to believe that the artist as such existed and, therefore, the pictures that are exhibited in his name belong to him.⁷ In such a case, logically, the pictures must have a defined authenticity. However, the pictures do not have a signature. Then one wonders why the pictures are not signed, which leads to a potential suspicion whether the pictures are the originals. Thus, this chapter will analyse the dialectics of the original and its fake.

The third dimension reveals collage pictures as indirect illustrations or simply as pictures to particular pages of classic literature: Federico García Lorca's theatre play “El

6 For the analysis of the invented biography please see previous chapter.

7 Deividas Preišegalavičius would be one of the visitors who instead of believing in the existence of Dogu Bankov chose to take part in the discourse of his invented biography. He wrote a witty book review about a book that supposedly was written by the curator of Bankov's exhibitions, when in reality such a book does not exist. See literature list: (Preišegalavičius 2016).

Publico”, Wilfred Owen’s war poetry as it is used by the composer Benjamin Britten in his “War Requiem”, the ancient Roman novel “Satyricon” by Petronius, and finally a novel “Querelle de Brest” by Jean Genet.

THE DIALECTICS OF THE ORIGINAL PICTURE AND ITS FAKE

Apparently in the case of Dogu Bankov’s pictures, which are without signatures, the concern should be beyond what is “a fake” and what is “the original”. Rather the question should be: do the pictures have quality or not, and if so, to what art school and period of time they belong? The authenticity question here is secondary, because no duplicates of any other picture have ever been found.⁸ If Dogu Bankov is a fictitious artist with an invented biography, then logically the art works that are ascribed to his name are done by someone else. The underlying idea behind all this could be called “anti-Pablo Picasso”.

If the strategy of Picasso was to sign as many pictures he could possibly make in promotion of his name at the expense of quality, so the true name behind Dogu Bankov does not flash. Neither the pictures are signed unlike Picasso’s pictures. It is so because art should not be for the market where the authenticity of the established artist’s name effects the value of an art work, – rather art should be about its own quality for the sake of art itself. In other words, art collectors and agents do not have much to gain at Dogu Bankov’s exhibitions, because none of the pictures are for sale – they belong to the M. K. Čiurlionis National Art Museum in Kaunas, Lithuania. Some other collections of Bankov’s pictures also belong to Buenos Aires *Centro Cultural Recoleta* and to Sofia’s National Gallery of Foreign Art, and to the City Gallery of Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Although from a legal point of view one may find peculiar that Bankov’s works have no copyright, yet the pictures are museum property.

The very fact that the pictures have no copyright may indicate the following idea: to create a free access to the usage of the pictures as one wishes, although the museum that holds the collections of Bankov’s pictures would have the right to limit the use of copying from the originals for conservation reasons due to the fragility of the collage material (like its 100 years old paper) that might be effected by the exposure to direct light.

8 Another example – Andy Warhol, who sometimes would let to sign his works just anyone present in “the Factory” (Warhol’s studio).

Gøran Ohldieck, the curator of numerous Bankov’s exhibitions, on the dialectics of the original picture and its fake has replied as follows:

“In Bankov’s case one could say with a little flippancy that we do not know if it is the fakes that are real or the real that are the fakes. Having worked for so many years with the problem of “Dogu Bankov”, I have come to the conclusion that I take all of them for genuine unless otherwise proven. I remember my old teacher Michael Rothenstein made quite a stir at the art school pronouncing that when an exhibition is mounted the artist should go home. The intention was of course to tell that “name building” is unnecessary for the sake of art” (Ohldieck 2014:179).

This shows that the curator Ohldieck has his own attitude towards the issue of what is a fake and what is a genuine work. Why to be concerned with the authenticity, if the author as such is not necessary? If an exhibition is for art itself, not for “name building”, then quality of presented art works is sufficient. Hence comes the curator’s conclusion that he takes all Dogu Bankov’s pictures as genuine unless otherwise proven. And if Bankov is “invented artist”, as Jacytė claimed,⁹ it does not change the dialectics of the original and its fake, because his pictures – whether they belong to an invented author or a real one – they are openly exposed to the visitors of exhibitions for evaluation of quality. The visitors and art experts can see how copyright free pictures are exposed to the public, including numerous children excursions for learning Bankov’s collage technique.

As we can see such dialectics of the original and its fake have nothing to do with the art of forgery or crime. “Art thieves tend to be mercenary, have no specialized skills or interest in art, rarely steal art on more than one occasion and do not fit consistent psychological profile. In contrast, in the world of forgery, there are consistent generalizations that can be applied to forgers – motivation, character” (Charney 2015: 14). But in the case of Dogu Bankov’s story a thief is non-existent and there is nothing mercenary about it, because the pictures after the exhibitions are inventoried and catalogued in order to become a particular museum’s property. The forger does not exist either, because there are no duplicates.

If one is to be overwhelmingly concerned with the fact that the author is “invented”, then this could go as far as to say that all the “fakes” are the originals. Invented author (or invented biography of the author) does not necessarily mean that the pictures that are ascribed to this particular author (Dogu Bankov) are the fakes. One thing is to construct

9 See previous chapter

fictional biography, the other thing is to create authentic pictures in relation to classical literature. The author can be X, but the pictures are real. The entire anti-Picasso idea is to send a simple message: an author as a source of authenticity of an art work is unnecessary for the acknowledgment of the original work.

But the world wants to be deceived as the ancient Roman writer Petronius has said (or at least as these words are ascribed to him) in Latin: *Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur*. There is enough persuasion that such an artist as Bankov *could have* existed and he *could have* made namely these particular pictures. Then the dialectics of the original and its fake is for the intellectual pleasure of the art society, not only for the purpose of sending anti-Picasso message.

The intellectual pleasure lies in the combination of the two: a mixture of an invented biography on the basis of many documentary facts as well as on the dialectics of the original and its fake. Without this would be difficult to explain why the collections exhibited in the 21st century are made of 100 year old interwar period material of the 20th century. Once the narrative of Dogu Bankov is established, then it becomes self-explanatory why he used the clippings of the publications from 1920s and 1930s. It is not an optical deception. It is a conceptual deception. It is not an optical deception, because all the collage pictures are made of the “original” material of the 1920s and 1930s. It is another matter how the original material of the 1920s and 1930s was obtained. Suffice to use imagination...

However, it is a conceptual deception, because the art society is lured into a belief that Dogu Bankov was not “invented”; in addition to this, the art society is lured into a belief that his biography as it “really was” is available to us today thanks to the memoirs written by Agnes Shaunegger, who was the cook of the café where Dogu Bankov used to indulge into his collage picture making. The idea is that his pictures made in the café L’Ane Rouge belong not just to him, but more importantly they belong to the epoch of the Golden Age of Modernism. The café L’Ane Rouge indeed existed in Paris during the interwar period. But the following question is why Paris’ interwar period deserves so much attention in the 21st century? Was not it all about Modernism? Is there a deeper purpose in the effort to promote Modernism in the epoch of Post-modernism? The answer *could be* “yes”. The idea might be that we are allowed to create art in the 21st century without the trauma of World War II. Imagine that the Second World War has never happened, – we hear the idea behind all this.

