

CENTRAL ASIA PAVILION
ПАВИЛЬОН СТРАН ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ
2005



Art from Central Asia a Contemporary Archive

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Almagul Menlibayeva

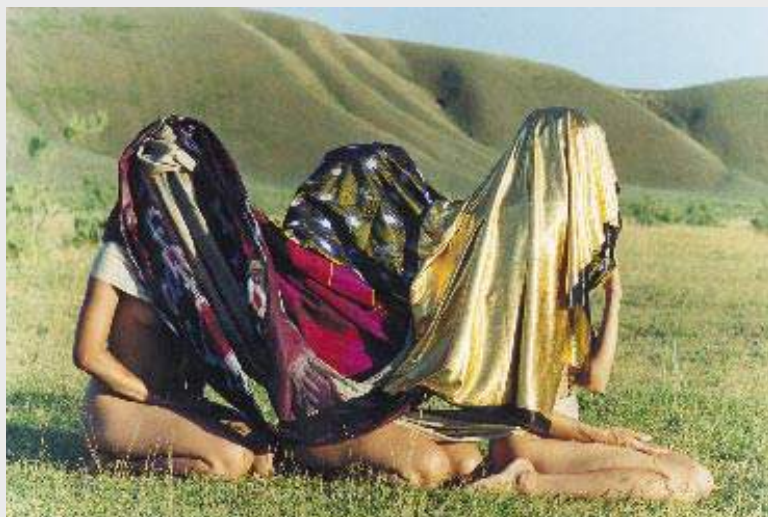
Almagul Menlibayeva is a cosmopolitan. She lives in the planet space easily moving from one country to another. She represents the modern image of a female nomad traveling in art as freely as in real life. Yesterday she painted pictures and felted "tekemets" (felt carpets). Today she paints pictures and makes video performances. Her pictures create strange aesthetics of decorative symbols and artistic fluxus. Her style is unusual, for instance, she cuts her own watercolor into strips and interlaces them with ribbons and lurex creating a series called "A Dress for a Shaman".

Her performances evoke tears of rapt affection and leave a sensation of encountering a miracle. In the performance, "Eternal Bride", she went out to the streets of Almaty in a white aerial bridal dress on a dull March morning. It was still cold and snowing, but she wandered the streets, entered a bazaar, danced with a beggar, and talked to astonished passers-by. She explained to them that she was happy and thus decided to put on that special dress and that her groom was somewhere around. She was like an unreal image that reminded of the whole primeval beauty in ordinary world.

In Almagul's words, the character of the bride "has gradually transformed into seven fortuitous snow princesses" in the video performance "Apa" and then into characters of the seven ancestors to whom the video performance, "Steppe Baroque", is dedicated. The decorative search initiated by the artist in her paintings and felt works have fused together with the messages of her latest video performances. Against a steppe mazars (Muslim burial-vaults) background, a series of transformations of naked oriental women into cosmological creatures is unfolding. Their naked bodies are suddenly dressed in decorative elements, such as turbans, shawls, scarves, and God knows what else. New images emerge resembling demons from the "Thousand and One Nights" or aliens in veils. The sensation of the illusory is created by means of "mirror" effect during filming the video, which makes the figures perfectly symmetric and similar to a magnificent and decorative pattern that really looks like baroque decor. The "Steppe Baroque" like "Eternal Bride" leaves the sensation of witchcraft, which really was Almagul's goal. She considers herself a pioneer or representative of punk-shamanism which still allows her to be interested in Sufism and Buddhism, attend Sufis festivals in Central Asia, and esoteric camps in India and mix them all in her works of art.

Almagul Menlibayeva. SteppenBaroque. Video 2002
Алмагуль Менлибаева. Степное Барокко. Видео

Yulia Sorokina



Алмагуль Менлибаева

Алмагуль Менлибаева – человек мира. Она живет в пространстве планеты, легко перемещаясь из одной страны в другую. Она являет собой современный образ кочевницы, странствуя в искусстве так же свободно, как в жизни. Вчера она писала картины и валяла войлочные ковры – текеметы. Сегодня она пишет картины и снимает видеоперформансы. Ее картины создают странную эстетику из смеси декоративных символов и живописного флюксуса. Она свободно позволяет себе эстетическое хулиганство, например, режет на полосы собственную акварель и переплетает их с лентами и люрексом, создавая серию «Платье для шамана».

Ее перформансы вызывают слезы восхищенного умиления и оставляют ощущение встречи с чудом. Так, в перформансе «Вечная невеста» она вышла на улицы Алматы в белом воздушном платье невесты одним хмурым мартовским утром. Было еще холодно, падал мокрый снег – а она бродила по улицам, заходила на базар, танцевала с нищим, разговаривала с удивленными прохожими, объясняла им, что у нее сегодня хорошее настроение и поэтому она надела этот особенный наряд, что ее жених где-то здесь, рядом; она была как ирреальное видение, напоминавшее об извечности красоты в обыденном мире.

Образ невесты, по словам Алмагуль, «плавно перешел в 7 случайных снежных принцесс» в видеоперформансе «Апа», а потом и в образы семи предков, которым посвящается видеоперформанс «Степное барокко». Здесь слились воедино декоративные поиски, начатые художницей в картинах и войлоках, с посланиями последних видеоперформансов. На фоне очертаний степных мазаров (мусульманских усыпальниц) разворачивается череда трансформаций обнаженных восточных женщин в некие космогонические существа. На их обнаженные фигуры вдруг «наворачиваются» декоративные элементы из тюрбанов, шалей, платков и бог знает чего еще. Возникают новые образы, напоминающие то ли демонов из «Тысячи и одной ночи», то ли инопланетян в парандже. Ощущение ирреальности создает использование «эффекта зеркала» при съемке видео, что делает фигуры абсолютно симметричными и подобными пышному декоративному узору, действительно смахивающему на барочный декор.

«Степное барокко» так же, как и «Вечная невеста», оставляет ощущение наваждения, что, наверное, и являлось целью Алмагуль. Она считает себя представителем (или первооткрывателем?) панк-шаманизма, что позволяет ей тем не менее увлекаться суфизмом, буддизмом, посещать фестивали суфиев в Центральной Азии, лагеря посвященных в Индии и подвергать все это странной перепалке в собственном творчестве.

Юлия Сорокина

Almagul Menlibaeva. A Wild Sheep Chase. Video 2002
Алмагуль Менлибаева. Охота на овец. Видео



Almagul Menlibaeva. Vagon. Video 2002
Алмагуль Менлибаева. Вагон. Видео



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Прогрессивная ностальгия
Progressive Nostalgia

2008



Прогрессивная НОСТАЛЬГИЯ Progressive Nostalgia

Современное искусство
стран бывшего СССР

Contemporary Art
of the Former USSR

Алмагуль Менлибаева

Родилась в 1969 году в Алма-Ате, Казахстан

Живет в Берлине, Германия

Степное барокко

Мультимедиаинсталляция

2007

Работы Алмагуль Менлибаевой даже при беглом взгляде выдают интерес художницы к проблеме идентичности. И это закономерно: национальная идентификация – это первое, с чем столкнулись народы Центральной Азии, обретая государственный суверенитет и лишившись идентичности советской, укоренявшей их в интернационалистском идеологическом проекте. Видимо, поэтому ранние произведения Алмагуль были созданы в изобразительных формах текемета – национального войлочного ковра, а в более поздних видеоперформансах – «Апа» (2002), «Степное барокко» (2003), «Джихад» (2004) и других – присутствуют мотивы казахской степи, мазаров (мусульманских усыпальниц), бараньих голов (баран – тотемное животное казахов), восточных тканей, аллюзий на региональный фольклор, древние предания и суфийскую мудрость. Появляется в этих работах и сама художница, программно предъявляя свои характерные монголоидные черты.

