

The FOCUS Association and the TET A TET Project

by Shakyla Hussain

“No modern means of communication can replace personal, face to face human interaction.”

Anatoly Kolesnikov, RIP 1983-2013

Central Asia remains a relatively unknown entity to most Europeans. In this article Shakyla Hussain describes how understanding and knowledge were exchanged between artists in Kyrgyzstan and Switzerland.

Created in 2009, the FOCUS Association, based in Switzerland, organizes transdisciplinary art projects which aim to encourage artistic exchange and support cultural diversity. By presenting exigent artworks involving diverse artistic statements in the field of visual arts, sculpture, graphic design, new media and music, FOCUS facilitates the exchange of ideas between emerging artists from different creative milieus.

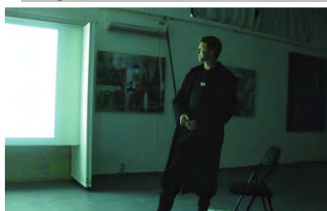
The artistic exchange TET A TET took place in Kyrgyzstan and Switzerland between 2009 and 2011. Four Swiss artists – Adrienne Scherrer, Yann Gross, Régis Tosetti and Simon Deppierraz presented an outdoor exhibition in October 2009 with five Kyrgyz artists – Bermet Borubaeva, Nikolai Cherkasov, Dmitry Petrovsky, Chingiz Aidarov and Anatoly Kolesnikov. In September 2011, the Kyrgyz participants spent three weeks in Switzerland and created TET A TET#2 at the former supermarket Ex-Epa in Vevey with four additional Swiss artists Federico Berardi, Simon Palmieri, Sebastian Vargas and Camille Scherrer.



↑ Entrance of B'Art Center (Bishkek)



↑ Sculptures at B'Art Center (Bishkek)



↑ Conference at B'Art Center (Bishkek)



↑ At Anatoly Kolesnikov's place



↑ Near Cholpon-Ata



↑ First discussions



↑ At Chabysh Festival



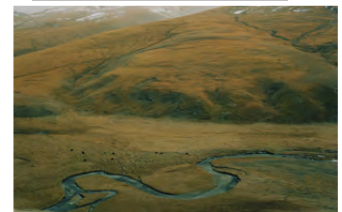
↑ Breakfast and designing of the poster



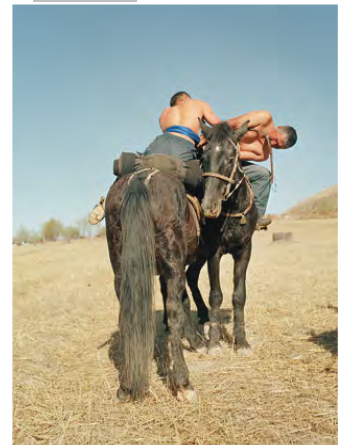
↑ Tokmok



↑ Road trip with the participants



↑ Tölök River



↑ Kyz-Kuumai

The intercultural project TET A TET created a hub that highlighted similarities and common interests, rather than focusing on differences and discrepancies. It helped to foster dialogue among Kyrgyz and Swiss artists, building bridges between cultures. Focus is the place in which different objects converge. This is exactly what the project's innovative collaborations are all about. Thousands of kilometers away from Switzerland, FOCUS and TET A TET encouraged human interactions in which there was a convergence of open-mindedness and cultural exchange.

According to TET A TET artist Anatoly Kolesnikov, "no modern means of communication can replace personal, face to face human interaction". We are part of the group which Dutch curator Lidewij Edelkoort calls the "Pop-up generation." We were born into a life dominated by flat-screens, always living, moving, learning, playing between two and three dimensions. Therefore, FOCUS wants to bring both intercultural human interaction and digitalization together in order to promote cultural diversity through modern means of expression and communication such as digital artworks, 3D mapping, interaction design and social media. New ways of artistic creation using technology should be encouraged.

In the past ten years, the digital sphere, smartphones and the ubiquity of images have become part of our social interactions and everyday life. Indeed people, according to Henry Jenkins, live in a "convergence culture", where everyone can obtain cultural goods for many different purposes.² Nowadays, Facebook has more than 950 million subscribers and 880 million users watch You Tube.³ Modern means of communication have radically changed how human beings communicate with each other and art has changed through them as well.

In an upcoming transdisciplinary project called Sofa Kabul the FOCUS Association aims to encourage new ways of artistic expression. Afghan and Swiss artists will collaborate in order to produce artworks in the field of visual arts, digital art, music, video animation, traditional and modern calligraphy, mapping video and projections, digital graffiti and architecture. The cultural exchange will focus on the ways in which technology from the West can be integrated with culture and arts from Central Asia and vice versa. The program is planned between 2013 and 2014. Indeed, the coming two years are vital for Afghanistan's future. The arts have to be promoted as a means of expression in the country, where many cultural events have been forbidden for the last 40 years. Culture and arts offer a means through which dialogue and cooperation can be achieved.

¹ <http://www.edelkoort.com/2012/12/pop-up-generation/>

² <http://www.convergenceculture.org/>

³ http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics

FOCUS is a non profit association created in April 2009 by Shakyla Hussain (*1985, lives and works in Zurich). Graduated in 2008 from the IUHEID Geneva, she encourages cultural exchanges as a *motto* fostering on intercultural relations and arts. Native from the *moitié-moitié* generation, both from Afghanistan and Switzerland, she is currently working at Swiss arts Council Pro Helvetia.

For more info on FOCUS and partnership opportunities, please contact : Ms. Shakyla Hussain: s.h@focus-art.ch; linkedin: <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/shakyla-hussain/39/413/512>

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UPCOMING Anatoly Kolesnikov's video *Swiss Monolith* will be presented at the Nuit des Images, Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, June 27th and 28th 2013. <http://www.elysee.ch/la-nuit-des-images/>

About Sofa Kabul: Sofa Kabul will take place in Afghanistan and Switzerland between 2013 and 2014. Graffiti artist Shamsia Hassani will be invited for a wall painting session with Swiss artist at Message Salon in Zürich on Sunday June 9th. More information coming soon at <http://www.focus-art.ch>.