

ART from ESLEWHERE: Mexico City
The MOMENTUM Collection at LAGOS

ALMAGUL MENLIBAYEVA



***Transoxania Dreams* (2011), HD Video, Kazakh with English subtitles, 23'**

Almagul Menlibayeva's film tells a tale of ecological devastation in the guise of a mythological narrative staged in the vast landscape of her native Kazakhstan, ravaged by 60 years of Soviet occupation. *Transoxania Dreams* is filmed in 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 policies. The region of Transoxania 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 - 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 Transoxania 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. Almagul Menlibayeva tells the tale of a young fisherman's daughter observing 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. In her symbolic dream, the girl's father searches for the remaining sea and new fishing grounds, while encountering strange and seductive four-legged female creatures on his way through the hostile desert. Drawing on the mythological figures of the Hellenic Centaur and of Kazakh folklore, Menlibayeva creates a magical landscape with alluring hybrid beings, sexually charged and bizarre. In *Transoxania Dreams*, Menlibayeva, a pictorial sorceress herself, breeds an eccentric storyline and fantastical imagery drawn from her own atavistic repertoire; leading us visually through an existing, yet unimaginable, landscape in a distant and hypnagogic world.

Almagul Menlibayeva (b. 1969 in Almaty, Kazakh SSR. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany, and Almaty, Kazakhstan.)

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Almagul Menlibayeva is a video artist, photographer, and curator. Menlibayeva, holds an MFA from the Art and Theatre University of Almaty. Working primarily in multi-channel video, photography and mixed media installation, Menlibayeva's practice addresses such critical issues of post-Soviet modernity as: the 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 at MOMENTUM in Berlin's Kunstquartier Bethanien. In conjunction with her solo exhibition 'Transformation' at the Grand Palais in Paris (France, 2016-17), she was awarded the prestigious Chevalier Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture in 2017. Among other notable awards, she was the Winner of the Main Prize of the

International Film Festival Kino Der Kunst (2013) in Munich, Germany, and shortlisted for the Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Hong Kong (2020).

Menlibayeva participated in numerous international Biennales, including: Mardin Biennale, Turkey (2022); Asian Arts Biennale, Taiwan (2021-22); the Asia Pacific Triennale of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia (2020, 2012); the Lahore Biennale, Pakistan (2020); *Channels Festival*, International Biennial of Video Art, Melbourne, Australia (2019); Cairo Biennial, Egypt (2019); the Gangwon International Biennale, South Korea (2018); the Daegu Photo Biennale (2016); the Venice Biennale, Italy (2005, 2007, 2009, 2015); the Moscow Biennale, Russia (2011, 2015); the Kiev Biennial, Ukraine (2013); Sydney Biennale, Australia (2006, 2012); the Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2010); the Mediterranean Biennale, Israel (2010); amongst many others.

Selected recent solo exhibitions include: De. Groen Fine Art Collection, Arnhem, Netherlands (2019); *Videoart at Midnight #98*, Babylon Kino, 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); among others. Selected recent group exhibitions include: Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland (2020); Yarat Art Foundation, Baku, Azerbaijan (2020); Kamel Lazaar Foundation (KLF), Tunis, Tunisia (2019); M HKA, Antwerpen, Belgium (2019); Museum of Fine Art, Shymkent, Kazakhstan (2019); RMIT, Melbourne, Australia (2019); Haifa Museum, Israel (2018); Neues Museum in Nuremberg, Germany (2018, 2016); Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (2018); 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); Pera Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (2016); National Centre for Contemporary Art (NCCA), Moscow, Russia (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei, Taiwan (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art Strasbourg, France (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art Arnhem, Netherlands (2014); Singapore Art Stage, Singapore (2014); MoMA PS1, NY, USA (2013); ZKM Center for Art & Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2012); and many others.