

Thursday 27 January 2022

*A conversation between Millie Norman and Sophio Medoidze*

**Millie Norman: How are you feeling about the opening of the show?**

Sophio Medoidze: I am very glad to show at OUTPOST, not least because of the gallery's proximity to rural and its connection with the local community. Obviously Norwich is not as remote as the Georgian mountains, their harsh socio-economic climate is not replicated here, but if we think of it in relation to centrality in the art world, the proximity to the museums, galleries etc, interesting parallels can be drawn.

The question of local, radical localism and off centre is very important for me, and for this film in particular.

**MN: Could you tell us a bit about your experience making 'let us flow!'**

SM: It was a very drawn out process because of delays in funding, also I can only film in Tusheti during a short summer season (the mountain road is closed for most of the year due to heavy snow). So the film acquired another duration (apart from the obvious one of its running)- the time it took for me to make it, the time between my first short film shot there and the latest. I like to include everything in my films, so I decided to insert this point I am making about duration into the film as flashbacks to my previous film Xitana, (commissioned by Adam Pugh and Tyneside cinema back in 2018). The flashbacks (and other techniques I use in 'let us flow!') push against this idea of linear time (I think all my films do that), this dramaturgy of beginning middle and end. In my films I follow subjective logic by including thoughts, dreams and memories.

**MN: What role does writing, such as your poem 'Madoli' play in your creative process as a visual artist and filmmaker?.**

SM: Most of my work is connected to writing in one way or another, and I write almost everyday, but I wouldn't call it literature because that comes with it's own idea of hermetic, and my work is driven by the opposite desire to connect with other people. In films writing bleeds in a sort of direct way, usually a short excerpts read by me, a voice of some archetypal character (mostly women from Georgian mythology and folklore). This form of address creates another layer of distortion, a removal, but myths are, of course, also real. So it's to do with different layers of reality and I think I was drawn to Tusheti precisely because of this duality- for them it is part of their everyday life.

More broadly, I am interested in malleability of material, in the instances of hollowing out language with bad grammar and slang, for example. Perhaps I am more sensitised to 'power of words' having lived as an asylum seeker in the UK for years and having experienced what institutional language can do, so this desire for fragmentation comes from there, I think.

**MN: Can you tell us a bit more about the dialogue between the sculptures and the film in the show?**

SM: There's a tradition in Caucasus mountains when woman bake round ritual breads called 'Kotori' for midsummer celebrations. It symbolises the Sun, in the same way the men moving in circles (which is in my film) represents the Earth's movement around the Sun. I wanted to repeat this gesture and transport it to a gallery (or any other provisional space). I have been working with plaster for a while, I like it for its transitory, impermanent nature. Sun cult is very important in the mountains, but it's also a circle, which for me refers to the repetitions and looping in my film, and my camera is circling the sky both at the beginning and the end of 'let us flow!'...so it's the same gesture but the media (or material) is different.

**MN: What is next for you?**

SM: I am going to continue filming in Tusheti, the next part of the project is more focused on collaborating with the Tush community and youth workshops (which I had to postpone because of pandemic). I am also working on a publication with text and images spanning last twenty years of my practice with Tbilisi based publisher Kona Books. It's provisionally titled *Bastard Sun*.