

Gattamelata in the Hide of Genghis Khan



Gattamelata in the Hide of Genghis Khan, Installation, 200 x 80 x 170 cm, 2005

The Installation is the stage of the improbable encounter between two men belonging to different geographies and epochs, yet both driven by power and a taste for war.

The first one is Erasmo da Narni (1370-1443), nicknamed Gattamelata, a mercenary in the Italian Renaissance who became the subject of Donatello's equestrian bronze sculpture on Padua's main square. The second one, Genghis Khan (1162-1127), was the founder and ruler of the Mongol Empire.

Highly symbolic and open to interpretation, the body-less force resting on a quasi-empty pedestal is what might have become of Gattamelata had he encountered the "barbarian" Mongol Emperor – or so is the Western vision of the unknown (the faraway past and faraway country) that the artist brings to the viewer's attention. The work further ironises the way in which Central Asian countries have represented their own history and the building of their nations – notably through the erection of statues of national heroes – since their independence in the early 1990s.

Anna Colin in Catalogue "Frontières Invisibles", Stickingboek - Lille 3000, 2009

It is a pathetic monument to the history of cruelty repeating itself. Whose features Meldibekov assimilates as a part of the Asian tradition. The work refers to the enthusiasm with which the newly independent Central Asian countries started erecting equestrian statues for old heroes from the early 1990s onwards. They gave a visible and permanent form to a desire to define a nation through its own past. The new role models were the legendary warrior chiefs from centuries before, such as Ablai Khan, Timur bin Taraghay Barlas and Genghis Khan.

Their return is moreover apparent in plays, books, films and music videos, which present history in a fictional and idealised manner and include calculated symbolism.

Mutation - Peak Staline



Mutation – Peak staline, Peak Communnism, Peak Somoni, 2009
Installation with metal pots – 3 x diameter of 35,5 cm x 13 cm

In the series entitled *Peak Communism*, the artist inverts cheap metal pots and bowls and moulds their tops to show their shapes as different shapes -- such as Communism Peak, Lenin Peak and Peak of the Pioneer, or as the work presented here Peak Stalin, Peak Communism, Peak Somoni * -- offering a pathetic spectre of a government projecting itself as a noble vision of the nation-state. Either way the series *Peak Communism* is viewed, the work appears as hollow or empty shells, little more than commonplace, disposable icons. By transforming the most mundane and cheap product of everyday use into a symbol of state ideology, Meldibekov provides us with an ironic view of the building of the modern state. The pathetic sight of these up-ended utensils bespeaks of the impoverishment of life -- a condition of the shaping of a people and way of life by the imposition of a ruling ideological belief that of itself is no more than an empty form. **Nadira Artyk**

And Yerbossyn Meldibekov quotes humorously the Arab proverb : "If the mountain will not come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain".

*The highest peaks of the USSR lay in Central Asia, in the Pamir Mountains, was named Stalin Peak in the 30s of the last century, renamed into Communism Peak after Stalin's death and given still another name Somoni Peak after the downfall of the USSR.

Aliens



Aliens, wax or bronze, 5 x 20 x 30 cm, edition of 4, 2009

JOZSA GALLERY

May be Chingizkhan, may be Jakometti



May be Chingizkhan, may be Jakometti – bronze - 3 x 30 x 30 x 15 cm - edition of 4 - 2009



Family Album

In collaboration with Nurbossyn Oris

In the Soviet Union it was traditional for new couples to visit the local Lenin memorial after their marriage ceremony. From Kamchatka to Kaliningrad, every family has photos taken in front of such memorials. In his deeply Soviet ritual, public professions of loyalty became a sort of guarantee of future family prosperity.

The Soviet Union is long gone and the elemental force of post-Communist iconoclasm has swept away countless Lenin memorials, but the tradition of paying homage to some symbol of state power remains alive – at least in the eastern former Soviet republics.



Kalinin 1982-2008 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

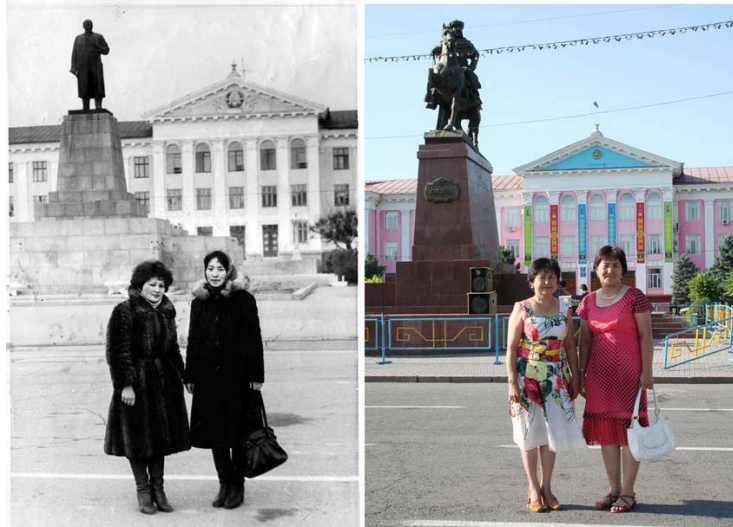
What prompted Yerbossyn Meldibekov to create his *Family Album* (in collaboration with his brother, Nurbossyn Oris) was the discovery of a striking fact : Over the past 120 years, in one park in the centre of Tashkent, there have been six different memorials successively proclaiming conflicting messages. In other words, the history of the region was rewritten every 20 years from the bottom up : starting with Turkistan as a province of the Russian Empire, moving on to the triumph of Leninism and Stalinism, and finally to independence symbolized by the figure of Tamerlane.



