



**Saodat Ismailova — *I Compete with Time***

**ángels barcelona**  
**15.11.2025 > 17.01.2026**



Exhibition view

## ***I Compete with Time***

*I compete with time - sometimes trying to speed it up, sometimes to slow it down. Yet it moves on, indifferently counting down days.\**

The exhibition reflects on the nature of time and its perception through mystical traditions and the cultural heritage of Central Asia. Across moving image, sound, and installation, Ismailova weaves connections between women's history, time perception, and the landscape.

The artist presents several stages of horsetail hair: as a raw material forming the screen surface in *Time's Tail* (2025), in dialogue with horsehair-woven veils (artist's collection), and as a political object of female emancipation in the film *Her Right* (2020). In resonance with *18,000 Worlds* (2023), the use of horsetail hair also recalls the domestication of the horse in the Central Asian steppes — a moment that profoundly transformed human perception of time.

Through the use of horsehair, Ismailova evokes a relationship between history, local knowledge, and time. Horsehair functions both materially and emblematically — as a medium of projection and weaving, and as a metaphor for temporality, domestication, and women's embodied histories.

On one wall, Ismailova presents a series of veils made with horsehair, and dating from 1928. These historical pieces, drawn from the artist's own collection, have been carefully unwoven. The work establishes a subtle circularity within the exhibition - linking women, the horse, and time - and reflects on how history continues to unfold through materials, gestures, and shared heritage.

Through these four works, *I Compete with Time* invites viewers to consider time not as a linear sequence, but as a layered and relational experience. Ismailova's practice combines research, image, and material to reflect on how collective memory and cultural heritage persist within changing realities.

\**18,000 Worlds*, 2023





Exhibition view





***Time's Tail*, 2025**

Single-channel video installation. Projection screen made of horsehair

13'41"

Unique

Installation view: [LINK](#)

<https://vimeo.com/1131651281> PASS: tail

In ***Time's Tail*** (2025), Saodat Ismailova turns to a material and cultural symbol deeply rooted in her region: the horse. Continuing her exploration of possible surfaces for video projection, the work employs a screen made of horsehair—a choice that emerged from the artist's research on traditional veils. Once used to conceal women's faces and emotions, the veil here is reversed and unwoven. Female faces appear openly, looking directly into the camera. Their whispering voices address the viewer as if transmitting knowledge across generations. The domestication of the horse, believed to have originated in the steppes of Central Asia, fundamentally altered humanity's perception of time, distance, and thought. *Time's Tail* extends Ismailova's reflection on temporality, tracing how the act of riding a horse reshaped our relationship to movement and the passing of time.



Stills from *Time's Tail*.





Exhibition view



**18.000 Worlds**, 2023  
Single-channel HD video  
32'

<https://vimeo.com/794057746> PASS: olam



## **18.000 Worlds, 2023**

According to some mystics, the world we live in is just one of the 18,000 worlds that make up the universe. This concept appears regularly in religious poems that are part of daily life in Uzbekistan. Ismailova was familiar with the idea of the 18,000 worlds from her youth, and she encountered it again later in the work of the twelfth-century Persian philosopher and mystic Shihab al-Din Yahya al-Suhrawardi. His texts, about such subjects as light and darkness, have been a source of inspiration to her ever since.

*18,000 Worlds* is the title of the exhibition and of the latest film by Ismailova. For this she dug into her own archives like an archaeologist, in search of unused fragments among what she has accumulated during years of filming. The images she chose belong to different places and periods, filmed for different projects: viewers will recognize the worlds she depicted in various earlier works. In *18,000 Worlds*, which also includes fragments taken from Eye's collection, it becomes clear just how interwoven all of Ismailova's works are. The artist sees this film as a talisman in the form of a video. She draws our attention to the fact that people all over the world are losing touch with their ancestors, and the danger of losing forms of knowledge is real.

