

# An Abstract Expressionist: A Study of Kurt Vonnegut's *Bluebeard*

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### Abstract

*The novel, Bluebeard (1987) presents a dialogue between abstract and representational painting, pointing out both the value and shortcomings of each school. It may end by imagining a type of art in which the usual boundaries separating the real and the artificial fall away; an art that is able to capture the complexity, sorrow, and beauty of life itself. On the other hand, it focuses on human's cruelty to human. However, the novel also shows that even in the midst of war and death and sorrow the innate human impulse is a creative one. The novel discovers the human desire to create as it investigates the nature of new art itself. Vonnegut was mostly inspired by the grotesque prices paid for works of art during the past century. He thought not only of the mud-pies of art, but of children's games as well.*

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The novel, *Bluebeard* (1987) presents a dialogue between abstract and representational painting, pointing out both the value and shortcomings of each school. It may end by imagining a type of art in which the usual boundaries separating the real and the artificial fall away; an art that is able to capture the complexity, sorrow, and beauty of life itself. On the other hand, it focuses on human's cruelty to human. However, the novel also shows that even in the midst of war and death and sorrow the innate human impulse is a creative one.

The novel discovers the human desire to create as it investigates the nature of new art itself. Vonnegut was mostly inspired by the grotesque prices paid for works of art during the past century. He thought not only of the mud-pies of art, but of children's games as well. Vonnegut writes: "It is not to be taken as a responsible history of the Abstract Expressionist school of painting, the first major art movement to originate in the United States of America: It is a history of nothing but my own idiosyncratic responses to this or that" (*Bluebeard* 6). In "Apocalyptic Grumbling: Postmodern Righteousness in the Late Novels" Todd F. Davis writes:

*In Bluebeard Vonnegut returns to the problem of how we treat one another on a daily basis in the contemporary world and what that treatment might suggest for our future on this planet ... And he faithfully and adamantly proclaims it should entail caring for all humankind ... Of course; Vonnegut is no politician or religious leader. The only tools he has to offer in this postmodern crusade to alter our course with destruction are his words, and, unlike Auden and other apolitical modernists, Vonnegut hopes to make something happen with his art. (118; ch. 3)*

*Bluebeard* is the memoirs of abstract expressionist artist Karabekian, he writes his account in 1987, at the age of seventy one, at the urging of Circe Berman, a loud, voluptuous widow he recently met on the beach and who invited herself to live as a guest in his beachfront home in East Hampton, Long Island.

Karabekian's beloved second wife, Edith Taft Karabekian, died two years previously, and since that time, Karabekian has been lonely, rattling around his mansion with only the company of his cook, Allison White, her fifteen year-old daughter, Celeste, and his novelist friend, Paul Slazinger, who spends most of his time at Karabekian's home. Mrs. Berman, though opinionated, loud, and dominant, also breathes fresh life into Karabekian's lonely existence, and despite their differences, the two characters manage to form a concrete friendship.

As Karabekian relates his life story, the novel makes frequent jumps back and forth in time between his past experiences as a boy and young man and his current life with Circe Berman. In "Apocalyptic Grumbling: Postmodern Righteousness in the Late Novels" Todd F. Davis writes:

*Since Bluebeard is essentially the spiritual and artistic autobiography of Rabo, we come to view the world and its sordid history through his one good eye. Moreover, in the process, we also come to understand the despair of this one-time abstract expressionist whose lifework has been destroyed because the paint he used, Sateen Dura-Luxe, despite its claim to "outlast the smile on the 'Mona Lisa,'" disintegrates completely: Left with nothing but empty canvases and long-dead friends and lovers, Rabo retreats from the world only to be rescued again and again by the kindness of women. (119; ch. 3)*

Rabo Karabekian's existence begins, like the twentieth century life itself, in atrocity. His childhood is an unpleasant one. He is the son of a bitter, distant father who is trapped by his memories of the friends and relatives he lost in the carnage, and who therefore has given up on life itself: 'As for real and famous persons he mentions: he has them do nothing that they did not actually do when tested on this proving ground' (Bluebeard 6).

