

# WELCOME TO THE BAZAAR! THE KAZAKHSTAN STUDENT EXHIBITION AT PQ 2023

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**Abstract.** This review explores the work of the Kazakhstan Student Exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial in June 2023. In doing so, we contextualize the exhibit within the international festival, describing its concepts and accompanying performances, including Cooper's Trading Post, «Kurt,» the «Day of Tea,» and the Nauryz Celebration. The notes presented here are based on first-hand observations as well as individual interviews with the design and production team members present at PQ. To accompany this work, we also reflect on the cross-cultural collaborations behind the exhibition, which are the culmination of a five-year relationship between a university in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Conway, SC, in the United States. Thus, the interviews conducted during the second half of the 10-day festival provide not only insight into design and performance choices, but also the processes behind a student-led collaboration between two cohorts from Theatre and Design programs separated across time and space. In this way, while we locate the exhibit as a display of scenographic art and performance from the Central Asian nation, we also provide suggestions for international collaboration in designing a display for theatre festivals that may provide a framework for others working on similar projects in the future.

**Keywords:** Scenography, Kazakhstan, PQ 23, student art, cross-cultural communication, collaboration

**Cite:** Howes, Emma, et al. «Welcome to the Bazaar! The Kazakhstan student exhibition AT PQ 2023». *Central Asian Journal of Art Studies*, vol. 9, № 1, 2024, c. 310–328. DOI: 10.47940/cajas.v9i1.809

*The authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and declare that there is no conflicts of interests.*

**Acknowledgments:** The authors of this review would like to thank the editorial team at the Central Asian Journal of Art Studies and the curation team from the Temirbek Zhurgenov Kazakh Academy of the Arts, Vice Rector for Research Kabył Khalykov and Master of Arts Zhannat Baimukhanova, as well as the creative teams from KazNAA and Coastal Carolina University, listed below. Travel for students from CCU was funded, in part, by an internal grant from the Succeed@Coastal program, as well as scholarships from the University's Center for Global Engagement. We would also like to thank our departments for all of their support: the Department of Scenography at KazNAA, and the Departments of Theatre, English, and the Master of Arts in Writing program at Coastal. Alfiya Yembergenova supported performances and served as a translator for students and faculty at both institutions. Finally, none of this work would be possible without the unyielding support of Anna Oldfield, who worked with both cohorts from the beginning to submit paperwork, make travel arrangements, and translate during our early meetings over Zoom and WhatsApp. This truly was a team effort.

We would also like to thank the faculty, staff, and students at Temirbek Zhurgenov Kazakh Academy of the Arts in Almaty for inviting faculty and students from Coastal Carolina University to participate in this incredible project. You were wonderful hosts during the US cohort's visit to Almaty, showing us incredible hospitality and kindness, as we toured your beautiful city and learned about Kazakh culture. A thank you, as well, to the merchants at the Green (Kok) Bazaar, who welcomed the US cohort to their market and to Kazakhstan with curiosity and joy. And the market visit would not be complete without Assylhan Izbassar's documentation.

Finally, we would like to thank the countless workers and volunteers at the 2023 Prague Quadrennial, as well as the city of Prague itself, for hosting such an extraordinary event.

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## Introduction

The Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space, or «PQ» for short, is a festival that showcases scenographic techniques and artistry from different cultures around the world. The 2023 edition was the 15th occasion since the first festival in 1967, and it took place primarily in Prague's lively Holešovice Market, which remained open and active throughout the duration of the festival, providing an exciting, dynamic backdrop for the exhibits. The 10-day event consisted of a number of displays representing 59 countries and regions and more than 2000 artists. Work was presented at the Exhibition of Countries and Regions, where professional exhibits were housed, and the Student Exhibition; each participating country focused their designs on a specific

theme, this year's being *rare*. This theme was explored through performance, costume design, set design, and other theatrical elements as every group strove to illustrate rare «in the sense of unique and raw realities that artists create» («15th edition»). As such, PQ invited its attendees to become fully immersed in these realities through direct interaction with the exhibits, and, in this way, the scenes are «truly completed by the participants engaging with the designed space» («15th edition»). In 2023, PQ estimated there were «nearly 11,000 accredited visitors and one-day ticket holders,» while free performances «attracted tens of thousands [of] other people» («PQ is Over»). The event successfully brought cross-cultural exchange through performance art to an impressive number of people, creating a magical space where participants could

build coalitions around expressions of global identity and connection.

This review focuses on the Kazakhstan Student Exhibit and the performances that took place in that space. The student exhibit, as outlined below, was rare in a number of different ways, including its presence as the only exhibition in the space from the Central Asian region. It was also the product of a collaborative process between students at T.K. Zhurgenov Kazakh National Academy of the Arts in Almaty and at Coastal Carolina University in the US. This review is written primarily from the perspective of curation team members from the US, including interviews of curation team members from both countries to provide a variety of perspectives on the work we created together.

