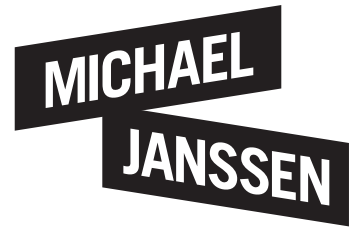


# GULNUR MUKAZHANOVA

## Un-Conscious



18 September – 20 November 2021

Opening: Friday 17 September, 6–9 pm

Fabrics of silk and velour stretch tautly over canvases, luring the viewer into Gulnur Mukazhanova's solo show with Galerie Michael Janssen. Titled "Un-Conscious," the exhibition will be the artist's first showing with the gallery to date where the artist will present a series of felt paintings and collages, both of which are produced exclusively for the exhibition. "Un-Conscious" offers a survey into the artist's almost decade long inquiry into post-nomadic identities. The works together explore how felt and collage can become a conduit to subvert ancient practices and visuals that remain in circulation and likewise to meditate on cultures in flux through employing the language of abstraction.

Central to the artist's practice is a research into and a processing of Kazakh society as a whole, where the artist experienced the Soviet collapse and subsequent capitalist embrace as two abrupt transitions and migrating orders. Since emigrating to Berlin, the artist has honed her observation on post-nomadic identities. Though this term today is often used in reference to the digital-nomad living in alienation or isolation from rooted culture, the artist's oeuvre grasps the tension between the rooted and unrooted by observing visual practices developed in nomadic communities in Kazakhstan. Here, the digital and the traditional are held in tight balance within the artist's works, where she takes up ancestral felting techniques that are practiced within the region. Mukazhanova instead ushers these techniques into the language of minimalism where large-scale, monochrome oranges and mustards point to a period that sought to throw-off the archaic and elude figuration.

The series *Post-Nomadic Reality* that features in "Un-Conscious" is informed by the traditional *tuskyiz*, hand embroidered wall carpets that typically are ornamentally patterned. Mukazhanova breaks apart this word to get at its essential meaning: *tus* to dream and *kyiz* to felt. Like portals or screens, Mukazhanova's works in this series invite the viewer to dream of another world where hopes and desires can be sublimated into the unconscious, but also create a space where new identities can be assumed. This is further punctuated in Mukazhanova's triptych, *Untitled* (2021), where three large-scale felted paintings contain curved windows. The felted materials of gray, red, and yellow, however, give the image plane a surreal quality where reality and fantasy can merge. Though the triptych might be reminiscent of the celestial and historically used to narrate linearly, it is transformed beyond recognition while retaining its referent to the divine.

Where *Post-Nomadic Reality* features fields of color emptied of pattern and ornamentation, the series *Moment of the Present* focuses exclusively on isolating that pattern with pins and needle work through the practice of collage. The artist uses lurex, brocade, and velour to deconstruct traditional print. This practice of cutting, isolating, and collage unravels modes of superficial conviviality. Originally, these fabrics are exchanged during weddings or celebrations. The artist isolates the precarity evidenced in the fabric's superficial ritualistic function that might cover over darker cultural norms. For example, in *Moment of the Present #25*, (2021), hundreds of pins hold together golden petals. From afar, the shape appears to be lush and ornamental, though peering closely, one can see how it might collapse at any moment. Stability, and likewise beauty, are held together by fragile threads.

"Un-Conscious" opens on Friday September 17th during Berlin gallery week and will be on view until November 20th. This exhibition expands on the online exhibition of the same name that offered a glimpse into the artist's sensitive and bold works.

Text: Vanessa Gravenor