



...Culture, arts, & heritage of Azerbaijan & the Caucasus

## For Immediate Release

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Washington, D.C. February 10, 2011—Residents of the metro D.C. area gathered on Tues., February 8, for the opening reception for Yavar and Leyla Rzayeva's *Karabakh on my Mind* exhibition. Yavar's beautiful landscape paintings and Leyla's stunning landscape paintings and prints will continue to dazzle audiences through February 18 at Pepco's Edison Place Gallery in the Penn Quarter.

Guests enjoyed a delectable spread of Caucasus inspired *hors d'oeuvre* and sipped on wine while they explored the luscious landscapes depicted in the work of both artists. After giving visitors ample time to familiarize themselves with the paintings and print work, Karabakh Foundation Board Chair Dr. Adil Baguirov took the microphone to welcome the featured artists and attendees to the evening's reception. Executive Director Diana Cohen Altman introduced Yavar and Leyla, which opened the floor for both artists to share how Azerbaijani heritage influences their art pieces. The evening's speeches concluded with Shafag Mehraliyeva discussing the children's book that she wrote and Yavar illustrated. Many excerpts from the children's book were displayed in the exhibition.

Yavar Rzayev was born in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. He graduated in 1989 with a degree in architecture in Czechoslovakia. He has led a multifaceted career as an architect, artist, and performer. Rzayev has experimented with a variety of artistic techniques, including monochrome drawings, mixed-media contemporary paintings, watercolors, illustrations, oil on canvas and wood panels, and live model portraits. Even though Yavar has studied art around the world, he still expresses the continuing importance of his homeland: "My life took me lots of places around the world. And when you do a lot of traveling, the world becomes small...My mind always races back to Karabakh. The place where I was born and grew up. The place where I prepared myself for great discoveries. Now, I can only travel there in my thoughts."

Leyla Rzayeva received her BFA in painting and printmaking from Maryland Institute College of Art. She also pursues a career in printmaking and has become a Tamarind Professional Printer at Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Leyla draws upon her family heritage rooted in Karabakh and her many trips to the Caucasus region for inspiration in her creative works. She also uses direct studies from nature, plein-air landscape painting, and drawings to cultivate her muse for depicting local landscapes.

*Karabakh Foundation volunteer, Shafag Mehraliyeva, discusses one of Yavar Rzayev's landscape paintings with her son.*



*Program Officer, Farzin Farzad, interviews artist Leyla Rzayeva. The interview will be added to Karabakh Foundation's Azerbaijani Documentary Project Archives.*

*In addition to the numerous landscapes Rzayev has painted, he has also illustrated a children's book. These paintings are excerpts from that book.*





*Guests gather to hear speeches from Karabakh Foundation Board Chair Dr. Adil Baguirov, Executive Director Diana Cohen Altman, and artists Yavar Rzayev and Leyla Rzayeva.*

*Guests of all ages were present at the gallery opening to enjoy the artwork and hors d'oeuvre.*



### **About the Karabakh Foundation**

*The Karabakh Foundation seeks to increase awareness and understanding in the United States of the cultural heritage and traditions of the country of Azerbaijan, the Caucasus area, and the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. While coalescing significant artistic and scholarly talent, the Foundation is nurturing a new generation of artists and scholars toward important accomplishments.*

*The Foundation serves as a dynamic facilitator and clearinghouse raising the public profile of Azerbaijan, its Karabakh region, and the Caucasus region in general. Main activities include preserving and disseminating cultural content via archival collecting, public programs, publications, exhibitions, speaking forums, international collaborations, scholarly exchange, artistic sponsorship, and related venues.*

*Foundation support comes primarily from Khazar University, the first private university in Azerbaijan and one of the country's leading institutions of higher learning. Support also comes from the U.S.-based Allaverdy Foundation. Additional information about the Karabakh Foundation may be found at [www.karabakhfoundation.org](http://www.karabakhfoundation.org).*

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