

## Turning to the Experience of the 60s

A Discussion between Yuliya Sorokina (Almaty) and Ulan Djaparov (Bishkek)

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**Yuliya Sorokina:** For me the 60s was definitely a very special time... I started remembering and realized that the title "Sweet 60s" is quite exact. So, in short, everything led to childhood emotional content. The main thing is that after such a nostalgia about childhood, the present time is annoying, as one can realize what a creative time it used to be. Our parent's generation succeeded in finding the nerve of local modernity. All these people, they were on the border of the discovery. That international context was suddenly transformed into something new with local nuances and without any marginality. Later this was lost and now it is going to be trampled down. It's so habitual here, first to build something and then to destroy it. This has a depressive influence on me.

It was hard to concentrate for me because, of course, we are not experts of such a specific issue like the 60s. Well, at least I am not and you neither, I think. These specific issues, they demand immersion, but this is impossible here as quite a rapid reflection is required. That's why I feel like being confused. But when I started researching the materials of the [RE]vision<sup>1</sup> project, or the book *Set of Architectural Monuments of Almaty and Almaty Province* (by E. Malinovskaya<sup>2</sup>), then I just got stuck. This especially relates to Almaty architecture, as we have quite a lot of painful issues here. Our officials try to demolish all historical buildings. What horrible things they are making with architectural monuments!

**Ulan Djaparov:** *But maybe it was always like that – periods of development are replaced by times of reformatting of those periods? And it seems to me we have to ask two or three questions here.*

*First question: what is so important for us right now in the experience of the 60s? Second question: what was specific to this time and what kind of manifestations did that period have in different arts?*

*For instance if we'll consider Kyrgyz cinema of the 60s then we'll see that the manifestation of modernism was the search of selfhood forms. That involved large amount of work with national roots, identity, local contexts and personages – a certain kind of brutal and strong characters. That was local modernism which was developing through the reanimation of lost features. Speaking formally, the influence of Japanese and Italian cinema is visible here.*

*And we could say that in Bishkek (former Frunze) the first clearly modernist projects appeared in architecture in the beginning of the 60s. This might have been the influence of Mies van der Rohe, Corbusier, and Japan – clear plans and laconic decisions, concrete with glass were dominant. And everything was perfectly done in terms of composition thinking, but all that was connected neither with the place, nor with any local context. Such a fragment of international style.*

**Sorokina:** But in Almaty we had this connection in architecture.

**Djaparov:** *Earlier in the 50s (and later, at the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s) this connection was in the form of ornamentation and other pseudo-national motives. After that, in the beginning of the 60s, architects-modernists turned up and most of them had newly arrived. They were given jobs here, but it was evident that they were well educated and were influenced by Moscow, Leningrad or another architecture school. They knew what was going on in European architecture, so they came here well prepared. As you might know, in Bishkek the first architecture faculty was founded at the end of the 60s, and the first professionals graduated at the end of the 60s and the beginning of the 70s.*

*I would like to draw your attention to a quite amusing thing.*

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<sup>1</sup> [RE]vision 60/90 is a research dedicated to the comparison and rethinking of Kyrgyz cinema of the 60s and the 90s, and consists of authored texts and archive materials (editor in chief: Ulan Djaparov).

<sup>2</sup> Elisabeth Malinovskaya is an academic, specialist in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century architecture in Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

### *Turning to the Experience of the 60s*

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*Chingiz Aitmatov<sup>3</sup> influenced Kyrgyz cinema very much. A major number of scenarios are based on his parables, stories and novels. And that's why a certain thread – a national, ethnographic thread or I don't know how else I could specify it – is visible practically in all films.*

*In architecture, indeed, the influence of the international context was dominant. In general, architectural shapes and town planning decisions didn't have this delicate belonging to the place and its spirit, its images etc.*