## A Brief Background

As previously mentioned, this exhibition embodied PQ's theme of *rare* in a variety of ways, including our shared work across cultures, nations, geography, and language. In collaboration, we landed on the overall concept of a bazaar, highlighting these open-air markets that house inter- and intra-national trade as «redistribution hubs» for people, ideas, and goods (Alfi 249). There is tremendous research diving deeply into the culture around the bazaar, Kazakhstan, and the role of the Silk Road in Central Asian history, outlining the social, political, and historical significance to this choice as a platform for an international stage (Mamasolieva, Chin, to name just a few). Further, interest in this historical moment has resurfaced with infrastructure and trade projects like the New Silk Road. We selected this concept for its historical ties to pre- and post-Soviet Central Asia and as a space where old and new, local and global, come into conversation. The character tropes we sketched during early meetings within the space of the market are vast: the trickster, who attempts to do

business, alongside the mystic, who shares visions of the future and the shopper, who bargains down the price of fresh vegetables. The market is a place where foreign and regional not only come into contact but interact through negotiation and exchange. The outlandish and performative mix with the everyday and banal, emphasizing encounters that speak to PQ's theme of rare. It further created a space for intercultural exchange, where students and artists from the US could interact with students and artists from Kazakhstan to emphasize people coming together in harmony, an especially potent message following the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of global conflicts that have arisen since.

The market is also a space where traditional and modern technologies interact and are shared, as the items exchanged carry stories. This thread became surprisingly significant in the exhibit, as outlined below; the sharing of stories and goods captures the overall spirit we hoped to illustrate, as the world experiences rebirth after lockdown. As theatre professionals, artists, and the public converged in Prague for PQ, the Kazakhstan Student Exhibition produced a site that functioned as a gathering point for participants in the festival as well as visitors, who could join in a game of *assyk* with our curation team, or step inside the tent to find shade or shelter from the sun and occasional rain that drifted through the city. In these ways, while we did not centralize the act of trading to the extent of other exhibits (the Student Exhibit from the Philippines, for example), there was almost-constant interaction between guests to the space and our curation team. Aligning with traditions of Kazakh and nomadic hospitality, so often referenced regarding many Central Asian cultures, the exhibit became a space for people to visit, find shelter, and explore the artifacts and displays within the bazaar.

## The Collaboration

The kernel for this collaboration was planted at PQ 2019, when faculty from CCU were invited to join students and faculty at KazNAI for an exhibit titled, «The Power of Magic in the Imaginary World of the Kazakh Ertegi Tale: The Instinct of Free Flight.» The group decided to form a fuller collaboration for the next Quadrennial in 2023, bringing students from both institutions together to present shared responses to the festival's theme, *rare*. In this way, the theme was woven into not only the exhibit itself, but in the cultivation of concepts and performances through the unusual collective work of two different universities and two different cultures. We also thought of this as a *rare* professionalization opportunity for all the students involved, in designing an exhibit and performing at a large, international festival, in addition to the chance to work closely with colleagues from around the world to do so.

While work to apply for PQ began with design concepts, securing funding and organizing the trip began much earlier for students and faculty at both institutions and the full group was brought together for the first time in early 2023 over Zoom. In particular, student members of the design and production (DePro) team met weekly, with a standing day and time. The collaboration picked up speed the week ahead of PQ, when the US team traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan for a week. Team members reflected on the ways that these meetings brought the team «closer in general once we got to Kazakhstan» (Josties), even as «strong bridges [were built] during the Zoom meetings, which created a sense of trust between the cohorts which enhanced the creative process» (Bolat). These meetings included discussion of design work, including costumes and the presentation of the exhibit. The relationships cultivated in these informal student meetings created

a space for cross-cultural communication and allowed students to get to know each other. Regular reports from the meetings were sent to the full team of instructors, actors, and DePro members via emails from our acting stage director, Grace Gardner, in a gesture to include members who were not able to attend and create accountability and clear communication. In addition, there were several threads of written communication taking place with a variety of combinations of team members from both countries on WhatsApp and Telegram.

As the exhibit centered on student artistic endeavors, student meetings were more frequent than full cohort meetings, with the latter taking place 1-2 times a month, beginning in January 2023. During the larger team meetings, members discussed necessary supplies for the exhibit, as well as larger conceptual frameworks for the work, including constructing different performances that would punctuate our time at PQ. In emphasizing space for students to meet, we hoped to respond to Johanna Leinius's advice on collaborative projects across the global North and South, to value «sharing our stories and experiences with efforts to build non-dominating ways of producing knowledge across power divides» and to allow students to avoid «ready-made recipes» for production (72). Thus, while students were guided by faculty in both cohort groups (and faculty were responsible for putting together the tremendous logistics of the project), they were also encouraged to work with one another from the standpoint of relationships to expand on the concepts proposed by the full group.

