

MONGOLIA PAVILION
at the 59th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

A Journey Through Vulnerability

The fourth appearance of Mongolia at the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia features Munkhtsetseg Jalkhaajav (Mugi), one of the foremost figures of contemporary art in Mongolia. During her long-distinguished career, Mugi (b.1967) has significantly contributed to the growth of Mongolian contemporary art and has exhibited locally and internationally.

Mugi's artistic practice incorporates sculptures, paintings, videos, and performances and explores the notion of pain, fear, healing, and rebirth. Mainly reflecting her personal experiences, Mugi's work investigates the complexities of female bodies, minds, and souls, and the connection with one-self and nature, capturing the tensions between different realms. Seemingly fictional yet grounded, her unique works embody invisible forces, such as spirits and myths, and tell sensible stories of women, unborn children, and the sorrowful fates of animals.

Inspired by Mongolian traditional healing methods and spiritual therapy, the process of her artistic creation is deeply intuitive and ritual-like. Through embodiments of the subject matter that evoke strong sentiments and juxtapositions of symbolic elements used for healing and protection, she meditatively examines the nature of her own anxiety and the process of its healing. Her particular ways of tearing, cutting, collating and stitching imply pain, anxiety, fear, hope and patience and create a specific language that allows Mugi to articulate and manifest her inner feelings and visions. In her works, birds represent the pulse of life, pregnancy, healing and protection, whereas female bodies represent her constant search for inner strength. The concept of reincarnation is the foremost interest of her artistic journey.

A Journey Through Vulnerability, the fourth edition of Mongolia Pavilion at La Biennale di Venezia, presents a series of installations, spread across three different rooms and narrates the stories of women and animals, offering the viewer a journey through the intimate, fragile yet powerful world of Mugi. The first room titled "Dream of Gazelle", a small space like barn, presents her multi-media installation, where soft sculpture of a half-bodied gazelle laying on a metal framed bed becomes whole through a video projection of a baby gazelle. Acting as a point of convergence, the second room titled "Pulse of Life" reflects Mugi's main concept 'cosmic body', a term she adopted from the definition of samsara, meaning all particles and living organisms make up one whole universe. To signify that idea of wholeness, Mugi comprehend her series of installations, consisting of part-human and part-animal hybrid sculptures in singular sense. Some of the sculptures installed in the room, possess human limbs manifesting their desire to survive by becoming human-like, while others given up their body parts with no place to go. In the last tiny room titled "Miscarriage", Mugi presents her work Keeper of Protector Bird, referencing traditional protective spells and rituals performed to safeguard women from miscarriage.

Occasional resounding of a jaw harp installed in exhibition hall is made to resemble the traditional rituals of interacting with the transient souls and heighten the spatial and spiritual awareness. The overall exhibition explores the concept of samsara, compassion and healing.

The exhibition is curated by Gantuya Badamgarav, the founding director of the Mongolian Contemporary Art Support Association and Art Space 976+, based in Ulaanbaatar. She initiated and organized Mongolia's first-ever participation at La Biennale di Venezia in 2015 and two subsequent editions in 2017 and 2019, curating the latter one. She produced an abstract sound composition specially for this exhibition.

Commissioner: Nomin Chinbat, Minister of Culture of Mongolia
Exhibitor: Munkhtsetseg Jalkhaajav
Curator: Gantuya Badamgarav

Organizer: Mongolian Contemporary Art Support Association
Supporters: Ministry of Culture of Mongolia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia
Sponsors: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Turkish Airlines
Partner in Venice: Arte Communications

Opening hours: Apr 23 to Nov 27, 2022, 10am - 7pm. Closed on Mondays (except Monday 25 April, 30 May, 27 June, 25 July, 15 August, 5 September, 19 September, 31 October, 21 November).
Address: Calle S. Biasio, Castello 2131, 30122 Venezia