The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Guelman Back With Kazakh Contemporary Art

By Eradzh Nidoev

December 01, 2012



Kazakh artist Yerbossin Meldibekov's piece "My Brother My Enemy," now on show at Winzavod as part of Marat Guelman's new Cultural Alliance. **Vladimir Filonov**

"I'm a gallery owner again," he said.

Guelman, a former political spin doctor, returns less than six months after closing his Moscow gallery and after a period of semi-exile in Perm, where he attempted to make the Urals city a cultural powerhouse.

His new project, called Cultural Alliance, currently showcases Kazakh art and is an attempt to unite modern artists from different areas.

"Working in Perm, I realized that you can't organize a full cultural life in the city by using creative minds only from the city. It's impossible. You need a constant cultural exchange," Guelman said in an interview.

Guelman shut down his gallery earlier this year because the idea of running a gallery had changed.

"The market model for Russian art, launched in the '90s, has already ended. That time it was created just for a small group of oligarchs," he said.

"New rich people in Russia, who frequently are connected to the authorities, now hide their money rather than show it. Now, the people who are interested in art for real are from the middle class. They are well-off but not very rich. They will not buy a picture for 50,000 euros," he said.

Guelman has decided to tap this new market by showing artists from outside Moscow, who are more affordable for this new breed of collectors.

"Russian art must stop being a clique of just 30 oligarchs," he said. "We want it to have a big, active and creative life with communication between artists, between cities."

Guelman says his prices have fallen to a range of about 3,000 to 8,000 euros per work.

"These artists were outside the Moscow art market. This is the real price from their own town," he said. "In the future their works will become more expensive and we will bring new ones."

For his return, Guelman is concentrating on new Kazakh art.

"Kazakh art is very powerful. Of course, I wanted to amaze everybody by showing something new," he said. "Kazakh art is terra incognito."

One of the most prominent Kazakh artists in the exhibition is Yerbossin Meldibekov, whose sculpture of four horse legs and a ball has drawn much attention, although the most popular work at the gallery was a video by another Kazakh artist that showed a couple copulating while riding a horse.

"After Kazakhstan I will astound even more — our next exhibition will be held in Izhevsk," Guelman said, referring to the Udmurtian capital, which is most famous for being the home of the Kalashnikov rifle and a group of singing grannies. "Nobody expected that Izhevsk would have such an interesting cultural life."

Cultural Alliance, Marat Guelman Project runs till Dec. 12. Winzavod. 1 4th Syromyatnichesky Pereulok, Bldg. 6. Metro Chkalovskaya, Kurskaya. Tel. (495) 766-4519.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/12/01/guelman-back-with-kazakh-contemporary-art-a19826