*And that is the paradox: some artistic images became the images and, in fact, the spaces of our identity through literature and cinema. For example, the film by B. Shamshiev<sup>4</sup>, "White Steamship," was produced approximately at the beginning of the 70s. So, through cinema this image of "White Steamship" had a strong influence on architects – and not only locally, but in Moscow as well – who designed the health resort on the Issyk-Kul Lake. And they created an object which conceptually grew from this archetypical image. It was visible through the planning and structure and some artistic decisions. So, in the beginning of the 70s, the influence of the groundwork of the 60s (in literature, cinema etc.) which were based on national, ethnic and regional archetypes, started to spread in visual arts and architecture. And then later in 70s-80s, our architecture started to use these national images and motives. And something like that was going on throughout the territory of the USSR.*

*There is one more amusing moment: later (in the mid 60-s) most architects started to play postmodern games – when it was possible to feel free to use different styles, contexts without fearing that it would look eclectic. And the application of the "local specificity" became an element of such a professional game.*

*I refer to the fact that there were people before us, who tried to do something meaningful even under such very limited circumstances, but this was manifested differently in different artistic disciplines. And now the moment of continuity is the main thing for me. What can we consider to be interesting from the experience of the previous generations; can we see and understand any texts, statements from the perspective of their artistic gestures? And after all, it is likely that our generation has its own aim. Maybe the experience of the 60s will help us reconsider something as well. Unfortunately, architecture has such a dramatic moment that when one tries to present an integral artistic expression it may become dilapidated, reconstructed, hackneyed in time ... So, it loses its shape.*

**Sorokina:** Yes, it is typical in architecture here. Me too, when I started to study books, then I realized that all our, you know, Lenin Palace (current Palace of Republic, 1970, architects V. Alle, V. Kim, Y. Ratushnyi, N. Repinskiy, A. Sokolov, L. Ukhobotov and others), Kazakhstan Hotel (1981, architects L. Ukhobotov, Y. Ratushnyi, A. Anchugov, V. Kashtanov), Wedding Palace (1971, architects A. Leppik, M. Mendikulov), these very buildings were constructed by people who were familiar with the modern context and who knew about Corbusier. However, they tried to apply some local figurativeness in their architectural forms. Through new images, not always directly – as for example we may see in Lenin Palace again, there is not any circular plan in it, but it still has the feeling of an oriental tent, or, in the case of Alma-Ata Hotel, there is something imperceptibly oriental in it and that is exactly the modernist approach, which is not direct. That's what I like.

**Djaparov:** *This is a certain stylization...*

**Sorokina:** Not actually a stylization, but rather a search for some form, which indirectly expresses the local context through an associative line. That is architecture which has already been established on the basis of the perception of local peculiarity and is influenced by feelings rather than by direct images. This is very clear in the cases of the Circus or the Bath House, which are

<sup>3</sup> Chingiz Aitmatov (1928-2008) is a famous Kyrgyz author and public figure, whose novels strongly influenced Kyrgyz art and culture (novels, *White Steamship*, *Goodbye Gulsary* and others).

<sup>4</sup> Bolot Shamshiev is a famous Kyrgyz cinema-director. His graduation film "Manaschi" won Gran-Prix at the Oberhausen film festival. His most popular films are "Shot on the Karash Pass," 1968, "White Steamship," 1975 and others.

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directly connected with the oriental context. And if we talk about the mediated image... Well, our architects usually used small things like loggias instead of facades, or sun-breaker grids, which were both ornamental decorations and functional at the same time. It is obvious that competent people worked here. Well, I am not sure about nowadays, you know, how our Baiterek<sup>5</sup> was built, for example. I heard a legend that our President drew the scheme of Baiterek on his napkin. And the Vorobyevs<sup>6</sup> made a project about this. And there are many examples like this. So, "Who pays for the girl, will dance with her." Unfortunately, our architecture "dances" today with quite suspicious creators. What are they doing? For example our Sport Palace (1966, architects V.Katcev, O. Naumova) – there is (was already) some figurativeness in it – the semicircular roof cut was there, there were graffiti by Sidorkin<sup>7</sup> on side facades.... They have totally rebuilt it now. Thanks God, the Architecture Union and the Artists' Union preserved the graffiti; they managed to remove the graffiti off the walls and later stuck it on the new enlarged walls. But the building has been changed completely, of course.



