



Art Lifestyle / Arts

How Central Asia's largest art biennale in Bukhara signals new chapter for Uzbekistan

The inaugural Bukhara Biennale, which brings together over 200 Uzbek and global artists, is a sign of Uzbekistan's opening up to the world

Reading Time: 4 minutes



Payal Uttam

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Bukhara once flourished as a Silk Road hub, where travelling poets, merchants and scholars converged. But under Soviet rule during the 20th

century, the Uzbekistani city was for decades sealed off from the world, with few outsiders entering.

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This autumn, the narrow streets of the medieval city are abuzz again, but with a very different crowd: international art collectors, curators and artists gathering for the inaugural Bukhara Biennial.

Taking place in recently restored caravanserais (historic inns), mosques and madrasas (Islamic schools), the event is injecting new energy into Bukhara.

Titled “Recipes for Broken Hearts” and running from September 2 to November 20, the biennial brings together more than 200 participants from 39 countries who have created new works centred on themes of food, healing, loss and rupture.

The largest event of its kind in Central Asia, the biennial signals a new chapter for the former Soviet republic, which is now opening up to the world.

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“Five years ago, it was hard to imagine something like this happening,” says London-based Uzbek artist Aziza Kadyri, who represented Uzbekistan at the [Venice Biennale 2024](#). “It’s like a dream to incorporate my work here.”

She stands beside a monumental yellow fabric installation, which she created with Uzbek embroiderer Yulduz Mukhiddinova, in Fathullajon Caravanserai, one of the buildings hosting the biennial. A fantastical cloth machine inspired by her grandfather’s research on Soviet-era cotton gins, the embroidered work encircles the building’s weathered walls.

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Seoul Art Week draws big crowds and headline sales despite market downturn

Frieze Seoul and Kiaf attracted over 150,000 visitors, while sales included a Mark Bradford triptych for a Frieze record of US\$4.5 million

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Erika Na

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The start of September saw hundreds of galleries flock to Seoul and major exhibitions open at many of the city's museums as two contemporary art fairs – Frieze Seoul and Kiaf – opened to mark the South Korean capital's annual Art Week.

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Now in their fourth year of partnership, the twin fairs continue to attract a huge number of international visitors even amid the slowdown in the global art market.

Frieze Seoul, run by the UK-based Frieze, a rival to Art Basel, hosted 121 exhibitors from 28 countries and registered more than 70,000 visitors from 48 nations over four days.

Representatives from over 160 museums and institutions attended, the organisers said, including the Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, and well-known regional players such as Hong Kong's M+, Japan's Benesse Art Site Naoshima and Museum Macan from Indonesia.

The number of exhibitors changed little from the year before and regular blue-chip participants such as Hauser & Wirth, Gagosian, Lisson, White Cube, Thaddaeus Ropac, David Zwirner, and local heavyweights Kukje Gallery and Gallery Hyundai maintained their presence.

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