

## **52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennial 2007 - Central Asian Pavilion**

Project description by the curator, February 2007

### **Project:**

**Muzykstan:** Media generation of contemporary artists from Central Asia. A project for the Central Asian Pavilion in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale 2007.

### **Project team:**

- Yuliya Sorokina (Kazakhstan), project commissioner and curator
- Ulan Djaparov (Kyrgyzstan), co-curator
- Viktor Misiano, project consultant

### **Venue:**

Spiazzi, Associazione Culturale  
Castello 3865  
Campo S. Martino

### **Collaborators:**

- The Direction of Art Auctions and Exhibitions, Kazakh State Enterprise
- Asia Art+, Public Foundation
- HIVOS, Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries
- Open Society Institute
- Associazione Culturale Spiazzi

### **Summary:**

**Muzykstan:** Media generation of contemporary artists from Central Asia.

The name Muzykstan resembles the names of Central Asian countries: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Central Asia has a rich musical heritage. All genres of music can be heard everywhere in the streets, cafes, markets, mosques, schools etc. There is a Kazakh saying: "No Kazakh person is a real Kazakh, but the Dombra (Kazakh traditional string instrument) is a real Kazakh". Through music you can recognize time/epoch, generation, spirit and humor etc of the region.

Contemporary art in Central Asia has seen dynamic development since early 90's – since the collapse of the USSR and the establishment of new independent countries. The first contemporary artists in the region developed professionally and established their philosophy through a comprehensive process of theoretical and practice based analysis of modern art. They processed the heritage of the vanguard and non-conformist art of Soviet epoch, and also identified themselves as neo-nomads or neo-orientalists.

Today a new generation of artists (around 30 years old) is very pro-active in Central Asia. This generation absorbed all the achievements of the first contemporary artists, and at the same time they have a different post Soviet background. They use all kinds of information technologies as important tools in their everyday life and work. They have a different mentality, a so-called 'clip-mentality'. They are working in media-corporations, keep headphones under their pillows, watch MTV, go to night clubs, produce internet magazines and write their e-mails in "RunGLISH" (a crazy mix of Russian and English slang). "Isn't it a Cyber-like Globe generation?" you might ask, and I'd say: "Almost"!

These artists have a strong appreciation of music. They create their art-works under a strong influence of music. They have experimented with playing music themselves, using new technologies to compose new works. Equally, they are passionate about national instruments of Central Asia such as the dombra, kobyz, dutar and can also use these instruments with ease, promoting local music traditions through their works in international contexts. They

participate in the "Tulip revolutions" (current political activities in Kyrgyzstan) and travel all over the world in order to hear their favorite singers or bands.

The artists of this generation will be the main focus of this project.

The main idea of the project is to connect popular music (folk, rock, native etc.) and contemporary art (performance, video art, installation) in the Central Asian Region through producing new art commissions, based on the principles of entertainment and contemporary art. Each project will be based on the local music leitmotiv, as prioritized by each individual artist. The visual part, its construction, theme and story will be developed by each artist in his/her own way. This project will give us a unique opportunity to see the actual social and cultural background of Central Asia and witness how its music and art affects an audience.

### **What is so unique about Muzykstan and who are its citizens?**

#### ***The main aim:***

**To promote unique Central Asian contemporary culture world-wide, through organizing the "Muzykstan" exhibition at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale in June- November 2007.**

I see the exhibition as a video-projection of short (2-5 min) art-pieces of 4 teams of artists and musicians. The video pieces will be projected on the walls of the hall, one by one.

- the official venue for the Central Asia Pavilion is: Gallery Spiazzi, Campo S.Martino, Castello 3865, <http://www.spiazzi.info/>
- The exhibition will begin with a performance on the opening. During the opening a live-stream presentation of Central Asian cuisine will be organized.
- From June to November a special monthly education program of events, in the connection with Central Asia culture will be organized.
- Near the exhibition space we will have a media-library of CDs and DVDs of Central Asian music, video-art and films (in a small separate room set up and decorated in Asian/felt). The visitors to the library will be able to view the CD or DVDs in the collection on special DVD players with digitized systems to easily access material. If anyone would like to buy a CD or DVD, they can order it through the internet.
- A DVD catalogue/album will be published for this project.
- A web-site has been created.

\* The project is different from the one presented in the last Central Asia pavilion at 51 Venice Biennale, while building on its success, as it is about the next generation of artists, who were not presented at the last Biennale. The project covers a distinctive part of Central Asian contemporary culture, which is strongly connected to sounds and music.

\*\*The media-library will give us an opportunity to involve all regional institutions working with new media in the educational package of the project. They can contribute their media productions of music, video and films of the region on CD or DVD.

\*\*\* Finally I am certain that the project will reach a wide audience as although each sound and each tune can be specific to a particular region, the music will have the ability to transcend boundaries.

#### **Preliminary list of artists:**

- Natalya Dyu (Kazakhstan)
- Aleksander Ugay (Kazakhstan)
- Gaukhar Kiyekbayeva (Kazakhstan)
- Roman Maskalev (Kyrgyzstan)

- Aleksander Nikolaev (Uzbekistan)
- Vyacheslav Useinov (Uzbekistan)
- Jamshed Kholikov (Tadjikistan)
- Aleksei Rumyantsev (Tadjikistan)

**Commissioner and Curator:**

Yuliya Sorokina

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