Housing in Almaty, photograph by Alexander Ugay

**Djaparov:** *There were quite a few interesting modernist buildings constructed at the beginning of the 60s (for example, The Museum of M. Frunze, architects Y. Karikh and G. Kutateladze). However, the Russian Drama Theater (architect A.Albanskiy) is my favorite one in Bishkek. It was presented in working drawings in the mid 60s, and then construction started at the end of the 60s and was continued for several years. This building was absolutely neutral, whereas later on the influence of oriental images in architecture was visible. The Russian Drama Theater's architecture was very much like European, or even Finnish architecture, like Alvaro Aalto, or maybe this was the result of the Japanese influence with their concept of "emptiness." Never mind, there are no direct references in it. But it is clear that the author's special gesture is visible in how the building is situated in Dubovyi Park, on the little crossing paths, how it holds a space around it, and how different details and elements such as the stairs, stained glass windows and others work. And in this case architectural decisions do not rely on any specific images which have any prototypes, ethnic or regional references "à la Orient." In the example of the Russian Drama Theater one can see how some new ways were established, how some unaddressed shape could assemble the space around and give it an absolutely different quality in accordance with the author's comprehension.*

**Sorokina:** It seems to me that you are right, most of them belonged to the new generation who had newly arrived after graduating from Moscow universities, or other universities; like Repinskiy<sup>8</sup>, he graduated from Kiev University, studied at Zholtovski's and Vesnins' studios... But all of them worked in a very accurate and absorbed way. Everything developed quite organically in their case.

**Djaparov:** *Yuliya, I like your word "absorbed." You know, sometimes it might happen that when you work with the context of a specific place (ethnic or historical context), at the end there might come out a programmed work... Or there might be another variant; it is not necessary that you should be really fixed on a certain issue but if you have certain attentiveness to a concrete situation (spatial, or even worldly or cultural) then you start to interact exactly with this situation when creating some artifact. During this process some interesting things can unconsciously come up. Just because you work delicately and carefully, with some respect. That's what I like. And*

<sup>5</sup> Baiterek is a monument-tower in Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan. The author of the project is Norman Foster, a popular British architect. It is well known that the confidential author of the monument is the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev. In the building there are many conceptual references to mythology and symbols, but the Kazakhstani people entitled it "Chupa-Chups" (it looks like a famous candy).

<sup>6</sup> Yelena and Victor Vorobyevs, Kazakhstani contemporary artists.

<sup>7</sup> Yevgeniy Sidorkin (1930-1982), Soviet artist, Honoured Art Worker of Kazakh SSR.

<sup>8</sup> Nikolay Ripinskiy (1906-1969) is an outstanding Kazakhstani architect and State USSR Award laureate. Like many famous cultural figures, he was repressed and banished from Kazakhstan. His name is associated with the further development of the Kazakh architecture school.

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*those who have been obsessed with these doctrines, national or any other, they abandoned the space of art, for the cultural, social or even political spaces. And those spaces supposed other games.*

**Sorokina:** *Maybe that was because they were actually loose, this land was not their bone and flesh, you know. Maybe it was even easier for them to work with this, as with a kind of a fragile context. They had to be politically correct with those contexts. Well, at the same time, the same Repinskiy, what did he do? It is well known that he encouraged local architects to develop. Before him there were only architects who had newly come to Kazakhstan from different parts of the Soviet Union. And it was he, who led “Kazgiprostroiproject,” not personally yet, but through his team.*

**Djaparov:** *The situations were somehow similar in Almaty and Bishkek (former Frunze). Some time ago they used to look similar both in terms of their scale and their atmosphere. There were up to ten-twenty persons in architecture, cinema, and in other fields. There were Pleiads composed of concrete personalities who had a meaningful purpose. They tried to catch up a general wave and to do something in their real situation. And nevertheless there is one nuance here: there is a difference between the approaches and assessments of Russian-speaking and non-Russian-speaking people... The past is idealized sometimes.*

*When I started to explore the statistics materials about Frunze citizens during Soviet time I was surprised to learn that in the 70s-80s people of Kyrgyz nationality formed only 11-17% of the whole population. For example, in our classroom, out of 40 pupils only 6 or 7 were representatives of the “title nation” (i.e. Kyrgyz). This looks like a spring, which is compressed on one side, and is expanding to another extreme on the other side.*