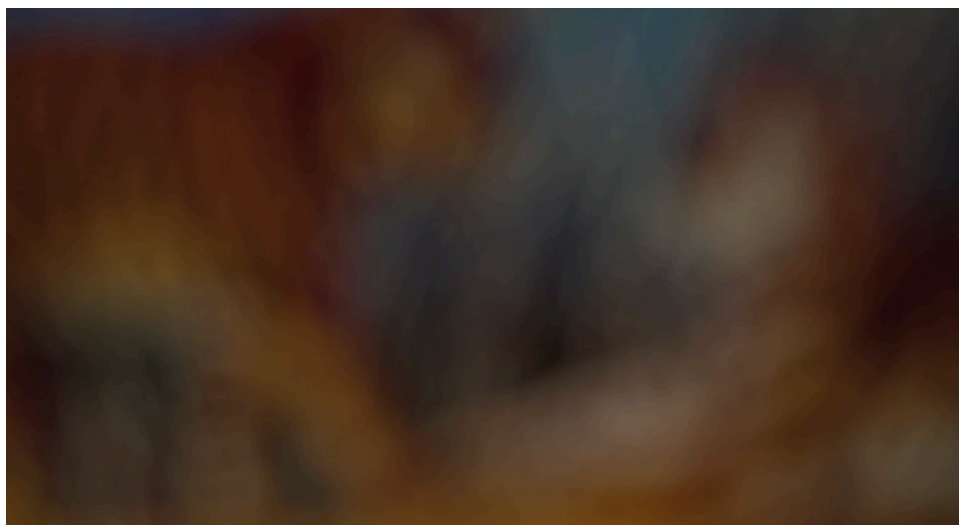
*18 000 Worlds*, was exhibited at Fondation Pernod Ricard (2025); Pirelli Hangar Bicocca (2025); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2024); JOAN Art, Los Angeles (2024); Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale (2024); STUK Arts Center, Belgium (2024); Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2023); HKW Berlin (2023); Villa Medici Film Festival, competition (2023).



Stills from *18,000 Worlds*.







Stills from *18.000 Worlds*.





Once I was told that  
we live



***Her Right***, 2020

Video-collage

14'

<https://vimeo.com/437264789> contraseña: tamara



***Her Right*, 2020**

*Her Right* is a Foundation footage film created from Uzbek fiction films from 1927 until 1985, focusing on hujum (unveiling complain). A period in the history when women found themselves flattened in-between traditional society and an imposed state ideology, risking their lives to resist the new foreign government. Both veiled and unveiled women feared harassment – the veiled by the new regime, the unveiled by traditionalists. For most of them it was a century of emotional and social displacement. The women's emancipation remained the major subject for Uzbek Soviet cinema. After the fall of the USSR majority of the films of the Soviet era were not accessible to the public, as their ideological target didn't fit the newly shaped republic. Among rarely accessible mute films that were used in *Her Right*, there are also iconic films of Ali Khamraev *Without Fear* and *The Fire Roads* by Shukhrat Abbasov.

*Her Right*, was exhibited at C3A, Córdoba (2024); Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2023), Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany.

Collection of TBA21, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection; FRAC Corsica.



Stills from *Her Right*.





Stills from *Her Right*.



Exhibition view





# Saodat Ismailova

(1981, b. Tashkent. Lives and works between Paris and Tashkent)

**Saodat Ismailova** (b. 1981, Tashkent, Uzbekistan) is an Uzbek filmmaker and artist from the first post-Soviet generation in Central Asia. Weaving memories, myths, rituals, and dreams into the tapestry of everyday life, her films explore her region's historically complex and layered culture, at the crossroads of different realities, migrations, and colonial legacies. Drawing on her personal history, Ismailova delves into the collective dimension of memory and the global resistance to the impact of human activity on the environment. Frequently based on oral stories in which women are the lead protagonists, and exploring systems of knowledge suppressed by globalized modernity, her works encapsulate this consciousness that hovers between visible and invisible worlds. Her research spans ancestral knowledge and landscape transformation in the region in more recent histories. She incorporates archival film footage and textile elements from vernacular traditions, which also allow for the continuity of artisanal activities that may soon disappear.

Graduated from the Tashkent State Art Institute and Le Fresnoy, National Studio for Contemporary Arts in France, she has established her artistic life between Paris and Tashkent. In 2021, she initiated the Davra research collective in Central Asia to develop the local art scene. In 2022, she received the Eye Art & Film Prize in Amsterdam. And, this year, she became a medalist of the Art Basel Awards 2025.

Ismailova has exhibited internationally with solo presentations including: Baltic Center for Contemporary Art (2025); STUK & Queer Art Festival (2025); Kunsthalle Lissabon (2025); M HKA (2025); "Abyss Between Two Mountains," Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2025); "Melted into the sun," Batalha Centro de Cinema, Porto (2025); "A seed under our tongue", Hangar Biccoca, Milan, (2024); "Double Horizons", Le Fresnoy, National Center for Contemporary Arts, Lille, France, (2023); "18 000 Worlds" at Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam, (2023). In 2024, she presented "Melted into the Sun" at the Nebula exhibition, commissioned by Fondazione in between Art and Film during the Venice Biennale of Arts.

She has exhibited in numerous group exhibition including as part of Asia Pacific Triennale of Arts (2024), Shanghai Biennale of Arts (2024) curated by Anton Vidokle, Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale curated by Uta Meta Bauer (2024), Sharjah Biennial of Arts (2023) curated by Hoor al Qasimi; The Milk of Dreams curated by Cecilia Alemani, 59th Biennale Arte, Venice (2022); documenta fifteen curated by Ruangrupa, Kassel (2022); and many others.

Her works are in the collections of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, TBA21, FRAC Corsica, Tate Modern, the Almaty Museum of Arts, Kazakhstan, and others.

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