

**ALIJE VOKSHI**

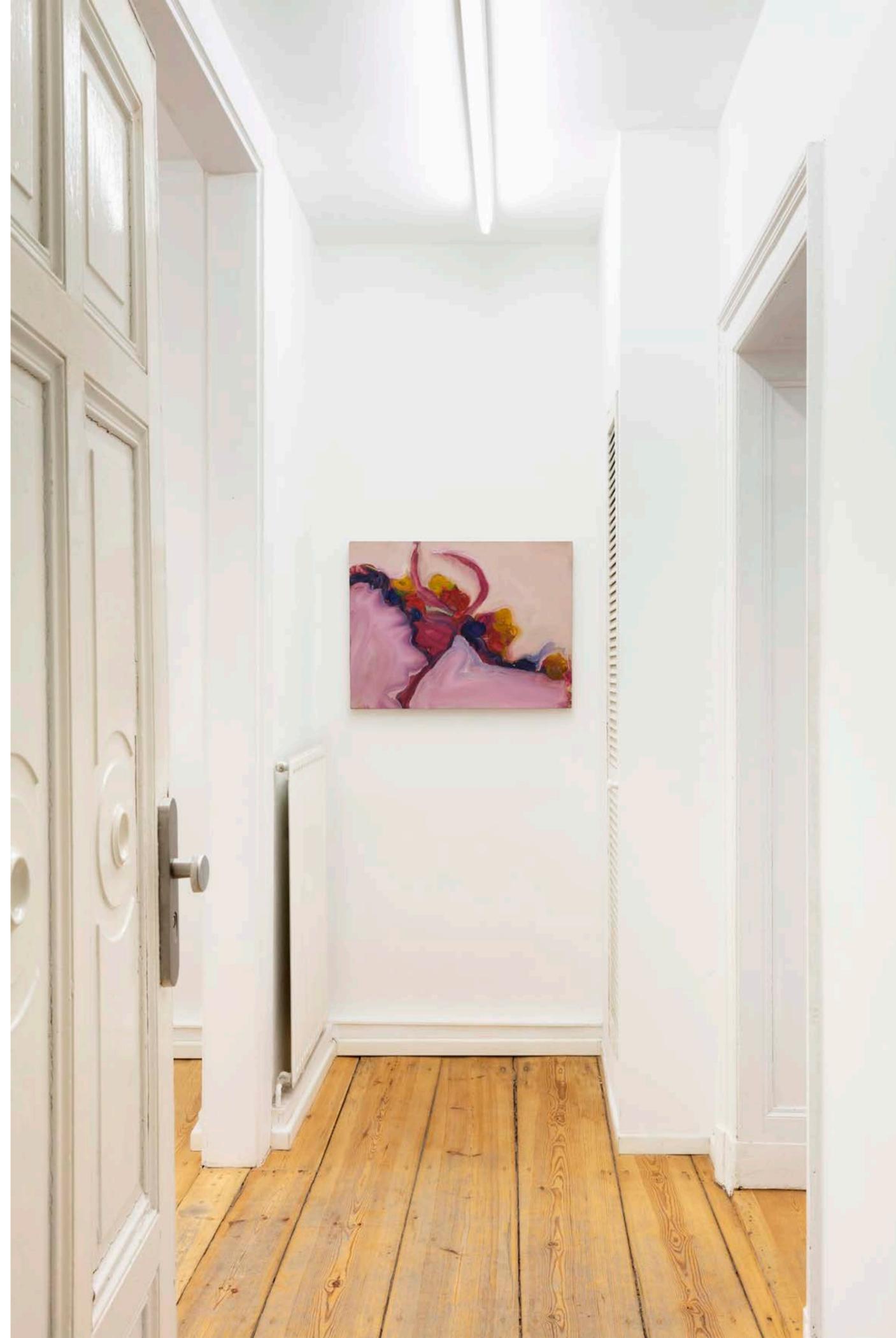
**I DECIDED TO DRAW  
BIGGER HANDS**

**Alije Vokshi**  
***I Decided to Draw Bigger Hands***  
**ChertLüdde Showroom, Berlin**  
**6 March – 17 April 2021**

ChertLüdde is thrilled to present a solo exhibition on the work of Alije Vokshi. Alije Vokshi was born in Prishtina, Kosovo in 1945. She studied painting at the Academy of Figurative Arts in Belgrade, Serbia, becoming the first academically trained woman painter in Kosovo in 1968. In a sociopolitical context where few women had the opportunity to pursue higher education, especially in the arts, Vokshi became a trailblazer within Kosovo's art scene. Regardless of the expectations to perform the conventional role of a woman in the society, Vokshi pushed for an equal precedence of her artistic practice. Dedicated to further forge her career as a painter in a male dominated scene, in 1981 she moved to Paris for a year to attend a specialization program at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, subsequently moving back to Belgrade to obtain her masters degree. Steeped in a patriarchal art system which marginalized women, Vokshi is an example of perseverance and one of the most prolific artists of her time.