To give US students hands-on experience with Kazakh culture and history, ahead of the exhibition, students from Coastal Carolina University (eight undergraduate students from the Department of Theater and two graduate students from the Masters in Writing program) arrived in Almaty, KZ, to the generous welcome of students

from KazNAA, led by the Vice Rector of Research, Kabyl Khalykov. Students from both universities quickly began connecting personally, artistically, and professionally through shared meals, performances of theater and music, exchanging of gifts, and sightseeing. The time spent in Almaty, and the repertoire that resulted from it, highlighted language and cultural barriers (making space for reflection on global power dynamics, social currencies, and accessibility), while also breaking them down in the name of interpersonal connection and artistic collaboration.

While in Almaty, students met regularly in the evenings to unpack the experiences of each day: acting students created symbolic performances, design and production students crafted costumes—including individualized aprons—with practical materials, and writing students reflected on the unfolding conversations between individuals and the larger group. The students joined each other for a group trip to the Kok Bazar, allowing the CCU students to experience first-hand the central theme of the Kazakhstan Student Exhibit through the lens of those who frequent the market we strove to recreate in Prague. The group sampled foods and drinks like kurt, boursak, shubat, and kumis, offered graciously by smiling vendors. In addition, the Almaty videographer, Izbassar Assylzhan, of the production company NDA Product, created a video of the visit to promote PQ and commemorate the cross-cultural exchange (videos available on Instagram @nda.assyll or @kazakhstanpq). Even though the Kok Bazaar was slightly overwhelming at first, the CCU students were soon able to appreciate its variety and vastness, as well as its fast-paced, social nature, due to the support and enthusiasm of the Kazakh cohort. Experiencing the Kok Bazaar together greatly contributed to the strength of both our friendships and our collaboration in general, and it was a key element in the success of our exchanges and PQ exhibit. (fig. 1)



Figure 1. The Kok Bazaar. Students and faculty from both universities visit the Kok Bazaar in preparation for PQ. Photo: Alina Gavrilova.

The experiences in Almaty proved essential for both cohorts, though they had an especially potent impact on students from the US, who came to Kazakhstan with a spectrum of experiences in time abroad ranging from none to several months in other study abroad programs. Willow Collins, one of the performers, stated frankly, «Without going to Almaty first, we couldn't have done what we did,» adding «the performers' process included experiencing the culture—fully immersed in each moment—then trusting our training to essentialize that into our performance. It's odd because you don't feel that happening in the moment, but looking back, even the less defined cultural moments made their way into the performance» (Personal interview). This is further emphasized by Corin Wiggins, who reflected, «When we got to Almaty, I intentionally took in my surroundings with a heightened awareness because I knew that that would be what we were using to create these pieces of art» (Personal interview). Lastly, Cooper Josties, a DePro student and an active member of the pre-departure student meetings, echoed the emphasis of his colleagues on the importance of observation: «Being in

Kazakhstan helped me understand what the people are about. Our role in this project was never to be the designers. We were just the bodies and the people helping bring it to life. So while in Almaty, I knew I needed to be observant» (Personal interview).

This positioning of student participants as learners and as «the bodies and the people helping bring» the exhibition to life, suggest the presence of what feminist researchers refer to as «critical self-reflexivity» (Leinus 75). This was especially important as students from the United States were attending PQ as collaborators, but also as invited guests of the Kazakhstan Student Exhibition. In her much cited work on research methodology across cultures, Jacqueline Royster writes of remembering our «home training,» a reference to emphasizing values of respect, when visiting the «home spaces» of others (32). Specifically, Royster references this concept in relation to historical misconducts when researchers fail to consider the complex systems of power in which we all operate, disrespecting the communities in which they work, often unintentionally. For these reasons, it was very important for our entire group to consider some of the larger contexts in which our collaboration was fostered, particularly for US students who walked through these home spaces of their colleagues and strove to share stories from a culture not their own. Jacob Phillips, a member of the CCU cohort, reflected on this idea, stating that as he spent more time in Almaty and in places like the Kok Bazaar, he was «becoming more conscious of respecting the space that he’s entering» (Personal interview), and through such behavior, we were able to bolster the sense of trust and community referenced by Bolat and other students in their interviews.

Following the week in Almaty, the curatorial team traveled to Prague, where the cohorts from CCU and KazNAA reconvened at the Holešovice Market on the day of PQ’s opening ceremony. Much of the construction of the tent’s display was

set up by the Kazakh team and technical support team in Prague (Khalykov, Zhannat Baimukhanova, Bolat, Aruzhan Tuleubyeva, Alina Gavrilova, Zamanbek Daryia, Zamanbek Yergalym and Jaromír Bernard), who arrived a day earlier than the US cohort, though both groups were charged with transporting items from Almaty to Prague. The large outdoor space was sunny and full of life as student groups and scenography professionals arrived from various countries, while the Kazakh exhibit—a colorful, interactive, and welcoming display of cultural community—was assembled after months of preparation.