*In their structure, both Almaty and Frunze were cities which were established by strangers – newcomers who brought European culture.*

**Sorokina:** *Well, it’s like what people say now about contemporary art: “Agent of the West”... So, they were the modernist agents of the West.*

**Djaparov:** *Yes, yes, yes. Even the representatives of the local intellectuals, those who represented the native population, they were not so numerous in comparison. However, when any reference to representation in culture, science, or governmental structures was made, their names were well known. What I am talking about is: that city structure, all its institutions – ministries, factories, universities – were imported and just adopted by the local population. Literally, a few years passed and there was some established form, of this city, of the social order. But that form was somehow mechanistic, external, and alien.*



Capture from the film “Shot on Karash Pass” (1968)

*And that’s why the following question comes up: why do we have in Kyrgyzstan so many people who revere the 60s phenomena in Kyrgyz cinema?*

*That’s because all these people who had just moved from the villages obtained higher education, lived in these 2-3 floor houses, became employed – they represented the first generation. But all that was something infused for them. And suddenly, in these films, they recognized themselves and their own territory in the contemporary world. Do you understand? It seemed like they lived in an independent state, but it was a formal space for them – an alien space. And here, in the films, they feel themselves at home even if just virtually. And some vague nationalist ideas started to materialize and become formulated. At that time it was a surprise, that you have your own unique place. There is its own prehistory, own heroes and paradox personages. There were a lot of actors and actresses who personified somebody native and half-forgotten. For example, Suimenkul Chokmorov<sup>9</sup> who personified the image of*

<sup>9</sup> Suimenkul Chokmorov (1939-1992), artist, Kyrgyz actor, People’s Artist of the USSR, main roles Bahytgool in “Shot on the Karash Pass,” 1968 and Achangool in “Ferocious,” 1973.

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*a free person, it was wild and distinctive... We do not have such heroes any more. I wanted to draw your attention to this. That in the 60s the feeling of identity existed exactly in virtual space.*



"Happiness" by S. Aytbaev, oil on canvas (1968)

**Sorokina:** Yes, I agree in general. And curiously enough, that very alien culture makes it possible to expose all that, and there is a similar situation with Kazakh cinema as well. Kazakh cinematography was also influenced by Italian and Japanese films, nevertheless it succeeded to establish itself. That same Shaken Aimanov<sup>10</sup> – he looks like a local protagonist with special texture – Aldar Kose, Djambul etc. Aimanov was a universal person with regard to his experience and relationships, but he was also totally local by birth which was clear judging from his character. He just transformed into these characters and lived their lives. Or another figure – Salihitdin Aitbayev<sup>11</sup>, our artist, he was quite charismatic as well. He was born in the Kyzylorda province and that's why he had that very powerful national texture, he was keen on modernist trends which were forbidden in our territory at that time – all these so called bourgeois "isms." But he was really a titanic person: he was fearless, he didn't give a damn about anything. So, he was like a real rebellious *batyr* (epical hero). And his art was like that, monumental. And one can feel something special there. By the way, I can always tell if a painting is done by a Kazakh person, or by a local but not a native, even if the picture is not signed. Because the feeling of color transitions and textures is somehow different. This was done by the generation of 60s and we can say that it was done quite clearly: that blending of the modernist project with local roots. It was done in an organic way without any strains.



Capture from the film "First Teacher" by A. Konchalovski (1965)

**Djaparov:** When I was rereading [RE]vision, there were a few moments that caught my attention. At the same time in the beginning of the 60s, the first films which maybe gave rise to the phenomenon of Kyrgyz cinema, were debut films: "Heat" by Larissa Shepitko (1963) and "The First Teacher" by Andron Konchalovsky (1965), which were both shot in Kyrgyzstan. These movies received a lot of awards at different festivals and of course they had a powerful aesthetic. But in those films all the main tricks were formal, intended for external artistic effect, which did not reflect Kyrgyz mentality accurately, and this was obvious. According to Andron Konchalovsky's memoirs, he openly used Kurosawa's plastic tricks, just renovated them according to local realities and then carried them to the point of absurdity. He justified this referring to drama issues.

