

ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA



Transoxania Dreams (2011), HD Video, 23 min

Almagul Menlibayeva films mythological narratives staged in the vast landscape of her native Kazakhstan, ravaged by 60 years of Soviet occupation. In *Transoxania Dreams* she leads her audience to the brutally changed region of the Aral Sea where its indigenous people live in the Aralkum, the desert of a once thriving region now entirely devoid of water due to radical Soviet irrigation politics. The region of Transoxiana (Greek for 'across the Oxus') in southwestern Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, once the eastern part of the Hellenistic regime under Alexander the Great and the former homeland of the nomadic tribes of Persia and Turan at the banks of the Oxus River, remained an important trade region along the Northern Silk Road with flourishing civilizations and fertile plains for many centuries. Afflicted by former Soviet policies and abandoned by commercial and cultural interests, today, Transoxiana lies bare and stripped in a surreal state of existence with discarded fishing fleets on dusty terrain, ravaged by metal scavengers while its inhabitants look on as the sea keeps receding into a far and unreachable distance of a seemingly better world. Menlibayeva tells the tale of a young fisherman's daughter who observes the dramatic changes to the landscape of the Aral region and its population through a child's eyes in a dreamlike mélange of documentary and fantasy. Menlibayeva visually walks the viewer through a vacant landscape and a symbolic dream whereby the girl's father searches for the remaining sea and new fishing grounds while encountering strange and seductive four-legged female creatures (Centaurs) on his way through the hostile desert. Drawing on the image of the Greek mythological figure of the Centaur, Menlibayeva creates alluring hybrid beings, both sexually charged and bizarre. According to the legend, when the ancient Greeks first encountered the nomads of the Transoxianian Steppes on their horses, they initially believed them to be mythological quadruped, part person part animal, fearing their savage and magical powers. In *Transoxiana Dreams* Menlibayeva, a pictorial sorceress herself, breeds an eccentric storyline and fantastical imagery extracted deeply from her own atavistic repertoire; leading us visually through an existing, yet unimaginable, landscape in a distant and hypnagogic world.

BIO

Almagul Menlibayeva (born in 1969 in Almaty, Kazakh SSR; lives and works in Almaty and Berlin) is a video artist, photographer, and curator. Menlibayeva, holds an MFA from the Art and Theatre University of Almaty. She works primarily in multi-channel video, photography and mixed media installation and her work addresses such critical issues of post-Soviet modernity as social, economic, and political transformations in Central Asia, de-colonial re-imaginings of gender, environmental degradation, and Eurasian nomadic and indigenous cosmologies and mythologies. In 2018, she was co-curator of the groundbreaking exhibition *Bread & Roses: Four Generations of Kazakh Women Artists*, which took place in Berlin's Kunstquartier Bethanien.

In conjunction with her solo exhibition 'Transformation' at the Grand Palais in Paris (France, 2016-2017), she was awarded the prestigious Chevalier Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture in 2017. Other awards include the 'Daryn' State Prize of Kazakhstan (1996), and the 'Tarlan' National Award of the Club of Maecenas of Kazakhstan (2003). She was also the Winner of the Grand Prix Asia Art at the II Biennial of Central Asia, in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (1995) and the Winner of the Main Prize of the International Film Festival Kino Der Kunst (2013) in Munich, Germany.

Menlibayeva has gained international recognition by participating in: the Venice Biennale, Italy (2005, 2007, 2009, 2015); Sydney Biennale, Australia (2006, 2012); the Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2010); the Mediterranean Biennale, Israel (2010); the Moscow Biennale, Russia (2011, 2015); the Kiev Biennial, Ukraine (2013); the Daegu Photo Biennale (2016); and the Gangwon International Biennale, South Korea (2018).

Selected solo exhibitions include: *Videoart at Midnight #98: Almagul Menlibayeva*, Berlin (2018); *Transformation*, Grand Palais, Paris, France (2016-2017); *Union of Fire and Water*, 56th Venice Biennial, Italy (2015); *Transoxiana Dreams*, Videozone, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany (2014); *An Ode for the Wastelands and Gulags*, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria (2013); *Daughters of Turan*, Casal Solleric, Palma De Mallorca, Spain (2012); LATT: *Europe at large #6*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst (M HKA), Antwerp, Belgium (2010); *Kissing Totems*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, USA (2008). Recent selected group exhibitions include: Haifa Museum, Israel (2018); Neues Museum in Nuremberg, Germany (2018, 2016); Astana State Museum, Kazakhstan (2018, 2016); Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium (2017-2020, 2010); National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (EMST), Greece (2017).

CV

Born in 1969 in Almaty, Kazakh SSR; lives and works in Almaty and Berlin.

