

The **Nine Dragon Heads** on the **Silk Road** **Nomadic Party#2** through **Uzbekistan**

Tashkent – Samarkand – Bukhara – Khiva – Nukus – Aral Sea
September 20th – September 30th 2012

The Nine Dragon Heads Symposia and Nine Dragon Heads Nomadic Parties are a worldwide art project of the South-Korean artist, curator and philosopher **Park Byoung Uk**.

They have been held since 1994.

The aim: To bring together contemporary artists with an **environmental and also a spiritual vision**; artists from all over the world, working in any media, but with a strong accent on performing arts within the field of visual expressions.

In the first years the Symposia took place in different regions of South Korea. Then the activities started to spread out – to the Sarajevo art festival, to the north of China, to Tibet, to Switzerland... and back to South Korea.



Today the Nine Dragon Heads is a **world wide artist network** that joins in various configurations to experience new fields in unknown situations and regions of the world.

The Silk Road Nomadic Party#2 held in September 2012 in Uzbekistan was such a field. It was the second part of the exploration of the ancient trade route from China to Europe by Nine Dragon Heads. The Silk Road formed the history of the regions along the way in a decisive manner. War and destruction exchanged with high culture through thousands of years.



A nomadic party leading from Tashkent through **Samarkand**, Bukhara, Khiva, Nukus to the Aral Sea is on the one hand a process of observing the traces of the ancient history, and on the other hand also the developments of the 20th and the 21st century when Uzbekistan was part of the Soviet Union until it declared itself

independent in 1992.

You can also describe it as an extreme contrast between fantastic architectural monuments in islamic style and one of the most disastrous environmental catastrophes (Aral Sea). And in between a people who have, despite the hard semi-desert middle-asian climate and continuous poverty, preserved an extremely **heartfelt charisma**.



When **Nine Dragon Heads** travel it looks on the surface not so different from a touristic journey. It is the way artists of any media look and listen, the way they are acting, perceive what they see, the way they combine it with their individual artistic profil that makes the difference. Every unexpected incident, any corner, back side, any inscription, information, movement, colour, form, sound, material, any woman, man, boy, girl, dog, cat, bird... can be a spontaneous or a long term motivation for a transformation in an artistic expression. Be it an intervention, a photographic essay, a video, a performance, an audio-work, a temporary installation, an object, a series of drawings.



Performance art is of great importance in the practise of Nine Dragon Heads. Among multiple reasons because it can happen spontaneously, it appeals directly to the audience, it has a inevitable connection with the body and the energy of the specific situation in which the performance is presented. It does not, or not necessarily, need words and can therefore be understood in any language (although the reception is different according to individual cultural backgrounds).

During Nomadic Party#2 a lot of spontaneous actions, interventions etc. happend. Lisa Benson and Kylie Bakker for instance let her flags of love chatter in various situations.



Twice however the artists set up presentations that included all of them. The first one was somehow a welcome ceremony. Serious thoughts that already anticipated the ambiguous problems of the country (the irrigation of the cotton fields for example) exchanged with poetic or humorous presentations.(One does not exclude the other!)



The second presentation, titled „boat to boat“, in the ship-graveyard in the old Aral-Sea Town Moynaq, was planned from the beginning. It was therefore more developed. It is obvious that **in the face of the Aral-Sea disaster the topic of the Tibilisi-Artisterium 2012 „Never ending protest“ was dominant.**

Protests however without fists, rather with a *melancholic sound*, mourning the loss of the natural balance of the area, due to mankind. The UK based artist Bruce Allan for instance showed the letters „R I P“ (requiescat in pace) on T-Shirts, worn by three persons. And the Canadian Erika Batdorf understood her singing of „Amazing Grace“ in the given context

not as a sound-performance but a **prayer**. Similarly Harold de Brees morse-code signals, that broadcast the slogan of Ernest Hemingways „The old man an the sea“, saying that you might be killed, but never allowed to give up.

There were also clear **signs**, such as the „Wappentier des Grössenwahns“ (heraldic animal of the megalomania) of the Austrian artist Alois Schild, or the radical expression of the absurdity of an artists voice in front of a disaster of the dimensions of the Aral-Sea (Ali Bramwell). Signs of death showed up such as „archeological“ pieces of rust of the old ships (Park Byoung Uk) or bleached bones falling out of the ship-skeletons (SIM Jae Bun).

Visions came up that might have the power of changing history – such as Daniela de Maddalenas solar-ballon, that should fly the ships back to the water. Many further words and dances, meditations and drawings more were comprised the multiplicity of protest by Nine Dragon Head Artists.



The works presented in the Artisterium-Exhibition in Tibilisi can be read in a direct contact with the excursion to the Aral Sea. A two days journey that was not only a nice visit but, through the difficult and adventurous driving trough the desertlike, salty and poisonous seabed, became as well a mental as a physical experience that none of the participants will ever forget. And never forgetting is the best protest because it is emotional and not only a theory.

Participants of Nomadic Party#2: Ali Bramwell (NZ), Alois Schild (AU), Annelise Zwez (CH), Bruce Allan (UK), Channa Boon (NL), Christophe Doucet (FR), Daniela de Maddalena (CH), Denizahn Ozer (TY), Enrique Munoz Garcia (Chile), Erika Batdorf (CN), Fred Luedi (CH), Gabriel Adams (US), Graham Cochrane (AUS/NZ), Harold de Bree (NL), Juliet Fowler Smith (AUS), Kylie Bakker (NZ), Lisa Benson (NZ), Park Byoung Uk (Korea), Paul Donker Duyvis (NL), SIM Jae-Bun (Korea), susanne muller (CH), Suzanne Bartos (AUS), Yoko Kajio (AUS/JP), Yoo Joung Hye (Korea), Lee Gun-Soo & Park Chan-Min (Korea).

Annelise Zwez, October 3rd 2012