While Karabekian's mother, who actually has a worse experience during the Turkish brutality, having to play dead among the corpses, remains fairly optimistic, she dies of a tetanus infection when he is only twelve years old, leaving him like motherless child. "War is hell, all right, but the only way a boy can become a man is in a shoot-out of some kind, preferably, but by no means necessarily, on a battlefield" (Bluebeard 100). And all the

missing mothers in Vonnegut's fiction may serve as a testament to the suicide of Vonnegut's own mother when he was twenty one years old.

The novel follows Karabekian's associations with a series of women, beginning with Marilee Kemp and ending with Circe Berman. As the first of Vonnegut's novels to explicitly incorporate gender disparity as a major theme, his relationships with the various women in his life suggest a longing for nurturing and balance.

Marilee Kemp is the first substitute mother figure with whom Karabekian interacts. When he, at Marilee's urging, moves to New York City to become Dan Gregory's apprentice, he describes the event as a rebirth: 'Therefore he has gone to New York to be born once more' (Bluebeard 100). Like many modern day Americans:

*Nowhere has the number zero been more of philosophical value than in the United States. Then, it is easy for Karabekian to start a new life. And after ten minutes, he was there in the Grand Central Station, wearing the first suit he had ever owned, and carrying a cardboard valise and a portfolio of his very best drawings. "Who was there to welcome this beguiling Armenian infant? Not a soul, not a soul". (Bluebeard 101)*

Karabekian has made a great Dan Gregory illustration for a tale about a yokel finding himself. All alone in a big city, he has never seen before. He has got his suit through the mail from Sears, Roebuck, and nobody could draw cheap, mail-order clothes like Dan Gregory. His shoes were old and cracked, but he has shined them and put new rubber heels on them himself; he has also threaded in new laces, but one of those had broken somewhere around Kansas City.

As "a truly observant person Karabekian would have noticed the clumsy splice in the broken shoelaces; nobody could describe the economic and spiritual condition of a character in terms of his shoes like Dan Gregory" (Bluebeard 102). Karabekian's face, however, was wrong for a yokel in a magazine story back then. Gregory would have had to make him an Anglo-Saxon.

Part of Karabekian's rebirth in New York involves the loss of his earlier innocence. While in San Ignacio, he can able to believe that Dan Gregory

himself admired his artistic endeavors and wants him as an apprentice. In New York, however, he must realize that Dan Gregory cares nothing about him, he says: “Nobody could paint grime like Dan Gregory” (Bluebeard 103), and that it is really Marilee Kemp who has arranged the trip. Karabekian will also witness. In “Bluebeard: Redemption and the Unwavering Light” Lawrence R. Broer writes:

*While the “new me” affirmed in Bluebeard is a natural progression in the spiritual evolution of Kurt Vonnegut and his renescent artist-hero, Rabo Karabekian represents a quantum leap in psychic healing. Conceived in the grand epiphanies light of Rabo’s painting in Breakfast of Champions, Wilbur Swain, Walter Starbuck, Rudy Waltz, and Leon Trout survive their defeatist selves to work out “aesthetics of renewal”-the existential possibilities of authoring one’s identity in life as in art. But the retrospective visions of these emergent artists-of ghosts laid to rest and emotional recovery-is more tentative than triumphant. (162; ch.12, pt. II)*

Dan Gregory’s cruelty to Marilee, though it will take him several more years, ‘he wouldn’t get the whole story until he visited Marilee in Florence after the war’ (Bluebeard 106), to realize that Gregory had thrown Marilee down the stairs for sending some of his precious art supplies to the young Karabekian in San Ignacio. Only the guilt over Marilee’s broken bones causes Gregory to agree to accept Karabekian as his apprentice.

In fact, when Gregory talks about Marilee, Karabekian says: “Women will never take the blame for anything,” he said. “No matter what troubles they bring on themselves, they won’t rest until they’ve found some man to blame for it” (Bluebeard 195).

And in his attack against women, Gregory argues that men and women have separate, distinct roles. He tells Karabekian that: “They have got their jobs and we have got ours ... Never has anything to do with a woman who would rather be a man ... women who had amounted to anything in any field but domesticity” (Bluebeard 196). While the young Karabekian politely agrees with Dan Gregory at this point, he later criticizes Gregory’s sexist thinking.

Once again in New York, Karabekian is also introduced to the basic artistic debate of the novel. Dan Gregory is an entirely realistic artist, an

illustrator, whose ability to mimic the real world in his paintings is the root of his fame. In fact, Gregory says “anytime anyone has anything good to say about so-called modern art” (Bluebeard 190).