If one is to pay attention to the mood of the pictures, then all the collections (with the exception of “War Requiem” and possibly with the exception of “Querell de Brest”¹⁰) are about happiness. That strengthens the idea that we should have art in such a way as if the Second World War II has never happened. In addition to this, it is especially peculiar how the artist Bankov managed to create a distinct style in each collection of his pictures for different exhibitions when the material of the collage is from the same period and, moreover, the pictures contain the same mood of happiness.

COLLAGE PICTURES AS INDIRECT ILLUSTRATIONS TO CLASSIC LITERATURE

In this sub-chapter the focus is on the pictures as indirect illustrations to classic literature: Federico García Lorca’s “The Public”, Wilfred Owen’s poetry as it is used in Benjamin Britten’s “War Requiem”, and Petronius’s “Satyricon”. When it comes to the latter, it is important to highlight that the exhibition titled “300 pictures to Satyricon” does not have an artist’s name. Dogu Bankov is not mentioned. Nor any other artist’s name is mentioned. However, due to similarity in style and due to the collage material (same material of 1920s and 1930s) and due to the mood of happiness, it is reasonable to include this collection into Dogu Bankov’s oeuvre, since it fits here better than anywhere else.

As we know, the book “Satyricon” – ancient novel in Latin – could be called the Bible of hedonism with lots of scenes of love that includes paganism and pagan sin-free attitude towards homosexuality and bisexuality, sex slaves. “Satyricon” also has the scenes on the abuse of money and pride, yet in a poetic approach. Food eating festivities is also a big part, but all of it not without a mockery and irony. The reader sees a great sense of humour applied for the purpose of the revelation of the decadence of high culture that Petronius evidently witnessed (Petronius 2020).

But why the material of 1920s is used for the collage pictures that are in such a strong affinity with Petronius text of ancient Roman times?

One of the potential answers – convincing or utterly unconvincing – is that the artist chose freedom to remain anonymous by following two manifestos: “The Inventionist manifesto” and “the Concrete Art Manifesto”. These two manifestos not without a reason were placed on the wall during the exhibition “300 Pictures to Satyricon”. From

10 To be exhibited

these manifestos we learn that an artist is not supposed to sign art works. We also read there: “Don’t Search or Find: Invent,” as Edgar Bayley would say in promotion of “The Inventionist Manifesto” (Danchev 2011). With the manifestos in mind, these pictures as illustrations to “Satyricon” could be regarded as standing on their own, whereas Petronius text could be a pretext for the imaginary of Bankov. That imaginary of the artist led him to a creative visual playing with the assemblage of the material from 1920s and 1930s – photos, journal clippings, advertising, cards, knives, feathers, buttons, etc. Then the artist no longer has to be concerned with the fact that his collage material of the early 20th century is used for illustrations of ancient times, especially keeping in mind that the illustrations are indirect,¹¹ symbolic.

When one takes time for a slow examination of each single picture in the exhibition “300 Pictures to Satyricon”, s/he sees how painstakingly all the details of the collage material are assembled. When one takes a quicker look going through the general view, then s/he sees sort of a cartoon movie that could be on its own without any text. After all, the “cartoon movie” contains 300 pictures and takes quite some space on the walls.

But “Satyricon” as such, as a literature text in itself is a challenge for the reader due to innovative Latin language. Petronius himself could belong to the Inventionists, since his Latin language is so inventive. The word *Satyricon* is more connected to Greek than to Latin. After all Greek was the most used language in the area where “Satyricon” was written – close to today’s Naples, Italy. Firstly, *satyr* is a Greek demon with a male body, but with the legs of a ram-goat. Secondly, it is connected to satyricus – a poet or a writer who satyrizes. Thirdly, satyriasis means abnormally strong sexual desire in men. It is also possible that the word *Satyricon* is connected to *satyria* – a well-known aphrodisiac at that time.

The English translation for this particular exhibition was made by the curator of the exhibition, instead of simply relying on the already existing translations. A need for a new translation stemmed from the multiple meanings that Petronius created with his inventive vocabulary. Evidently a possibility for additional multiple meanings were discovered in the process of artistic searching to create a picture in such a way that particular meanings of “Satyricon” would be visualised.

¹¹ For instance, one of the pictures from the exhibition “300 Pictures to Satyricon” includes a photo of a “bottle”, not an amphora of wine that was used in the ancient Roman times, because, as it was mentioned, the pictures are indirect illustrations. Another picture includes Arabic number “100”, not Roman “C”, because the pictures being indirect illustrations do not have to imitate the precise historic reality.

If the collection titled “300 Pictures to Satyricon” matches gay mood of the other collections of Dogu Bankov’s collage pictures, so it is not so with his collection titled “War Requiem” (37 pictures), which has a completely different mood. The collection “War Requiem” is oriented towards mourning of the dead soldiers. The mood is strikingly sad and meditative, as it is dedicated to the end of World War I. Not coincidentally the opening of the exhibition was November 11th, 2018, for the occasion of 100th anniversary for the end of this war in 1918. Thus, the mood is sad, unlike all other collections. Here Wilfred Owen’s poem “Anthem to Doomed Youth” (as well as his other poems) is integrated into Benjamin Britten’s symphony “War Requiem”.

“What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

[...]

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes” (Owen 1986).

As it was mentioned, the exhibition “War Requiem” by Dogu Bankov is an exception in terms of mood and dedication to the loss of lives of men in World War I. One could argue that if all the collections of Bankov were on such a metaphysical level,¹² then the discourse of Dogu Bankov would transcend cultural level of the localised café L’Ane Rouge. Then a religious and metaphysical theme would dominate lifting Bankov’s ideas and his works to a different realm. As it is for now, the collection of “War Requiem” stands as an exception to the other collections, and those other ones – so humorous with a retro mood of the Golden Age of Modernism – could be summarized in the words of a new manifesto. That new manifesto would be the manifesto of Dogu Bankov and the words would be: “I chose the happy life”.

CONCLUSIONS

“The Concrete Art Manifesto” that no longer wants an artist’s signature is the same manifesto that was hanged in the exhibition “300 Pictures to Satyricon”. This manifesto suits the concept of Dogu Bankov. Without knowledge about the meaning of the manifesto the art philosophy of Bankov would be incomplete. The other manifesto – “The Inventionist Manifesto” – here is exceptionally important as well, because it urges artists to invent.

¹² Wilfred Owen uses lots of Biblical symbols in his poetry, yet, unlike the teachings of Christianity, he sees no hope and no meaning in the trenches of dead bodies who died because of national flags.

Dogu Bankov's world teaches to look back at the Golden Age of Modernism as having special meaning in the 21st century. There are at least three messages to learn:

1. an artist should invent;
2. an artist should have an anti-Picasso attitude when exhibiting works without a name and a signature;
3. art quality is more important than a name.