So, young Kyrgyz directors who took part in these movies as assistants had to make their own choice. Either they had to take the shortest route, which was shown to them by Shepitko and Konchalovsky, who based their masterpieces on simple local material. Or it was necessary to carefully examine some hidden processes in the community and reveal what had disappeared as a result of the collapse of the traditional Kyrgyz lifestyle.

The most known are two directors – Tolomush Okeev ("Sky of Our Childhood," 1966) and Bolot Shamshiev (documentary movie "Manaschi," 1965 and "Shot on Karash Pass," 1968). But it was another director who remained in their shadow: Melis Ubukyev. He is an undeservedly evaded figure. By the way, he became one of the first culturologists later, he made conceptual researches about Kyrgyz history and the "Manas" epos. He was on friendly terms with Gumilev<sup>12</sup>...

<sup>10</sup> Shaken Aimanov (1914-1970), Kazakh Soviet actor, director, People's Artist of the USSR, laureate Stalin's Award (1952) and State Award of Kazakh SSR laureate.

<sup>11</sup> Salihitdin Aitbayev (1938-1994), artist, Honoured Art Worker of Kazakh SSR, Lenin Komsomol Award laureate.

<sup>12</sup> Lev Gumilyev (1912-1992), Soviet and Russian scientist, historian-ethnologist, PhD in history and geography, poet, translator from Farsi. Founder of the Theory of Passion Ethnogenesis. Son of Russian poets Anna Akhmatova and Nikolay

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Capture from the film "The Sky of our Childhood" (Bakay's Pasture) (1966)



Capture from the film "Manaschi" by B. Shamshiev (1965)



Capture from the film "Hard Crossing" (White Mountains) by M. Ubukeyev (1964)



Capture from the film "Ak-Moor" by M. Ubukeyev (1969)

**Sorokina:** ...they all were on friendly terms with Gumilev...

**Djaparov:** He tried to understand many different matters. He tried to rethink the most important and dramatic periods of Kyrgyz history in his first films.

**Sorokina:** And who is the author of "White Mountains"?

**Djaparov:** It's his film. "White Mountains" or another title "Heavy Crossing," 1964, that's what you mean? Cinema critic Talip Ibraimov made the following remark about it: "That is the first film in which the Kyrgyz recognized 'themselves.'"

**Sorokina:** Well, such a chic film! I saw it a few times.

**Djaparov:** He was a person whose positioned himself a bit away from the mainstream, but on the other hand, he influenced the development of Kyrgyz cinema considerably. I remember, in my childhood, I watched on TV a movie titled "Ak-Moor" which looked like a drama play (it was obvious that everything was done in a pavilion) – it was one legend. But what a great aesthetic and tension and how it was done. It was a new symbolic tonality, on which this movie was based. Later on it wasn't very critical neither for our cinema, nor for the theater.

So, that moment of having the nerve, being bald, the feeling that something is going on and you are taking part in it – that is an interesting moment.

There is an interesting director, Marat Sarulu, who said: "The movies by our coryphaeus were interesting due to their debut expressions." We may say that something was accumulated in the collective unconscious of the people, something which needed to come out, and this happened through these first films of the "Kyrgyz Miracle." And then Marat said: "It was necessary to create the second nature, to work with artistic forms, with meanings, but not to parasitize on the ethno-material base." And unfortunately this did not happen. Later in the 70s-80s our cinema became completely unremarkable.

**Sorokina:** You see, we have a problem – a problem typical of any marginal territory: our people like to work (and always did, I think) on the basis of their human nature, but modernism does not forgive this, it requires special skills. And here, as Galya Piyanova, the director of ART&SHOK Theater, says: "the skills should be fixed." And when I analyze the strata of the 60s and 70s, and our current actions as well, I realize that there isn't enough fixation here. Once something has already been founded, like the chernozem has been removed, then it is important to make some professional fixations. But nothing comes out of it, because everything was done by treating the nature, and though there is still that instinctive longing for digging in back into that nature, we fail as the topsoil has been removed. Something like that is going on.

We actually did not have such a phenomenon in Kazakhstan. Here, everything was built on various mythologems, on some narratives. There was no such visual texture like in Kyrgyz cinema in the 60s and later. It was more narration, a political thread, more of something else, but not such a texture.