Gregory also associates modern art with strictly democratic principles, pointing out to the young Karabekian that “the fact that many people are now taking it seriously proves to me that the world has gone mad” (Bluebeard 190). Gregory has an exaggerated view of the importance of artists in the world, seeing them as gods on earth: He says: “Maybe the most admirable thing about the Abstract Expressionist painters, since so much senseless bloodshed had been caused by cockeyed history lessons, was their refusal to serve on such a court” (Bluebeard 194).

The matured Karabekian says that “this rifle was designed to be used by Americans defending their homes and honour against wicked enemies” (Bluebeard 150). Somewhat as a reaction to the fascist and cruel Dan Gregory, Karabekian rejects realistic art completely, blaming people like Gregory for causing a great deal of ridiculous chaos.

Marilee and Karabekian, against Gregory’s express orders, begin to visit the Museum of Modern Art together. This is where Karabekian’s later appreciation of abstract expressionism develops. While he believes that Gregory’s delusions of moral grandeur cause bloodshed and suffering, abstract art, Karabekian explains, refuses to present a moral stance on the world. He tells “that the rifle was evil and the body was good” (Bluebeard 193).

Soon after, in Florence, we see that Marilee Kemp agrees with Karabekian’s views about the dangers of realistic art. She tells Karabekian that she had considered hiring women and children to paint the blank spaces on her room with their:

*Unexpected reunion was a stroke of luck for her, since she thought I might have brought the solution to an interior decorating problem which had been nagging at her for years, namely: what sort of pictures, if any, should she put on the inane blanks between the columns of her rotunda? “I want to leave some sort of mark on this place while I have it”. (Bluebeard 323)*

In Bluebeard, both Marilee’s and Karabekian’s dedication to modern art suggests a rejection of the

pretensions to morality by realistic artists like Dan Gregory. In “Abstract Idealism: Deadeye Dick and Bluebeard” Robert T. Tally Writes:

*Vonnegut was not always so sure about the role of the writer. In a 1969 speech, Vonnegut says that he had been “perplexed as to what the usefulness of any of the arts might be, with the possible exception of interior decoration. The most positive notion I could come up with was what I call the canary-in-the-coal-mine theory of the arts. This theory argues that artists are useful to society because they are so sensitive. They are supersensitive. They keel over like canaries in coal mines filled with poison gas, long before more robust types realize that any danger is there. (124-5; ch. 8)*

Gregory’s belief in his own godlike stature is driven home when he catches his mistress and his apprentice coming out of the museum they have been forbidden to enter: He “spoke only of gratitude, loyalty and modern art” (Bluebeard 224). Gregory behaves here like God castigating Adam and Eve for eating the apple in Eden. The parallel is made especially clear when Karabekian describes his and Marilee’s walk home later that afternoon. He says: Sex was the cause of our excitement: youth versus age, wealth and power versus physical attractiveness, stolen moments of forbidden fun and so on” (Bluebeard 224).

However, in their revolt against the tyrannical Gregory, Karabekian and Marilee create a new Eden of their own making. Karabekian says that they “were going to make love that afternoon. I now think we were out of control, and would have made love whether we had run into him or not” (Bluebeard 226). The two make love for three hours, Marilee initiating the not yet twenty-year-old Karabekian into the mysteries and pleasures of sexual ecstasy.

In fact, Karabekian connects this tedious sexual activity with abstract expressionist painting when he says: “I have indicated that there would have been no lovemaking if it had not been for the confrontation” (Bluebeard 226). Soon after this, Karabekian’s artist friend Terry Kitchen describes those three hours has no manifestation, a moment in which human beings are cheerfully aimless in the universe. While realistic art and storytelling offer moments of epiphany, in which divine beings reveal themselves or spiritual

insight is achieved, abstract art eschews such moments, refusing to be about anything at all, and thus releasing people from the burdens of spiritual insight. As Robert T. Tally Writes:

*Karabekian’s narrative detail extends to fictional characters as well, which allows for further speculation. The authenticity of each uniform is homage to the hyperrealism of his mentor Dan Gregory, but the utterly human biographies of all, with their pain, fear, hopes, and so on, are what make the painting so redemptive . . . for Karabekian and for Vonnegut. (127; ch. 8)*

Any remaining inexperience, Karabekian carries from his childhood disappears completely when Marilee informs him that their lovemaking does not mean that the two will move into the future together, he smiles heroically and hold the hands. Marilee, abused horribly by Gregory, nevertheless realizes that the great illustrator is her meal ticket and that she must return to him.

