

Artwork turned into the narrator of an epic. Case Study: David of Sassoun
(Oral Tradition and witnessing information in connection with objects)

By Hasmik Altunyan
MA in Heritage Management,
University of Kent/Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB)
Email: asiko_alt@hotmail.com
Tel.: 030 6982799575

This paper aims to bring forward the issue of the connection of visual arts to oral tradition. Starting from the role of the narrator in the communities of the past and how the written language has changed the perception of these stories, it provides an overall insight of this evolution to what we know today. The narrator and the main channels of communication have changed to something utterly new and exciting.

To make these deductions more tangible, the paper analyzes the case study of the Armenian epic, David of Sassoun and its revival in the 20th century, when it was published for the first time, after centuries of oral transmission. The story of David, the main character of the epic, became an inspiration for many eminent Armenian artists, who through their artwork, brought forward key elements of the story itself, as well as features of the main characters.

These pieces of art, which vary from sculptures to paintings and engravings, have turned into the main medium of passing on a traditional oral narrative. The sculpture of David of Sassoun has become the symbol of Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, whereas everyone knows the story, because of the artworks which are put in the city and not because of reading the book.

In conclusion, this paper argues the fact that epics and narratives, are nowadays better perceived and transmitted, if connected to a piece of visual art, whether that is a painting, a sculpture or even a 3D cartoon animation, or a model figure of the main character.