In 2023, Eye is presenting the first major retrospective of work by the Uzbek director and artist Saodat Ismailova. Born in 1981 in Tashkent, Ismailova is the winner of the Eye Art & Film Prize 2022. Her work occupies a prominent place at this year’s Venice Biennale and Documenta 15 in Kassel. Eye will showcase not only her films and video installations but also photography and textiles. The exhibition is also accompanied by a publication and an extensive programme of public events.

Insight into the spirit of Central Asia
Saodat Ismailova is an important voice among the first generation of Central-Asian artists to reach adulthood in the post-Soviet era. In her work she examines the rich, complex and layered culture of her native region. She portrays the spirit of Central Asia with its rituals, myths, history and landscape. Ismailova also focuses on the identity and emancipation of women. Since stories and customs are passed down from mother to daughter for generations, women play a key role in maintaining cultural and spiritual heritage. However, this aspect of history remains underexposed and intangible.

Weaving myths, rituals and dreams with everyday life, Ismailova calls attention, in a highly subtle manner, to societal issues such as ecological problems and the right of women to veil themselves or not. Her work offers plenty of scope for intuition, magic, music and performance. Moreover, the tumultuous political history of the region is never far away. Central Asia forms a cultural crossroads. Successive regimes, with their accompanying ideologies, belief systems and artificial borders, have caused great unrest. Ismailova reflects on the resulting loss of culture, languages, generations, landscape and local traditions and customs. At the same time, she shows what has succeeded in surviving in the region: a rich spiritual world and deep sense of connection.
In addition, Ismailova has a great interest in the history of film. The tradition of Soviet cinema that she grew up with has left traces in her work, but she has also carried out extensive archival research into the earliest Uzbek films, which appear in her works as found footage.

**Biography**
Saodat Ismailova was born in 1981 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and she is now based in Tashkent and Paris. She studied film at the Tashkent State Art Institute, where she won the Grand Prix at the Student Film Festival. In 2004, her documentary Aral. Fishing in an Invisible Sea won Best Documentary at the Turin Film Festival. From 2004 to 2010, she made ten documentary films for the Smithsonian Institute about the music of Central Asia. She also studied screenwriting and directing at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute. Her feature film 40 Days of Silence (2014) was nominated as best debut film at the International Film Festival in Berlin, and it also won prizes at various international festivals. In 2013, Ismailova presented Zukhra, her first video installation, in the Central Asian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Between 2015 and 2017 she studied at Le Fresnoy, the National Studio of Contemporary Arts in Paris. In 2018, she initiated the cross-disciplinary project Qyrq Qyz at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Museum Quai Branly in Paris. In 2022, her work was selected for The Milk of Dreams, the main exhibition at the Venice Biennale. In Kassel, where she took part in Documenta 15, she founded DAVRA, a research group and collective made up of 19 young artists from Central Asia.

An extensive publication will be available at the exhibition and will be accompanied by a program with films, discussions and lectures, together with the artist.

The exhibition opens on 20 January 2023.

END OF PRESSRELEASE

Rachel Voorbij, Press and PR manager.
Tel n: 0630254143
E-mail: RachelVoorbij@eyefilm.nl