

ASLAN GAISUMOV

DARK SHELTERS

Aslan Gaisumov, was born in Chechnya a few months before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. His international exhibition history is marked by the unusually mature work he makes. Installations, films and drawings release a plastic force and poetics carried by a need to give substance to silence, oblivion and emptiness. It is in the darkness of a story that has sunk into the bowels of a soiled earth, taking with it memory and bodies, that the artist draws the tension that runs through his works.

For his first solo exhibition in France, Aslan Gaisumov presents at LE CAP - Art Center of Saint-Fons (FR) a set of three works created between 2015 and 2017. The title of this assemblage, *Dark Shelters*, echoes the strong lines that run through the works and the exhibition itself. Shelter: often a precarious construction that protects and where one can take cover; shelter is also what preserves from some evil, what is a refuge, a protection, according to the dictionary. The shelter is isolated, peripheral, sometimes underground; it is then the camp, the refuge, the bunker. One could say that shelter is inherently dark: it protects as much as it hides, it preserves as much as it subtracts. The three major works that run through the artist's production and exhibition are the video *Volga* (2015), the three-dimensional work *Household* (2016) and the film *Keicheyuhea* (2017). Each in its own way subtracts and reveals, shows and makes disappear.

Volga displays a car from the eponymous mythical Soviet car brand, in which women, children and men crowd in. The protagonists approach the car, enter it one after the other, until twenty-one people rush into it. Once the engine starts up, the car moves and leaves the frame. This choreography of emergency is both a metaphor for exile and a reconstruction of a story that the artist witnessed himself, seeing the inhabitants of his city forced to flee from conflict. In this work, the car is a wormhole, a dark box into which bodies rush and disappear. This disappearance subtly gives way to landscape, which until then served as a background.

Keicheyuhea is the artist's first multi shot film, in which the lens initially follows a car crossing the eerily beautiful landscapes of the Caucasian mountains. We hear an elderly woman speak about the landscape and the memories she associates with the places that she sees from the car window. We later learn that she is the artist's grandmother whom he invited to revisit the places where she spent her youth, seventy-three years after the deportation of the

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8 December 2018–

9 February 2019

Opening

Saturday 8 December 2018, 2-6p.m.

Access

Free

From Tuesday to
Saturday 14.00-18.00
and by appointment

rue de la Rochette
69190 Saint-Fons, France

Tram T4 Lénine - Corsière
Bus 60 Yves Farge
Bus 93 La Rochette-Clochettes

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Chechens and Ingush during the Second World War. At that time, she tells us, she lived in these mountains, there was a village here, a hamlet there, and life was everywhere. We, as spectators, see only hills and stones and, from time to time, a low wall that makes us understand that, indeed, entire villages have disappeared. Keicheyuhea is the home of her childhood; it is a spectrum of her memory floating above the hills. About this work, the curator Viktor Misiano writes: "*Without memory and the past there is no movement of time, no actualisation of the present. Without the past, the present would be a «foggy spot», in which no life processes would occur.*"

The final work in the exhibition, *Household*, consists of two large wooden crates used for the transport of goods. On the adjoining wall, a list of objects announces the contents of the boxes: 5 tarpaulin sheets from UNICEF, 3 wood-and-gas-fired heaters, 7 felt mattresses, 8 wool blankets, 11 cooking pans... The list reads like a long catalogue of camping equipment and leads us to imagine the organization of a life in involuntary displacement. The work is at the edge of a conceptual approach that passes the image and object to the rank of clues, and of institutional criticism that positions the art centre that hosts the work and organizes transports crates whose content it cannot, in turn, verify, in a position that borders on cynicism: that of organizing a transport of works of art in order to move everyday objects from a refugee camp, and consequently to overvalue objects that carry drama as a work. In fact, Gaisumov's gesture questions the ethical responsibility of the institution, through the circulation of these objects, in the ambiguous process of aesthetic speculation of distress.

Finally, the exhibition can be seen as the ultimate shelter, into which we are immersed while we are confronted with the works; a dark shelter that highlights the forgotten people and the forgotten aspects of history; a meta-narrative, a dialogical ensemble that, despite the silence and dryness of the filmed landscapes, reveals the obliterated narrative of a history that is struggling to find its sources.

Aslan Gaisumov was born in 1991 in Chechnya. Recent solo exhibitions include "Crystals and Shards" at Kohta, Helsinki (2018), "All That You See Here, Forget" at Emalin, London (2018), and "People of No Consequence" at Museum of Modern Art, Antwerp (2016). His work has also been featured in group exhibitions at Liverpool Biennial (2018) and the Riga International Biennial of Contemporary Art (2018); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, (2017); Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco (2017), among many others. In 2014, he was awarded the Special Prize of the Future Generation Art Prize of the Pinchuk Art Centre in Kiev, and in 2016 the Innovation Prize of the National Centre for Contemporary Arts in Moscow. He lives and works in Grozny and Amsterdam.

Curator, Nicolas Audureau

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