Almagul Menlibayeva

Born in 1969 in Almaty, Kazakhstan

Lives in Berlin, Germany

Steppe Baroque

Multimedia installation

2007

Even a superficial viewing of Almagul Menlibayeva's works will betray her interest in the problem of identity. And her interest is natural: national identification is the first problem that faced the peoples of Central Asia when they gained sovereignty and lost the Soviet identity that had rooted them in an internationalist ideological project. This is apparently why Menlibayeva's early works were made in the shape of a tekemet, a traditional felt carpet, and her latest video performances – *Apa* (2002), *Steppe Baroque* (2003), *Jihad* (2004), and others – employ motifs of the Kazakh steppe, *mazars* (Muslim tombs), sheep heads (the sheep is the totem animal of the Kazakhs), Central Asian textiles, as well as a web of allusions to regional folklore, ancient legends and Sufi wisdom. The artist herself appears in these works, deliberately revealing her classic Asian countenance. However, the discourse of national identity was also appropriated by the new

Однако дискурс национальной идентичности оказался апроприирован также и новой авторитарной властью, приступившей к созданию государственной идеологии. Поэтому у многих центральноазиатских художников искренний интерес к региональной традиции сочетается с критикой политики идентичности. Свою персональную версию этой критики Алмагуль построила – как это ни парадоксально – на идее номадизма (кочевничества), являющегося базовой историко-культурной особенностью центральноазиатских народов. Номадизм для нее – органичная форма бытия, санкционированная жизненным укладом предков, и антифундаменталистская стратегия, санкционированная современной критической мыслью (от Жюль Делёза и далее). Так, многие ее работы строятся на встрече и непрестанной смене образов, восходящих к самым разным этническим и историко-культурным пластам. В видео «На полигоне» (2004) некое языческое действие развивается на советском военном полигоне, а в «Джихаде» мы видим саму художницу, снимающую с лица бесконечные фантастические покровы. Номадический образ дороги был положен в основу ее инсталляции в Центральноазиатском павильоне на *authoritarian regime as it began to formulate a state ideology*. For this reason, many Central Asian artists combine a genuine interest in regional traditions with a critique of official identity politics. Paradoxical as it may sound, Menlibayeva based her personal version of this criticism on the idea of nomadic pastoralism, the traditional way of life that distinguishes the history and culture of the Central Asian peoples. For her, nomadic pastoralism is both an organic form of existing in the world sanctioned by the legacy of her ancestors and an anti-fundamentalist strategy sanctioned by contemporary critical thought starting with Gilles Deleuze. Many of her works are built on encounters and incessant shifts of images that refer to an array of ethnic, historical and cultural layers of meaning. In the video *On the Firing Range* (2004) a pagan mystery unfolds on a Soviet military site, while in *Jihad* we watch the artist remove endless fantastic covers from her face. The nomadic image of the road was the focus of her installation in the Central Asian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005, which was called *On the Road*. The Kazakh steppe intruded in a room of a Renaissance palazzo, where the floor was sprinkled with dirt and

Венецианской биеннале 2005 года (она так и называлась: «На дороге»). В один из залов ренессансного палаццо вторглась казахская степь – весь пол оказался усыпан землей, по которой проложено полотно разливной трассы; слышны были цокот копыт и голос самой художницы, выспрашивающей дорогу на Венецию.

Склонность к системе устойчивых и постоянно чередующихся лейтмотивов, как известно, черта мифопоэтического типа мышления. Для мифа Алмагуль оказалось важным и такое неприемлемое для прагматического рационализма измерение как чудо. Именно чудо позволяет встрече невозможного: появление казахской степи в венецианском палаццо или алмаатинского ресторанного застолья в Сиднее (перформанс и инсталляция «Караван-сарай» на Сиднейской биеннале–2006). Так и хельсинкская инсталляция «Степное барокко» строится на эффекте безмерных степных ликов, фантомом мерцающих в стерильно современном зале музея КИАЗМА. Но задача художницы не сводится к разыгрыванию столкновения локального и глобального; будничное, одномерное, рациональное встречается с праздничным, оргиастическим, поэтическим. Отсюда и столь *crisscrossed with roadways*. The clatter of hooves was audible, as was the voice of the artist herself as she asked the way to Venice.

Menlibayeva's inclination to work with a system of fixed yet regularly alternating leitmotifs is a feature of the mythopoetic mode of thinking. The miracle, so alien to pragmatic rationalism, has also become an important dimension of myth for Menlibayeva. A miracle makes possible an encounter with the impossible: the appearance of the Kazakh steppe in a Venetian palazzo or a feast typical of an Almaty restaurant on the Australian continent (as happened in the performance *Karavan Sarai*, made for the Biennale of Sydney in 2006) as well as the Helsinki installation of the *Steppe Baroque*, based on the effect of steppe images glittering phantom – like in a modern sterile hall of KIASMA museum. But the artist's task cannot be reduced to performing a clash of the local and the global; in her work, the everyday, single-dimensional and rational meets the festive, orgiastic and poetic. Hence her collaboration, which she values so highly, with DJ OMFO (German Popov), who creates soundtracks of original

важное для нее сотрудничество с диджеем ОМФО (Германом Поповым), создающим для ее работ оригинальные саундтреки клубной музыки. Себя же Алмагуль считает представителем (или первооткрывателем?) панкромантического шаманизма...

Эффект столкновения несовместимого известен по работам сюрреалистов. Встречаясь в иррациональном контексте, реальные мотивы освобождаются от обыденных значений, приобретают некий абсолютный статус: они будоражат своей пустотностью – неисчерпаемостью возможных значений. В «Джихаде», где художница снимает с лица бесконечные покровы, она являет нам образ наплюенного ничто, которое – согласно древним – ипостась неисчерпаемой мудрости. А происходит эта сцена на фоне усыпальницы великого суфийского мастера Ходжи Ахмеда Ясави, автора «Книги книг» – пустой книги. Так критическая стратегия Алмагуль Менлибаевой – шаманки и кочевницы – противостоит не только авторитарному фундаментализму власти, но и инструментальной рациональности глобализации, пришедшей на территорию Центральной Азии.

