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Pirosmani

Russian director Georgi Shengelaya's film is an impressionistic look at the life of expressionist Georgian



"Pirosmani": the film is the artist.

painter Niko Pirosmani. The self-taught artist paints the walls of Tiflis's inns for board and drink, embarks briefly on a disastrous business venture and has one fleeting moment of ill-fated fame before sinking into alcoholism, loneliness and poverty. Avtandil Varazi is excellent as Pirosmani, but it is the film itself that is the artist here. Shengelaya deliberately poses his people en tableau in a momentary portrait at the beginning of each scene so that the telling of the story also becomes an artistic adventure. There are settings reminiscent of Van Gogh, others of Cezanne, and dark tones of the Dutch masters as Pirosmani paints in cafes and music halls, among priests and peasants, birds and animals, and combines with Shengelaya to turn the total experience into its own tableau vivant of sheer beauty. (Nov. 8 thru 14; Four Star, SF)