## Summary of Performances

Performances were originally imagined to highlight important aspects of Kazakh culture, offered by the Kazakh members of the curation team as a way to both invite US participants into traditions that were significant to their culture, as well as select snapshots that would present these elements on a global stage. The setting of the bazaar was intentionally one of cross-cultural interaction, making space for the collaboration to avoid the very real dangers of cultural appropriation, highlighting instead cultural exchange and appreciation. There were also performative moments that were grown out of the collaboration and the PQ experience, including Cooper’s Trading Post, mentioned below. While this review does not cover every performative moment from the exhibition, it does outline some of the major performances that took place at the Student Exhibit. (fig.2)

### *The Tent*

To begin our review, we start with the displays produced by the curation team. As mentioned, the specific bazaar that served as a model for students was the Kok (Green) Bazar located in Almaty, the home of KazNAA. The tent included a variety of articles that one would find in a bazaar, including trinkets that represented Kazakh culture that might be sold to tourists,



Figure 2. A view of the open-air tent that served as the display for the Kazakhstan Student Exhibition at PQ. The space served as a welcoming center for visitors and the base location for the performances reviewed in this article. Photo: Alina Gavrilova.

fruits and vegetables, and a host of design elements, created by the Kazakh team. These included tapestries beaded with sheep bones and bottle caps, felted flowers that served as covers for the lighting, and garlands of ribbons with traditional Kazakh designs and homemade tassels, strung along the edges of the display to enhance the ambiance of the space for those entering and exiting. Further, each corner of the tent housed displays of scenographic models, representing additional elements of Kazakh culture, including celebrations of apples, a fruit whose origins lie in the Tien Shan Mountains outside Almaty («The Last Wild Apple Forests»), dioramas of ancient petroglyphs found in the Tamgaly gorge, and a delicate model of the internal structure of a yurt. Finally, the space was punctuated with tea bags, hanging alongside the tassels to add texture and fill the space with the smell of tea during the periodic rains that moved through Prague.

The tent itself had open sides, allowing access from multiple points, though the tent's front was used as an official entrance, welcoming visitors with an outlaid carpet and two pairs of Kazakh slippers, which guests were welcomed to try on when they entered the space. These elements created an experiential encounter with the market: when participants entered the tent, they entered a unique space full of artifacts and images of Kazakhstan. The curation

and creative teams wore individualized aprons, designed and adorned by Gardner and Bolat. These aprons identified bazaar workers by the green embroidered Kazakhstan logo and were embellished with items from the tent, including ribbons, tea bags, and dried fruit. (fig.3)



Figure 3. Welcome to the Bazaar! Khalykov, Gavrilova, Tuleubyeva, Yembergenova, Parker, Phelps, and Bolat stand outside the tent wearing personalized aprons. Photo: Kazakhstan Student Exhibit Creative Team.

### *Cooper's Trading Post*

We will begin the performance reviews with Cooper's Trading Post, as this element of the exhibition was present throughout the entire festival. As mentioned above, audience participation and interaction played a significant role in bringing each scenographic exhibit at PQ to life. At our exhibit, one way this concept came to fruition was through what we called «Cooper's Trading Post.» The Trading Post became a microcosm of the exchanges that take place in a typical bazaar, though instead of trading actual goods and services, festival attendees traded significant personal items and stories with Cooper Josties, a member of the design and production team from the American cohort. Through these exchanges, empathy and human connection became the «currency» of trade. Everyday, Josties would sit at the exhibit with a sign and a handful of items, waiting for attendees to approach the space. He would invite them to sit with him and, if they agreed to listen, he would explain the significance and story of each

item in front of him. Then, he would ask them if they had an item they would like to trade and would prompt them to share that item's story. (fig.4)



Figure 4. The Trading Post. A PQ visitor listens to stories about different items at Cooper's Trading Post. Photo: Alina Gavrilova.

Over the course of the festival, people came to our exhibit specially to trade and talk with Josties. In fact, he reported that after 6 days, he had spoken and traded with 55 different participants. Josties noted that «people just kept coming and listening and sharing and trading, and [that] the emotional connections resonated with people [...] and it became something really special» (Personal interview). The sense of truthfulness and authenticity that was created through both the trade itself and the act of sharing and listening to personal stories opened the door for cross-cultural human connection and understanding in a way that mirrors the type of exchange that takes place in a bazaar. Further, these exchanges highlighted the theme of *rare* by artistically and emotionally reflecting a unique reality where items of all sorts are traded via face to face interaction. Cooper's Trading Posting was an integral part of our exhibit, and it exemplifies our central themes of collaboration and connection while also demonstrating an important aspect of Kazakh and Central Asian culture, as a center for the trading of ideas and items from people hailing from all over the world.