Family Album - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

JOZSA GALLERY

Meldibekov uncovered a similarly surprising fact while digging through the archives of his own family : The attitude of individuals to state symbols seems never to change. In fact, not only newlyweds but also groups of friends and entire families have photos take of themselves standing in front of various memorials, to mark important occasions in life. Clearly, the scenery and technology change, but the ritual character of society overall remains static. This creates the impression that no one in the photos really cares what a given memorial stands for; and it is not even clear whether they notice when one object of veneration has been replaced with another.



Dzhambul, 1978-2009 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

The artist attempt to grasp whatever logic may lie behind these changes of fetish : For example, where a Lenin memorial once stood in Taras (formerly Jambyl, Kazakhstan) today one finds an equestrian statue of the local hero Bajdibek-batyra; and in Almaty, the Soviet politician Kalinin was replaced by Ablai Khan, a warrior who fought against the Western Mongolian Dzungar tribe when it tried to seize Kazakh lands. The ideological tendency appears obvious: emphasis on the historical struggle for independence and negation of the influence of Soviet power.



Baja, 1990-2009 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

JOZSA GALLERY

On the other hand, a second Lenin monument in Taras, was replaced by one to Turar Ryskulov, deputy chairman of the Council of people's Commissars (government) of the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) from 1926 to 1937. And in the village of Vannovka, today called Turarkent, a statue of Turar Ryskulov again replaced one of Lenin – the very historical figure who, as a chairman of the Council of People's Commissars until 1924, actually laid the foundation for Ryskulov's work.



Aktay, 1980-2009 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

Meldibekov compares the stratified names, classifications, ideologies and myths; he tries to disentangle the chaos of three to four layers of street- and -city-renamings, documenting a classical trend in post-colonial discourse : the affirmation of ethnocentric historical images that promote a "return to roots" while erasing traces of the recent past.



Dzambul, 1977-2009 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

JOZSA GALLERY

Meldibekov has members of his own family pose in the same place where they were photographed 20 years ago, thus explaining the indifference towards national symbols as being due to a tradition of manipulating history : The people and the authorities merely form backgrounds to one another's existence. Post-colonial and Soviet symbols of power, representing real or mythical heroes, are mere stage-dressing, ephemeral objects. But the roles of people, of individuals, remain static : the small figure of the beloved wife, who barely reaches to the knee of the colossal ruler. **Valeria Ibrayeva**

Texts from the catalogue *Turbulent World – Telling Time – 1989-2009*
Goethe-Institut, Berlin, August 2009



Tuz, 1978-2008 - Digital Photograph - 2 x 20 x 30 cm - Edition of 5

Nurbossyn Oris - *German Hope*



The topic of dematerialisation of matter was particularly clearly articulated in Nurbossyn Oris-uly's works, Yerbossyn Meldibekov's brother and artistic colleague. Nurbossyn Oris-uly uses Günther Ucker's works as the object of artistic contemplation. Ucker was a member of the neo-avant-garde Group Zero, a group which advocated the free choice of medium in the middle of the last century. Günther Ucker's trademark was the use of nails : he made pictures out of nails, objects covered in nails similar to hedgehogs, and monumental nail-compositions. Nurbossyn reproduces some of Ucker's works, replacing the nails by burned matches. In this way something passionate, convincing, phallic, strong-willed turns into something fragile, ephemeral, uncertain, decaying.

Dematerialisation, decay is an unavoidable phase on the way to the emancipation of the material. One gains the impression that Günther Ucker's creations, independently of their iron reputation, burnt and died down, like the art enthusiasm of the 60s did. The fire, the ashes, the glowing – the general metaphor for the avant-garde thought (...). The aesthetic and poetic of the representation of fire is depicted poorly. In his variations on Ucker, Nurbossyn Oris-uly presents this aesthetic – post-utopian, post orgiastic, an aesthetic of the salient material. The variations are inverse. The members of Group Zero strove to start at the very beginning, as is appropriate for an avant-garde. They were filled by the pathos of the origin. Nurbossyn Oris-uly demonstrates the pathos of the end, - not so much the suffering but the decay – thereby getting back to the beginning of the cycle, the eternal struggle over the power of the material. Oxana Schatalova in *Pieces of Evidence*, 2008

Plates

In collaboration with **Nurbossyn Oris**



Plate, 2003 – painted ceramic plate – Ed. of 10 – Ø11 cm



Plate, 2003 – painted ceramic plate – Ed. of 10 – Ø25 cm



Plate, 2003 – painted ceramic dish – Ed. of 10 – Ø23 cm



Plate, 2003 – painted ceramic plate – Ed. of 10 – Ø17,5 cm

In the series of traditional Iznik-style Turkish plates, the centrepiece imagery is replaced by clichéd images of barbaric Islamic stereotypes and US army vehicles.