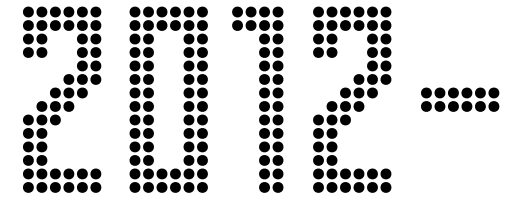


Exhibition for the 8th Gyumri International Biennale
September 14 - 28th, 2012
Gyumri State Academy of Fine Arts
Opening: September 14th, 15:00

Artists

Benik Karapetyan
Liana Khachatryan
Ernest Voskanyan



Marianna
Hovhannisyan

Curator

This project has been developed through a series of ongoing discussions about the role of contemporary art education in Armenia.

This project "2012—" and its artworks were developed over 2012 through an initiative of Marianna Hovhannisyan in collaboration with the Dept. of Fine Arts at Armenian Open University, for the Gyumri International Biennale: "2012".

Both in the choice of outcomes and method, "2012—" considers the Biennale's theme, 2012, by working with a young generation of artists, recent graduates from the Department of Fine Arts. The intention was a shared developmental process that would shape a dialog over the year, supported by research-based practice. This led to an agreed-upon project outline for realizing works through the narratives of family history and by that to articulate the theme of Biennale.

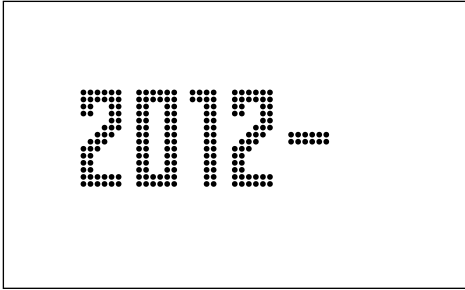
While personal narratives suggest initiating passages from a familiar, secure space, here it is only in order to work with the discovery of where they might lead in this development of educational methods joined to the artistic process. Thus, while personal, the scale is greater, connecting to history, memory, identity and language, where the year 2012 is isolated neither from past nor future.

The "2012—" exhibition presents a point of contact between three different art institutional spaces, each with their perspective and histories: Gyumri International Biennale and AOU Department of Fine Arts, which represent two different, direct outcomes from the 1990s artist-initiatives, and Gyumri State Academy of Fine Arts that provides classical art education.

This point of contact proposes to observe, rethink and imagine what kinds of critical tools or outlooks arts education provides a younger generation in 2012. It offers to understand their position as not only registering and reacting to the contemporary moment – 2012 – but drawing their perspectives out from and producing the space of an ongoing relation between knowledge and practice.

Supported by:

Armenian Open University, Dept. of Fine Arts
Gyumri Center of Contemporary Art
Gyumri State Academy of Fine Arts



"From chance to chance" (2012)
Benik Karapetyan

The "2012—" exhibition works with the intention of a space created from both the pedagogical and artistic frameworks.

The participating artists chose to begin with research into a past recognized through the narratives of family history, specifically to grandparents. These narratives of research grow and branch out in different ways, ultimately helping to outline the artists' approach to a contemporary arts practice.

The idea of the family is at the center of current Armenian society, a complex intersection that supports national discussions, but as well it is a place where memories, emotions, conflicting histories cross directly.

In the three artists' presented works, the idea of the modern family history emerges within a range of questions which end up skipping the parents and addressing their grandparents. In every work, the grandparents appear as research subjects representing a specific generational transition. They are symbols for continuation in the oral histories, yet they identify certain endpoints as well, inherited from Soviet/Armenian history. Those two are interwoven, but competing and interrelated with the orientations of nation, culture, identity.

The familiar Soviet Armenia newspaper is presented in a manner appropriate to artifacts and museum objects. Inviting closer inspection, the pages of this newspaper will be discovered to actually consist of only one storyline from the artist's family that he has substituted for all the expected variety of Soviet Armenian news events.

The whole newspaper guides us with the idea of a shift and an accident that the artist could draw on as the main narrative in the research on his paternal grandmother, Arus Avetisyan. The story starts from two photos of his grandmother that he discovered by chance, and expanded to include the roots of his Iranian-Armenian great-grandfather. The newspaper idea is taken from one of those photos, in which his grandmother Arus was reading one. Step by step, the newspaper unveils almost everything about this family, by different texts, photos and contemporary interviews between the artist and his father about Arus. All materials are balanced around the key figure of the grandmother Arus and how the framework of the Soviet media becomes a tool to transform Soviet and Soviet Armenian stories into the personal ones.



"Five Lessons by the Grandmothers" (2012)
Liana Khachatryan

The work consists of two videos. Their format suggests a standard, educational tool that is used to understand a certain universal terminology implied by such terms as "family-communism", "family garden (bahcha)-kolkhoz", "old home-ministry", "mother-plan" and "father-pioneer". The artist shows the problems of such straightforward universal education, by introducing the space of her specific history, created through the language and interpretation symbolized in a dialogue made between her two grandmothers.

The paternal grandmother is from the family of survivors of the events of 1915. She is always conscious to present her knowledge in Turkish. It reflects the only connection to her past and also a tiny hope for the ability to transmit it to the next generation, as if a kind of code necessary to make available the complete family story.

The maternal grandmother is a staunch Stalinist who still now believes and protects the visions of Communism. She is subjective as she proceeds to teach her granddaughter the real essence of communism through her knowledge based on working as an official in a Soviet ministry.



"Disturbing Legacy" (2012)
Ernest Voskanyan

In this work, the artist's research led him to unavoidably confront the paths of discontinuity, of cultural gaps produced by the shift between generations. Despite his intentions to keep intact a kind of symbolic script serving as a link and dialog with his grandfather, it becomes obvious that this cannot be.

The video works with the archive of a family reunion, where his grandfather recited from memory, an excerpt from the first Armenian sound film called "Pepo". That excerpt appears as a part of collective memory in national film history, and in terms of content, it stands for the whole film, which is clearly directed to the unequal reality between the rich and the poor.

In the video the artist tries to be synchronized with his grandfather's speech. While the grandfather's practiced recital from memory evokes cultural and emotional tones, and one can feel he knew who he was addressing, the grandson's attempt at repetition inevitably brings "errors" in and is directed to an unknown.