#### *Kurt*

Another repeated performance at the Kazakhstan Student exhibit was a piece

called, «Kurt,» based on the story of Gertrude Platays, who was imprisoned in the village of Zhanashu during World War II at the ALZhIR, or Akmolai Camp of Wives of «Traitors» of the Motherland. During her imprisonment at the Soviet camp, which was the largest concentration camp holding the wives of political dissidents and captives, Platays and other women were forced to do manual labor under the harsh conditions of the northern Kazakh steppe (Maria-Xavier). Platays' story is one that many Kazakhs hold dear as an illustration of the hospitality, generosity, and compassion that the country is known for, as well as a quiet resistance to colonial presence during the rule of the USSR. The story, which has been told in a number of places, goes like this: a group of older Kazakhs from the nearby village directed village children to throw white stones at the imprisoned women at the end of a long workday (E-history.kz). Guards of the camp, assuming that these actions were done in anger at the wives of men identified as traitors to Stalin's regime, allowed the actions to take place. Platays fell to the ground during the «attack,» her face coming close to one of the white rocks thrown by the children. That's when she noticed: the rock smelled like cheese. Platays put the rock in her mouth and discovered that it was actually kurt (qurt), a fermented, hardened cheese curd, common amongst traditional nomadic populations in Central Asia (the hardened curds travel well and are a source of protein, calcium, and calories on the steppe) (Uteuova, E-history.kz). The villagers were not throwing rocks, but food sources to the imprisoned women, to help sustain them and show them compassion.

The performance around Kurt was introduced by Alfiya Yembergenova, one of the KazNAA faculty members who participated in PQ as part of a larger series of performances originally categorized under «The Day of Milk.» Yembergenova shared documents describing Platays'



story and worked with team members from the US, including Willow Collins, Isaiah Cook, Ben Sota, and Corin Wiggins. Grace Gardner and Emma Howes narrated the performances, reading a script written by Gardner. The performance itself, which was a crowd favorite, featured four performers, Cook, Yembergenova, Sota, and Wiggins, standing in a circle holding a fishing net; Collins played the part of Platays, walking precariously through the net, which was moved by the others in opposition to their steps to illustrate the physical difficulties of labor and environment that imprisoned women experienced. As the actor negotiated the net, they were pelted by white juggling balls, representing the rocks that were thrown at prisoners at ALZhIR. Mirroring Platays' story, when the net and balls were too much, Collins fell to the ground, picking up one of the balls to realize its actual symbolic identity, not as a rock, but as an offering of dried cheese. During the performance, Gardner's script was read slowly, offering vignettes from the story interspersed with a recipe to make kurt. (fig.5)

Alongside sharing the story of the interactions between women imprisoned ALZhIR and local Kazakh villagers, this performance further plays with the roles of self and other, as members of both cohorts played the roles of those holding



Figure 5. Walking the Net. Collins steps carefully through the net, embodying the conflicts represented by the performance. Photo: Emma Howes.

the net, the villagers tossing kurt, and Platays, a foreigner to Kazakhstan and a political prisoner. In this way, the larger themes of cultures coming into contact with one another, as well as tropes of generosity to strangers and hospitality, even under extraordinary and oppressive conditions, are highlighted within Kazakh culture. At the end of the performances, Yembergenova and Aruzhan Tulebyeva distributed samples of kurt to members of the audience, extended this offering from the villagers to visitors to PQ and the Kazakhstan Student Exhibit, further driving this point home.

### *Tea*

The themes of hospitality and cultural exchange were also highlighted in the «Tea» performance, featuring Collins, Cook, Yembergenova, Sota, and Wiggins. In Kazakh culture, inviting others to tea is an act of coming together that cultivates closeness and trust, and that creates space for family and friends to share stories, celebrations, and gossip. During these tea ceremonies, certain gestures are considered thoughtful and appropriate, while others are rude and impolite. In our Tea performance, this sentiment was expressed by Yembergenova inviting the other actors to tea, greeting each of them enthusiastically when they arrived and making sure to seat them appropriately, with Sota, the most important guest, seated closest to her and Cook, the least important, seated furthest away. When she served them their first round of black tea—pouring the proper amount for Sota and a larger, offensive amount for Cook—each guest took a sip and came up from their cups with bright red clown noses attached to their faces. They then proceeded to embody the flavor and «persona» of black tea by having loud, exaggerated conversations, speaking over one another and moving rapidly from topic to topic. Yembergenova then called for the next round and served them green tea, which resulted in the guests becoming

much more relaxed and holding calmer conversations. The third round was milk tea, which left them lethargic and relaxed, and the conversation slowed as each guest grew sleepier. Finally, Yembergenova served millet tea, and the guests became sentimental and sweet, relishing in the fact that the ceremony had forged a tighter bond amongst the group of new friends.

During each round of tea, the guests' conversations and actions were shaped by the type of tea they were drinking, and it was intentionally poured so that the harshest tea was served first and the sweetest tea served last. This was meant to demonstrate not only the differing flavors of the traditional teas themselves, but also the sense of trust and togetherness that can be formed over the course of a tea ceremony. The guests started out as enthusiastic strangers and ended up as welcoming friends, and the conversations they had through each round of tea flowed in a manner that allowed for this transformation. The content of the conversations, however, was not of import in this case, for while serving her guests, Yembergenova spoke solely in Kazakh, a language her guests did not share. Despite being unable to understand one another, the act of drinking tea together and of experiencing the ceremony and traditions associated with it allowed the guests to form a true connection. Further, the clown noses represented not only the performance of the embodiment of the teas' personas, but, on a deeper level, the performance that transpires during a tea ceremony in general—that is, the performance of hosting, of being a proper guest, and of participating in conversation. In this way, we were able to highlight the importance of tea ceremonies in Kazakh culture and to demonstrate the coming together that transpires because of them.