The women who nurture Karabekian throughout the book are decidedly practical and non-romantic. Telling Karabekian that he is yet a quiet kid, Marilee parts ways with him, a parting that will set the stage for the next key relationship in Karabekian’s life, his marriage to his first wife, Dorothy. His longing for nurturing is evident when he meets Dorothy while he is undergoing cosmetic surgery for the eye injury he received during World War II. Dorothy is his nurse at the army hospital at Fort Benjamin Harrison.

While Marilee introduced Karabekian to the artistic world of New York City, Dorothy tries very hard to remove him from that world. Dorothy is a sensible woman, concerned that Karabekian should provide for his growing family. Thus, the two make plans that Karabekian gives up his artistic endeavours and become a businessman. If his dream with Marilee was to become a great painter, his dream with Dorothy is to be a great father.

However, Karabekian, as he is writing his memoirs, sees himself as a failure in both of these dreams. He neglects Dorothy and his young sons, preferring instead to drink in bars with a group of abstract expressionist artists he has met in New York City. When, in later life, his cook, Allison White, berates him for not treating her as a full-fledged human being, for, in fact, not even knowing

her name, he is reminded of his relationship with Dorothy: Once Dorothy says: "I just want to be a human being and not a nobody and a nothing, if I have to live under the same roof with a man or any man" (Bluebeard 183).

Karabekian's failings as a husband and father cause him much sorrow: "There was Hell to pay when he got home from Florence. The good and brave Dorothy and both boys had a brand new kind of influenza, yet another post-war miracle" (Bluebeard 327). Before Karabekian can become the great artist he had always dreamed of being, he must first learn to love and appreciate women.

This process begins when Karabekian again meets Marilee Kemp in Florence, Italy. She reborn as the Contessa Portomagiorre, she has transformed herself from a victim, a woman abused by her lover, Dan Gregory, into an outspoken feminist. Offended by the crude remarks Karabekian makes on the telephone, Marilee, when she sees Karabekian in person, rages against men, against war, and against the effects of both on women. She tells Karabekian that "the whole point of war is to put women everywhere in that condition" (Bluebeard 303).

While Karabekian has received medals for saving fellow soldiers and for the injuries he suffered, women like Marilee's servant Lucrezia; "the woman who let you in, lost a leg along with her eye" (Bluebeard 304), after stepping on a mine while trying to do a kind act for a neighbour, received nothing.

Marilee, in fact, has turned her palazzo into a kind of home for women injured and abused during the war. "We do not know what army was responsible. We do know the sex. Only a male would design and bury a device that ingenious. Before you leave, maybe you can persuade Lucrezia to show you all the medals she won" (Bluebeard 304). For the first time, he must examine his own status as a privileged member of society as well as his own earlier attitudes about women and their roles.

When Marilee meticulously mortifies him, 'he changes the subject from war to peace. He tells Marilee that he returns to the arts after a long hiatus, and had, to his own astonishment, become a creator of serious paintings which would make Dan Gregory turn over in his hero's grave in Egypt, paintings

such as the world had never seen before' (Bluebeard 324). The two have become good friends again. She appreciates what Karabekian tells her about the new abstract art being produced by him and his friends in New York City, pointing out that this group is doing.

However, the theme of renewal, of rebirth, of starting over, so recurrent throughout the novel, is evoked again when Marilee suggests a name for Karabekian's group of painter friends. Despite her view that the abstract expressionist art expresses the last stage, she proposes that "we should call ourselves the "Genesis Gang" (Bluebeard 324), a name that suggests beginnings, since they are trying to create a new form of non-moral art, of art that is about nothing but itself.

After this meeting with Marilee, Karabekian is able to begin again in a new marriage, this time with the former Edith Taft, a kind, generous woman who does not try to change Karabekian, but allows him to be what he is. Described in Karabekian's autobiography "as privileged as she had been all her life, she cooked with the cook, gardened with the gardener (Bluebeard 18).

