



**BACTRIA**  
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Bactria Newsletter

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**May** | 2011  
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## Avatar of social network

The term "avatar" is ubiquitous in modern life. It is most commonly used as a moniker of network users, identifying them in their respective social networks, virtual worlds, chats, and online forums. The etymology of the word "avatar" is almost forgotten. The term originated in Hindu philosophy, from the Sanskrit word for "descent" or "incarnation" where the gods would manifest themselves in corporal bodies.

In our time, an ever increasing amount of the world's social communication is taking place in the virtual world. It is now common that people build their relationships and friendships without ever having physically met their "friends." The whole concept of friendship is evolving, changing from comrade-in-arms and close friends & colleagues to merely casual acquaintances.

A friend of mine exemplified this disconnect perfectly. She was walking in the square the other day and kept bumping into friends from her social networks, but the vast majority of them did not recognize her. The "friends" either had never been that close with her and could not recognize her, or thought she looked unrecognisable from her virtual avatar.

In Europe, a job applicant filed suit against an employer accusing them of trawling through personal information posted on social networking sites before deciding which person to hire. By engaging in this practice the company was able to find out much more information about potential employees, far more than would be gleaned from a resume, cover letter and an interview. Yet the applicant argued that this was an invasion of the private sphere (which is heavily protected by law in some countries) and allowed the company to engage in other types of hiring discrimination. The lawsuit boiled down to whether or not the presumption of privacy still existed when personal information was becoming more and more open and accessible to the public.

Another strange phenomenon has emerged with increasing use of social networks. It can happen when someone passes away that his/her account continues to be active and the "friends" of the dead do not even suspect that something has happened. This became such a problem that many



The work by Xu Bing, *Book from the ground*, 2008

social networks have invented contingencies for death, passing on the details of accounts to relatives of the departed.

All this suggests that people are immersing themselves deeper and deeper into the virtual world, catalogue their life, their activities and idealizing their personality. The films "Avatar" by David Cameron and "Surrogates" with Bruce Willis, have tapped into this strange modern disconnect between the real and virtual and have become hugely successful for it.

In both films a person living in a futuristic world guides his idealized copy (his avatar) in an imaginary world. But, in fact, we already live within this "futuristic" model; the only difference is that the avatars of social networks do not yet possess a physical manifestation.

A person who lives in the imaginary world of virtual life currently leads an active life. He/She updates the tags of their mood daily (if not hourly), jots down their perception of the world, visits each of his/her friends, listens to music, creates communities and takes part in revolutions.

On the one hand, virtual reality has become exemplar of freedom and in some countries it has paved the way for the strengthening of constitutional rights. On the other hand, it damages interpersonal relations and alienates people from each other in the real world. When living in the same country or quarter people choose to communicate through social networks, when working in the same office and room colleagues choose to Skype each other.

The avatar has become part of our real life!!!

Anna Basanova



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Cover page: Alexander Nikolaev, from the series *World of Kind People*, 2010. Photo: Alexander Nikolaev, 2010  
Photo from Xu Bing's exhibition at Albion Gallery, London: <http://linkchinese.net>  
Internal unit: Said Atabekov, *Red Cross (triptych)*, 2010, courtesy of Impronte Contemporary Art Gallery. Photo: Said Atabekov, 2010  
Pictures of Bakhoriston Festival courtesy of Tajik National Conservatoire named after T. Sattorov .  
Picture of Safar Khakhdodov, [www.pressa.tj](http://www.pressa.tj)



# 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia

Bactria Art Vision

From June to November, 2011 the 54th Venice Biennale, a magnificent event in the world of contemporary art will be held. The Central Asia Pavilion will be organised by an international group of curators- Boris Chukhovich, Oksana Shatalova and Georgy Mamedov. Their exhibition is entitled “Lingua franka”/ Франк тили – a language of universal communication and intercultural dialogue. Contemporary art can be considered as such a universal language.

The etymology of the term Lingua Franca derives from the name of a historically mixed language, which developed through trade contacts between Europe, North Africa and Asia. Lingua Franca is an Italian translation of the Arabic expression ‘Frankish language’, because during the crusades the Arabs called all Europeans ‘Franks’. The word combination “Lingua franka” was translated into Turkic language (Kazakh, Kirgiz, Uzbek) as “Франк тили”. Today this term defines languages of multiethnic communication, or in a broader sense – any semiotic system serving the function of multinational or multicultural communication.