Education

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| 1987-92 | MFA of Academy of Art and Theatre, Almaty, Kazakhstan; |
| 1986-87 | Student of Painting Studio run by Sergei Maslov at Pioneer`s Palace, Almaty, Kazakhstan; |
| 1986-87 | Painting Studio run by Sergei Borovikov at Pioneer`s Palace, Almaty, Kazakhstan; |
| 1985-86 | Student of Kazakh painter Gani Bayanov, Almaty, Kazakhstan; |

Awards and Grants

- 2020 IFA Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen, Germany;
- 2020 PCAI, LAHORE BIENNALE 2020, ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA SUPPORTER;
- 2019 Trust Mutual Understanding;
- 2017 *The Chevalier Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters)* awarded by French Minister of Culture;
- 2013 Main Award in *KINO DER KUNST* in the International Film Competition, Munich, Germany;
- 2011 KfW Audience Award, Videonale 13, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany;
- 2013 Open Society Institute Budapest, Art and Culture Network Program Grant;
- 2010 The winner of the *Prize de la Nuit* for film *Exodus* at the 8th International Festival *Signes de Nuit, Paris*;
- 2009 *Gold Tambourine Prize: Video Art, 1st Prize, Golden Drum International Video Festival, Hanti-Mansiisk, Russia*;
- 2003 *Sacred Places of Kazakhstan, 3rd Prize, Center of Contemporary Art, Soros Foundation, Kazakhstan*;
- 2002 First Video Festival, 2nd Prize, Center of Contemporary Art, Soros Foundation, Kazakhstan;
- 2002 *TARLAN, Клуб меценатов Казахстана, an independent prize of Kazakhstan*;
- 1995 *ASIA ART Grand Prix, Second Biennial of Central Asia, Tashkent, Uzbekistan*; 1995 *DARIN, the state Grand Prix for artists, Kazakhstan*;

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2019
Transoxiana Dreams, curated by Mirjam Westen, De. Groen Fine Art Collection, Arnhem, Netherlands;
Genius Loci of Central Asia, curated by Nigora Ahmedova, Andakulova Gallery, Dubai, UAE;
- 2018
#98 Almagul Menlibayeva, Videoart at Midnight, Cinema Babylon, Berlin, Germany;
Green, Yellow, Red and Green again, TSE gallery, Astana, Kazakhstan; 2016 *Transformation, Grand Palais, Paris, France*;
My silk road to you, Lexing Art, Miami, USA;
- 2015
Union of the Fire and Water, curator Suad Garaeva, commissioned by Yarat Art Foundation, 56th Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy;
- 2014
Transoxiana Dreams, Videozone, Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany;
- 2013
Empire of the Memory, Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw, Poland;
An Odd for the Wastelands and Gulags, Kunstraum Innsbruck, Austria;
- 2012
Daughter of Turan, Casal Solleric, La Palma De Mallorca, Spain
- 2011

Exodus, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, Germany; *Les rêves perdus d'Aral*,
Galerie Albert
Benamou, Paris, France; *Transoxiana Dreams*, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY, USA; *My
Silk Road to You*, Tengri-Umai Gallery, Almaty, Kazakhstan

2010

Lonely at the Top, Europe at large #6 (Refrains from the Wasteland), Museum van Hedendaagse
Kunst (M HKA),
Antwerp, Belgium;
Daughters of Turan, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY, USA; 2009 *Exodus*, Tengri-Umai
Gallery, Almaty,
Kazakhstan;
Kurban, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY, USA

2008

Kissing Totems, Priska C. Juschka Fine Art, New York, NY, USA; 2007 *On the Road*, Galerie Davide
Gallo, Berlin, Germany

Selected Group Exhibitions

2020

Interlocutors APT10 (The Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art) Queensland Art Gallery,
Brisbane, Australia;
Once upon a time and Now! curated by Diletta D' Antoni, Ines Mourato and Junweij Chen, School of
Arts, University of Kent, UK;
The Sovereign Asian Art Prize Shortlist, Hong Kong;
Potential Words 1: Planetary Memories, curated by Heike Munder and Suad Garayeva-Maleki, Migros
Museum für Genenwartskunst, Zurich, Switzerland and Yarat Art Foundation, Baku, Azerbaijan;
Lahore Biennial 02, between sun and moon, curated by Hoor Al Qasimi.
Almagul Menlibayeva in collaboration with Inna Artemova and German Popov, PIA Planetarium,
Lahore, Pakistan

2019

Planet Art Festival of Nature, Kuehlhaus-Berlin, Berlin, Germany;
Channels Festival, International Biennial of Video Art, Melbourne, Australia;
Water (Proof), Berlin Food Art Week 2019, Momentum World Wide, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin,
Germany;
Art Residency at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia;
Border Agency Luquid Landscapes: what if the ground under your feet can't be trusted? Kunstfort,
Vijfhuizen, Netherlands;
This Land is Your Land, curated by Maren Richter, Valletta Contemporary, Valletta, Malta;
Uly Dala Hikayalary, group show, exhibition complex Atameken, Taldykorgan, Kazakhstan;
Re-membering. Dialogues of Memories, exhibition in Memories of Victim of Political Repression,
curated by Aigerim Kapar, House of V. Kubrin, Nur Sutan, Kazakhstan;

