

# SILK



**CURATED BY ALFONS HUG**

Goethe-Institut and Giudecca Art District present the textile art exhibition "Silk" during the Venice Biennale with artists from the Caucasus Region, Italy and Germany.

More than 10 000 years ago goats and sheep were first domesticated in the Caucasus and Mesopotamia ushering in a sophisticated tradition of carpet making and textile art as well as laying the foundations for human settlement, culture and civilization.

Textile art continues to be very important until today in many countries of the region between the Caspian and the Mediterranean Seas. For centuries, women in the Middle East, Central Asia, the Balkan countries and the Caucasus have passed on the tradition and art to their children. The intricate designs and materials used in carpets make it an elaborate art. Silk-printing was a very important product of manufacture in the Caucasus region, of which the silk factory and especially the silk museum in Tbilisi, the History Museum of Armenia as well as the Carpet Museum in Baku serve as testimonies.

In textiles the history of trade and industry has resonated since ancient times, and fabrics reflect the ever changing conditions of global production. Concomitantly, they give insight into social practice. But they are also an aesthetic realm with their own poetic potential.

At the same time the project revisits the western part of the old Silk Road which started in China and ended in Venice. Our exhibition approaches the Silk Road as a poetic resonance chamber and positive myth where ideas, technologies and artifacts are exchanged and "traded", rather than merely merchandise. Venice is an iconic city not only for the Silk Road but also for the century old trade and cultural exchange with the Orient. Rather than insisting on contemporary conflicts and frictions, the exhibition which will be shown in the Caucasus later invites the public to reflect on common heritage and artistic excellence.

**Faig Ahmed** is well known for his conceptual works that transform traditional decorative craft and the visual language of carpets into contemporary sculptural works. His art reimagines ancient crafts and creates new visual boundaries by deconstructing traditions and stereotypes.

**Nino Kvrivishvili** produced two handwoven tapestries, that tell the story of their making in the now defunct Soviet textile industry. Numerous studies for these tapestries were created and later transformed into woven pieces. The titles of the simple, abstract weavings AISI and DAISI (Sunrise /Sunset in Georgian) reference the names of the fabrics produced by the Soviet era Georgian silk industry.

Based on the principle of fragmented tapestry, puzzles or patchwork, **Araks Sahakyan's** drawings made with markers on paper are made up of dozens of A4 format free sheets on which the artist has brought together snippets of her personal memory, punctuated by multiple trips.

In **Lisa Batacchi's** latest project a melancholy vein prevails, as if trembling while waiting for a new predominant ideology that could initiate a subsequent human cycle on earth, thus facing the current ideology of progress understood as a machine insatiable of available energy.

"I wish you were a mulberry tree leaf and me a silkworm" is the Georgian poet's quote that **Olaf Nicolai** prints on posters that depict silkworms. The artist has done extensive research in the iconic Silk Museum of Tiflis which is a huge archive of old photographs, objects and handicraft. The museum's general state of disrepair serves as an ideal study for contemporary art for which the ruin has always been a privileged realm.