

Uzbek artist Saodat Ismailova presents *Paths of Light*, her first exhibition in Canada

Curator: Louise Déry

Dates: February 13 — April 4, 2026

Opening: Thursday, February 12, 2026, 5:30 p.m.

Montreal, February 2nd, 2026 — Galerie de l'UQAM welcomes *Saodat Ismailova. Paths of Light*, an exhibition that provides insight into the ancestral traditions, rituals, myths, and post-Soviet heritage of Central Asia. The themes of memory, spirituality, immortality, and extinction play an essential role in her work, which is steeped in history and poetry.

The Exhibition

On the occasion of Uzbek filmmaker and artist Saodat Ismailova's first exhibition in Canada, the public will discover five works reflecting the main themes and motifs that punctuate the approach of this artist whose career is in full expansion. Her recent recognition, reflected in major awards such as Art Basel's Golden Award, as well as solo exhibitions and publications in prestigious European institutions such as the Pirelli Foundation in Milan and the Eye Museum in Amsterdam, has led Galerie de l'UQAM to showcase a body of work that has been unanimously celebrated in Europe and Asia.

According to the exhibition curator and director of Galerie de l'UQAM Louise Déry, viewing this work provides an opportunity to perceive “the historical, philosophical, migrational, and colonial dimensions of the infinitely complex culture of Uzbekistan by associating images of collective history with those of Ismailova's personal experience of growing up in the post-Soviet era.” The artist also explores they explore the intersection between rituals, myths, and dreams and the connection between ancestral knowledge and family stories, especially those of several generations of women.

Ismailova combines images that she conceives and films in various magnificent sites and landscapes of Central Asia with other visual, textual, and filmic elements drawn from archives and the cinematographic heritage of her country. “The photographs, films, and video installations in the exhibition bear several characteristics that encourage a sensory experience of the works: the often hypnotic rhythm of the images, the spellbinding musical and sonic elements, the glimmering colours and lights, the sensual materiality of embroidery drawn from vernacular traditions. In turn, the characters and their murmurs, the illuminating poetry of the stories, the splendour of timeless landscapes, the evocation of water and wind, and the symbolism of terrestrial, lunar, and solar cycles leave us in a state of suspension. Everything contributes to creating thoughtful horizons imbued with a sense of vertigo, mystery, revelation, and beauty”, the curator explain.

The exhibition *Saodat Ismailova. Paths of Light* will provide means for continuing to examine notions of propaganda and power, political and mental turmoil, the ideals of individual and collective awareness, and the reversals of memory and time.

About the Artist

Saodat Ismailova is an Uzbek filmmaker and artist who lives and works between Paris and Tashkent, Uzbekistan. She is a graduate of the Tashkent State Academy of Fine Arts and Le Fresnoy—National Studio of Contemporary Art in Tourcoing, France. In 2021, she founded Davra, a research collective dedicated to the development of the Central Asian art scene. In recent years, she has participated in the 59th Venice Biennale (2022) and Documenta 15 (2022), and received the Eye Art & Film Award from the Eye Museum in Amsterdam, which was accompanied by a major solo exhibition (2023) and a first major publication entitled *18,000 Worlds*. Several solo exhibitions have followed at Le Fresnoy—National Studio of Contemporary Art (2023), Hangar Biccoca in Milan (2024), Stuk Art Center in Leuven (2025), and Kunsthalle Lisbon (2025). In addition to the exhibition at Galerie de l'UQAM, other exhibitions are planned for 2026: *As we fade*, which continues at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead (United Kingdom), and *Amanat*, at the Swiss Institute in New York. He has recently been awarded several prizes: the Pernod Ricard Foundation's New Program, the Art Basel Golden Award, and the Han Nefkens Prize for a new commission produced in collaboration with the Reina

Sofía Museum (Madrid), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), and the Singapore Art Museum.
saodatismailova.com