As Boris Chukhovich noted “the researchers who study the art in the periphery assume that Central Asia countries, being far from the world art-centres, only try their best, figuratively saying, not to miss the last carriage of the train”.

Nevertheless we have our own artistic genealogy. We have been conducting creative research for a very long time. All contemporary art is linked with an art-community that managed to break with conventions of traditional art. Central Asia’s avant-garde has a specific feature, and it was a deliberate decision to investigate how the strategies of the past avant-garde artists intersect with what artists do today. We have found that the strategies are almost identical.

The exhibition combines two conceptual approaches – Lingua Franca. Experiences of Universal, juxtaposes atomization and miscegenation, language of metaphors and archetypes, harkening back to previous avant-garde movements, and appeals to the universality of unformulated order, which was called l’innommable

in the exhibit. Projects that built up this part of the exhibition investigate flexible and conceptual possibilities of creating new expressions that claim to be universally understandable and acceptable. The works of Natalia Andrianova (Kyrgyzstan), Galim Madanov and Zauresh Terekbay (Kazakhstan), Alexander Nikolaev (Uzbekistan), Aleksey Rumyantsev and Alla Rumyantseva (Tajikistan) fall into that category.

The section of “Frank Tilli,” the Foreign affairs, is comprised of works exploring contemporary universals through domination of languages, expressions of power, and appropriation of the universal potential of arts and media by authoritarian state machines. The works of Artyom Ernst (Uzbekistan), Yerbossyn Meldibekov (Kazakhstan), Adis Seitaliev (Kyrgyzstan) fall into this category.

The Central Asia Pavilion of the 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia was made possible thanks to the support from HIVOS (Holland). When asked why Central Asia pavilion at Venice Biennale is financed by various funds and organizations whereas the pavilions of many other countries are supported by their government, Georgy Mamedov responded that “There are 180 countries in the world and this year only 80 of them will participate in the Biennale. There are various reasons why other countries do not participate. Not only small states but also Great Powers with active artistic environment do not participate in the Biennale. For instance, India did not participate

in the exhibition for many years, and there is no Chinese pavilion thus far. Central Asia pavilion is a representation of its countries but it is also more than that – it is an autonomous art project representing the art of the region as a very specific phenomenon, something that transcends national borders. Even if some particular national pavilions of Central Asia countries emerge in the future that does not mean that CA pavilion should cease to exist. For example the Venice Biennale regularly hosts Italian and Latin America pavilions while at the same time hosting national pavilions of particular countries.



Sayid Atabekov, triptych, “Red cross”, 2011

Some critics of the Biennale suggest that government-funded pavilions are restricted in their selection of works. Can we say that CA pavilion is free from imposition?

This is a complicated question. There is no doubt that many countries consider Venice Biennale as Olympic Games of art. Very often the selection of artists, curators, conception of the exhibition is not transparent and this causes dissatisfaction within artistic communities of each country. Such dissatisfaction and criticism has surrounded the Bulgarian and Moldavian pavilions this year. Indeed this is one of the most criticized aspects of the Biennale – legitimacy and transparency of national pavilions. Both of the alternative scenarios – whether the pavilion is financed by international funds as in the case of Central Asia or by private entities such as the first pavilion in 2005 which only represented several countries – demonstrate that the format of national pavilion might be different, unrepresentative. As for the freedom of curators concerning the selection of artists we have this freedom. The selection of authors and works is carried out directly by the curatorial group. As it was, the curators and the sponsors had rather prolonged negotiations as to the structure of the project, and its technical details.

As for the social and political aspect of subtext, Georgy Mamedov best addressed this: "It is important for us to prevent the project from becoming just another 'project for export', we want it to become significant for the whole region, because the exhibition touches on controversial social and political issues. Contemporary art is something that allows you to go far beyond the borders of academic art. It is not merely an aesthetic medium, it has become a critical discipline, a medium through which we analyse and criticise present social and political reality. Therefore it is important to expose the exhibition to Central Asia towns. This art cannot be imprisoned within the walls of a museum; it is open for everybody and highly critical of the present reality".

