

**Satenik Vardanyan**

**The Image of Jesus Christ  
in the 20th Century and Contemporary Art of Armenia**

Religious iconography and the tradition of depicting Christ in Armenia go back to the very beginning of the Christian era. It has experienced a unique development particularly during the Middle Ages. The loss of statehood, the continuing violence of foreigners and migrations over the centuries have defined the uniqueness of Armenian art. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the figure of Jesus Christ persisted in Armenian culture despite the existence of various political and ideological movements. Distinguished Armenian artists of that period referred to the image of Christ giving new interpretations and generating new ecclesiastical art. Since the Independence of 1991, many contemporary artists have tried to reconsider and revive the idealistic image of Christ. The variety of different representations of Jesus in contemporary Armenian art reflects the existence of divergent ideological trends and processes. Today with the necessity to adopt a new national and unifying ideology the problem of ideal personality comes forward. The image of Christ embodying absolute will, wisdom and love can become the centre of that ideology. The monumental representation of *Christ Pantocrator* depicted in the dome of the newly built Church of St John the Baptist in the town of Abovyan (2013) is worth mentioning in this context.