Edith allows Karabekian to redeem himself as a husband. His relationship with Edith also allows Karabekian to cope with the great disaster that strikes his abstract paintings having used as bogus of world war wonder, the product is called Sateen Dura-Luxe to paint his canvases, all his pictures are now cracking and peeling, and in fact, disappearing. His paintings are returning to blank canvases.

This phenomenon suggests that Karabekian might be happy in his life, has also started over as a blank canvas. Mrs. Berman still has no respect for his art collection, "although, during the five weeks she has now been in residence, she has seen immensely respectable people from as far away as Switzerland and Japan worship some of them as though the pictures were gods almost" (Bluebeard 292).

However, even amid the seeming Eden Karabekian is able to create with Edith; sorrow inevitably creeps in when she dies unexpectedly of a heart attack twenty years into their marriage. Even great art cannot stop death, cannot freeze moments in time, but the time marches inexorably forward.

In fact, in Bluebeard, Karabekian explains that the greatest works of art are able to depict the

movement of time itself. What limits Dan Gregory as an artist, despite his impressive skill, is that, while his pictures were “Good riddance of bad rubbish. It was rotting your brain because it was about absolutely nothing. Now give the rest of them the old heave-ho” (Bluebeard 228)!

Dan Gregory celebrates only moments frozen in time, lacking. “He stuffed and mounted and varnished and mothproofed supposedly great moments, all of which turn out to be depressing dust-catchers, like a moose head bought at a country auction or a sailfish on the wall of a dentist’s waiting room” (Bluebeard 123).

The essential fact of life, crystallized in his grief for Edith, causes Karabekian to paint his final masterpiece, the huge, elaborate canvas he locks in the potato barn. He tells his friend, the novelist Paul Slazinger, that what he has hidden in “the barn is not the best and is not the worst, although it wouldn’t have to be very good to be the best I ever did, and it would have to be pretty awful to be the worst,” (Bluebeard 269).

The painting is his good-bye to Edith, but Karabekian expects it to be his good-bye to the larger world as well. For two years after Edith’s death, Karabekian himself is like the walking dead, his Long Island mansion a mausoleum.

Unexpectedly, another re-birth is in store for Karabekian. When he meets Circe Berman on the beach, Karabekian’s life, as well as his artistic vision, takes another dramatic turn. Although the two clash, disagreeing about nearly everything, including the role and purpose of art, Karabekian realizes to say: “What is the biggest concession she has made? She no longer mentions the potato barn” (Bluebeard 190). Karabekian feels; ‘he died with Terry Kitchen, and Edith brought him back to life again and he died with dear Edith and Circe Berman brought him back to life again’ (Bluebeard 399).

But perhaps Circe Berman’s most important role in the novel is to guide Karabekian to a newfound appreciation for representational art and the fact that art can, in fact, say something about the contemporary world.

Circe Berman’s views on art provide a necessary balance and corrective to the artistic vision embraced by Karabekian. In the guise of wildly popular

young adult novelist Polly Madison, Circe looks unflinchingly at the problems facing contemporary teenagers, writing smart and realistic books that mean a great deal to ordinary people.

Karabekian, on the other hand, tends to be elitist in his views of art. He often wallows in the past, using his conversations with Celeste, his cook’s fifteen-year old daughter, to bemoan the lack of knowledge he sees in contemporary teens. He belittles the artistic taste of Celeste’s mother, Allison White, by selling the only painting in his collection she really likes a magazine illustration of two black boys and two white boys painted by Dan Gregory. Allison points out that she is uneducated, and that the abstract paintings in Karabekian’s collection simply do not denote everything to her.

The painting by Dan Gregory, though, Allison could appreciate because, “which had priceless ocean views: “We will get out of your way now,” ... “and we don’t care if we never find out what is in the potato barn” (Bluebeard 187). We can see that Karabekian’s artistic conceit is also tied up with the gender superiority often felt by males when Circe replies that she wrote a book called *Kitsch*, and disagreeing with Celeste Mrs. Berman says that: “There was the swish of tires in the gravel driveway ... May be you can’t stand truly serious art: May be you’d better use the back door from now on” (Bluebeard 181).