*Prepared by Anna Basanova*

*Some materials of the text are borrowed from  
[www.fergana.ru](http://www.fergana.ru); [www.cap2011.net](http://www.cap2011.net)*

## Bahoriston Festival: the etymology of development...

Bactria\_Partner

One of the more important events that marked this musical spring of 2011 was the annual Bahoriston festival. It has become a celebrated tradition for the Tajik National Conservatory to host the international festival of musicians. Every May, admirers of classical music fill the conservatory with breathless expectation of the upcoming masterful performances. This year, the fifth annual festival, did not disappoint.

A great deal of help in the organization of this year's festival was given by: the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan; Rector of Tajik National Conservatory, Professor Amirov R.A.; Pro-Rector on Research Works, Associate Professor Ulmasov F.A., the Head of special piano and orchestra instruments department Obidova N.D; the Head of stringed instruments department Azaliya Galiahmetova, and many other professional and teaching staff members of the Tajik National Conservatory. It should be noted that Swiss Office of Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Tajikistan and the Open Society Institute (OSI) make valuable contributions to the development of musical art in Tajikistan and continue to support events like Bahoriston Festival with enthusiasm.

Although the Bahoriston is primarily a classical music festival, it has a very non-traditional approach to the art form and in many respects has become an innovative programme.

This approach developed from the qualitative approaches and implemented plans of the previous four years. Every festival has had a clearly defined thematic layout. Although in times of economic instability it has been very difficult to introduce any thematic innovations, thanks to the timely coordination of the administrative staff of the Conservatory and the support of the Tajik government the festival yielded very good results. The latest festival was under the personal patronage of the President of the Republic, Emomali Rahmon.

### Background of the festival.

The first ever Bahoriston Festival was held within the walls of Tajik National Conservatory in spring 2007. The principal goal of the festival was to unify the creative and organizational resources of four National conservatories – Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan – and present them to the public. The format of the festival was unique; it was the very first attempt at such an undertaking in Central Asia. The visionary behind the festival was the founder and first rector of the Tajik National Conservatory, the composer and professor Talabhuja Sattorov. Unfortunately Professor Sattorov passed away on the eve of the festival. The festival was dedicated to honour the memory of this brilliant composer whose creativity was well-known throughout the borders of Tajiki-

stan and was considered a national phenomenon in the world of professional music.

Firuz Ulmasov, the Pro-Rector on Research Works and an Associate Professor of the Sattorov's Tajik National Conservatory, was another key individual in the organization of activities and implementation of ideas for the festival. He has been involved with Bahoriston since the very beginning and has participated in the development of the project and has been the permanent manager of all subsequent festivals.

In spring 2008 second International Festival of Chamber Orchestras was held. Chamber orchestras from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan participated along with the stringed quartets from the Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and Art (Russian Federation) and Institute of Music of Oslo University (Norway). The 2008 festival extended and diversified the geographical representation of the participants. The prime objective of the festival was to present orchestra performing resources, consolidate creative collaboration and ultimately to form a joint "Interorchestra."

As previously mentioned, the organizers' creative initiative is not limited to a formulaic classical music festival; each festival is devoted to a particular theme. Having already found its niche in the cultural life of the country and gained international acclaim, the 2009 festival could justifiably claim to be a traditional event. In spring 2009 another, the third International Festival of Bahoriston was entitled "Piano – Forte." This festival has become more popular for the performance of US piano-player David Corevar, who joined the musical groups from the countries that participated in the two previous festivals.

The fourth International Festival of "Bahoriston" was dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Frederick Chopin and Robert Schumann. All world musical community celebrated the anniversary of the two great European classical composers. The Tajik National Conservatory considered its activities as the part of the international musical process and supported the initiative of the world musical community. The participants of the festival were the musicians from the Kurmangazi National Conservatory of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz National Conservatory, the Tchaikovsky State Conservatory of Moscow, the Glinka State Conservatory of Novosibirsk, the Mussorgsky State Conservatory of Uralsk, the Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and Art and Tajik National Conservatory.

From May 16 to 19 of 2011 the Conservatory again opened

its doors wide for the fifth annual festival. This festival differed from past by its scope and geography of the invitees. The distinguishing feature of this festival was the fact that all the invited musicians were our compatriots or those who had lived in Tajikistan in the past.

