

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

# The Civic And Artistic Language Of Contemporary Caricature: Mahmudjon Eshonqulov's Contribution To Global Satirical Graphics

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## Abstract

This article examines the creative legacy of contemporary Uzbek caricature artist Mahmudjon Eshonqulov, whose works have gained wide international recognition through participation in prestigious exhibitions, festivals, and competitions. The study explores the artistic, social, and professional factors that have shaped the artist's success on the global stage. Particular attention is paid to the narrative completeness of his caricatures, his minimalist visual language, and his ability to address complex social and political issues through satire and humor. The article also analyzes the role of international artistic exchange in the formation of Eshonqulov's thematic range and stylistic maturity, as well as his contribution to the development of caricature as a form of civic expression. It is argued that his works transcend national boundaries, engaging universal human concerns and reflecting the ethical responsibility of the artist in contemporary society. Through this analysis, the article highlights caricature as an important medium of social critique, cultural dialogue, and democratic consciousness.

## KEY WORDS

Mahmudjon Eshonqulov; caricature art; satirical graphics; visual satire; contemporary art; international exhibitions; civic expression; social criticism; minimalist graphics.

## INTRODUCTION

Mahmudjon Eshonqulov, was born on January 21, 1958, in the Telov village of Beshariq district, Fergana region. In 1994, he studied at the Department of Art Graphics of Tashkent Pedagogical University. From 1996 to 1997, he worked as an artist for the satirical magazine Mushtum. For a period of time, he lived and worked in Tashkent. Currently, he lives in his native region, engaging actively in creative work. He has a family and four children. His first caricature was published in the satirical magazine Mushtum in the early 1990s. Six years later, he became a laureate of an international caricature competition held in Turkey. Mahmudjon Eshonqulov's creative

achievements have been highly appreciated by the state and government, and in 2008 he was awarded the Order of Friendship.

Mahmudjon Eshonqulov has been included in the list of "100 Great Masters of Caricature Art." He is a member of the Union of Artistic Creators of Uzbekistan and the International Union of Caricature Artists (UWC), as well as the official representative of the UWC in Uzbekistan. He has organized more than twenty solo caricature exhibitions, both internationally and nationally. His works are preserved in numerous foreign museums of humor and caricature. He has

won and received awards at competitions held in Mahmudjon Eron, Serbia, the United States, Bulgaria, Turkey, Poland, Argentina, Nepal, Israel, and other countries. Notably, he has served as a member of the honorary jury at several international competitions, including the 2nd China International Caricature Competition (2003), the International Iran Caricature Festival (2012), the International Haifa Caricature Competition in Israel (2014), the International Malaysia Caricature Competition (2020), the Caricature Gallery in Macedonia (2024), and the International Boyabat Caricature Competition in Turkey (2024). Participation in international competitions has significantly shaped the artist's style and thematic range. He creates satirical works on diverse subjects, ranging from social issues to global international themes. One of the most remarkable aspects of Mahmudjon Eshonqulov's creativity is that each of his caricatures represents a complete narrative.

Caricature art is rapidly developing worldwide, with numerous competitions and exhibitions being held regularly in many countries. Mahmudjon strives to participate in almost all of them, and this dedication yields tangible results. He has acquired extensive experience, and numerous new works have emerged as a result of his creative activity. His successful pieces consistently attract attention in competitions, receiving recognition and awards, and he is even deemed suitable to serve as a juror in prestigious contests. Winners and participants of these competitions often receive catalogs compiling the caricatures of the artists, which are distributed free of charge. These resources serve as significant sources of



motivation, opportunities for gaining experience, and valuable materials for study and learning. At 68 years of age, Mahmudjon Eshonqulov has taken part in more than 1,000 national and international exhibitions, festivals, and competitions, achieving victory in 350 of them.

In Tashkent, a traditional caricature exhibition is held almost every year on April 1, International Humor Day, and Mahmudjon actively participates in this event, presenting his own solo exhibitions. In Uzbekistan, some individuals and officials tend to view social posters, caricatures, and satire with hostility, and criticism is often poorly received. The capacity for self-critical evaluation is underdeveloped, with many perceiving critique as a personal attack or insult, in contrast to practices in more developed, democratic countries.

It is hoped that, if a supportive environment for this field were created in Uzbekistan similar to that found abroad—through the organization of competitions and the expansion of satirical publications—this art form would develop significantly. Furthermore, the rapid democratization of society, a fair and constructive attitude toward justified criticism within governance structures, and the elimination of such social ills as bureaucracy, corruption, nepotism, abuse of authority, self-interest, indifference to citizens' appeals, apathy, and arrogance would pave the way for many positive transformations in society.

The broader use of caricatures in local mass media would contribute to social renewal, democratic development, and the improvement of public morale.