The exhibition will include a series of Expressionist portraits, her most renowned works which sought to depict emotions and distinct features of her sitters, who were often family members or strangers whose appearance captivated her. Vokshi's portraits are dominated by shades of brown, black, white and pale red— colors drawn from traditional Albanian clothes in the Dukagjini region where she grew up. Other works include a series of abstract drawings and paintings, which were produced partly during the unfolding of the Kosovo-Serbia conflict. The stylistic transition demonstrated in the exhibition, from figurative expressionism to abstract, coincided with the development of the terrifying war that the country was undergoing. During that period she created a body of works characterized by darker colors, in homage to the people who lost their lives in the Recak massacre in January, 1999. The body of works produced in the post war context incorporate strikingly brighter colors and abstract figures in motion.

*I Decided to Draw Bigger Hands*, marks the first solo show outside of Kosovo dedicated to her remarkable work. The title is a reference to Vokshi's assertion about her mother's portrait included in this exhibition, in which she distinguishes the disproportionately bigger hands as a signifier of hard work and diligence. This exhibition aims to recognize the progressive figure of Alije Vokshi by highlighting the genuinely avant-garde aspects of her work and life. The show is developed in close collaboration with Alije Vokshi's family, and Prishtina/New York based curator Hana Halilaj.





*Zgjimi / Awakening, 2005-2007*  
Oil on canvas  
60 × 80 cm  
AV/P 7861



left:  
*Portret / Portrait*, 2000-2013  
Ink on paper  
AV/D 8063

center:  
*Dy Portrete / Two Portraits*,  
2000-2013  
Ink on paper  
AV/D 7891

right:  
*Portret / Portrait*, 2000-2013  
Ink on paper  
AV/D 7892





*Nëna e artistes / The artist's mother, 1995*  
Oil on canvas  
130 × 110 cm  
AV 7846



*Lēvizjet / Movements*, 1980s  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 140 cm  
AV 7816



*Dy Portrete / Two portraits*, 2005-2007  
Oil on canvas  
70 × 100 cm  
AV/P 7859



*Portret i Visares (vajza e artistes) /*  
*Portrait of Visare (daughter of the artist), 1986-1988*  
Oil on canvas  
90 x 70 cm  
AV 7854



left:  
*Natyrë e qetë / Still Life*, 1980s  
Oil on canvas  
100 × 130 cm  
AV/P 7841



right:  
*Natyrë e qetë / Still Life*, 1980s  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 140 cm  
AV 7815



left:  
*Natyrë I / Nature I*, 2007  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 120 cm  
AV 7821

right:  
*Natyrë II / Nature II*, 2007  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 120 cm  
AV 7819



*Natyre III / Nature III*, 2007  
Oil on canvas  
120 × 140 cm  
AV/P 7845

# SELECTED BIBIOGRAPHY

## FRIEZE

### Artists' Artists: Part Three

Petrit Halilaj, Brook Andrew, Guendalina Cerruti, Peter Graham, Mira Schor, Elisa Sighicelli and Sung Tieu select works by some of their favourite artists

IN FRIEZE MASTERS | 19 OCT 20



#### Petrit Halilaj nominates the work of Alije Vokshi

Alije Vokshi, who was born in 1945, was the first woman to have access to an academic painting education in Kosovo. She recalls that her first drawings were realized by sliding her finger along a condensed window. She was always happy when the weather was cold outside so that moisture would form on the glass. These drawings were soon erased by the shifting temperature, marking the inevitable passing of time; calling to mind all of the traces that are lost, all of the artistic practices that are actively neglected or simply ignored by the dominant history of art. Most of these lost traces belonged to female artists. Growing up painting and playing basketball – very unusual activities for a woman in Kosovo at the time – Vokshi struggled to affirm her art and vision in a male-dominated society that was not ready to receive her work. Despite the resistance she fought, she ultimately arrived to leave an important trace. Today, her work is well known in Kosovo, but she has never been exhibited abroad. Her practice deserves international attention.