The names speak for themselves. There was Benjamin Usupov (Israel) – the composer, conductor, violinist and piano-player. He was also the winner of the Israeli Prime minister Prize, the winner of Clone Prize, a member of the league of Israel composers, the winner of Sherover Award, Landau Award, and two time winner of ACUM Prize. Despite his tight schedule of concert activities, Veniamin was pleased to accept the invitation to participate in the festival and bring joy and pleasure to his numerous admirers. He added: "I wish I were in my Motherland..."

There was also the familiar name of Valeriya Sharupa, the Rector of Uralsk Conservatory and a participant of all previous festivals. She is well-known to numerous admirers of piano music. The admires of piano music were very treated to performances by two other notable pianists – Dilbar Hakimova (Iran) and Gulchehra Inoyatova (China), graduates of Tchaikovsky State Conservatory of Moscow. Other pianists included Zarina Sabirova (Germany), Zulfiya Halilova (Germany) and Ruhshona Muborakshoeva (France) who joined the festival.



*Valeri Shkarupa and Benjamin Usupov*

The name of the composer Ahmad Bakaev (Moscow) is well-recognized among his admirers both for his outstanding creative talent and his performances at the annual Dushanbe Jazz Festival. His performance at the festival was very well received. Another brilliant discovery of the festival was the name of a talented composer Pavel Tursunov (Moscow), who graduated from the Dushanbe Musical School. A famous contemporary composer, Tihon Hrennikov, Pavel's former teacher of composition classes at Moscow State Conservatory described Pavel as: "very talented and highly-qualified composer

who easily wields all the means of musical expression: he is good at orchestrating, endowed with a real melodious gift (which is a rarity for a composer) and a theatrical flair.”

Also attending was Alisher Latifzoda (USA), a prominent contemporary composer, who was returning to Tajikistan for the first time in many years. He is a member of National Association of USA Composers, member of Composers' Union of Russia and Uzbekistan, a graduate of Dushanbe Republican Secondary School of Music of and Moscow State Conservatory. There was also Parviz Turabi (Moscow), a composer who visits Tajikistan rather frequently and is the author of symphonic and chamber compositions which he has performed in Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, and USA.

Soniya Kashkarova (Moscow) – an artist of Russian National Philharmonic orchestra conducted by Vladimir Spivakov. For her outstanding contribution to culture and art development, she was awarded a certificate of honour of the Russian Ministry of Culture. Another artist from Uzbekistan, Nozimov Sodir returned to Tajikistan for the first time in many years. She is a concertmaster of oboist section at Navoi State Academic Bolshoi Theatre, Tashkent.

The vocal part of the festival was performed by a famous tenor – Rustam Duloev (Italy) and the Peoples' Artist of Tajikistan and multiple prize-winner of International singing contest Mario Lantsa. Mr Lantsa won the Palermo's contest in Venice. He often performs solo concerts in Aini Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet. It is worthy of praise that many of these musicians living abroad integrate Tajik folk melodies into their compositions, thereby promoting Tajik music all around the world.

The Bahoriston Festival of professional musical art reflects the conditions of all professional music in Tajikistan. Based on the results and the response of the audience

we can estimate the level of Tajikistan's cultural mass consciousness. Having become an integral part of the Tajik musical heritage the festival gradually brings together more and more admirers of classical musical art and the Conservatory serves as a convergence point for musical creativity. The organizing committee never rests on its laurels and will continue to develop its thematic component. There are many factors that decide the thematic layout of the upcoming festival which are being elaborated now. We hope that the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and international organisations will assist us in reaching our goals. We have also great expectations from those who are not indifferent to the future of the Festival, which has become invaluable to cultural life of Tajikistan.