### *Nauryz*

Finally, the Kazakhstan Student Exhibit hosted a celebration of Nauryz (Naurız, Nawruz), a Central Asian and Persian New

Years celebration, held each March around the equinox. The cultural significance of Nauryz makes it one of the largest holidays in Kazakhstan, as it represents—among other things—a time when families and nomadic communities that have been separated throughout the winter come back together. In this way, the holiday is about survival, as Anna Oldfield points out in her article, «Nawruz in Kazakhstan»: it is the renewal of family, the renewal of crop growth, and the start of a new cycle of life and growth on earth (2-3). For this day of performance, the exhibit's tent served as a headquarters, where visitors were invited to dance and play games, including assyk, which used painted sheep bones, called saka, which are tossed like dice with the objective of knocking other assyks out of the playing field («Kazakh Traditional Assyk Games»).

In addition to the general festivities, the exhibit also hosted an all-female performance by members of the Kazakh curatorial team, representing the importance of heritage through the wrapping of a kimeshek, a head covering worn by women in traditional Kazakh culture who are married and have children. The origins of the kimeshek are contested and perhaps varied, but there is no doubt that it reaches back to ancient practices and ones that are echoed in many regions of Central Asia and the Turkish world (Richardson). This adds to the potency of the performance, which was the only one during the exhibition featuring only Kazakh performers and only women. To complete the ceremony, Baimukhanova was seated outside the tent, wearing traditional Kazakh dress. Tuleubyeva, Gavrilova, Yembergenova, and Daryia Zamanbek circled Baimukhanova, holding four ends to different strands of cloth, which they wrapped around a base covering on Baimukhanova's head, slowly walking around her to build the kimeshek. (fig.6)

Once the wrapping was complete, the ends of each cloth were tucked into the



Figure 6. A Wrapping Ceremony. Members of the Kazakh Creative Team, Tulebyeva, Gavrilova, Yembergenova, and D. Zamanbek, wrap a kimeshek on Baimukhanova during the exhibit's celebration of Nauryz. Photo: Morgan Phelps.

covering and Baimukhanova rose, walking around the edges of the exhibit and tossing tenge coins and Kazakh candies into the audience. The performance emphasized the importance of generational knowledge, which is often transferred through the home and through the work of women around the world, as well as honoring familial and community relationships, which are so central to the celebration of the Spring and of fertility of the land, of livestock, and of families. These threads are all central to Nauryz and to the continuation of traditional Kazakh culture in the contemporary world.

## Conclusion

Putting together a creative exhibit that represented Kazakh scenography, design, and culture was no simple task; especially for a group who was separated by time and space during the weeks prior to the festival. As we built our ideas and figured out the logistics, we found that being open to suggestion, change, and fluidity allowed for many of our successes. As stated by Bolat during an interview, she, as an individual, had to give up control at times «since [the project] was collaborative and everyone's creative concepts [were] mixing.» But she ultimately was pleased with the experience, noting that «collaboration brings in new thinking from different perspectives» that

you wouldn't get otherwise (Personal interview). Therefore, when working on collaborative projects, it is important to listen and learn as you go, and to embrace the potentially hectic moments as part of the process. It was difficult at times to communicate ideas across the language and cultural barriers we faced, but we quickly realized how important it is to remain in a mindset where making compromises or even letting go of ideas entirely is comfortable and productive. We faced this issue with a few of our performances at PQ, when we realized we needed to adjust concepts or shift their focus in order to make them more effective and engaging; but through open, judgment-free communication we came to agreements and our exhibit was able to thrive. Thus, a key element of our cross-cultural collaboration was everyone's willingness to be flexible and to create space for unique perspectives, and this should be kept in mind when embarking on similar projects.

The representations of Kazakh and Central Asian culture in our exhibit were based on key traditions and artistic notions that we experienced, observed, and discussed together in shared spaces over the course of our collaboration and beyond. Therefore, as we created space for unique voices and perspectives to contribute to our collaborative goals, we also cultivated conversations that crossed cultural boundaries and helped create real, genuine human connections. These conversations took place online and in person, and they allowed us to bond with one another and to build an appreciation for one another's culture. A significant way we were able to achieve this appreciation was by breaking down barriers and encouraging everyone to be involved in all aspects of the project. For example, all team members—including the actors, writers, and design and production students—were invited to the performance rehearsals, contributing to the ecosystem in which we stepped over the boundaries of creative disciplines and roles.

