

# Venice Art Biennale 2013



## Love Me, Love Me Not

Tesa 100, Arsenale Nord

**Love Me, Love Me Not** is an unprecedented exhibition of contemporary art from Azerbaijan and its neighbours, featuring recent work by 17 artists from Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey, Russia and Georgia. The exhibition is produced and supported by **YARAT**, a not-for-profit contemporary art organisation based in Baku, and curated by **Dina Nasser-Khadivi**.

The works presented space between diverse range of media and subject matter, with video, installation and painting all on show. Pieces range from those steeped in historical reference, to those with more site-specific responses through to those which are inspired by personal history.

**Faig Ahmed** takes the motifs found in Azerbaijani carpets as a starting point for his work, reinterpreting these to underline the rapid shift Azerbaijan is experiencing towards modernity. His thread installation *Untitled* (2012) deconstructs the notions of craft inherent to the traditional process of weaving, extending the usual two-dimensional plane of the finished carpet across a three-dimensional space. **Kutluğ Ataman**'s video installation *Mesopotamian Dramaturgies / Column* (2009) is inspired by the Trajan Column in Rome: a tower of 42 used TV screens each feature the silent face a villager from Erzincan in Eastern Turkey, Ataman's place of origin. This key work is both an attempt to show a story without narration as well as a tribute to the history of Anatolian people, who he sees as silenced throughout history. In his most ambitious project to date, **Shoja Azari** will show a specially commissioned film which recreates the *Haft Paykar*, an allegorical romance, which takes self-knowledge as the essential path to human enlightenment as its central theme. **Ali Banisadr** will be producing his largest work to date for the exhibition, in the form of a triptych inspired by the pervasive symbolism of fire and light. These elements, prevalent in both Azerbaijan and Iran, relate to the origins of Zoroastrianism as well as the etymology of 'Azerbaijan,' which derives from the Persian name for 'Guardians of Fire'. **Ali Hasanov** uses a contemporary appropriation of everyday materials. His work *Masters* (2012) features hundreds of "veniki" (brooms made of bundled twig and common in post-Soviet countries) which are bound together to form a sculptural whole. **Taus Makhacheva** will re-produce a film, recently shown at the Liverpool Biennale about an abandoned silk-road city *Gamsutl* (2012) through a young male protagonist who "dances" to enact the fragmented qualities of the city, now half forgotten. **Slavs & Tatars**' installation entitled *Molla Nasreddin The Antimodernist* (2011) is a life size sculpture as a playground "ride" for adults and children alike and refers to the popular Sufi philosopher of the 13th century. **Molla Nasreddin** also refers to the legendary Azerbaijani satirical periodical of the early 20th century, which not only contributed to a crucial understanding of national identity, but offered a momentous example of the powers of the press. In their installation *Love Me, Love Me Not*, the collaborative pluck the petals off the past to reveal an impossibly thorny stem: entire metropolises are caught like children in the spiteful back and forth of a custody battle, representing the evolution of the region over time - a theme which is at the core of this exhibition.

**Curator:** Dina Nasser-Khadivi

**Organized by:** YARAT Contemporary Art Organisation

### **Special Event**

Thu, May 30 | 11am - 2pm, Press brunch

Thu, May 30 | 5pm - 8pm, Private view, by invitation only

**Artists:** Faig Ahmed Rashad Alakbarov Afruz Amighi Kutluğ Ataman Shoja Azari  
Rashad Babayev Mahmoud Bakhshi Ali Banisadr Ali Hasanov Orkhan Huseynov  
Sitara Ibrahimova Aida Mahmudova Taus Makhacheva Farhad Moshiri Farid  
Rasulov Slavs and Tatars Iliko Zautashvili

**Open:** Saturday, 01 June 2013

**Close:** Sunday, 24 November 2013

**Address:** Arsenale Nord, Tesa 100

**Web:** Love me, Love me not

**Opening hour:** 10am - 6pm

**Closing day:** Mondays (except for June 3 and November 18)

**Admission:** Free

**Transport:** Lines 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 5.2, Bacini or Celestia; shuttle from Arsenale-Press Office Biennale to Arsenale Nord every ten minutes

**Photo credits:** Faig Ahmed. Untitled, 2012, Thread Installation, Dimensions Variable. Courtesy of the artist and YAY Gallery, Baku, Azerbaijan