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PART 2

Dogu Bankov's Pictures

CHAPTER 3

Introduction text and Dogu Bankov's pictures from the collection "Romeo could be a Grain of Salt, Juliet could be a Map"

EL PUBLICO

A first reading of Federico Garcia Lorca's *El Publico* would suggest this being a surrealist play. Readers who would know that Lorca's best friends in the 1920's were Salvador Dali and the surrealist film maker Luis Bunuel would then take this interpretation for granted and correct. But Lorca himself never called this play surrealistic and if the definition of surrealism is taken as more or less unconnected ideas and elements thrown together more for the sake of composition than their actual meaning the reader will find *El Publico* very different indeed. Here is a drama meticulously planned and loaded with symbols from Greek and Roman mythology as well as from Andalusia (with Moorish traditions) and Christianity.

El Publico is seldom produced in theatre as it calls for a large number of actors and many of the characters changes sex or age and a stage director will have to face the problems of showing horses and the thrown away costumes that immediately becomes characters in their own right.

The play was for many years prevented from production and publication by Lorca's family who had the copyright for the reason that Scene IV was missing, this despite the fact that the owner of the manuscript, Rafael Martinez Nadal, writes in his book ('Lorca's *The Public*, a Study' 1974) that he remembers this scene being taken out and later appeared as "A play without a title". Another reason given was that it differs too much from Lorca's other plays that it would damage his image as Spain's greatest playwright.

We can here mention some of the characters and their doubles. This can serve as a guideline – or add to the confuse...

The Stage Director (Enrique) is many different characters; Pierrot, Wilhelmina (the Ballerina), La Dominga de los Negritos (a famous black Cuban dancer and courtesan of the 1890's) and the Figure with Bells.

Man 1 (Gonzales) is also the Figure with the vine leaves and the Nude in Scene IV.

Man 2 is also the woman in black pyjamas and poppies.

The Black Horse is a disguised figure of death, he says to Juliet that he will bring her sand – her sleeping draught. This character is also the Magician in the Final Scene.

Helen, dressed as a Greek in Scene 1 and mentioned as the Centurion's wife in Scene II and as the Professor of Rhetoric's wife in Scene IV.

The Centurion (in yellow tunic and grey flesh) is a figure from the Andalusian Holy Week processions.

To complicate things more we see that Juliet is two persons (Scene IV). The Fourth Student mentions that "Romeo is a man of thirty and Juliet a fifteen-year-old boy", and later, "and they murdered the real Juliet too..."

We should keep in mind that this is an unfinished play – as we have it. It was later rewritten maybe three times (these being lost) and the sequence of the scenes cannot be taken for granted. His last version was sent to the printers just a few weeks before Lorca was executed by Franco's forces on the 18th or 19th of August 1936. He was 38 years old.

Dogu Bankov's pictures to Lorca's drama should not be viewed as traditional illustrations. In many cases Bankov's work is based on his interpretation of Lorca's symbols and by adding his own he changes and recreates the original. As the persons in the pictures changes at all times and is never repeated, it becomes – as Lorca puts it in the words of Man 1; "Come inside with us: you have a place in this drama. Everyone has".

Editor's note: this introduction text to El Publico was provided by the M. K.Čiurlionis Museum during the exhibition period 2015 05 08 – 2015 06 07 at Mykolas Žilinskas Art Gallery, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Editor's quotation as a guide to Lorca's play El Publico [The Public]:

WHITE HORSE 1: Juliet, the night is not the moment, but a moment can last all night.

JULIET: That's enough, I'm not going to listen to you. Why is it me you want to take? It's all lies, the word of love, the broken mirror, the footstep in water. Afterwards, you'd put me back in my grave again, like everyone else who tries to convince anyone who'll listen that real love is an impossibility. I'm tired of this and I've risen up to ask for help in expelling from my grave all those who theorise about my heart and all those who prise open my mouth with little marble tweezers.

Later she will confess her love for the horses, for these 'real horses, who [...] have shattered the stable windows.'

JULIET: I'm not frightened of you. You all want to go to bed with me, don't you? But now it's me who wants to go to bed with you, but it's me who says so, me who directs, me who rides you, me who cuts yours manes with my scissors.

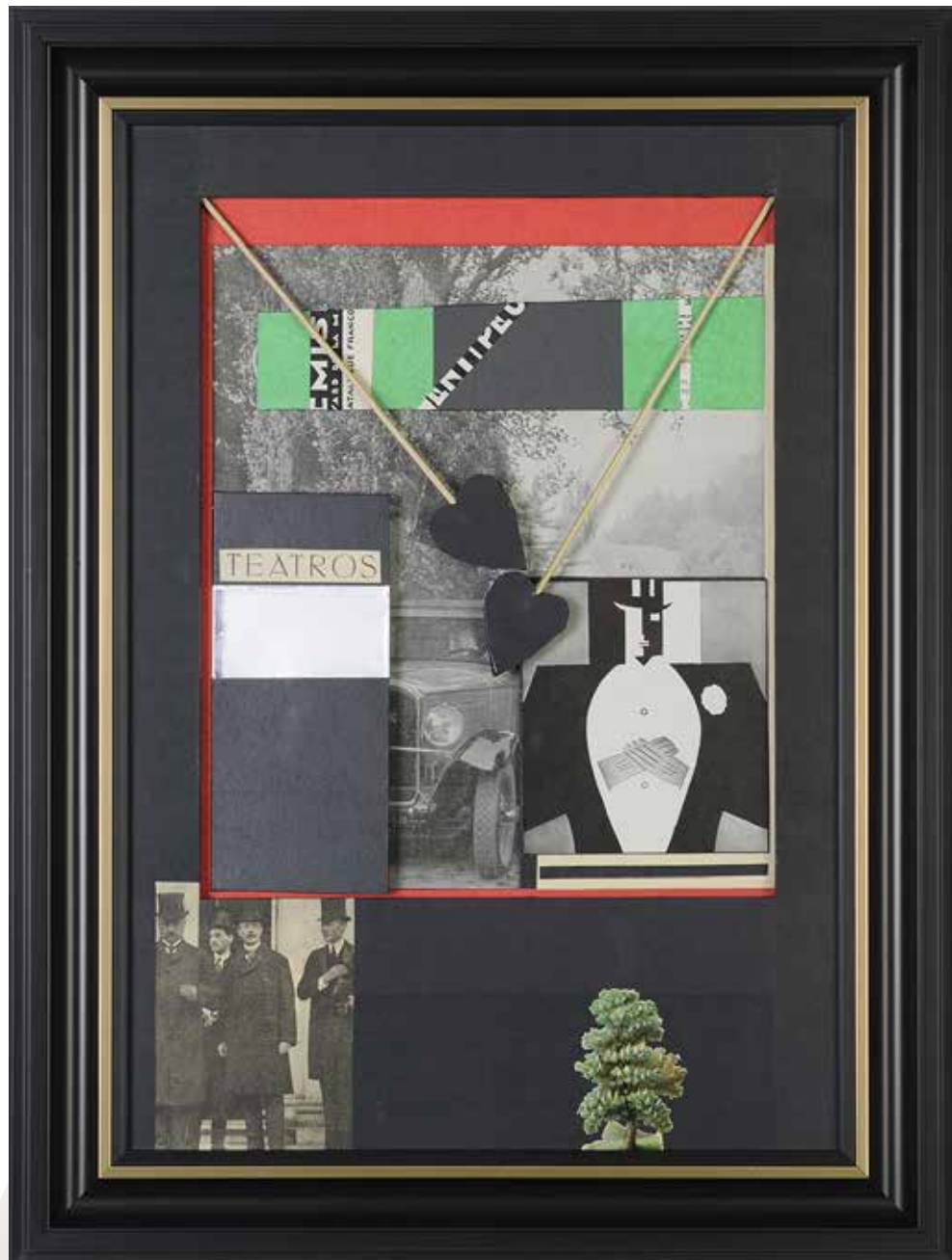
[...] But the quotation also captures one of the central intentions of the play as a whole. The force and shape of desire is a uniquely individual expression, and when it is brought into the open air it shatters the conventional constructs of gender. The Public proudly announces the 'very last truly feminine Juliet that the theatre will see.'