*Hosiyat Olimova*

*Chief of the department of the international relations and information of the Tajik National Conservatory after T. Sattorov*



*Soniya Kashkarova and Nigina Obidova*

## Safar Hakdodov: We should inform the audience about the cinema

Here below we bring to your attention an interview with the Head of Filmmakers' Union of Tajikistan Safar Hakdodov, full version of the interview is available on [www.pressa.tj](http://www.pressa.tj)

**In what condition is Tajik cinematography today?**

For many years I have been looking for an expression which might fully characterize the conditions of Tajik cinematography. It has been a search. The expression both had to encapsulate the current state of cinema and everything that was

lost in the collapse of the Tajik cinematography that had existed for over 70 years. In its heyday, there were over 200 feature films, thousands of documentaries, and a great number of dubbed pictures released by “Tajikfilm”. After the Independence the Soviet system did not exist anymore thus leaving movie studios and film production to stagnate, especially in its technical expertise. These past 20 years have been a search for a new direction. It seems to me that Tajik cinema has not found its own way and niche yet. It must find its place either in a figurative or in the literal sense of the word. What

Bactria\_CinemArt

should "Tajikfilm" be based on? Of course it should be revived on the basis of old "Tajikfilm" which has a rich history, taking its place in the public, among theatre or music, which are well supported in Tajikistan.

Probably today the preference is given to the art of dancing. It is prospering more than other art forms and the proof of it is that dances are frequently shown and spoken of. There are always definite trends and variations of art each of which has their own particular stars. But Tajik cinema has not found its niche. The repeated attempts by some so-called private film studios that emerged in the early years of independence ended without bringing any essential change to the development of this sector. There were some other individual attempts made by Daler Rahmatov, a filmmaker, who would shoot films and represent our country on international festivals. But in general these examples do not reflect the holistic situation of Tajik cinema. I do not deny that somebody tries to create something; the attempts do exist, but no clear holistic picture at all. This is the reason why it is impossible to define the tendencies of the Tajik cinema. If we take for example a local film studio, can we observe contemporary models of film production and distribution? No, in all cases it is the same, it has not been developed yet. All film studios are only at an initial stage in their development.

#### Why is the Tajik cinema in such a condition?

Current cinema can probably be best described as part of another genre – audio-visual, television. There are similar in their own way but have completely different goals. Television is broadcast oriented. Cinema as a visual art, with all its particular interests, has been thrown overboard. I hope that in the immediate future a separate structure for the cinema will be set up in the government dealing with cinematography, film production and all other cinema-related issues. Only then one can say that we are moving in the right direction, looking for concrete cinematic direction.

#### Is it realistic to revive the Tajik cinema?

Again, this boils down to the search for direction. In the early years of independence only two or three filmmakers shot films, now there are a large number of aspiring filmmakers. However, technical requirements of film production are not observed in the majority of their films. "Full noon," which was directed by Nosir Saidov, is the only motion picture for the past few years where all the required standards were observed. This is the only film that could be brought to the international cinema market, multiplied and distributed abroad. Sadly today, Tajikistan does not have any interested distributors who would promote the picture, and a film director should not be forced to take on the additional role. In today's saturated marketplace it is extremely difficult to cover the expenses required to produce a single food picture. Cinema, as you know, is not a profitable business; you need at least 5-6 pictures to cover all the expenses incurred. Now Tajikistan's mar-

ket is awash with DVD films, so called cinema. Presently, over 100 000 copies of various films are being released all around the country. It is a big business for our small market. But the copy rights are not observed despite the existing legislative. The laws do not function well.



#### Perhaps the audience is not ready to watch the films of better quality?

Good films are always in demand, but we must inform the audience of them. It is necessary to use all instruments of the film production sector: attract famous stars, conduct PR campaigns, open state-of-the-art cinemas. Anyone would be pleased to go to the cinema with all his/her family members if its hall and seats were comfortable. Look on 3D cinemas as an example, people visit them despite high ticket prices.

So I consider it important to use all the components of film making to attract the audience to our cinemas. Today nobody thinks of the audience, they buy a disk for 3 somoni per unit and watch it at home. If somebody watches a film it means that he/she wants to watch a film regardless of quality. I believe that anyone would want to watch a good Tajik film if there were any.

#### Do we have young specialists in our country who would be able to revive the Tajik cinema?

Of course, we have. I think those who have received good training in film making, feel responsible for what they do are our potential for the future development of cinema. But they will not shoot films if the budget is low. Nevertheless we have creative potential; all we need to do is to provide conditions for their realisation. If in the past we had 1-2 pictures, last year about 6-8 films were shot, though in DVD format, but still something is being done. You will certainly see that very soon we will have more pictures of this kind and even if they do not meet the technical requirements and are not so professional we will have a native cinema no matter what.

*Author: Sh. Alena*

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