*Petrit Halilaj is an artist who lives between Germany, Kosovo and Italy. His solo exhibition at Retiro Park, Palacio de Cristal, Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain runs until 28 February 2021; his solo show at Tate St Ives, St Ives, UK will open in Spring, 2021.*

These documents and ephemera are a small selection of exhibition catalogues, monographs and articles written about the work and life of Alije Vokshi. They do not wholly delineate her experiences and works produced but are particularly important in offering a better understanding of the conditions of production, and context when she was actively engaged in work.



### Alije Vokshi's paintings re-discovered

by Rina Krasniqi

24/02/2018



# VIDEOS INTERVIEWS



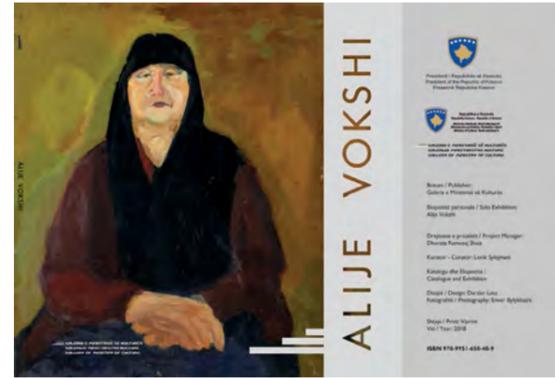
[Watch Online](#)



[Watch Online](#)

[Retrospective: Alije Vokshi, \(Gallery of the Ministry of Culture, Kosovo, 2018\) Exhibition catalogue.](#)

This exhibition catalogue was published in conjunction with the retrospective of Alije Vokshi in 2008 at the Gallery of the Ministry of Culture in Prishtina, Kosovo. Featured in the catalogue are also text contributions by the curator of the exhibition Lorik Sylejmani with an essay titled *Aunt*; a review of Vokshi's thesis exhibition during her graduate studies in Belgrade by Radenko Mišević; an essay by editor of Radio Kosovo Flora Durimishi, titled *Alije Vokshi, the Woman who Brought Emancipation and Increased the Importance of Art and Painting in Kosovo* and the article *Time in the Portrait of Kosovo's First Woman Painter* written by the journalist Shaban Maxharraj. The catalogue offers insights on the social context in which Vokshi's formation as an artist took place, along with a portrait of her life and career through personal meetings and interviews which the authors had the chance to conduct. Providing information on the period of Vokshi's studies in Belgrade, to subsequent developments in the post war context, this catalogue contributed to extending the scholarship around her impact as a pioneer in painting practices in Kosovo. The works included range from 1960, when she started her career, to the latest works realized in the last ten years.



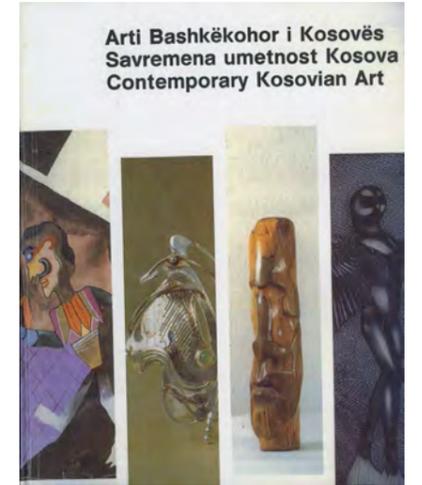
[Kosovo Spring Salon I, \(Association of Figurative Artists of Kosovo, 1974\), Exhibition catalogue.](#)

Kosovo Spring Salon I was a group exhibition organized annually by the Association of the Figurative Artists of Kosovo. The exhibitions were not thematic; they rather intended to give visibility and more space to individual artists both emerging and established, working with various mediums such as painting, sculpture and graphic design. This exhibition catalogue that accompanied the edition of 1974 includes, among others, an introduction written by the artist Nehbi Muriqi. Muriqi asserts that the Kosovo Spring Salon is a reflection on accomplishments achieved in the realm of figurative arts, and that in the future it will become more traditional and serve as an incentive for motivating artists to choose a career in the arts. Alije Vokshi was one of the participants of the catalogue included here.