Quotation source: Johnston, David. 1998. Federico Garcia Lorca. Absolute press, p.104-105.















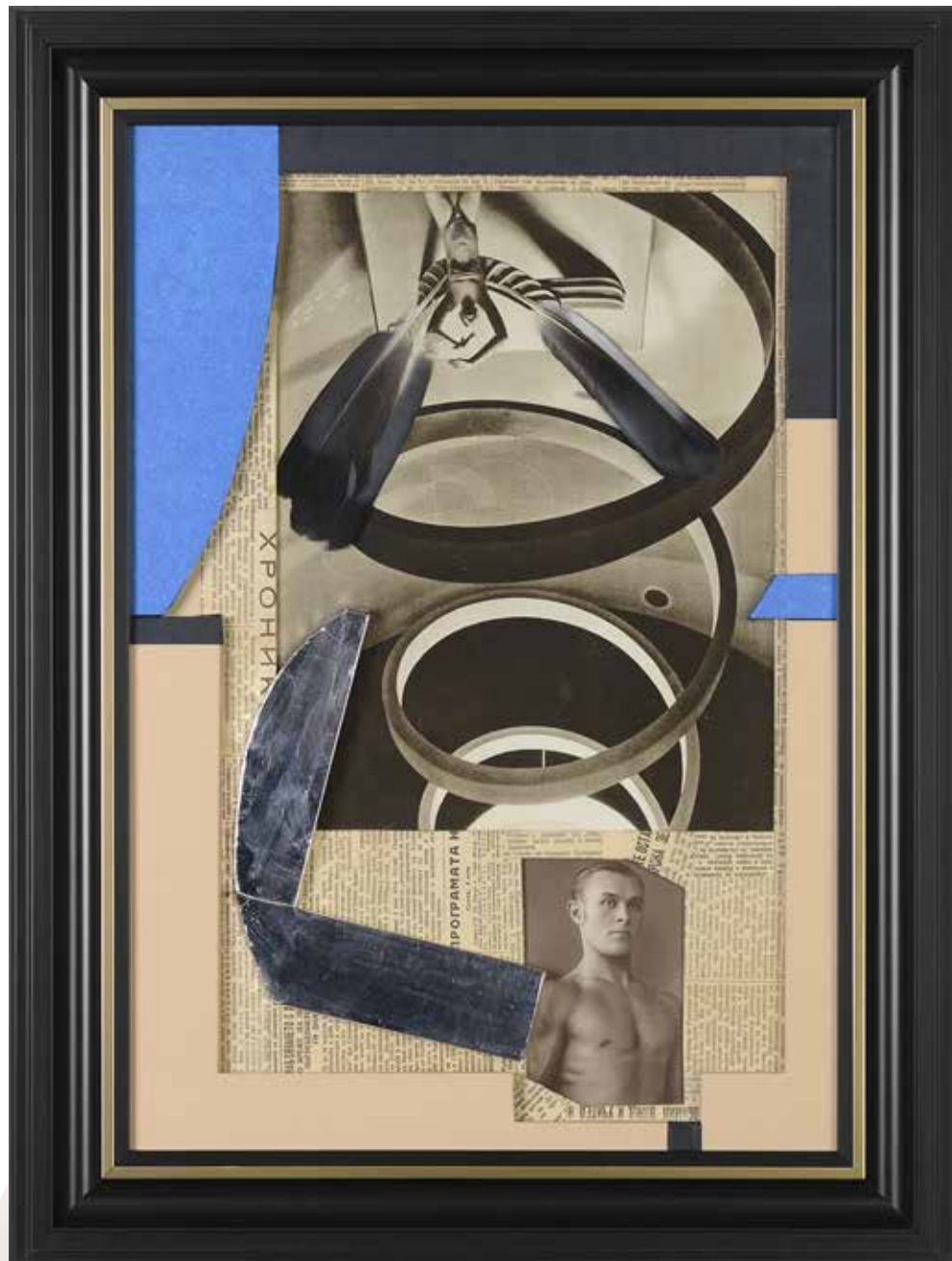






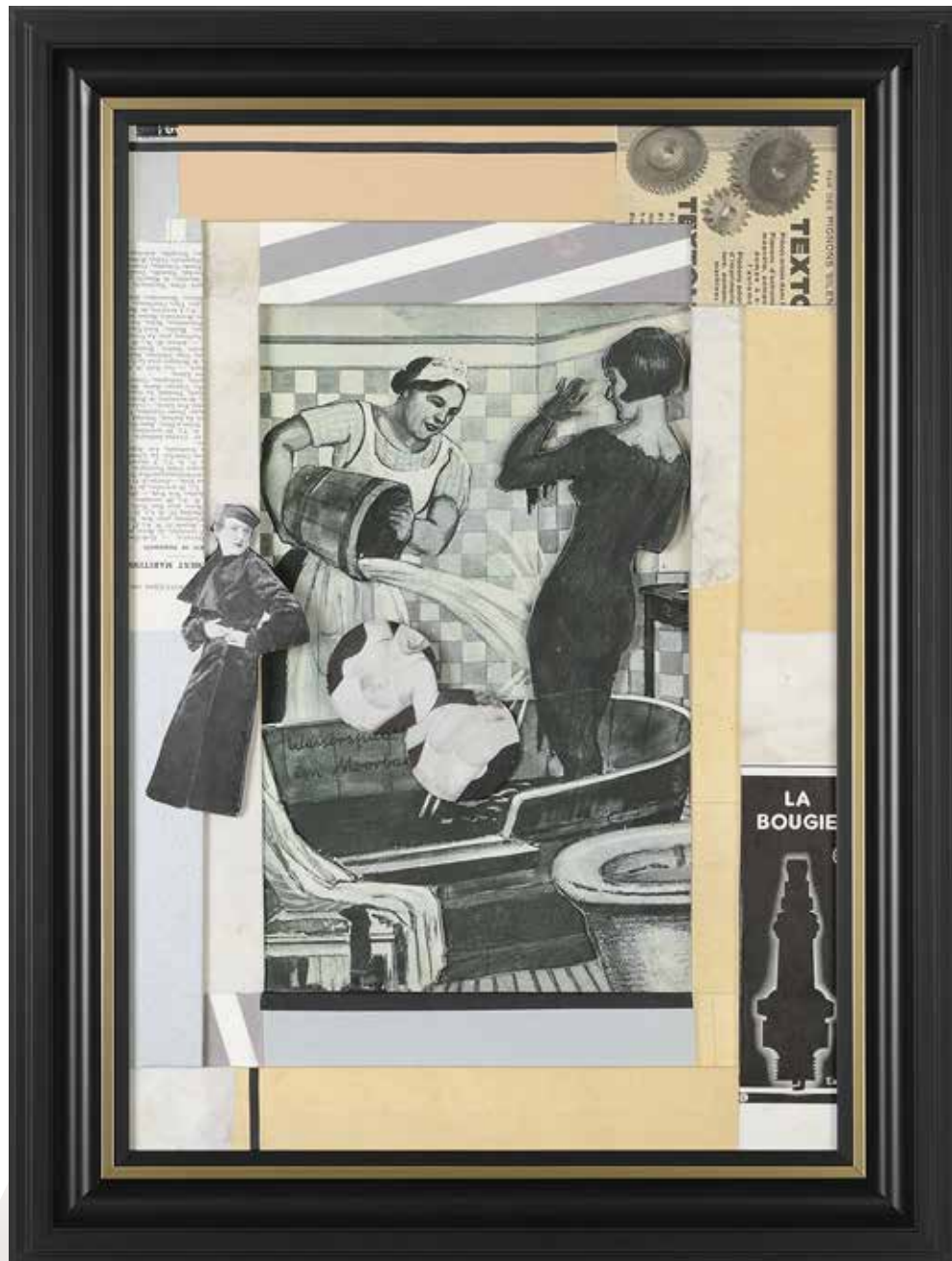




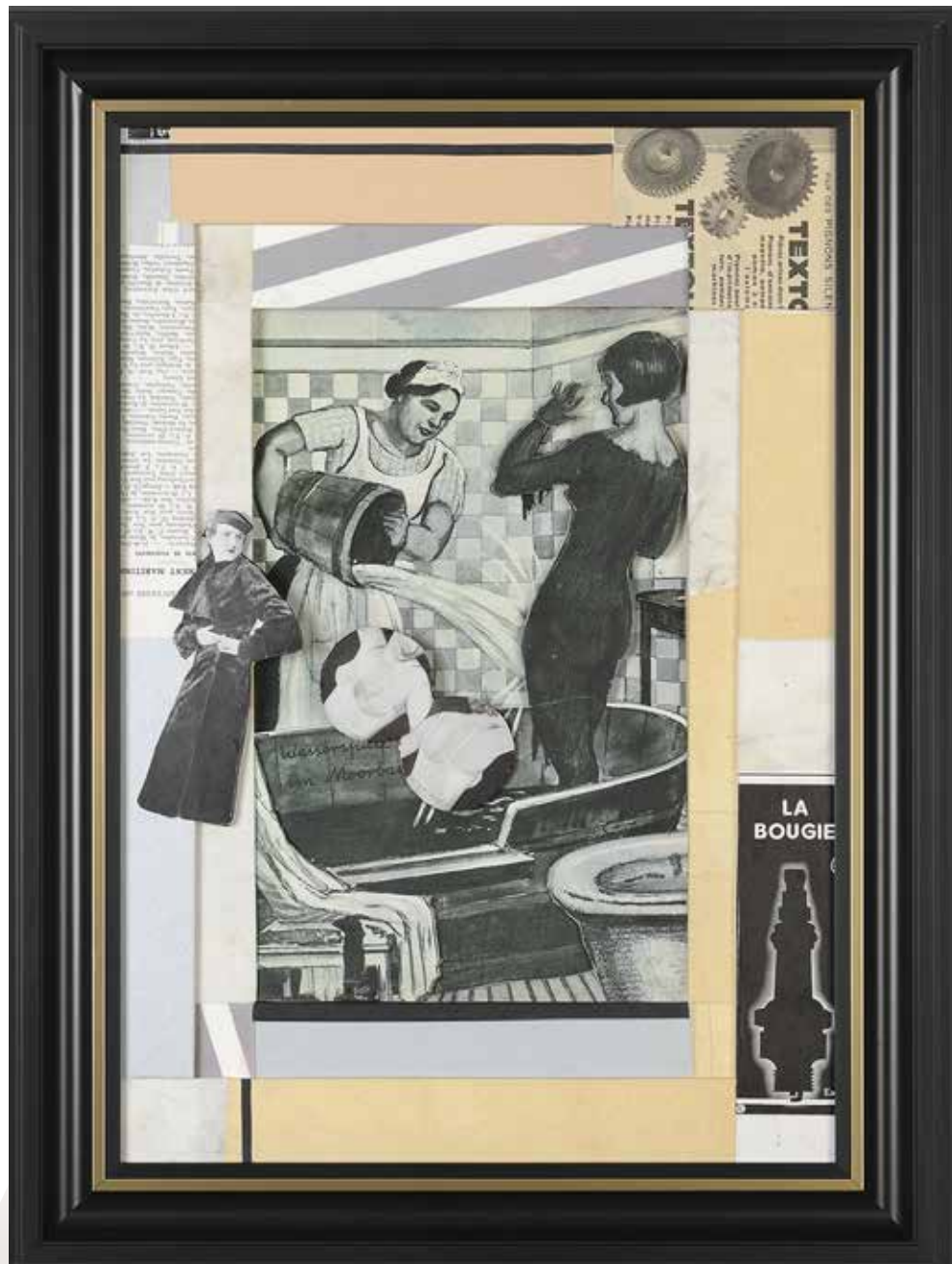