The sense of freedom and trust this fostered amongst the team cultivated friendships and made it easier for the American students to learn about and embrace Kazakh culture. As Josties detailed, after getting to know the Kazakh cohort, the American students were able to observe their culture and could figure out «how to represent [it] and the ways [it] interacted with our overall theme, which [was centered] around new ways of interacting with people and new ways of coming together» (Personal interview). In this way, our collaboration in itself was rare: two cultures from two very different parts of the world came together to cultivate conversations and relationships while creating art and studying culture. Furthermore, at PQ, not only did we bring in rare through our exploration of the Kok Bazaar and our unique cross-cultural collaboration, but also through our presentation of Kazakh culture in general. In an interview, Bolat noted that «we [were] the only Central Asian exhibit, so



Figure 7. Selfie from the Team!

showing this culture [through performance and design was] really great» and provided a rare instance of representation for cultures similar to Kazakhstan's. Through our collaboration, we opened the door for rare friendships, conversations, and representations to occur, and the cultural understandings we developed were the beating heart of this project. (fig.7)

#### **Contributions of authors:**

**E. Howes, C. Parker, M. Phelps** – all three authors contributed to the research, drafting, and revision of this review.

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### ДОБРО ПОЖАЛОВАТЬ НА БАЗАР! КАЗАХСТАНСКАЯ СТУДЕНЧЕСКАЯ ВЫСТАВКА НА PQ 2023

**Аннотация.** В данном обзоре анализируется деятельность Казахстанской студенческой выставки на Пражском Квадриеннале в июне 2023 года. В процессе исследования выставки описываются ее концепции и сопровождающие выступления, такие как «Торговый пост Купера», «Курт», «День чая» и празднование Наурыза, а также контекстуализируется ее в международном фестивальном контексте. Представленные заметки основаны на первичных наблюдениях и индивидуальных интервью с членами дизайнерской и продюсерской команд, присутствовавших на Пражском квадриеннале. Для дополнительного освещения исследуемого явления также рассматриваются кросс-культурные коллаборации, лежащие в основе выставки, которые возникли в результате пятилетнего партнерства между университетом в Алматы, Казахстан, и Конвэй, Южная Каролина, США. Таким образом, интервью, проведенные во время фестиваля, позволяют не только понять выбор дизайна и формы выступлений, но и процессы, лежащие в основе студенческого сотрудничества между двумя когортами программ Театра и Дизайна, разделенными во времени и пространстве. В итоге, несмотря на то, что мы выставка рассматривается как демонстрация сценографического искусства и выступлений из Центрально-Азиатской страны, также предлагаются рекомендации по международному сотрудничеству в создании выставок для театральных фестивалей, которые могут послужить примером для других проектов данного типа в будущем.

**Ключевые слова:** сценография, Казахстан, Пражский квадриеннале 23, студенческое искусство, межкультурное общение, сотрудничество.

**Для цитирования:** Эмма, Хауэс и др. «Добро пожаловать на базар! Казахстанская студенческая выставка на PQ 2023». *Central Asian Journal of Art Studies*, т. 9, № 1, 2024, с. 310–328. DOI: 10.47940/cajas.v9i1.809

*Авторы прочитали и одобрили окончательный вариант рукописи и заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.*

**Благодарности:** Авторы этого обзора хотели бы поблагодарить редакционную команду Центральноазиатского журнала искусствоведения, а также команду кураторов из Казахской академии искусств им. Темирбека Жургенова, Проректора по научной работе Кабыл Халыков и магистра искусств Жаннат Баймуханову, а также творческие коллективы из КазНИИ и Университета Прибрежной Каролины, перечисленные ниже. Поездка студентов из Побережного Каролинского университета была частично финансирована внутренней грантовой программой программы Succeed@Coastal, а также стипендиями от Центра глобального взаимодействия университета. Мы также хотели бы выразить благодарность нашим отделам за всю оказанную поддержку: кафедре сценографии КазНАИ, а также отделам театра, английского языка и программе магистратуры по писательскому мастерству в Побережном Каролинском университете. Альфия Ембергенова поддерживала выступления и выступала в качестве переводчика для студентов и преподавателей обеих учебных заведений. Наконец, ни одна из этих работ не была бы возможной без неуклонной поддержки Анны Олдфилд, которая работала с обеими когортами с самого начала, подавая документы, организуя поездки и переводя во время наших ранних встреч через Zoom и WhatsApp. Это действительно была командная работа.

Мы также хотели бы поблагодарить преподавателей, сотрудников и студентов Казахской академии искусств им. Темирбека Жургенова в Алматы за приглашение преподавателей и студентов Университета Прибрежной Каролины принять участие в этом невероятном проекте. Вы были замечательными хозяевами во время визита американской когорты в Алматы, оказывая нам невероятное гостеприимство и доброту, когда мы осматривали ваш прекрасный город и узнавали

о казахской культуре. Спасибо также торговцам на зеленом (Кок) базаре, которые приняли американскую когорту на свой рынок и в Казахстан с любопытством и радостью. Посещение рынка не могло бы быть полным без документации Асылхана Избасара.

Наконец, мы хотели бы поблагодарить бесчисленных работников и волонтеров 2023 года Пражского Квадриеннале, а также сам город Прагу за проведение такого удивительного события.

