

FLOW: Central Asian Video Programme

Week One Programme (2000s–2010s)

Screening List

- *Pastan on the Street*, Yerbossyn Meldibekov, 2005, 2'55
- *Eternal Bride*, Almagul Menlibayeva, 2002, 11'29
- *TransSiberian Amazons, Venice Biennale 2005, Pavilion of Central Asia*, Gulnara Kasmalieva & Muratbek Djumaliev, 2005, 1'34
- *La Nave Va*, Ulan Djaparov, 2003, 2'23
- *Starfall*, Ulan Djaparov, 2016, 3'30
- *Spit*, Yerbossyn Meldibekov, 2014, 8'03
- *Steppen Baroque*, Almagul Menlibayeva, 2003, 10'26
- *Spring*, Gulnara Kasmalieva & Muratbek Djumaliev, 2009, 12'32
- *Nail*, Ulan Djaparov, 2015, 5'19
- *Nan-Ursun*, Ulan Djaparov, 2007, 7'12
- *Shu-Chu*, Yerbossyn Meldibekov, 2007, 4'04
- *Video recording of the collaborative exhibition of contemporary art by Shai Ziya and Vadim Gandji "Avantgarde" on Arbat, 7 November, 1989*, Shai Ziya, 1989, 45'36

Additional Information/Artists Notes

YERBOSSYN MELDIBEKOV (b. 1964, Tulkubas railroad station, South-Kazakhstan Oblast, lives in Almaty, Kazakhstan)

Pastan on the Street (2005)

The image of a man being sapped first appeared in Meldibekov's work in the video *Pastan* in 2001. In that work, as in this one, the artist himself plays the role of the victim. "In it, the character humbly endured beatings and verbal abuse, showing himself as a metaphor for the subject of post-totalitarian, post-reformist, neo-authoritarian social conditions." (p. 80, *Eternal Return*: Yerbossyn Meldibekov, eds. Viktor Misiano and Dastan Kozhakhmetov, 2016)

Spit (2014)

In this work the artist explores one of the characters that he often portrayed in his videos. Here the seemingly aimless action of spitting becomes a metaphor for the state of society. As the video progresses, the screen between us and the character becomes more and more

sallied, making him invisible. There is also a play on words, as 'to spit' can also mean 'to not care'.

Shu-Chu (2007)

Similarly to *Pastan on the Street* and *Spit* videos in this programme, *Shu-Chu* is a work that suggests more than it portrays. The title comes from the Russian word meaning 'I joke' and accentuates the mental laughing of the protagonist. But what is he laughing about? It seems the silly toy is the cause, but the two do not share the same space or reality.

ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA (b. 1969, Almaty, Kazakhstan, lives and works in Germany and Kazakhstan)

Eternal Bride (2002)

"I want to sell my wedding dress. My family and children need the money. Anyway, it's been hanging in my closet for three years...it's a shame you only wear a dress like this once..." - said a married friend of mine, sadly reflecting...

As a show of support, I bought this wedding dress. At first, it took up residence in my little room like a shining white cloud. For almost a year, the image of Dream and Hope asked me a huge number of questions. The questions made my little room grow cramped... so there was nothing left to do but put on this dress-cloud one February day and go outside to solve them...

I wandered around the bazaar, along Silk Road Avenue, through the unfamiliar peripheries of Almaty.

I had no plan other than to take a whole stance of my own vulnerability, exactly where I was encased by this "monstrous cloud"...where my mother's and her sisters' anxious wails began to echo, challenge the gender constraints that have impacted my family and society.

Curious people asked me various questions...some of them seemed to be as harsh, and some even very harsh, as I myself... But strangely and magically, the more questions strangers asked me, the fewer questions I had remained to myself...

So one morning, when I was washing my face, I noticed in the mirror that I had a different inner look, I got beyond the gender.

That's the kind of artistic practice I had with a wedding dress...

I dedicated the performance to my mother and other family members who have faced struggles, hoping to inspire others to break free from the limitations and stereotypes that hold us back." (Almagul Menlibayeva, 2002)

Steppe Baroque (2003)

Steppe Baroque — Punk-romantic shamanism: a ritual movement through time, memory, and intuition. Sitting women, wrapped in geometrically intertwined fabrics, create a nomadic yurt — a living code of matriarchal memory, simultaneously serving as an archive of ancestors and a stage for performance, the steppe, and the sky.

GULNARA KASMALIEVA & MURATBEK DJUMALIEV (live and work in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)

TransSiberian Amazons, Venice Biennale 2005, Pavilion of Central Asia (2005)

This video is a recording of the set up within the Pavilion showing how the video *TransSiberian Amazons* was presented at that exhibition. The choice of the setting within plastic bags has become an iconic part of the work.