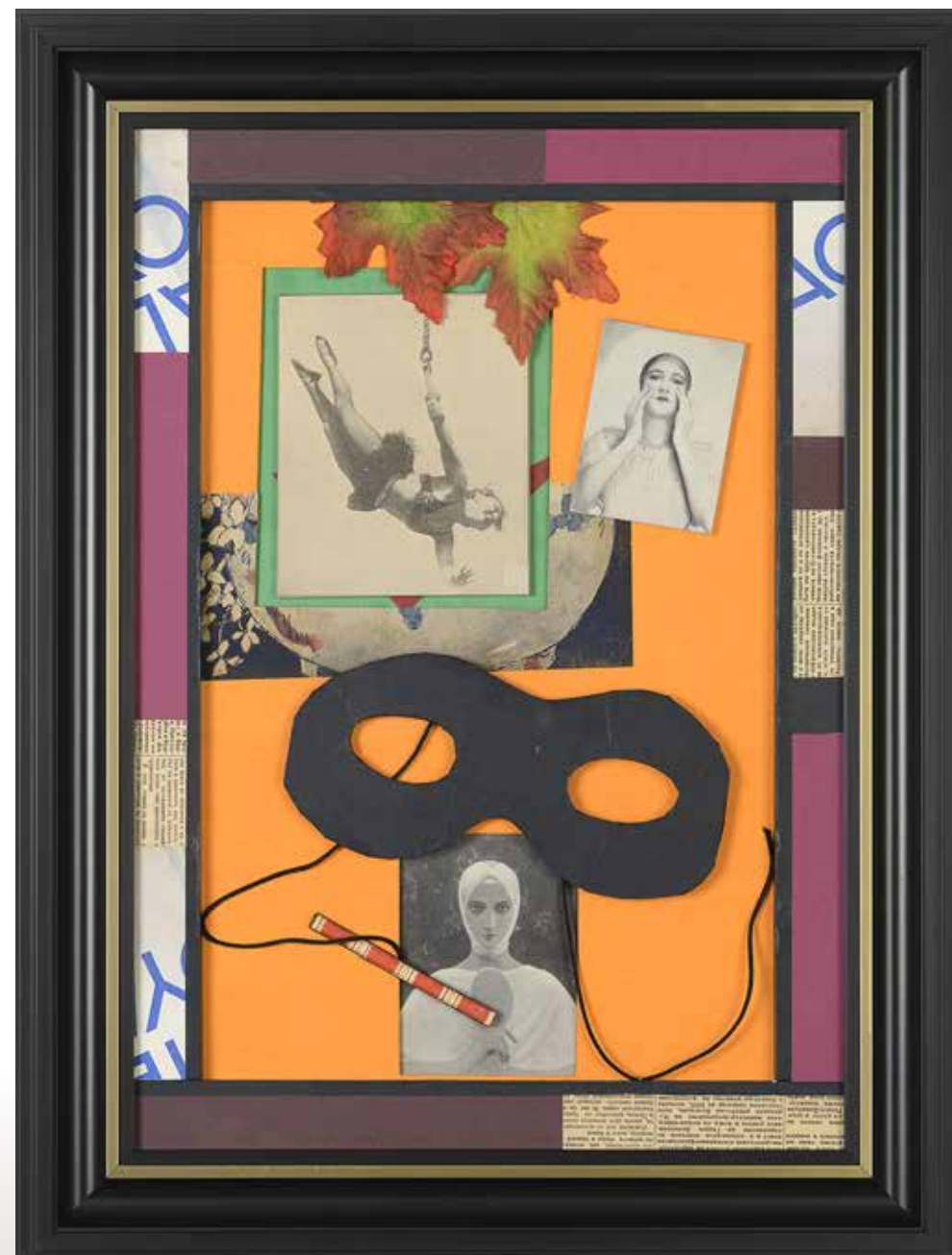






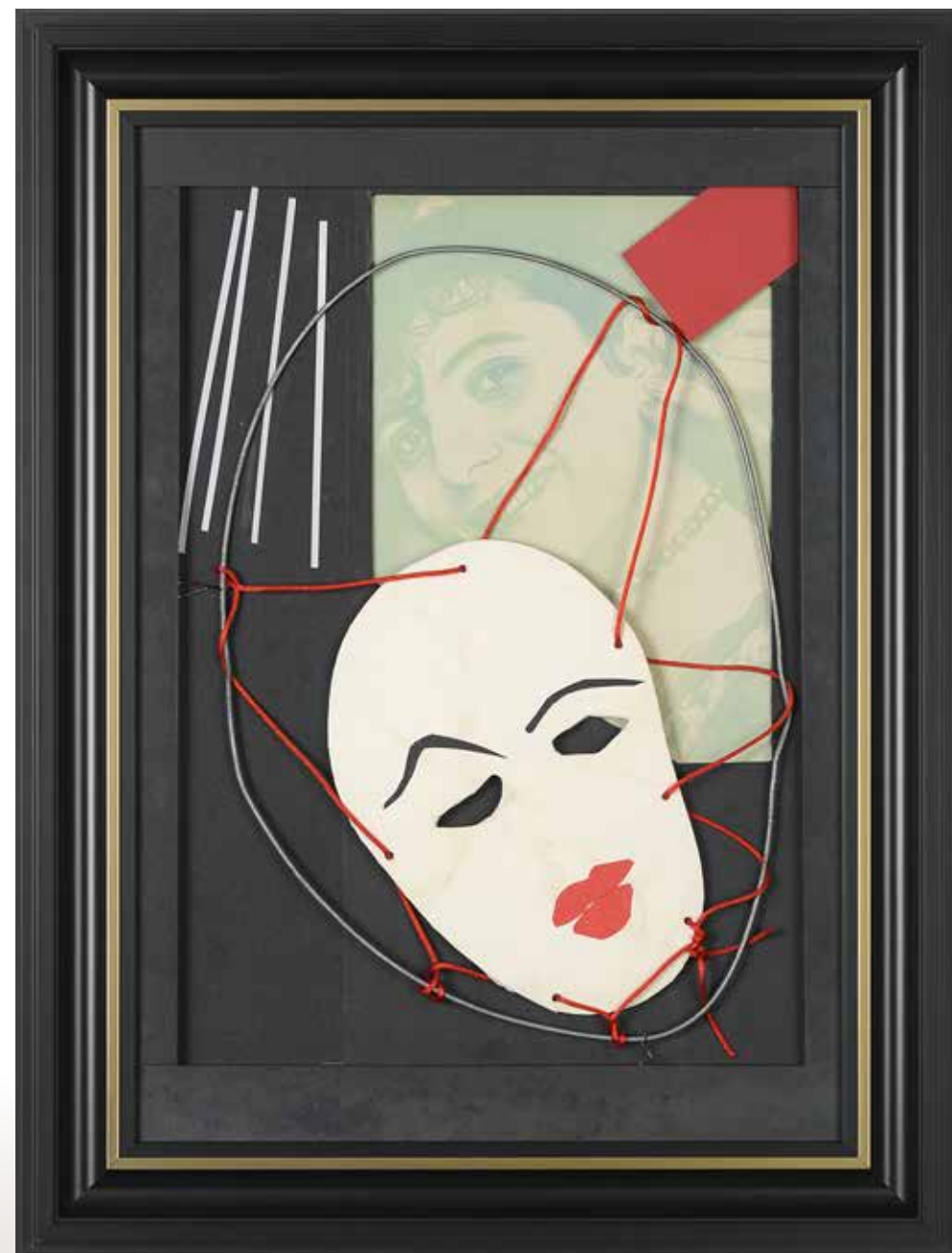


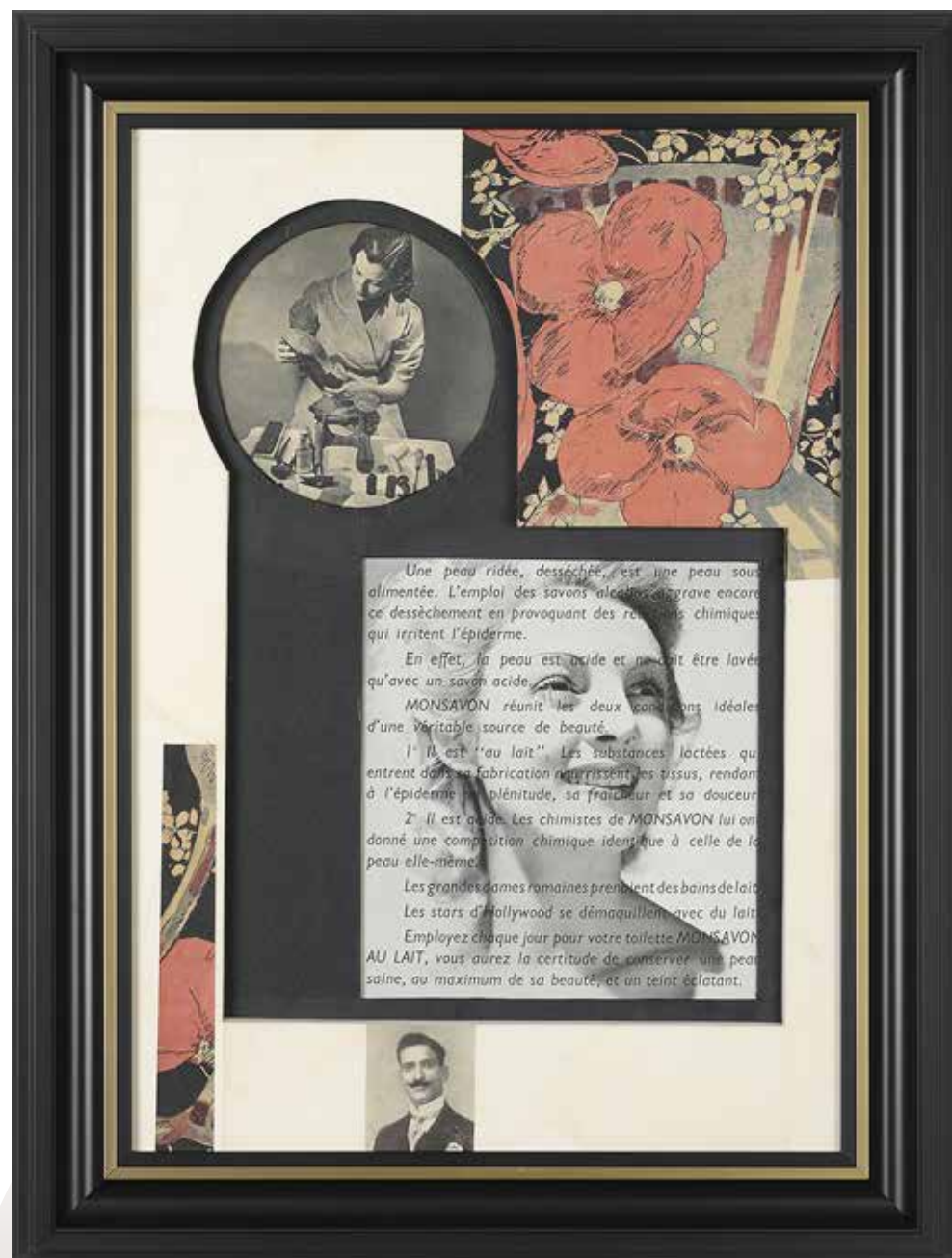








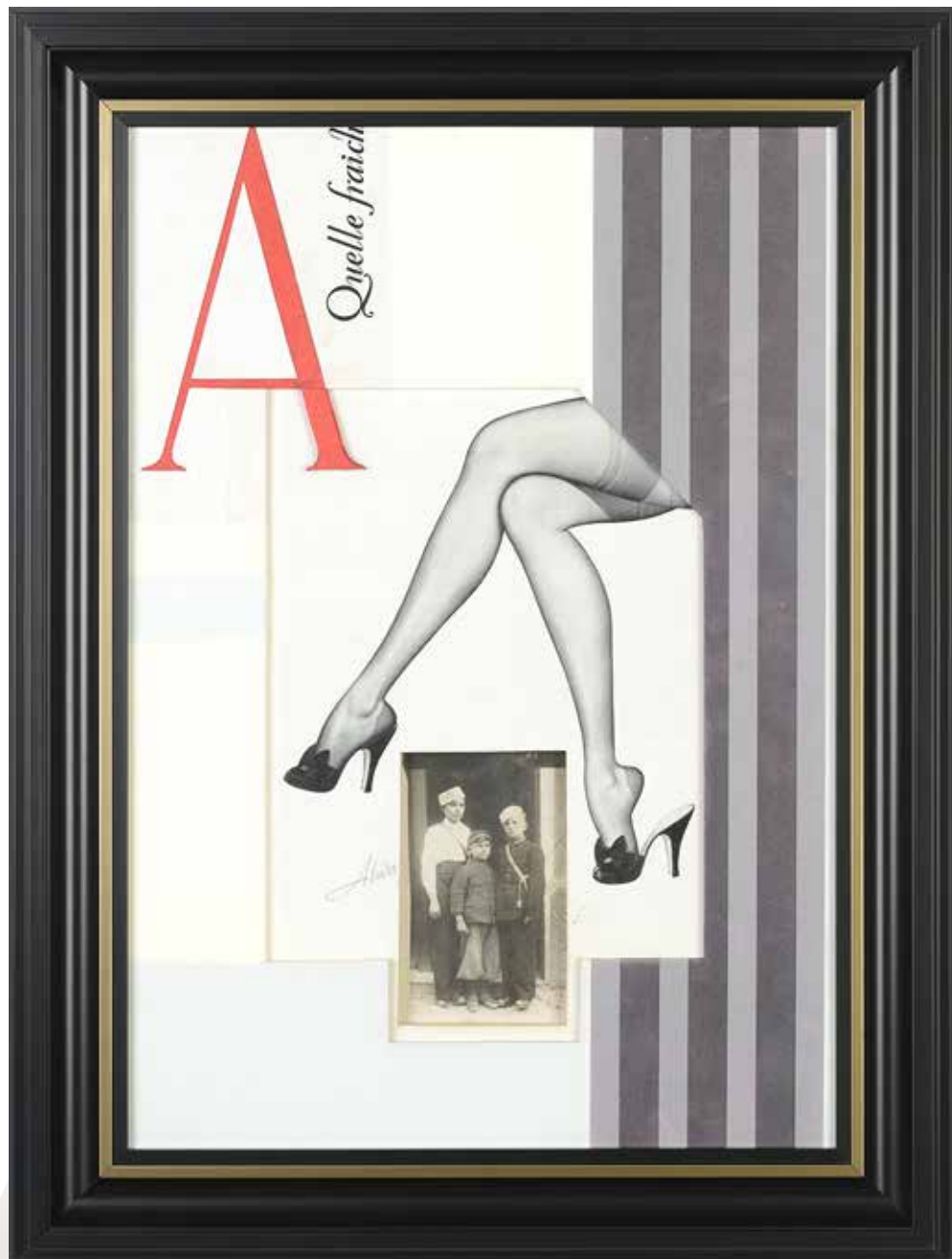




































CHAPTER 4

Dogu Bankov's pictures from the collection “Don't Shoot the Waiter before Lunch”

(with comments by Agnes Schaunegger, the cook of Paris cafe L'Ane Rouge where Dogu Bankov created the pictures)



ORCHESTRA

I doubt that this picture was made in France. I believe that Bankov had it with him when he came here (Paris café L'Ane Rouge). First time I saw it with him when he came to the café - this must have been 1910.



