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"My Year Ahead: Aida Mahmudova." *Christie's The Art People*. (January 12, 2015).

CHRISTIE'S *The Art People*



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My Year Ahead: Aida Mahmudova

Aida Mahmudova is an artist and the Founder and Creative Director of YARAT, a not-for-profit art organisation based in Baku, Azerbaijan. Here, she shares her highlights for 2015

Which exhibition or event are you most looking forward to in 2015, and why?

'The World Goes Pop' at Tate Modern. This show, which will explore the revolutionary 'Pop' movement globally, promises to be a highly varied and informative exhibition on a particularly dynamic subject. The Tate Modern will bring together Pop artists from across America, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, and give visitors the chance to explore the 'alternative' stories of the Pop movement alongside more well-recognised works.'

What do you predict will be the most significant development or biggest talking point in art in the year ahead, and why?

'I think the growth of contemporary arts movements in previously undiscovered or little researched regions of the world will continue to draw interest in 2015. The rich cultural landscapes of lesser known areas — such as the Caucasus area in which YARAT is based — give rise to concepts, materials and cultural reference points that many individuals have not yet been exposed to. I look forward to seeing the growth of art from regions across Africa, Asia and the Middle East over the course of the year.'



Aida Mahmudova, 2012. Acrylic, ink, pencil and oil pastel on linen. Courtesy the artist and YARAT

Which artist most excites you right now, and why?

'YARAT is currently working with the inspirational Kazakhstani-born artist Almagul Menlibayeva, whose work I find particularly interesting. Menlibayeva's work references non-verbal dialogues across worlds, cultures and eras, with particular attention given to the role of women in pre-Soviet, pre-Islamic and even Shamanistic and dervish cultures. Menlibayeva has gained wide international recognition having exhibited work in international museums and festivals. In 2015 she and Azerbaijani artist Rashad Alakbarov will be transforming the Palazzo Barbaro with site specific video and sculptural installations as part of YARAT's collateral event at the La Biennale di Venezia — 56th International Art Exhibition curated by Suad Garayeva, our Curatorial Director.'

Tell us about the project that you are working on/showcasing in 2015.

As both an artist and the Founder of YARAT I have parallel projects which are equally satisfying. I am working on a new series of works for my upcoming show at Leila Heller Gallery in New York in early Summer. This is an exciting year for YARAT as it will mark the opening of our first permanent centre: The YARAT Contemporary Art Space, Baku. The 2,000m square centre, converted from a Soviet-era naval building, overlooks the Caspian Sea and will be a dedicated hub for contemporary art and art education in the region. To mark the Space's opening, YARAT will be holding an exhibition from the artist Shirin Neshat, *The Home of My Eyes*, curated by Dina Nasser Khadivi. The exhibition's focus will be a major new commission, produced following the artist's time in Azerbaijan and featuring Azerbaijani individuals as its photographic subjects.'



Architect's rendering of YARAT Contemporary Art Space, Baku. Image courtesy of YARAT