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## БАЗАРҒА ҚОШ КЕЛДІҢІЗ! PQ 2023 ҚАЗАҚСТАНДЫҚ СТУДЕНТТЕР КӨРМЕСІ

**Аңдатпа.** Бұл шолуда 2023 жылғы маусымда Прагадағы төртжылдықтағы қазақстандық студенттер көрмесінің қызметі талданады. Көрменің барлауы Купер сауда бекеті, Курт, шай күні және Наурыз мерекесі сияқты оның тұжырымдамалары мен ілеспе қойылымдарын сипаттайды және оны халықаралық фестиваль контекстінде контексттендіреді. Ұсынылған жазбалар Прага төртжылдығына қатысқан дизайн және өндірістік топ мүшелерімен алғашқы бақылаулар мен жеке сұхбаттарға негізделген. Зерттеліп жатқан феноменді одан әрі түсіндіру үшін көрменің негізінде Алматыдағы (Қазақстан) университет пен Конвейдегі (Оңтүстік Каролина, АҚШ) бө жылдық серіктестік нәтижесінде пайда болған мәдениетаралық ынтымақтастықтар да қарастырылады. Осылайша, фестиваль барысында жүргізілген сұхбаттар дизайн таңдаулары мен спектакльдер формаларын ғана емес, сонымен қатар уақыт пен кеңістікте бөлінген Театр және Дизайн бағдарламаларының екі когорты арасындағы студенттердің ынтымақтастығы негізінде жатқан процестерді де түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Қорытындылай келе, көрме Орталық Азия елдерінің сахналық дизайны мен қойылымының көрсетілімі ретінде қарастырылғанымен, ол сондай-ақ театр фестивалдеріне арналған көрмелерді құруда халықаралық ынтымақтастық бойынша ұсыныстарды ұсынады, олар осы түрдегі басқа жобаларға үлгі бола алады. болашақ.

**Түйін сөздер:** Сценография, Қазақстан, Прага Quadrennial 23, студенттік өнер, мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас, ынтымақтастық

**Дәйексөз үшін:** Эмма, Хоуэс және т.б. «Базарға қош келдіңіз! PQ 2023 Қазақстан студенттерінің көрмесі «Central Asian Journal of Art Studies», 9-том, № 1, 2024 ж., б. 310–328. DOI: 10.47940/cajas.v9i1.809

*Авторлар қолжазбаның соңғы нұсқасын оқып, мақұлдады және мүдделер қайшылығының жоқтығы туралы мәлімдемеді.*

**Алғыс:** Осы шолудың авторлары Орталық Азия өнер тарихы журналының редакциясына, сондай-ақ Темірбек Жүргенов атындағы Қазақ ұлттық өнер академиясының кураторлар командасына, ғылыми жұмыстар жөніндегі проректор Қабыл Халықов және өнер магистрі Жаннат Баймұханова, сондай-ақ төменде көрсетілген ҚазҰӨА мен Жағалаудағы Каролина Университетінің шығармашылық ұжымдарына алғыс білдіреді. Жағалаудағы Каролина университеті студенттерінің сапары ішінара Succeed@Coastal бағдарламасының ішкі гранттық бағдарламасымен, сондай-ақ Университеттің Жаһандық өзара әрекеттесу орталығының шәкіртақысымен қаржыландырылды. Біз сондай-ақ біздің кафедраларымызға көрсеткен барлық қолдаулары үшін алғысымызды білдіргіміз келеді: ҚазҰӨА сценография кафедрасы, сондай-ақ Жағалаудағы Каролина Университетінің театр, ағылшын тілі және шығармашылық жазу магистрі кафедралары. Альфия Ембергенова қойылымдарға қолдау көрсетіп, екі оқу орнының студенттері мен мұғалімдеріне аудармашы қызметін атқарды. Ақырында, бұл жұмыстың ешқайсысы Zoom және WhatsApp арқылы алғашқы кездесулерімізде екі топпен бірге жұмыс істеген, құжаттарды тапсырған, саяхатты ұйымдастырған және аударма жасаған Анна Олдфилдтің мызғымас қолдауынсыз мүмкін болмас еді. Бұл шынымен командалық жұмыс болды.

Алматыдағы Темірбек Жүргенов атындағы Қазақ өнер академиясының оқытушыларына, қызметкерлеріне және студенттеріне Жағалаудағы Каролина Университетінің оқытушылары мен студенттері осы керемет жобаға қатысуға шақырғаны үшін де алғысымызды білдіреміз. Бізге американдық когортаның Алматыға сапары кезінде тамаша қонақ болып, біз әсем қаланы аралап, қазақ мәдениетімен танысқан кезде бізге керемет қонақжайлылық пен мейірімділік таныттыңыз. Американдық топты өз базарына және Қазақстанға қызығушылықпен және қуанышпен қарсы алған (Көк) базардың саудагерлеріне де рахмет. Базарға бару Асылхан Ізбасардың құжатынсыз

өтпейтін еді.

Соңында, 2023 жылғы Прага Квадренниале сансыз жұмысшылары мен волонтерлеріне, сондай-ақ Прага қаласының өзіне осындай таңғажайып шараны өткізгені үшін алғыс айтқымыз келеді.

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