THE BLUE TRAIN

The famous train from Paris (with connections from London) to Nice and Monaco was a first class express train operating before WWII. One thing is for sure: Bankov never travelled with it. However, he must have read about it. There was an article in L'Illustration in 1930 and one in Berliner Illustrierte in 1932. This is Bankov's ideas of what could have happened on such a journey.



ISABELLE

There must have been thousands of girls "available" in Paris and most of them looked unhappy, poor, devastated and ill. Not Isabelle. But then again, she had the best customers.



THE LOVE SALAD

We had a wedding party one evening. [...] the whole thing turned out to be a horrible story: the girl was apparently married before - in Belgium - and the former one had just turned up. Catastrophe. [...] The picture I liked. So romantic - and as all romances - they end.



KUBELIK

(a Czech violinist and composer in Paris)

Kubelik even celebrated his marriage in the cafe. The wife was very sweet and nice - she even came to the kitchen to ask if she could help with something - how is that for an upper class lady?

Dogu Bankov's pictures from the collection
"War Requiem" with poetry of Wilfred Owen



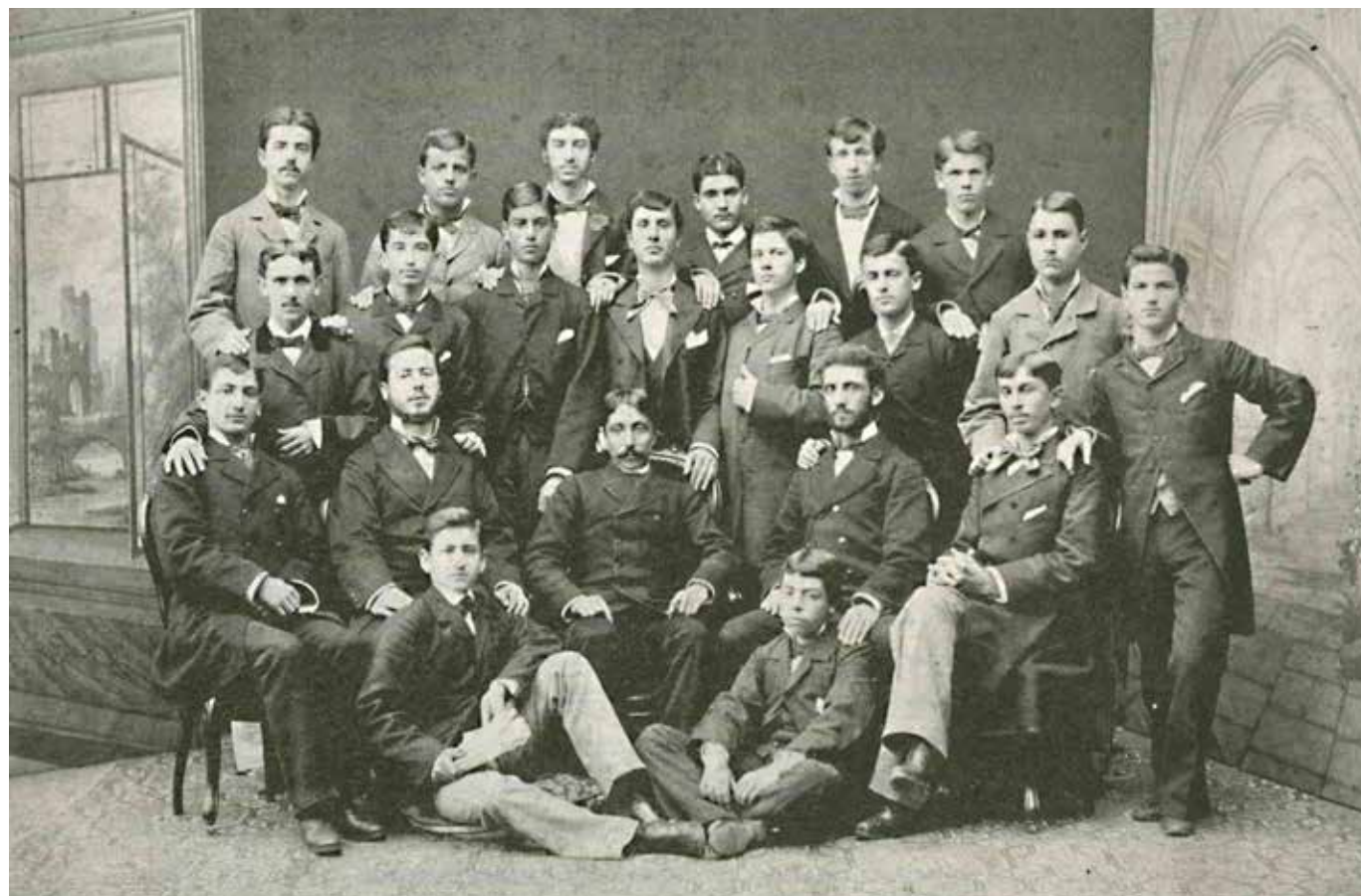
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum*
est Pro patria mori.



What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.



The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
 And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.



Dogu Bankov with his classmates in Sofia's Art Academy in the studio of prof. S. M. Panaremov, 1904.
Bankov started at the academy in 1902. The photo shows him standing at the far right.
(The original in the collection of National Museum of Photography, Szentendre, Hungary.)

Back row: Zonio Polikov, Luka Pranderef, Ivan Mishailov, Astride Dimitriev, T. G. Palmageriev, Danail S. Rusevski.
Middle row: Apostel Rujevski, T. S. Giorgiev, Dimiter Sokov, Nikola G. Baldiriev, Stefan Kirov, Lilo Jukovov, Tolo Levov.
First row: Yako J. Sjekov, Naom Mikariov, Prof. S. M. Panaremov, Gaino Bukov, Serebro Baldirijev, Dogu Bankov.
In front: Ivan M. Beshkov, Mina Milkov.

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THE END

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Layout designer Rasa Vilimienė

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PAVEIKSLŲ
ANTIKINIAM
ROMANUI

PICTURES TO

SATYRICON



Nacionalinis M. K. Čiurlionio
dailės muziejus maloniai
kviečia Jus į parodą „300
paveikslų antikiniam romanui
„Satyrikonas“ atidarymą, kuris
įvyks 2020 m. sausio 31 d.,
penktadienį, 17 val.,
M. Žilinsko dailės galerijoje
(Nepriklausomybės a. 12,
Kaunas).



M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum
of Art cordially invites you to the
opening of the exhibition "300
pictures to the Ancient novel
"Satyricon", which will take place
on January 31st, Friday, at 5 p.m.
at M. Žilinskas Art Gallery,
Nepriklausomybės Sq. 12,
Kaunas, Lithuania.



NACIONALINIS
M. K. ČIURLIONIO
DAILĖS MUZIEJUS



The curator of Dogu Bankov's exhibitions and Tomas Kavaliauskas.
Kaunas, M.K.Čiurlionis National Art Museum, January 31, 2020,
for the occasion of the opening of the exhibition "Satyricon"
(author unknown, although he could be Dogu Bankov).
Photo from private collection.