While Karabekian’s embracing of abstract expressionism is a corrective to the dangerously fascist artistic views of Dan Gregory, Circe Berman teaches Karabekian to revalue representational art. She defends her pictures of little girls on swings by arguing that their value lies in the very fact that they are about something. She says: “I have done my best to understand and respect your pictures,” ... “Why won’t you do the same for mine” (Bluebeard 181)? In “Ten Years More” John Tomedi writes:

*For all this praise of abstract painting, though, much of Bluebeard deals with the advantages of representational and nonrepresentational art. Prying houseguest Berman favours the former, and her challenge to Karabekian’s artistic career results in the illustrative autobiography he pens. As the similarities between Karabekian’s life and experimental style of art develop with Vonnegut’s,*

*Karabekian, in turn, defends Vonnegut's career. Both, of course, have embraced new forms of art following their experiences with the atrocities of the Second World War. Vonnegut is consistent in his usual preoccupations. Karabekian is a guilty man like Starbuck and Campbell and Waltz, among others. Suicides are ubiquitous. Karabekian refers often to the times with his surrogate families, his band of artist-warriors in the camouflage detail in the war, and the artists who founded the new movement in New York City. He is lonely in his old age. (103; ch. 6)*

Practical art, which makes a specific connection to the world, can attempt to change that world for the better. Karabekian himself uses this same defence of the sentimental pictures when three writers from the Soviet Union come to tour his collection. Like Karabekian, the men originally view Mrs. Berman's chromos as sentimental and worthless.

But after Karabekian connects the pictures to the horrors awaiting the little girls, the men are ashamed and leave the house unanimously. And then "they went from picture to picture, bewailing all the pain each girl would go through. Most of this wasn't translated, but I gathered that they were predicting cancer and war and so on" (Bluebeard 166).

Vonnegut says: "I did not have to wait for the neighbors and Celeste's schoolmates to arrive before knowing that it was going to be the most popular painting in my collection" (Bluebeard 396). Although an impossible feat in the real world, Vonnegut has imagined a painting that depicts all of life that is somehow equivalent to life itself. It is a painting that expresses the creative impulse, the impulse to life, as it depicts the moment that:

*It was a post-war miracle that did me in. I had better explain to my young readers, if any, that the Second World War had many of the promised characteristics of Armageddon, a final war between good and evil, so that nothing would do but that it be followed by miracles. (Bluebeard 36)*

Circe Berman finally teaches Karabekian to love himself again. Then he says: "I held my hands in front of my eyes, and I said out loud and with all my heart: 'Thank you, Meat' ... Oh, happy Meat. Oh, happy Soul: Oh, happy Rabo Karabekian" (Bluebeard 401). In "Twilight of the Icons: Hocus

Pocus and Timequake" Robert T. Tally writes:

*Vonnegut-like artist, Bluebeard restores the humanity of one human being, Rabo Karabekian, and offers personal salvation through the exorcism of abstract expression by the ideals of mimetic realism combined with narrative force ... Vonnegut seems to achieve that peaceful resolution, at the level of the species and of the individual, to his lifelong novelistic project of bringing sense to the nonsense of postmodern American life. (148; ch. 10)*

Circe has brought Karabekian back to life, and in finally showing her his painting, Karabekian has offered a new beginning both to Circe Berman and to the world at large. The painting depicts the world poised on the brink of a rebirth, turned over to women, who will now take their chances with it. In "Vonnegut's Melancholy" Kathryn Hume writes:

*Vonnegut's characters face ineluctable pressures exerted against their core identity. Because they cannot control their portion of the world even in everyday ways, Vonnegut characters tend to feel inadequate. The few who do not suffer from inferiority complexes—Senator Rosewater, for instance—are as close as Vonnegut comes to giving us villains. The senator's son, Eliot Rosewater, is the patron saint of people who feel worthless. Rabo Karabekian of Bluebeard feels inadequate to his calling, for his soul and his unfashionable artistic abilities combine to deprive him of a viable artistic vision. (Bloom's 5-6).*

The abstract painting suggests great sorrow, the suffering caused by World War II as well as Karabekian's grief over Edith's death, yet it is also a testament to the human will to survive. As Karabekian said to Circe Berman earlier, when she accused him of having survivor's syndrome: "So everybody alive must have the Survivor's Syndrome. It's that or death. I am so damn sick of people telling me proudly that they are survivors" (Bluebeard 53)! Therefore, we cannot say that Vonnegut believes Karabekian should completely reject abstract expressionism in favour of realistic art. Both types of art, Vonnegut seems to argue, can coexist alongside each other. Karabekian's extremely large painting that he has locked in the barn all these years.

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