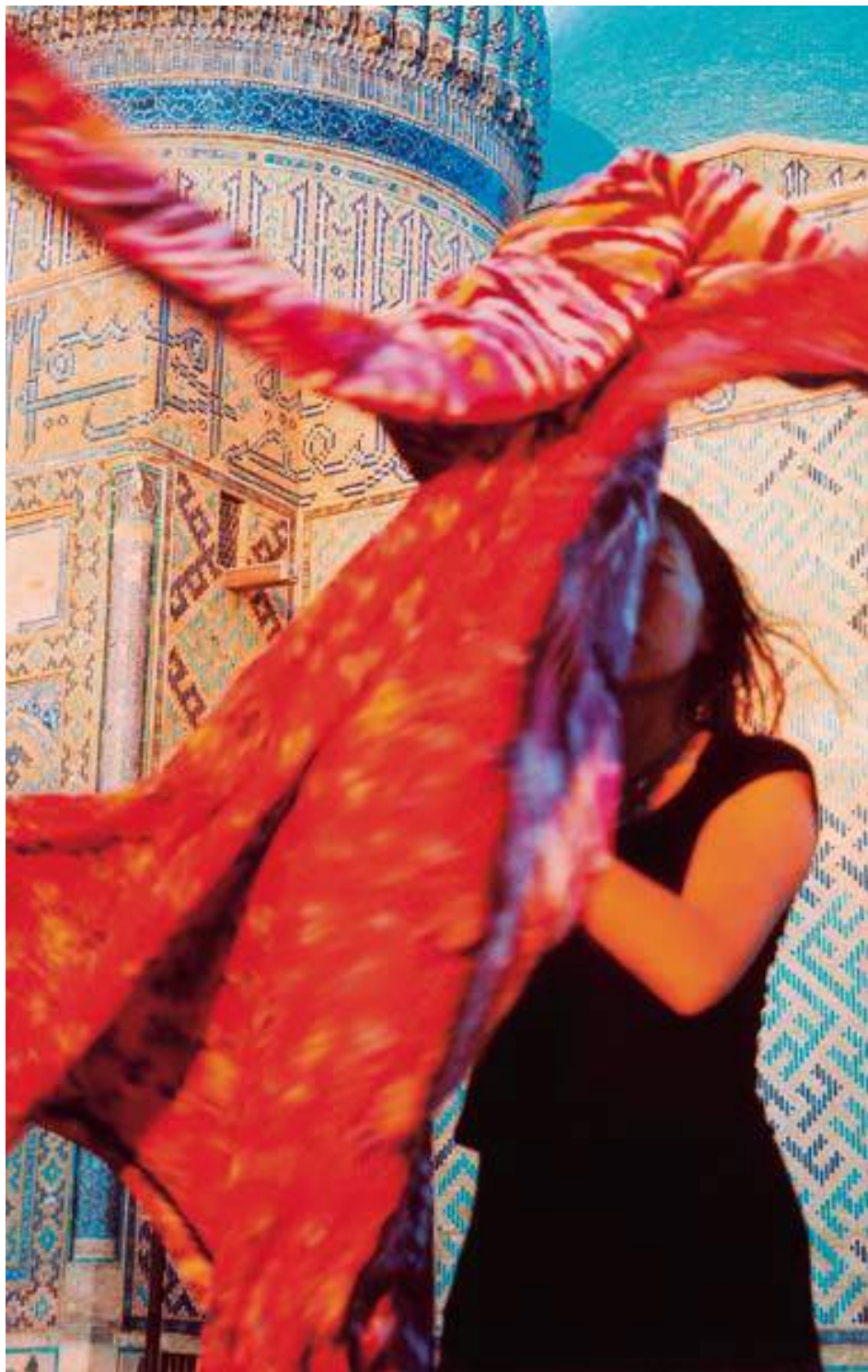
Виктор Мизиано

club music for her videos. Menlibayeva considers herself a representative (or the pioneer) of punk shamanism...

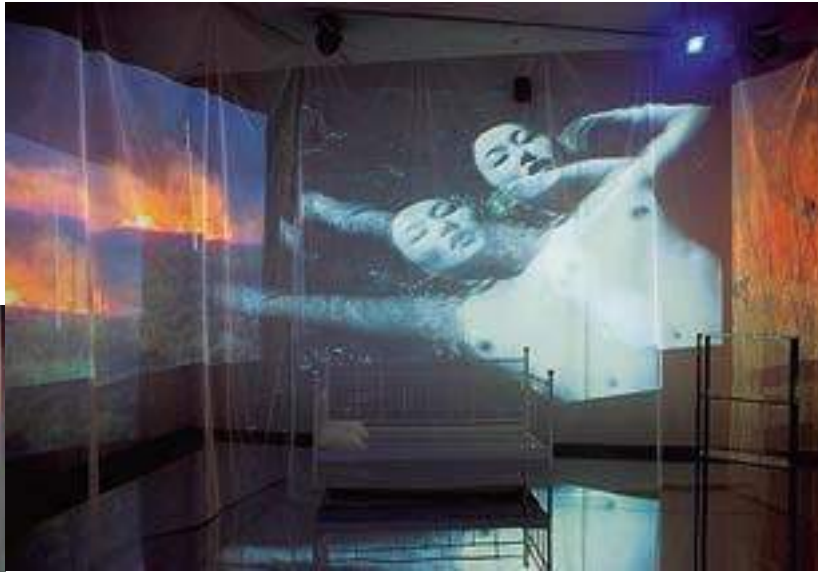
The effect of the clash of the incompatible is familiar from the works of the Surrealists. When they encounter each other in an irrational context, motifs of the real are liberated from their commonplace and instrumental meanings and acquire a kind of absolute status. Their hollowiness becomes a potential for inexhaustible possible meanings. In *Jihad*, where the artist removes veil after veil from her face, she is showing us an image of a layered nothingness, which, according to the ancients, is the hypostasis of inexhaustible wisdom. And this scene takes place against the background of the tomb of the Great Sufi Master Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, the author of the “book of books” – an empty book.

Thus the critical strategy of Almagul Menlibayeva – a shaman, a nomad and a woman – resists not only the authoritarian fundamentalism of the Kazakh regime, but also the instrumental rationality of globalization that has arrived on the territory of Central Asia.

Viktor Misiano







Universes in Universe / Nafas Art Magazine / SteppenBaroque as a Spiritual Renaissance
http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2007/almagul_menlibaeva
(Published: October 2007, print version)

SteppenBaroque as a Spiritual Renaissance

By Jari-Pekka Vanhala | October 2007

The stage for Almagul Menlibaeva's video performance *SteppenBaroque* (2003) is a bare, open steppe - the archetypal 'national landscape' of the Central Asian nomad culture. In this natural setting, exact information about the time and location becomes irrelevant; the place is beyond written history. Only the ancient burial vaults, mazars, which appear in the background, link the scene to Kazakhstan. In this landscape a group of seven women appear like mythical spirits of nature, clothed in flowing colourful fabrics or then completely naked, holding skulls of totem animals in their hands as offerings to gods. Menlibaeva has dedicated the work to her seven ancestors, thus referring to the nomad tradition of knowing by heart seven generations of one's ancestors: memory creates history and continuity.

The title of the work juxtaposes contradictory elements in a metaphorical way: the desolateness of landscape in contrast to the fullness of the Baroque style, the Western art historical style as a representative of 'civilisation' meets wild and pure nature. The stylistic elements of Baroque art are introduced in the form of capricious gestures of twisting decorated fabrics, as materialised movements of the wind. Also the presence of visual spectacle, presented here through the ritualistic performance, is characteristic for Baroque style. By using the mirror effect, Menlibaeva adapts another iconographic element of the Baroque, creating decorative beauty through perfect symmetry, which is always artificial, man-made. The divided image creates both real and symbolic visual perfection, always changing its form, like an organic whole never finding its final state. The image becomes a site for an unknown rite with its hypnotic rhythm and exuberant visuality.





An important part that strengthens Menlibaeva's visual narration is the soundtrack created by DJ German Popov, aka O.M.F.O. He combines various elements from folk music with contemporary club music, thus assimilating — in the same manner as Menlibaeva — different layers of time and traditions. This is a way to bring history, legend and tradition to our time. Menlibaeva describes herself as a 'punk shaman', who revives the values of nature, spirituality and mysticism in today's age of worshipping reason and technology. Her works can also be seen as a form of feministic polemics within a tradition swarming with famous warriors and other male heroes. As a representative of post-Soviet Central Asian contemporary art, Menlibaeva is brave and unique in her way of presenting woman as the heroine of the action. In *SteppenBaroque*, the female figures are connected to the spiritual world, but they are bound to earth and soil with slow and meditative movements, in contrast to the male heroes of the ancient past, who rode

wildly on horseback across the steppes. No wonder these masculine actions stained with blood were recorded in histories and legends, as the women were left silent and non-existent. Menlibaeva says that she wants to give a face to Central Asian women, because they are rather unknown and obscure for the contemporary world. In the turmoil of history, female identity in Central Asia has been an instrument for politics: the communists transformed the Central Asian woman into a symbol of their civilizing mission, promoting as the ideal woman a strong and self-disciplined worker. Today this strength and discipline are indeed needed in the new circumstances, when the transition to a market economy has brought sweeping changes to everyday life and social roles in Central Asia. In Menlibaeva's art, woman appears as a strong matriarch of the nomadic period, independent and free from patriarchal control and oppression. *SteppenBaroque* also proclaims the new potential individual freedom in its open celebration of traditional shamanism and female nudity, which were among the forbidden subjects during the Soviet era, when the communist regime tried to 'tame' the cultural and religious heritage of Central Asia and assimilate it into the Soviet ideology.