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Gumilyev. He was repressed repeatedly and for sometime during his imprisonment he was kept in the camp near Karaganda city in Kazakhstan.

**Djarparov:** *Well, you gave Olzhas Suleimenov as an example...*

**Sorokina:** Perhaps, yes, Olzhas Suleimenov, that is an unconventional figure.

**Djarparov:** *But if we compare him and Chingiz Aitmatov, we will see the difference between their depictions, accents of attraction, and in general their aesthetics of expression.*

**Sorokina:** You see, they are completely different people. I know Aitmatov by his writings only and don't know how he lived and what he did. And of course, I know much more about Suleimenov, as he is from here and he regularly makes himself remembered. Not deliberately, rather he is a very active person. And his personality has impressed me as he is a so called "Renaissance Person" – he started as a poet, but when his book "AZIYA" was banned and its copies seized, he joined a Chess Club, and a Volleyball league. After that, he organized the antinuclear movement "Nevada-Semipalatinsk," and later on he joined UNESCO, etc. And what is typical of him, he always succeeded in what he started, such a titanic person. Currently, he has been "exiled" to a remote location where he can't "put a spoke in a wheel" (he can perfectly do this to prevent stupid actions). And now he works in Paris as the Kazakhistani Ambassador in UNESCO. He is finalizing a large etymological dictionary titled *1001 words* and he is not allowed to do something here. And unfortunately many Kazakh people, particularly the young generation, abuse him in every way, because he is also supposed to be a "Western Agent." But it is the other way around. He promotes the idea that the Turkic and Slavic cultures have more interrelations than it is usually being accepted. He was also on friendly terms with Gumilev, and furthermore his father was a prisoner in one camp with Gumilev. And he said that there was not a serious conflict between these cultures, (so, like Gumilev said) and practically it was more of a complimentary relation than animosity. And he argued that by comparing the common plastic of the two languages rather than looking at historical facts (he is bilingual and speaks both Russian and Kazakh perfectly well). And if you read *AZIYA*, you might see that his argument is quite convincing; that is why his opponents still cannot stand him. I just would like to say that Suleimenov he is... like, you know, if we may choose a "Humanity Representative" from each country, Suleimenov can be the "Humanity Representative" from Kazakhstan. He is absolutely a 60s person and I can't imagine that a similar person can appear nowadays, it's impossible.

**Djarparov:** *I read the article by Oksana Shatalova and Alla Girik<sup>13</sup> about the "Kyzyl-Traktor"<sup>14</sup> Group. I like the metamorphose which happened with those artists. So, they were keen on modernist tendencies in the beginning. And later when they were deep in it and evidently they researched and imitated some form of Suprematism and other artistic practices, they started to get into the roots of intermutation. And it is funny that at the end everything has been hampered by shamanism. When I read it, I thought that is a formal side of this process, but there is also another side. When you start to discover something, you might reach a real power. Later it can be transformed into some stage adaptation, which simplifies your entire rout. But I was interested in this moment when they reached the fundamental principles of energy, power, natural elements, sacral things, after discovering the basics of painting and composition. That moment is interesting for me.*

**Sorokina:** Well you know that the group broke up and now there are only two of them who continue their artistic existence: Said Atabekov and Moldacul Narymbetov. They are quite different even if they were from the same group. And if we examine what they do now, they both came back to modernism. Both are doing this in different ways, but both switched over to this. So, they digested all the essential information, which you are talking about, and now the circle of artifacts came. Evidently, there is some circle: you have absorbed in some information, and after you gained access to nature, then you start to create those artifacts...

(connection break)

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<sup>13</sup> Oksana Shatalova and Alla Girik are Kazakhstani artists and art-critics.

<sup>14</sup> Kyzyl-Traktor is an art group from Shymkent, Kazakhstan.

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**(just after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Kyrgyz Revolution, 15.04.10)**

**Sorokina:** We have discussed different transformations and formal moments, let's come back to the message of the 60s, to the actuality of that time for us.