[Contemporary Kosovian Art, Catalogue, Art Gallery Prishtina, 1988](#)

*Contemporary Kosovian Art* is a seminal publication about the history of arts in Kosovo within the Yugoslav context. This monograph traces the most important developments in the arts ranging from 1945 to 1988. The introduction written by the art historian Vlado Bužančić offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the practices and values of Kosovian art and artists within the Yugoslav context. In his text, Bužančić acknowledges the lack of institutional development, literature, and art criticism as a hindrance to art production. Other texts examine specific mediums prevalent in Kosovo including painting, graphic design and applied art. Each section respectively notes some of the most influential artists that shaped the art scene at the time the monograph was published. The edition shown in the gallery has a radical intervention in the essay *Painting* written by the artist Rexhep Goçi. In his text Goçi gives a history of painting in Kosovo and emphasizes several (male) painters that he considered the most distinguished. Alije Vokshi, a preeminent artist by then with many solo and group exhibitions, is mentioned in the text along with other younger artists who haven't yet made an impact in the scene. Her daughter Arta made an amendment prefacing the text, condemning the positioning and undermining of Vokshi's work and including a printed page of Vokshi's biography. While this monograph is one of the most comprehensive publications of Kosovian art history until 1988, it also speaks to a quintessential case of women's marginalization in the scene during this period.



[Të Hequrat e Guximshme dhe të Sigurta "The Hardy and Courageous Experiences," Fejz Drançolli, Rilindja, 1976.](#)

This article is a review on the solo exhibition of a review of Alije Vokshi's solo exhibition at the hall of the National Theater of Kosovo. The article was published on March 14, 1976, a few days after the opening of the show. It notes the unique and distinct features of Alije as an artist, particularly her distinctive way of materializing her experiences and perspectives through brush strokes and colors on canvas. Out of 16 works included in the exhibition, he highlights: *Figures in Space*, *Figures in a free space*, *The Space Composed of Squares*, *Landscape I*, *Nature II*, *Still Life with Apples*, and the portrait titled *Woman that Rests*.



[Kolorit i Fisnikëruar](#)  
[Refined Colors, n.a., n.d.](#)

Article review regarding Alije Vokshi's solo exhibition at the hall of the National Theater of Kosovo. The date and the author of the article are unknown as it is an image of a cut paper from the actual newspaper. While it doesn't mention the date when the exhibition was opened, nor its title, the author notes that Vokshi seems to be a young emerging artist, whose apparent experimentation and switching between artistic styles reveals her inexperience yet still demonstrates artistic potential.

[Alije Vokshi, Article, 1970](#)



[Alije Vokshi](#)

Born in 1945 in Prishtinë, Kosovo. Lives and works in Prishtinë, Kosovo.

**Education**

1968

Academy of Fine Arts, Belgrade Serbia, B.A.

1978

Académie de la Grande Chaumière , Paris, France, Specialized Program

1981

Academy of Fine Arts, Belgrade Serbia, M.A.

1974-2015

Professor, Academy of Fine Arts, University of Prishtina, Kosovo

**Grants - Prizes**

1968

Member of Association of Figurative Artists of Kosovo ( AFAK )

1964

Prize for drawing

1965

Prize for Painting

1973

Scholarship for a study travel visit, Moša Pijade Fond

**Solo Exhibitions**

1970

Solo exhibition at the Hall of the National Theatre, Prishtinë

Solo Exhibition, Obiliq

1976

Solo Exhibition in the Hall of National Theatre, Prishtinë

1981

Thesis exhibition at the Gallery of Faculty of Arts, curated by her professor Radenko Mišević, Belgrade

1984

Solo Exhibition, Gjilan

1986

Solo exhibition at the Hall of the National Theatre, Prishtinë

1988

Solo exhibition at the Hall of the National Theatre, Prishtinë

2007

Solo Exhibition at the National Gallery of Kosovo, Prishtinë

2018

Retrospective , curated by Lorik Sylejmani, Gallery of Ministry of Culture, Prishtinë

### **Group Exhibitions**

1969

Autumn Exhibition of AFAK , Prishtinë

1974

Kosovo Spring Salon I, Prishtinë

1975

Contemporary Arts of Kosovo, Podgorica & Cetinje, Montenegro

2008

International Biennale of Drawing, Prishtinë

2008

*Creative Women*, Gjilan

2009

*January Flame*, Gjilan

2017

*Imago Mundi*, Benetton Collection, Kulturni Centar, Sarajevo

2018

*Drawing Now*, curated by Ismet Jonuzi, National Gallery of Kosovo, Prishtinë

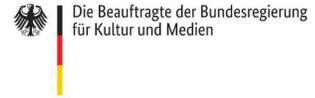
2019

*Burrneshat*, National Gallery of Kosovo, Prishtinë

2021

*Ambitions*, curated by Eremirë Krasniqi and Adela Demetja, National Gallery of Arts, Tiranë

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