Today, with the existence of original and talented contemporary artists like Almagul Menlibaeva, a contemporary renaissance for central Asian culture is possible. However, it can happen only if it is not directed from above and used for political or new ideological purposes. If the richness of traditions is forced into the form of a souvenir and used as an instrument of nation-making, contemporary culture will be handicapped and its normal development impossible. The culture cannot be paused in a 'stand-by' position and certainly it cannot be simply resurrected from death. A 'zombie culture' will never last more than overnight.

In her works, Almagul Menlibaeva is not attempting to make radical political gestures to shock people or the system. She is more interested in showing in her personal way how rich and diverse the possibilities are to create a contemporary Kazakh culture, without giving up your integrity, without assimilating completely to 'East' or 'West'. The 'mythopoetic narration' of SteppenBaroque presents a form for a 'spiritual renaissance', not through conflict but through harmony.



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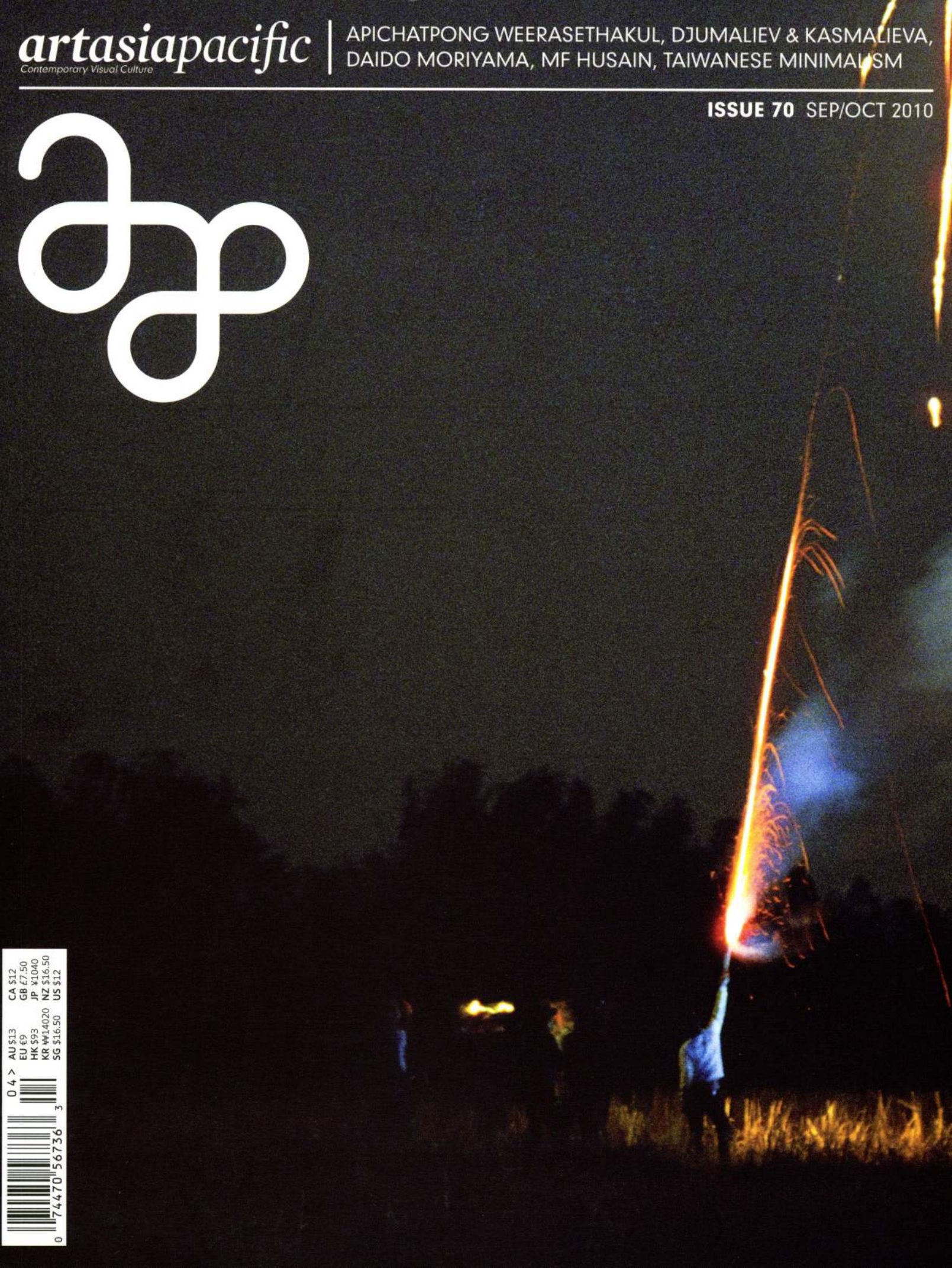
APICHATPONG WEERASETHAKUL, DJUMALIEV & KASMALIEVA,
DAIDO MORIYAMA, MF HUSAIN, TAIWANESE MINIMALISM

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ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA

DAUGHTERS OF TURAN



ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA,
Butterflies of Aisha Bibi, 2010, stills from HD single-channel DVD, 10 min.

Courtesy Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York.

"Daughters of Turan," Almagul Menlibayeva's third solo exhibition at Priska C. Juschka, aimed to introduce viewers to the history and culture of the artist's native Kazakhstan. Featuring videos and photographs, the display showcased 41-year-old Menlibayeva's strong pictorial sensibilities, which the artist has developed over the past three years. Educated in the Social Realist style at the Art and Theater University of Almaty, and now dividing her time between Berlin and Amsterdam, Menlibayeva's work weaves ethnographic references into a poetic vision of Kazakh landscapes. The 20-year crisis of national identity following the fall of Communism is central to her work.

Kazakhstan is a land suffused with a potent mixture of cultural influences: shaman myths, rituals of Mongolian invaders and the traditions of Islam. The absorption of ethnic traditions ground to a halt during the Soviet era, and then Western culture and Asian consumer goods flooded in after the nation's 1991 independence. Menlibayeva plays with this multiplicity of cultural influences in present-day Kazakhstan, suggesting that the nation's new foundations must be based on the coexistence of many traditions.

The video *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi* (2010) unfolds in

front of the finely carved limestone walls of the Aisha Bibi mausoleum located near the Kazakh city of Taraz. A series of vignettes cuts between local tourists and schoolchildren traveling to the monument and young women costumed in traditional dress. One of the latter carries a tiara-like turban constructed from dozens of small soft skullcaps (*tobetais*) while others wear richly patterned pink, blue or green silk fabrics wrapped around themselves as shrouds. The costumed characters, played by the artist's friends and relatives, are assisted by young boys, who hold the edges of their heavy silks. By juxtaposing the weighty, ornate traditional dress with the international tourist uniform of jeans and T-shirts, the artist suggests a cohabitation of past and present that will sustain and propel Kazakh culture.

The video *Milk for Lambs* (2010), composed of both black-and-white and color cinematography, tells the story of Umai, the wife of the sky god Tengri, and the festivals of worship associated with these deities. The rituals involve a cockfight, a lamb sacrifice and a lavish party. Several of the festive gatherings take place inside traditional dwellings, scenes that the artist shot in color to better display the domestic decorations of brilliantly sparkling red and yellow fabrics. For contrast, the exterior scenes of harsh steppes and bare deserts are filmed in tones of gray.