About the Curator

Louise Déry (Ph.D. in art history) has been director of Galerie de l'UQAM since 1997. Previously, she worked as a curator at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and was the director of the Musée de Rimouski. She has organized some 100 exhibitions and published as many publications in Canada and abroad devoted to David Altmejd, Rober Racine, Nancy Spero, Dominique Blain, Sarkis, Françoise Sullivan, Michael Snow, Jean-Luc Nancy, Enrique Ramírez, and Emmanuelle Léonard, to name but a few. She has received several awards and distinctions, including the Hnatyshyn Foundation Award of Excellence for Curating Contemporary Art (2007), the Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts (2015), the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres de France (2017), the Ordre des arts et des lettres du Québec (2021), and the Ordre national du Québec (2023).

Public Activities

Nuit blanche à Montréal

Saturday, February 28, 2026

6 – 12 p.m.

Galerie de l'UQAM

Free admission

Make the most of Montréal's Nuit blanche by visiting exhibitions *Saodat Ismailova. Paths of Light* and *Océane Buxton. Prophétesse* at Galerie de l'UQAM. We are extending our opening hours as part of this nocturnal event.

Guided Tour with Louise Déry

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.

In French

Free admission

As part of the *L'art observe* series, Galerie de l'UQAM invites you to a friendly tour of the exhibition organized by curator Louise Déry. This activity will be an opportunity to discuss the themes raised by the exhibition.

Film Program

In collaboration with the Cinémathèque québécoise

Wednesday, April 1, 2026, 6 – 8:30 p.m.

335 De Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Montreal

Limited seating

In French

[Tickets](#)

In the presence of artist Saodat Ismailova

In conjunction with the exhibition *Saodat Ismailova. Paths of Light*, the Gallery and the Cinémathèque québécoise are joining forces to present *Triptyque* (1980) and *Mon doux, mon chéri, mon aimé, mon unique* (1985), two films from the collection that were produced during the Soviet era. Rare 35 mm copies, reconditioned and subtitled in French, will be screened for the very first time, offering a unique opportunity to discover these works in their original format.

Artist Talk by Saodat Ismailova

As part of Programme ICI – Intervenants culturels internationaux

Thursday, April 2, 12:45 – 1:45 p.m.

Salle de la reconnaissance (D-R200), Athanase-David Pavillon, 1430 Saint-Denis Street, Montreal

Places are limited

In French

Details to come

On April 2nd, Galerie de l'UQAM and the ICI Program welcome Saodat Ismailova for an artist presentation. The ICI Program is an initiative of UQAM's School of Visual and Media Arts that brings together guest speakers from various artistic disciplines and different countries.

[Programme ICI](#) is an initiative of UQAM's École des arts visuels et médiatiques that hosts speakers from different art disciplines and countries.

Educational Program

The cultural mediators of Galerie de l'UQAM will be offering guided tours of the *Saodat Ismailova. Paths of Light* exhibition to groups and faculty members. Flexible and open to all school and community groups, the tours can be adapted to meet particular needs and to complement material covered in the classroom, if needed. These activities are offered free of charge, in French or English.

More information: <https://galerie.uqam.ca/en/educational-program/on-site/>

Reservation required:

Léa Lanthier-Lapierre

Cultural Mediation and Communications Coordinator, Galerie de l'UQAM

lanthier-lapierre.lea@uqam.ca

514 987-3000 ext. 20959

Partners



Upcoming Exhibitions at Galerie de l'UQAM: <https://galerie.uqam.ca/en/statut/upcoming/>

Address and Opening Hours

Galerie de l'UQAM

Judith-Jasmin Pavilion, Room J-R120

1400 Berri, corner of Sainte-Catherine East, Montreal

Berri-UQAM Metro

Tuesday – Saturday, noon – 6 p.m.

Free admission

Information

Tel.: 514 987-6150

galerie.uqam.ca / [Facebook](#) / [Instagram](#) / [Vimeo](#)

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Source and Interview Requests:

Olivier Lapierre

Press Officer

olivier.olpr@gmail.com

514 583-3868