"The film is a touching and ironic report of the life of small-scale traders in the transitional period, travelling with their goods on trains, and sadly singing songs popular in their Soviet youth. In the hands of the authors this simple plot acquires the depth of a work of drama. Collision of different epochs, an attack on the weariness of the society, and social analysis of the phenomenon can all be found in the film, but, which is most important, it shows the firm spiritual center of broken human lives. Moreover, "Trans Siberian Amazons" is a lesson, an example, a way for art to survive in a poor country. ... Without big financial expenditures and without fear of the complexity of the theme, the authors of this film managed to rise to the level of serious filmmaking." (Gamal Bokonbaev, pp. 46-7, in *Art from Central Asia: a Contemporary Archive*, catalogue of the Central Asia Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 2005)

Spring (2009)

Video *Spring* is based on the real situation on the Bishkek city rubbish dump. Not long time ago inner Kyrgyz migrants due to terrible economic situation in remote districts moved to this place on the suburb of the capital and despite of Governmental restrictions tried to build their own new clay houses just in front of the constantly burning and smoking huge territory of waste. It seems that it is a usual situation of every megapolis of the Third World... But the fact that the people do nothing against this poisoned waste and moreover they are very much depending of this place due to it gives them means for surviving provoked artists to make wider connotations.

ULAN DJAPAROV (b. 1960, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan)

La Nave Va (2003)

The video of a recording of a performance that took place on the island of Olkhon (Lake Baikal) in 2003. Performance: Ulan Djaparov. Cameraman Murat Djumaliev. Editing Evgenii Belokurov. It was carried out as part of the art expedition "Whisper of the Earth, Silence of the Sky", organized by the Art-East association.

"We are only the first or second generation of city dwellers, our ancestors led a semi-nomadic life only recently.

The transition from a tactile perception of the world, the direct transmission of knowledge and traditions from person to person, to "textual" thinking, to a culture of articulated relationships, is not an easy one.

But somewhere deep inside us there is still nostalgia.

This performance is deliberately using a banal plot with the hackneyed image of a "paper boat".

I wanted to express my thoughts on a situation related to real-life experiences from an art expedition through Southern Siberia (Altai, Khakassia – the ancestral home of the ancient Kyrgyz and Turkic peoples), as well as a visit to iconic sites – Olkhon Island on Lake Baikal and the Ivolginsky Datsan – the center of Buddhism in Siberia.

At some point, ancestral “memories” began to surface inside - and the body itself wanted to get rid of the attributes of recently “acquired culture”.

The performance highlights two main themes:

- *the fate of the artist, leaving behind only a fading trace and a certain “message”;*
- *the liberation of man from attachments, his “dissolution” in the Universal.*

The main feeling is a gesture of respect for the Severe Lake, which does not recognize artistic pretentiousness, and a slight irony in relation to our fussy actions “on the shore.”” (Ulan Djaparov)

Starfall (2016)

Video documentation of the performance, 2016. Concept – Ulan Dzhaparov, Camera – Philipp Raikhmuth, Participants – Ulan Dzhaparov, Yura (Vyacheslav) Useinov, Philipp Raikhmuth, Viktor Vorobyov as well as the artists' children. Yurt village, Tosor, southern shore of Issyk-Kul.

Characters take turns to act as ‘stars’ - taking up positions that remind of soviet monuments, especially Lenin with his hand outstretched. The seemingly innocent beach game then is a reflection on the fall of idols.

Nail (2015)

Video documentation of the performance, 2015, Yurt town, Tosor, Southern coast of Issyk-Kul. Concept – Ulan Japarov. Participants: Ulan Japarov, Jamshed Kholikov, Yura (Vyacheslav) Useinov, Philip Reichm. Voiceovers: Victor and Elena Vorobyov. Camera – Philipp Reichm.

Djaparov's videos are known for seemingly simple actions that can act as metaphors for human activities and beliefs.

Nan-Ursun (2007)

The Kyrgyz oath of bread, the most serious one; they usually try not to utter it, and if they do, they have to answer for it. The work was produced under the influence of the endless, intense (sometimes tragic) political confrontation between the government and the opposition (following the 2005 “revolution” in Bishkek), when former allies became implacable opponents. However, ordinary citizens did not fully trust either side.

Perhaps the meaning of the constant “sparring” was not in the final victory of one of the sides, but in the mutual “sharpening” of each other; in the development of a political and civic culture, a more responsible position – especially when you have mutually beneficial interests, rather than an abstract struggle for some “democratic values.”

Someday this will help solve the population's pressing problems. In our time of transition, “harsh” rhetoric and mutual attacks have become commonplace, both in private conceptual debates and in public policy. Surely there must be some meaning to all this?

Concept and performance – Ulan Dzhaparov, Camera – Jamshed Kholikov, Editing – Oksana Shatalova. The performance was part of Oksana Shatalova and Talant Ogobaev's project “Risk Zone”.

SHAI ZIYA (born in 1948 in Issyk, Almaty region, died in Almaty in 2000)

Video recording of the collaborative exhibition of contemporary art by Shai Ziya and Vadim Gandji "Avantgarde" on Arbat, 7 November, 1989, 45'36

This video work by Shai Ziya is considered one of the earliest examples of video art in Central Asia. Structured in distinct chapters, the piece follows the artist as he navigates the Soviet-era streets of Alma-Ata (now Almaty), presenting his exhibition and engaging in casual conversations with local residents. The work captures both the urban environment and the everyday interactions of the city, offering a unique window into the social and cultural landscape of the time.