



# Saodat Ismailova

- I Do Not Take My Name for Granted

Film/Video

**MARCH 6, 2023**

**8:30 PM**

**PRESENTED BY**

**REDCAT**

**Roy and Edna Disney**

**CalArts Theater**

**CaLARTS**

**California Institute of the Arts**

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandeño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

# Saodat Ismailova

## • I Do Not Take My Name for Granted

Who accounts for the whispers forgotten in the oral tradition? Who accompanies the ghosts that haunt the visual tradition? Saodat Ismailova's films pierce the forgotten and the silenced. Engaging the spiritual and representational in equal measure, the films are forceful but nuanced, intimate but communal, historical and imagined. Ismailova's work is situated in the context of Central Asian cinematic history, collective memory, and women's inner spaces. Within this context, Ismailova's work indexes, recontextualizes, and bears witness. This program presents four of Ismailova's short films from different stages in her career, marking the first time her films have screened theatrically in Los Angeles.

*Presented in Uzbek with English subtitles. The program is curated by Jheanelle Brown.*

**Runtime: Approx. 80 minutes, no intermission**



In Ismailova's films, which unfold in extended shots, viewers watch as age-old fairy tales come to life and religious rituals are undertaken.



—Alex Greenberger, *ARTnews*

***Gulaim*** (2014) 28 min.

*Gulaim* is a main character of an epic story—*Qyrg Qyz (40 Girls)*—and the video is built on a monologue that *Gulaim* addresses to her father *Allayar*. She recalls her childhood full of liberty, luxury, and care, her being encouraged to become a warrior. Gradually the monologue falls into the weight of patriarchal society and she refuses to marry a man her father has chosen for her. The voice-over is accompanied by images that visualize metaphors found in the monologue, shaping an imaginable landscape or a contemporary interpretation of the ancient oral tradition. —Aspan Gallery

***The Haunted*** (2017) 22 min.

*The Haunted* is an imaginary encounter with the extinct Turkestan tiger that fell as a victim to the colonization of Central Asia. Today, the tiger keeps on living in the collective memory and dreams of local people as a sacred archetype. —Aspan Gallery

***Her Five Lives*** (2020) 13 min.

Commissioned as part of Asian Film Archive's *Monographs*, a series of essays on Asian cinema, this essay film examines the changing role of female heroine archetypes in Uzbek cinematic history, situating filmic representations of women in a broader context of social and political transformation. —Asian Film Archive

***Chillpiq*** (2018) 17 min.

Two buses cross the horizon driving towards Chillpiq. A group of girls climb the ruins that stand on a mount in the middle of the steppe. They have come to worship a flagpole that crowns the archeological site, and one after the other they bind a cloth to it, as if it would be a tree of life. 40 girls circle around the shrine while the sunset is changing the light to a dramatic orange, and the girls are blurred, visually dissolving into the site. —Aspan Gallery

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Saodat Ismailova** was born in 1981 in Tashkent, in the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. She studied film at Tashkent State Art Institute, and, in 1999, she won the Grand Prix at the Tashkent Student Film Festival. In 2002, she accepted an offer to continue her studies at Fabbrica, Centre for the Study of Arts, in Treviso, Italy. Two years later her documentary *Aral: Fishing in an Invisible Sea* won Best Documentary at the Turin Film Festival.

Ismailova then mastered the art of directing and scriptwriting at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute. Her feature debut, *40 Days of Silence*, was nominated for Best Debut Film at the Berlin Film Festival in 2014 and won various international awards. The previous year she had attracted attention with *Zukhra*, her first video installation, shown in the Central Asian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

From 2015 to 2017, Ismailova studied at Le Fresnoy, France's National Studio of Contemporary Art in Lille. Since 2017, she has taken part in numerous exhibitions and had solo exhibitions in such prestigious institutions as the Tromsø Centre for Contemporary Art, Norway (*The Haunted*, dedicated to the Caspian tiger, which is threatened with extinction) and Musée du quai Branly in Paris (with the interdisciplinary project *Qyrg Qyz* [2018] also shown at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York).

In 2022, Ismailova took part in documenta fifteen and the main exhibition at the Venice Biennale ("The Milk of Dreams"). The artist's work is held in the collections of Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

*The Jack H. Skirball Series is organized by Bérénice Reynaud and Jheanelle Brown.*

## UPCOMING AT REDCAT

### Jon-Sesrie Goff

#### *After Sherman*

March 13

Beautifully layered, *After Sherman* is a story about inheritance and the tension that defines our collective American history, especially Black history. The filmmaker follows his father, a minister, in the aftermath of a mass shooting at his church in Charleston, South Carolina, to understand how communities of descendants of enslaved Africans use their unique faith as a form of survival as they continue to fight for America to live up to its many unfulfilled promises to Black Americans.

### Queer Motions

March 20

Queer Motions brings together six queer shorts characterized by movement and a spirit of anarchy in a unique combination of pulsating, contagious energy and leisurely drag. Mobile protagonists transported by feet, cars, motorbikes, rollerskates, or trains navigate a range of mostly urban terrains in Bissau, New York, East Jerusalem, Nairobi, and other places, tracing pathways of freedom within occupied territories. Verging in tone from lightness to spirited irreverence, these shorts by Dawn Suggs, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Amirah Tajdin, Eduardo Williams, Jumana Manna, and Lionel Soukaz exemplify resolutely queer, experimental approaches to form, especially volatile, frenzied, kinetic camerawork and verbal excess via polyphony, overlapping, discordant running commentaries, and poetic discourse.



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