Menlibayeva contrasts the severe landscape with images of nurturing women, and these women of the steppes, be they seductive beauties or preservers of tradition, play essential roles in the work. One young woman, a daughter of Umai, assuredly rides a horse with her black hair protruding like horns. The older women of *Milk for Lambs* are seen both slavishly cooking and enjoying the fruits of their labors, sitting around a table laden with food and set for a feast. Men appear in the video but they are overshadowed by women. This region's traditional gender dynamic, as shown in this work, highlights the deep roots of the culture, which has only begun to accept modern influences.

To further emphasize coexistence of the old and new, Menlibayeva collaborates with the conceptual composer OMFO (Our Man From Odessa), an artist who is also concerned with finding a new language to speak about traditional culture. OMFO, who also wrote music for the controversial 2006 Hollywood farce *Borat*, combines Eastern pentatonic scales with synthetic sounds made by electronic instruments, evoking a sense of plaintive longing—perhaps for the past, perhaps for the future—through squealing high-frequency tones.

While the majority of Kazakh artists still work locally, away from the international currents of the contemporary art scene, Menlibayeva says that her "nomadic" status offers "a productive distance to her original culture and a language for its poetic interpretation." Her video works communicate her remote origins but stay away from exotic stereotypes, showing that modern media and ancient traditions can have an enlightening, symbiotic relationship. ● YULIA TIKHONOVA

'Double Vision' video works by Almagul Menlibayeva & Sonia Balassanian at Motorenhalle, Dresden

'Double Vision' video works by Almagul Menlibayeva (Kazakhstan) & Sonia Balassanian (USA/Armenia), curated by Susanne Altmann Motorenhalle. Project Centre Dresden <http://www.motorenhalle.de>



Almagul Menlibayeva, Video still from Aisha Bibi, video 2010

The video artists **Almagul Menlibayeva** (*1969, Almaty) and **Sonia Balassanian** (*1950, Iran) both relate in a way to post communist global changes, in particular to the end of the Soviet Union. They trace present repercussions and their own autobiographical links to it. While New York-based Balassanian as diaspora-Armenian was only able to travel to the country of her fathers after the independence in 1991, Kazakh artist Menlibayeva was raised in Almaty and therefore able to experience closely the developments there since the late 1980s. Sensitively, she tracks down symptoms of transformation, of lost utopias and failed promises of prosperity. She creates imaginative narratives by integrating colors and poetry of the Kazakh natives, the steppe dwellers. Equipped with her knowledge of Western life style, she unveils contrasts and critically comments influences of absurd consumption. Menlibayeva's video work 'Kurban' features the ruins of agricultural production cooperatives – once founded by deportees of the Stalin regime, in between them statuesque women, wrapped in a kind of shroud, posing like symbols of a world bygone. Using a comparably poetic as well as archaic imagery and the documentary-like aesthetics of black and white film, Sonia Balassanian focuses on the country of Armenia. During the 20th century, Armenia was torn apart territorially, its people were oppressed and the course of its borders was at the mercy of external political and strategic interests. For her film 'Borders', she travelled to the ancient cultural heartland of Armenia that belongs to Turkey today, visiting prominent ruins of that very first Christian country of the world that has been shaken by various ideologies and pogroms. The films of both artists, Sonia Balassanian and Almagul Menlibayeva, are densely charged with melancholy and mournfulness. At the same time they are characterized by a strong vigour, by the power of traditional mythologies and by an underlying longing for a local identity. Yet these films do not present idyllic exotic sceneries, but rather introduce different cultures as fertile grounds for ideas and as chances to change well-trodden perspectives. In a certain way, one could consider the themes of Menlibayeva and Balassanian as being part of a large postcolonial discourse that has never really been led: a discourse regarding the Soviet politics of expansion and its failures, including the present consequences for cultures that were subject of heteronomous interests for many decades. **The exhibition will be opened on Wednesday, April 11th, 2012, 20:00** in the presence of Almagul Menlibayeva and with an introduction by Susanne Altmann. **Exhibition time:** 2012-12-4 till 2012-5-5



Double Vision

11.04.-05.05.2012

Motorenhalle. Projektzentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst

Almagul Menlibayeva, Kasachstan & Sonia Balassanian, USA/Armenien

Double Vision

Videoarbeiten von Almagul Menlibayeva, Kasachstan & Sonia Balassanian, USA/Armenien

Ausstellung, 11.04.-05.05.2012 Di-Fr 16-20 Uhr, Sa 14-18 Uhr


Vernissage, Mi 11.04.2012, 20 Uhr

Videoabend, Mi 18.04.2012, 20 Uhr „!Women Art Revolution“ ein Film von Lynn Hershman Leeson (USA, 2010) im Anschluss
Gespräch mit Kuratorin Susanne Altmann

Kuratorin Susanne Altmann

in Zusammenarbeit mit der Reihe videoabend

Kooperationspartner: Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden & Kunstfonds/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden



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Exuberant Fabrics of Central Asia Explored in Ikat Exhibition at Seattle Asian Art Museum

Colors of the Oasis March 15–August 5, 2012



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SEATTLE ART MUSEUM

SEATTLE March 6, 2012 – *Colors of the Oasis*, a striking new exhibition, opens March 15 at the Seattle Asian Art Museum and features the dazzling textiles that were created in the oasis cities of Central Asia. Organized by The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. the exhibition features 65 ikat textiles primarily from Uzbekistan, where this art form, utilizing daring designs and jewel-like colors, emerged in the 19th century. This exhibition heralds the recent revival of the ikat technique after near extinction during the Soviet era, and growing global popularity through popular design houses such as Oscar de la Renta, J. Crew, West Elm and Pottery Barn. In addition, two films by Kazakhstan director Almagul Menlibayeva that explore her nomadic heritage in concert with an ancient belief system are featured.

Ikat, a term derived from a Malay word meaning to tie or bind, is a technique that requires supreme concentration and collaboration, the results of which give each image a blazing edge that is ikat's distinctive signature. Unlike a majority of textiles woven with solid-colored thread or printed or dyed after weaving, ikat is produced using the reverse process. Individual threads are first dyed with several colors that, when woven together, produce energetic patterns. Successful application of this complex technique requires extensive forethought and teamwork between various craftsmen and the designer. Ikat has been considered a cultural treasure and fashion statement in Uzbekistan for over two centuries. After centuries of trade along the Silk Road, Central Asian artists elevated the technique to new heights of innovation, experimenting with exuberant designs that combine menacing hooks with floral arabesques, scorpions with tulips, or flowing water with pomegranates.

Visitors to the exhibition will be able to see the special effects that are unique to this art form: the sumptuous quality of silk that has been dyed in rich saturated colors, glazes that give the fabric a unique polish, and linings made out of sharply contrasting cotton prints. To enhance this experience for visitors who may not be familiar with Central Asian art history, life in the oasis kingdoms will be introduced. Remarkable photographs by a Russian photographer who experimented with color in the early 20th century provide glimpses of life on the streets of oasis kingdoms. In the largest gallery, visitors will be surrounded by an ikat city bazaar, akin to walking into a design kaleidoscope where urban energy mixed with this textile heritage. Contemporary photographs from two major cities, Bukhara and Samarkand, will further explore ornate decorative surfaces. Samarkand, nicknamed the "City of Famous Shadows" and the "Jewel of Islam", and Bukhara, known as the "Pedestal of Greatness", are home to astonishing buildings covered in colored

geometric, floral and epigraphic patterns which reflect their

geometric, floral and epigraphic patterns which reflect their influence on the textiles on display.