First of all, we should say that we are now talking just after the revolution in Kyrgyzstan and all those terrible events. To be honest, I thought during these events that we are discussing what we have after the 60s, cinema, architecture... And then all these fires, marauding, the information that the Museum was ransacked, and I thought: "OK, while we were talking everything was burned up and destroyed and we may be left with nothing except talks at the end..." What do you feel about that? We are talking about various messages, their actuality, so, where is the actuality of the 60s for Bishkek now, when all that horror is going on and nobody knows what will happen (we just hope that it won't turn into a civil war)? Is it meaningful to talk about the 60s and its actuality?

**Djarparov:** *When I overview the press covering Kyrgyz events, especially the foreign press, it seems to me that there is not an adequate presentation of the situation. A one-sided view and disdain prevails.*

*I imagine the situation like the following: Kyrgyz people (as well as Kazakh) did not experience their own statehood like the Western model. In this regard, the process of search for an adequate form of social order is going on now. During the Soviet time the form had been artificially imposed.*

*And when the form of the social order is not adequate with the mentality, traditions, expectations, and the current reality, then sooner or later there comes a time to pay the bill. Everything fails, is being violated, human life is under threat, property is being reallocated, something almost chaotic is going on. In such a situation it is really hard to deal with the nuances. And this is clearly happening on a large scale. And under such circumstances the statement of the art community is important – how to deal with all that?*

*But let's return to our question: What is the message of the 60s?*

*The 60s generation tried to modernize the Soviet structure, which didn't reflect the expanded needs, and the revived self-consciousness of nations. And that's why the experience of the 60s is interesting, when some representatives of the artistic community, despite being sometimes in quite restricted circumstances, were trying to implement real large scale programmed projects which did not assume to be only stylistically and formally interesting and far beyond the purpose of setting up with little strokes the cultural environment around themselves, they were also trying to identify in an indirect way some essential motivations. Definitely for yesterday's nomads all those destructions – transition to city life, Europeanized culture, Soviet ideology, other social relations – never came so easy, am I right? This demanded radical changes in the complex life-conception. And that was one of the main issues in art and culture.*

*How is it possible to reformat this new life, new relations, in order to make them as adequate as the old ones used to be some time ago? And this should not be on a marginal scale, but to reach a deserving place in the contemporary world.*

*And now, after the 90s, after the change in the social paradigm, something similar is going on. There is some internal intellectual fermentation going on and I think we have quite the same task. In spite of heaps of basic economic and political problems, people of art and culture are looking for prototypes of some new social relations, even by creation of artifacts and spatial forms. We do not have a background we could return to. All our background is either mythologized, or archaic. We have only one choice: the development of a totally new model of relations. This search for a model, for a new tonality, for new ways is interesting because it may give us the aesthetics of new social relations.*



*Turning to the Experience of the 60s*

*A Discussion between Yuliya Sorokina (Almaty) and Ulan Djararov (Bishkek)*

**Sorokina:** I almost agree with you, apart from the assertion that this is only true for Kyrgyzstan but not yet for other Central Asian countries. I hold the opinion that Central Asian artists are united into one enclave. There is no political unit, no country unit; countries compete with each other, dispute, but for a long time artists of contemporary art have been persistently uniting under the new strange unification “Central Asia.” And many people unfamiliar with the context, even art-professionals are curious: “Why didn’t you present yourself separately as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan etc., why have you united as a region?” And it seems to me that we managed to come up with some model here. And it is connected with the aspiration of the generation of the 60s to adopt the global progressive experience when making their models. We have an informal, more family-like hierarchy. The neighbor’s problems are perceived like possible domestic ones and actually like a part of our own problems. The achievements of one are perceived like common achievements. But nevertheless, we share the progressive achievements of worldwide culture and exist in a local as well as in global contexts. Unfortunately it may not be true that our model is being perceived in the right way. And it is a big danger that any reformatting will not happen at all. And vice versa, a straight rollback to the archaic past may happen. Some people say that Central Asia would have been something like sheer Afghanistan if the Great October Revolution in 1917 (which actually brought modernists culture here) did not break out. And it is terrifying how actual that is and how alien the modernists’ models are to the local mentality.

Translated from Russian by Irina Rousakova and Yulia Sorokina