Unlike other artists, a caricaturist possesses a heightened ability to promptly recognize humorous and satirical situations. Mahmudjon's graphic work reflects a minimalist style that employs minimal visual elements to communicate multiple layers of meaning with clarity and precision. His visual solutions are original and engaging, as familiar subjects—whether local or global—are rendered from an alternative perspective through the artist's skill.

In recent years, pressing global political events, unrest, and tragedies have prompted Mahmudjon, as a caricaturist, to clearly articulate his civic position and express his perspective. Moving beyond a focus on local themes, he has entered a universal artistic sphere, and his simple, sincere satirical images are readily understood and warmly received by audiences regardless of nationality. It is precisely this civic stance that has enabled him to address serious and painful

issues of contemporary life and to challenge social vices through artistic “resistance.” Human imperfection and societal flaws, as well as the deficiencies that have led to geopolitical, moral, and ecological crises, do not allow the artist’s civic conscience to remain silent; instead, they compel vigilance and call for improvement.

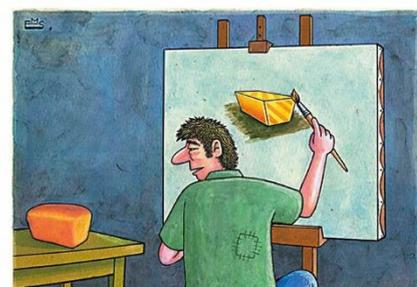
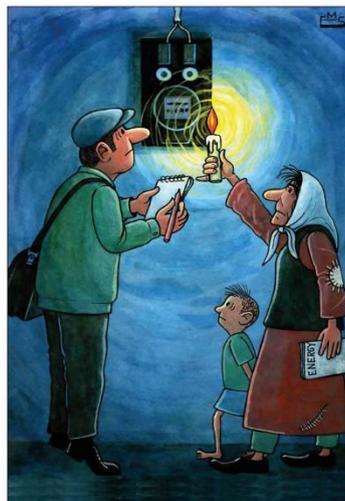
Mahmudjon’s works are characterized by a distinctive use of satire and humor. At this point, it is important to clarify these concepts, which are often confused or misinterpreted. In caricature, alongside satire, there is also a humorous approach that is not directed at a specific individual or group; rather, it consists of lighthearted images intended to uplift the mood and evoke laughter and smiles. Satire addresses more serious themes, often concealing a poignant social concern beneath humor. In other words, it simultaneously provokes laughter and invites reflection on underlying suffering. Satire addresses more serious themes, often concealing a poignant social concern beneath humor. In other words, it simultaneously provokes laughter and invites reflection on underlying suffering. Another related genre is caricature (portrait caricature), which may be described as a form of “friendly humor.” It focuses on humorous visual representations of

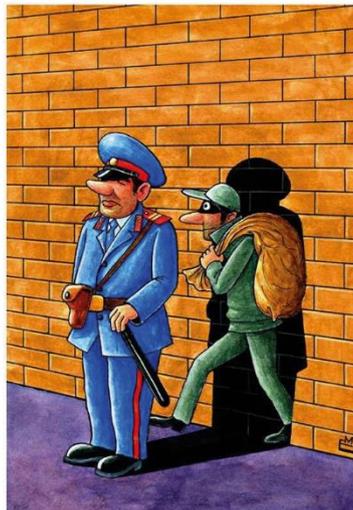
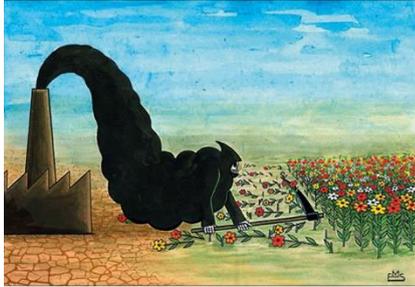
specific individuals or groups. In both social poster design and caricature, producing an engaging and original work requires the artist to discover a novel visual solution that has not been previously explored, a process that represents the most challenging yet most rewarding aspect of creative practice. Mahmudjon demonstrates a well-developed ability to observe life and the creative work of his peers, to identify visual solutions that align with his ideas, and to translate these effectively into imagery. These qualities may be regarded as key foundations of his creative achievements. In his recent works, Mahmudjon has integrated modern digital tools, including Adobe Photoshop, and actively uses the Internet and contemporary communication technologies to enrich his art and maintain ongoing collaboration with international colleagues.

The people of Fergana, renowned for their simplicity, honesty, openness, and cheerful disposition, have long shown a natural inclination toward curiosity and humor. It is therefore unsurprising that these qualities are reflected in Mahmudjon’s artistic sensibilities. We are proud to have such a contemporary compatriot and wish him continued good health and outstanding success in his future work.

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