To bring the vision of Central Asia up to the present, two videos by Almagul Menlibayeva are included in the installation. Born in Kazakhstan in 1969, Ms. Menlibayeva stages complex mythological narratives that fuse her own nomadic heritage with ancient belief systems that were challenged by 60 years of Soviet domination. *Milk for Lambs*, 2010, depicts the many roles of women in the Steppes, and emphasizes the ways women strive to keep cultures intact. *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi*, 2010, recounts an ancient love story of the Sufi poet's daughter Aisha Bibi and Karakhan. The push/pull dynamic between these lovers is played out in a drama that involves many observations of unfulfilled longing with a problematic relationship. As men and women appear and disappear in and out of dramatic architecture, their choices in clothing underline the changes in 21st century life in Central Asia. *Colors of the Oasis* comes to the Seattle Asian Art Museum after opening at The Textile Museum in Washington DC (October 16, 2010–March 13, 2011). Curated by Sumru Belger Krody, senior curator of Eastern Hemisphere Collections at The Textile Museum. Pamela McClusky, SAM's Curator for African and Oceanic Art, is the curator for the show in Seattle.

This exhibition is on loan from The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. Exhibition sponsor is MIR Corporation.

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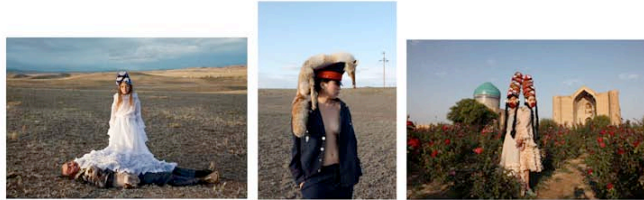
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"Visceral Filmmaking: The Video Art of Nina Yuen and Almagul Menlibayeva," by Brian Fee, NY Art Beat.

April 25, 2010

NY ART BEAT

Info and Opinion on NY Art & Design



Visceral Filmmaking: The Video Art of Nina Yuen and Almagul Menlibayeva

They take us somewhere far beyond the gallery walls, into environments deeply personal and thoroughly rewarding.

Almagul Menlibayeva "Daughters of Turan"
at Priska C. Juschka Fine Art
in the Chelsea 27th area

Video art is a tricky subject in the realm of the gallery show. In an environment of over-stimulation, especially in a neighborhood dense with galleries as West Chelsea, the artist must present something compelling to warrant our 15-odd minutes of time, seated in a darkened room (if seating is provided at all) with varying acoustics, as we think 'there is this fantastic show across the street/next door/down the hall I've not seen yet and it's closing tomorrow, and since it's paintings/assemblage/etc it might grab me faster than this video piece'. There are knockout video-based artists, of course: Barbara Kruger, Doug Aitken, Steve McQueen and Cao Fei immediately spring to mind. Then there are artists you might remember from an art fair, or read about them in an international art journal. Perhaps the name doesn't immediately equate, but you duck your head into the darkened room anyway, just to see what's up — and you are rewarded with an incredible video art experience. Two such current shows, Nina Yuen's "White Blindness" at Lombard-Freid Projects and Almagul Menlibayeva's "Daughters of Turan" at Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, entwine brilliant, very personal narratives and representation with fascinating filmmaking. Avoiding overt spectacle, the two artists latch you in hook, line and sinker in minutes.

One immediate difference between Almagul Menlibayeva's exhibition and Yuen's is the inclusion of Menlibayeva's photography in the gallery space. This series of luxuriously colored and staged prints — mounted either on aluminum or in lightboxes — presents a gorgeous and dreamy Central Asian landscape, with the Steppe unfurling in all directions and the yurts' interiors emitting as much of the visible color spectrum as possible. It's a strong first impression, especially if you've never encountered Menlibayeva's mythology-steeped works before, but these prints are only part of the action:

they are production stills from the artist's two new films, *Milk for Lambs* and *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi* (both 2010), on view here. Menlibayeva works in Amsterdam and Berlin, but she grew up in Almaty, the largest city in Kazakhstan, and imbues her richly visual narratives with her heritage and the cultural traditions and chronicles of Central Asia. These two films further her emphasis on strong women, from the legend of Aisha-Bibi, a Sufi poet's daughter in a Romeo and Juliet romance, to Umai, the all-nurturing mother goddess of the Turkic Siberians, symbolizing their interconnectivity with the Steppe and the female population's multigenerational circle. *Milk for Lambs*, in a bit over 11 minutes, takes us there, to a festival for the remembrance of ancestors on the Steppe, while interweaving the story of Umai into the psychological fabric of the women. We see a little girl in a frothy white dress, far too long for her, holding a lamb. We hear the snuffling breath and clomping hoofbeats of a horse, and astride it is a young woman in black, holding locks of her hair out to either side like great horns, throwing darts at us with her piercing gaze. Another woman appears on the Steppe, accompanied by the crack of a gunshot; she's shirtless but wearing a navy military uniform with a fox pelt draped over her head. There are old women seated on ecstatically patterned rugs in the yurts and at tables heaped with food for the festival. At the film's conclusion, as night falls and the gathering disperses, the little girl with the lamb reappears, standing over the prone figure of an old man. These women — the older women of the village, the sternly outfitted 'Protector of the Wasteland', the young dancing girls — are all Umai, her 'daughters' suffused with and intrinsically linked to her spirit.

Milk for Lambs straddles the arid beauty of the Steppe and the decorated, festival-prepped yurts, but *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi* resides fully within persistent, intense visual stimulation. Set amid the eponymous terracotta-tiled mausoleum in Taraz and the massive turquoise-domed mausoleum to Turkic poet Khoja Akhmet Yassawi in Turkestan City, Menlibayeva recreates Aisha-Bibi's ancient love story with contemporary relevancy. To be sure, there are male figures in Menlibayeva's works: the shirtless omni-adolescent boys on the Steppe in *Milk for Lambs*, shadowboxing at the camera and carrying a lamb, searching for Umai, in the bemused men outside the mausoleums in *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi*, flapping her fabric wings or snapping photographs of the mesmerizing dancers. Perhaps the strongest male figure could be interpreted as the contemporary Karakhan Mukhammed, Aisha-Bibi's suitor, peering out through the sunlight-pierced terracotta walls of the mausoleum interior, awaiting his love.

Yuen and Menlibayeva's chosen mediums elaborate these respective representations so effectively: Yuen's voice, role-playing and affecting editing (particularly in Alison), Menlibayeva's precise timing of aural cues (the drums in *Butterflies of Aisha Bibi*, the baby's cry and hoofbeats in *Milk for Lambs*) and blurring of contemporary Kazakhstan with historic ritual. The cautionary point here is simple: these exhibitions are precisely the compelling journeys described initially. They take us somewhere far beyond the gallery walls, into environments deeply personal and thoroughly rewarding. It is on us, then, to look past these darkened rooms and give this video art a closer look.

Of note: Almagul Menlibayeva is in conversation with Independent Curator Leeza Ahmady and Gallerist Priska C. Juschka on Thursday, April 29 at 7:00 p.m. at Juschka's gallery. RSVP to gallerystalk@priskajuschkafineart.com

Lombard-Freid Projects / 531 W 26th St, 2nd Floor / NYC 10001 / 212-967-8040
Priska C. Juschka Fine Art / 547 W 27th St, 2nd Floor / NYC 10001 / 212-244-4320

—Brian Fee



Brian Fee talks art by day, sees Brooklyn bands by night, and speaks Japanese during in-between hours. His alter ego is feelist.blogspot.com, which includes a weekly rundown of only the dopest NY-based art/film/music events.

"In Peekskill, 2 Shows of Raw Works," by Benjamin Genocchio, New York Times.