Racing The Galaxy, curated by Jerome Sans and Dina Baitassova, Astana Art Show 2019, Palais of Independence, Pyramid, Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan;
Eyes East Bound, Cairo Biennial, Cairo, Egypt;
Cultural Summit 2019, Abu Dhabi, UAE;
ULY DALA HIKAYALARY, Group show at Museum of Fine Art, Shymkent, Kazakhstan;
Climbing through the Tide, Kamel Lazar Foundation, Tunis, Tunisia;
SACRÉES FEMMES, the group show at Galerie BELEM/ Benamou-Lagié-Maxé, Paris, France; *The Collection*, Permanent Collection Exhibition of the International and Belgium artists at M HKA, Antwerpen, Belgium

2018

10 Year 100 Artist 100 Films, Videoart at Midnight Festival, cinema Babylon, Berlin, Germany;
Making Worlds, screening, performances and conversations curated by Isabel de Sena, diffract, center for theoretical periphery, Berlin, Germany;
DOTLAND II / Spannung, group show, *Peninsula*, curator Emilio Rapana, Berlin, Germany;
Inverted World, Neues Museum, Nurnberg, Germany;
CI, Contemporary Istanbul, Natalia Andakulova Gallery (Dubai), Istanbul, Turkey;
Mystic, Group Show, Karl Oskar Gallery, Berlin, Germany;
Focus Kazakhstan, Group exhibition *Bread & Roses*, Momentum Worldwide Berlin in collaboration with the program Rukhani Zhangyru, Ministry of Culture of Republic of Kazakhstan and The State Astana Museum, Berlin, Germany;
Focus-Kazakhstan Art Residency, Momentum Worldwide Berlin, and Rukhani Zhangyru, supported by Ministry of the Culture Republic of Kazakhstan and State Astana Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan; *Reinvented Mythology Planetary and Realities of Post- Soviet Central Asia: The Art of Almagul Menlibayeva*, curated by Liviq Monnet, *Cultural and Literary Studies; New Epistemologies and Relational Futures in the Age of the Anthropocene*, the Research Center for Planetary Studies, University Montreal, Canada;
V.I.E (Video Image Evolution), Albert Benamou Gallery in collaboration with Galerie W, Paris, France;
bitch MATER-ial, Group show at Studio 1, Kunstquartiers Bethanien, Berlin, Germany;
Collection of Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE;
March Meeting 2018, Active Forms, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE;
Prélude LIEBEN, Taxis Palas Kunsthalle Tirol, Innsbruck, Austria;
The The Collection, Permanent Collection Exhibition of the International and Belgium artists at M HKA, Antwerpen, Belgium

2017

The Time in Astana After Future, Astana State Museum, Kazakhstan;
Archipelago KAGLAG, in conjunction with Nurlan Dulatbekov, Museum Modern Art, Karaganda, Kazakhstan;
When The Sea LOOKS BACK, A Serpent's Tale/ TheMany Headed Hydra# 2, Berlin, Germany;
Arbat Fest 2017, Almaty, Kazakhstan;
GARAGE SCREEN PROGRAM at Astana Art EXPO, Astana, Kazakhstan;

When the Sea Looks Back, A Serpent's Tale/ theMany headed Hydra#2, Nida Art Colony, Lithuania;
The Collection, Permanent Collection Exhibition of the International and Belgium artists at M HKA,
Antwerpen, Belgium;

2016

Urgent Conversation: Athens-Antwerp, EMST and M HKA, curated by Bart De Baere and Katerina
Koskina, EMST, Athens, Greece;

A New Language, Root 1066 Contemporary Arts Festival, Observer Building Gallery, Hastings, TN34
1EL, UK;

Daegu Photo Biennale 2016, Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea;

KINO DER KUNST, Nurnberg museum, Nurnberg, Germany;

Astana FEST, Astana, Kazakhstan;

Shymkent Art Festival, Shymkent, Kazakhstan;

Archipelago KAGLAG, in conjunction with Nurlan Dulatbekov, Museum Modern Art, Astana,
Kazakhstan;

Hero Mother, Contemporary Art by Post-Communist Women Rethinking Heroism, Momentum, Berlin,
Germany;

Do you know Kazakhstan, Wild Project Gallery, IADA (International Art Development), Luxemburg;

Collection of Huma Kabakci, Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey

2015

German Cool, Salsali's selected collection, Salsali Private Museum, Dubai, UAE;

Elective Affinities, curated by Viktor Misiano, National Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA), Moscow,
Russia;

How to gather? Acting in a Center in a City in the Heart of the Island of Eurasia, curated by Bart De
Baere, Defne Ayas, Nicolaus Schafhausen, commissioner Joseph Backstein, 6th Moscow Biennial,
Moscow, Russia;

Union of the Fire and Water, curated by Suad Garaeva commissioned by Yarat Foundation, 56 the
Venice Biennale, Italy; <http://www.bakuvenice2015.com>

Fairy Tales, Utopian Days, Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei, Taiwan; *LINE*, curated by Basak
Senova, Art Rooms, Cyprus, Turkey