September 28, 2008

2/2

Opposite Ms. Mendieta's photographs is "Sphinges" (1985), a sculpture by the minimalist Carl Andre, her former husband. It consists of half a dozen large rectangular blocks of weathered white pine arranged in a grid. This doesn't sound like much, but the piece has a very particular and subtle beauty. Mr. Andre takes care to let the material sing the song of its intrinsic visual qualities.

Elsewhere in the show, there is a lot of impressive craftsmanship using unusual or unexpected materials. Zhang Huan's sculpture of an anonymous soldier, "Ash Army No. (?)" (2008), is an extraordinary technical achievement. Loosely modeled out of nothing but powdery gray ash, it seemingly defies the laws of gravity and optics. This is one of the best pieces in the exhibition.

Not all the artists are well known. Among them is Bruce Bickford, an underground artist from Seattle who makes animations using little handmade clay figures. Many, many months of painstaking work go into the creation of each of his works. "Prometheus' Garden" (1987), an early piece, is a rudimentary but nonetheless pleasantly entertaining riff on the Greek myth of Prometheus, the Titan who stole fire from the god Zeus and gave it to human beings.

Magdalena Abakanowicz's "Seated Bowl" (1987) is an older work by the artist. It is a conceptual-minimalist hybrid, consisting of a ball of birch twigs wrapped in wire and resting on a makeshift cart. Each little element is executed with exquisite finesse, creating a beautifully ambiguous whole. It is captivating.

The same can also be said for several of the works in the Peekskill Project, an annual citywide, site-specific exhibition of contemporary art. This year's event, the fourth — smaller and more compact than past editions — features 55 artists who make art about the environment at 16 sites around the city.

The location of works is roughly split between indoor and outdoor locations. Among the outdoor works, one in particular stood out — Cal Lane's piece "Gated Community" (2006), installed by the riverfront. Ms. Lane has cut detailed decorative patterns into the sides of an old, rusted Dumpster to create an astonishingly original work of art. It asserts an immediate gravitational tug.

Tucked behind the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art is Michael Peterson and Jade Townsend's sculpture showing the facade of a house and white picket fence made out of recycled materials from photographic shoots. But this is no happy vision of suburbia. The house and fence appear to be sinking into the ground.

Two indoor sites stand out for the quality of work exhibited. The first is a vacant storefront on Main Street in downtown Peekskill where you will find work by **Almagul Menlibayeva**, Johannes Girardon, Carla Rae Johnson, Liz Magic Laser and Ted Victoria. My pick of this bunch is Ms. Magic Laser, who stages eroticized imagery of lusty, scantily clad girls alone in the woods.

A 19th-century hat factory on Division Street is another worthy location. Here you will find squashed into two galleries works by Stephano Cagol, Emil Alzamora, Lorenz Estermann, Angelo Musco, Carolyn Salas, Adam Parker Smith, Ryan Schroeder and Gregg Segal. All impress, though Mr. Schroeder's replica of a garbage can, made of bee's wax, dazzles with its technical virtuosity.

But in reviewing this collective artistic effort, one is inevitably confronted with the realization that the sum is probably greater than the individual parts. There is just too much mediocre work. If the Peekskill Project is to thrive, it needs to attract better artists.

"Origins," Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art, 1701 Main Street, Peekskill, through July 26. Information: hvcca.com or (914)788-7166. The Peekskill Project, citywide, selected works on view through Nov. 23.

"Almagul Menlibayeva," by Laura Fanti, Esparte (Italy).

September 1, 2008



September 2008



Almagul Menlibayeva by Laura Fanti

Semi-serious conversation with Almagul Menlibayeva. Because art is a serious matter but the spirit even more. When art is able to open the passage for the spirit, we can try to immerse ourselves once again in the primordial waters and the bare earth ... but only if we stop being robots. The work is preferred by the performance, the generative act, where individualism is erased to make room mystical union with the world in all its forms. After decades of performance and Body Art, the activity of Almagul not at all trivial or repetitive, does not resemble anything else, especially for his knot in a radical way the Sufi culture and that of the peoples of the steppe.

Interview

Laura Fanti: The first question is almost a must, that air you breathe in Kazakhstan, especially if you look to Europe or the USA? Very banally wondering how I would see the West!

Almagul Menlibayeva: States that you mentioned are different. However, I can compare them to various parts of the body: they are all different but ultimately related to each other. In the twenty-first century we are all one unit ... there is neither East nor the West, there is the modern man, confused by the new religion called "consumerism", which does not know where to go. We are sinking all together in one hole.

Kazakhstan for me consists of three components that are like a family: his young daughter, the independent central Asia, ruled by his father, ex-Communist and the ancient primordial grandmother in whose eyes reflected the blue sky and the endless steppe.

Father and daughter hope prosperity. They have many hopes and desires and fears many at a time ... but also produce and consume oil and gas and other things that are part of a "new world order."

Of these three I love the "grandmother", which is the ancient tradition and speaks through the ancestors. As I see Western people? People!

Democracy is an important step to build individuality, which is not an easy process for the risk of drowning and getting lost in the 'selfishness of his ego. "

Your photos and video are often connected with your roots and your traditions, but also with the question of which of course comes from the other two. Work with the concepts of identity [plural], religious and even sexual. What is the relationship between the first issue (national identity) and another (the identity in general)? And in relation to the mentality of your country?

I am only interested in issues that are behind the sex and death, even if at the same time the artist is often influenced by his personal history.

My life has been like a hot dog in my childhood was a sausage in bread for a strange social experiment on a large scale. It was the USSR. And the more deeply in this sandwich, I saw the light of a "Peri" which descended on me from the world of shamanic Sufi hidden but always present.

That is why my work is a process of re-connection to my nature mysticism.

The ritual that in the contemporary artistic vocabulary, is transformed into performance. My home and my tradition is one of my artistic tools. For me, art is love ... I enjoy working with nature in the nude bodies. There he became a part of the landscape. Perhaps it is because I am only a painter.

Speaks often of the Steppes Peris, which, as I understand it, are among the creatures, fairies and angels, who come to visit the mortals on earth ... We can say something about them? And their power on your job?

The myths are realities of our psychic powers. I have a very personal relationship with the myths. You made the case that men are without modern mysticism? Increasingly use their left brain. Are turning more and more robots in urine, defecation and multiply. I am disappointed and confused. I turned in a Peri, which is like a nymph or a Western geisha heavenly. This is my mystical emanation. But for all this robot is only a fable. The Peri are present in many popular stories in Eurasia, from Korea to the Caucasus. In Central Asia to assist shaman but are invisible when they become visible are a stunning beauty. Sometimes it can harm humans by their decision to bring him off the mind. This man has no choice but to become a shaman. The Peri may take the form of an animal or a bird. May have a sexual contact with people, children that are born from these contacts are special people.

My Peri are modern, they live in our time trying to deal with modern society. Have important things to say "that never die" ... and in my opinion, art and creativity belong to them and not to us because they know what is behind the sex and death.

Most times you spoke of mysticism and its absence in modern culture. Do you believe that art is the only way to achieve mystical or that there are other ways to bring it closer?

Art is a means to achieve a mystical state. This process is very personal. Furthermore, I believe that art belongs there. We expect and we try to achieve it. I feel closer to the way in which Zen and Sufi relate to art. The art has a lot of power when it is truth. Art can kill or make you fly. It is not wonderful?

According to you when we have lost the sense of mysticism? When can this process be initiated? Assuming, of course, we can determine the beginning of this loss ...

Our conversation was more philosophical. Often afraid to enter the unknown. This is because over time more and more we separate art from life. The art became a gadget. But still admire the art of the past, even if the artefacts are of a man "Prehistoric" ... or look at the art of the nomads of Central Asia: they are seen as part of nature, which is why their art is natural, mystical, spiritual and much more ...

The concept of metamorphosis has great importance in your work, use it to remind us that we are not robots! You're forced to use a camera or other instruments. What is your relationship with the media? And when you decide that an image can be reproduced? Then, when the metamorphosis can be blocked? What happens in your mind, when you need to decide to lock in a photo or an image in your work and its spiritual significance?

The first important thing is to be clear and simple. The concept should not be adapted to the market. The media are just a tool, a tool to create a dimension or a position that can be a film, a painting or a photo. I feel like an animal that gives birth to his creature / creation. Just when I feel accomplished. When you can get out of his living.

"Surprising Sophistication," by Benjamin Genocchio, New York Times.
March 23, 2008

The New York Times
Wednesday, November 12, 2008

New York and Region

ART REVIEW; Surprising Sophistication

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO
Published: March 23, 2008

Much of the art in the College of New Jersey's latest exhibition, "Parable of the Garden: New Media Art from Iran and Central Asia," shows a level of sophistication that may come as a surprise to many viewers.

Most contemporary artists in these former Soviet states, among them Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, were initially trained in architecture, monumental socialist realist painting and sculpture at Soviet art schools, according to Leeza Ahmady, Sarah Cunningham and Deborah Hutton, the curators, writing in the exhibition catalog.

Today, however, the region has emerged as the site of a remarkably complex new-media art culture, with endearing local particularities of content and style.

The catalog tells us everything about this new-media culture in Central Asia, except the reason for it. But the curators imply -- rightly, I think -- that after decades of isolation, Central Asian artists want to reconnect with the world, joining the free market of ideas and images. And what better way to engage the world than through the Internet? Most of the artists in this exhibition maintain Web sites where they display their art.

The show includes the work of 10 contemporary artists who explore a sense of place, ideas of paradise lost and found, memory, tradition and the garden. Iran is included because of its cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic ties to the region; the Persian Empire once ruled over much of Central Asia, and people living in Iran today have much in common with their Central Asian neighbors.

Video, digital photography and graphic design are especially popular forms of expression. Almagul Menlibayeva, born in Kazakhstan in 1969 and the best-known artist in the exhibition, makes video artworks illustrating aspects of Kazakh culture, often with a fantasy quality.

"Steppen Baroque" (2004) offers up a dreamlike vision of the country in which women, nude or draped in traditional, hand-painted regional fabrics, re-enact regional tales and rituals to a soundtrack that evokes the eerie isolation of the landscape. The video imagery is also manipulated using a computer.

Ms. Menlibayeva's video references Kazakhstan's nomadic tribal heritage; Genghis Khan and his mounted warriors came from the Kazakh steppes. At the same time, it alludes to Baroque art, in particular Italian art from the 17th century. The artist refers to this synthesis of Central Asian and European traditions as "romantic punk shamanism," a term that captures both the rebellious qualities of the work (the use of nudity in a Muslim nation) and the celebration of nature and imagination.

Irony, pastiche and metaphor abound in these works, which are rich with humor and pathos. Vyacheslav Akhunov, born in 1948 in Kyrgyzstan and now living in Uzbekistan, presents a video of an elderly man in traditional Uzbek clothing slowly climbing a minaret's narrow spiral staircase. He is clearly a follower of Sufism, in which strenuous physical activity is tied to religious devotion.

Were this all, Mr. Akhunov's video might have been an interesting reflection on tradition and religion in Central Asia. But when the old man reaches the top of the minaret, he sits down and opens up a laptop, proceeding to watch a replay of the video of himself climbing the tower. Instantly the work bridges past and present, linking ancient religious traditions to 21st-century digital technology.

Alexander Ugay, born in Kazakhstan in 1978, reflects on the way in which many Central Asia nations are busy getting 21st-century makeovers. Mr. Ugay's "Paradise Landscape" (2004), a digital print on canvas, presents a tongue-in-cheek vision of the transformation of Kazakhstan during the artist's lifetime from a poor developing nation to a Technicolor utopia filled with exotic animals.

"Parable of the Garden: New Media Art from Iran and Central Asia," the College Art Gallery, College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Road, Ewing, through March 30. Information (609) 771-2633 or www.tcnj.edu/tcag.

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New York, NY – 8 April 2010 – 15 May 2010

Almagul Menlibayeva – Daughters of Turan

Almagul Menlibayeva: Madonna of the Great Steppes, 2010

Click on image to enlarge.

Share 3

Priska C. Juschka Fine Art is pleased to present "Daughters of Turan", Almagul Menlibayeva's third solo exhibition of video and photography at the gallery. In the Steppes of her native Kazakhstan, Menlibayeva stages and films complex mythological narratives, with reference to her own nomadic heritage and the Shamanistic traditions of the cultures of Central Asia.

"Daughters of Turan" explores the emotional and spiritual residues of an ancient belief system as well as a historic conflict, still resonating among the peoples of Central Asia today, between the Zoroastrian ideology of former Persia, spreading widely across Eurasia and influencing Western politicians and philosophers and the Tengriism (sky religion) of the Turkic tribes, reaching as far as the Pacific Ocean. Tūrān, the ancient Iranian name for Central Asia, the land of the Tur, inhabited by nomadic tribes, takes center stage signifying the relationship between the male and the female principles ingrained in the stories, myths and ritual practices of a widespread population and its cultures.

The nurturing earth goddess Umai and favorite wife of Tengri, the god of the sky, much like Gaia in the Greek mythology, created life also gynogenetic, out of herself, and symbolizes the close relationship of the people to the land and its given riches, without agriculture, by animals and humans feeding off her body and drinking her milk. The elusive sky god Tengri, foremost living on in Christianity, where then becoming omnipotent, is here still in his adolescent phase – while Umai satiates the voracious appetite of her inhabitants, Tengri watches over her body, the plains of the great Steppes of Central Asia, playfully entertaining several other wives and fathering many children.

Menlibayeva reaches further into the psychological fabric of the people living today on the Steppes traversed by their ancestors before they were forced to settle down, first by Persia and China to become peasants and in the 20th century by the Soviet Union in a cultural genocide. Umai, said to have sixty golden strands, still has her 'daughters' today, the female population, engaging in the same acts as their predecessors, symbolizing the circle of life, the most powerful Shaman symbol by making sure the circle remains undisturbed and intact, reflected in Menlibayeva's video, "Milk for Lambs". From this perspective, all men remain ultimately adolescent– feeding on the female riches,

"When I look at the Steppe, it reminds me of my body, dry and in some places hairy," referenced in all roundness of all things, "When I look at the round yurts and tables, they remind me of my breasts." (lyrics, "Milk for Lambs", Menlibayeva).

In her video "Butterflies of Aisha Bibi", Menlibayeva recounts an ancient love story of the Sufi poet's daughter Aisha Bibi and Karakhan, the Central Asian version of Romeo and Juliet, visually transforming it into a modern day drama of unfulfilled longing, unconditional love and its underlying gender discourse, addressing a never ceasing problematic synergy/symbiosis, deeply rooted in the civilizations born between the elements of earth and sky.

Almagul Menlibayeva was born in Almaty, Kazakhstan and lives and works in Amsterdam and Berlin and holds an MFA from the Art and Theatre University of Almaty. She has gained international recognition exhibiting at the Sydney Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2006; the 51st, 52nd & 53rd Venice Biennale, 2005, 2007 & 2009; "Tarjama/Translation" at the Queens Museum of Art, 2009, and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Ithaca, NY, forthcoming 2010; and the Oberhausen Film Festival, Germany, 2009 & 2010. Menlibayeva's video "Kissing Totems" is traveling in "Off the Beaten Path", Stenersen Museum, Oslo, 2009; El Cubo-Tijuana Cultural Center, Tijuana, Mexico; Museo Universitario del Chopo, Mexico City, 2010; and forthcoming, Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa; COP10 Nagoya, Japan; and the UN Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo, China.

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