

NOMIN ZEZEGMAA

different mountains, different encounters



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LKHAM



What does it mean to know the earth and your place within it? How does it feel to be disconnected from your surroundings—or conversely, intimately entwined with them? Nomin Zezegmaa, a multi-disciplinary artist of Mongol descent, who works between the Netherlands, Mongolia and Germany, explores these questions for her first solo exhibition in Mongolia.

Sacred, natural sites in Mongolia and the stories around them are shamanic; that is, they have a life of their own. From this perspective, trees, ravines, rivers, lakes, steppes, and stones are personified. Nomin's art practice engages the land as a personified entity and in turn, becomes a means through which these seemingly different entities—the human and non-human—can begin to recognize each other.

different mountains, different encounters is a multi-part exhibition composed of sculpture, scent, sound, paintings, and video. Nomin's primary point of entry into the topic comes through materials. Soils, natural fibers, wooden branches, stones and minerals have been gathered and reassembled to encourage reflection about our human bodies and their corollaries in the natural world.

Together, the works testify to the artist's exploration of Mongolia, its land, its beliefs, and its languages, likewise opening up possibilities for viewers to see, think, and imagine in turn.

Curator Dr. Christianna Bonin



Nomin Zezegmaa (b. 1992) is a Berlin-based multi-disciplinary artist, designer, researcher, and writer. Born and raised in Germany, she graduated from the Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. In her work, she operates as a mediator and connector between realms of the ancient past, diasporic non-localities, and Mongol cosmology. The often sculptural and tactile works find fluid expression in an amorphous multiplicity of medium and material, where applied and unapplied arts meet on equal ground—with the urgency to blur and diffuse the rigid borders and boundaries between art, design, crafts, and histories. Working between Germany, the Netherlands, and Mongolia, Nomin is fascinated with archaic imagery, metal-smithing, book-making and the genealogy of writing systems, semiotics of (multispecies) mankind, and alchemy.



ᠵᠢᠨᠢᠮᠤᠨ ᠰᠤ ᠠᠯᠠᠭᠤᠨ : **THE LANDS KNOWS YOU, EVEN WHEN YOU ARE LOST**
Earth from Bulgan province, ashes of Juniperus sabina L, ink, acrylic medium,
silk, 112x64,5cm

ᠵᠢᠨᠢᠮᠤᠨ ᠰᠤ ᠠᠯᠠᠭᠤᠨ : «The Lands knows You, Even when You are Lost» is a profound artistic creation that weaves together elements of Mongol symbolism, culture, personal history and nature. The use of blue silk and earth from Bulgan province carries a deep connection to the artist's homeland and identity. The piece pays homage to the Mongol symbol of the «nutag,» the homeland and ancestral origin embodied as a physical place or site—it is a poignant reflection on the importance of one's roots. In the face of external historical influences and disruptions, the artwork serves as a reminder to seek and acknowledge one's origins.

The incorporation of the dark-grey pattern painted with ashes of Juniper adds another layer of symbolism. Juniper, a sacred medicinal plant, holds cultural significance and is often used in rituals. The pattern, resembling roots simulates the growth of trees and becomes a metaphor for the intricate and vast network of roots beneath the surface. This aspect of the artwork contributes to a layered meaning that encompasses notions of origins, roots and ritual.

ᠵᠢᠨᠢᠮᠤᠨ ᠰᠤ ᠠᠯᠠᠭᠤᠨ : «The Lands knows You, Even when You are Lost» merges personal history, cultural symbolism, natural elements and invites the contemplation of loss and redemption of identity—connection and presence of one's homeland. The title features a powerful quote from «Braiding Sweetgrass» by Robin Wall Kimmerer, page 35.



SERPENTS OF CREATION ENTWINED: AS ABOVE, SO BELOW (1) & (2)
Ink, acrylic ink, pigment, thread, larch branches from Bogd Khan Mountain,
183x86cm



Serpents of Creation Entwined: As Above, So Below were created as a pair, not as a diptych. Inspired by a conversation that took place between a shamaness and man. The man wondered about Mongol shamanic powers and their connection to land, where the shamaness answered that all mountains of the earth are connected and wind around the planet like serpents, with their heads gathering in Mongolia.

In its visual and physical form the works emphasize the blurred borders of medium and matter, the front and back. They were only worked on from one side, hence the fabric acts as a membrane for light and pigment to deeply soak and penetrate to the other side. *Serpents of Creation Entwined: As Above, So Below* are charged with narrative and artistic experimentation, and explore the alchemy of painting.

ANCIENT VESSEL

Wood from Khuvsgul and Elsen Tasarkhai,
horse hair, black chalcedony from Gobi desert,
118x39x27cm



TRAVELLER

Wood from Khuvsgul, horse hair,
chalcedony from Gobi, 73x10x15cm

UNEARTHED

Sculpture, drift wood from Lake Khuvsgul, papermache, horse hair, 160x52x29cm



Unearthed is a serpentine creature, it is alive and powerful. The work embodies the force of nature, channeled in the drift wood piece found from the shores of Dalai Eej, Lake Khuvsgul.

A YIELDING VESSEL

Ink, acrylic ink, varnish, red birch branches from Bogd Khan Mountain, 170x187cm



This piece is the physical residual work of the performative process taking place in Selenge province which is screened in this exhibition as well. The piece itself ties together several time-places: It is in powerful dialogue with the setting sun, only to be witnessed in this instalment and the unique space of the gallery, but it also refers to the mountain, the tree in Selenge and lastly the spectator.



KAIROS

Site-specific installation, wood from Selenge & Khuvsgul provinces, and Elsen Tasarkhai bones, chalcedony from Gobi, horse hair, 310x210x140cm

Of Greek origin the word «*Kairos*» denotes timeliness, more specifically the precise moment or time for something. It denotes the innate, intuitive time for action. This site-specific installation piece expresses that specific and delicate time of Kairos: it is composed of various found materials such as bones, stones and wood from various places across Mongolia, which came together through sensibility and balance to create a striking piece of material tactility across various time-places. Hence the piece mediates various sites, times and memories.





WHISPERS OF EEJ MOD & A YIELDING VESSEL

Video: duration 8 min / duration 6:42 min

Also seeking to portray natural sites without interference, the performative video work «A Yielding Vessel» is an extension of «Whispers of Eej Mod.» Its residual visual work is a piece of cotton draped around a broken tree, tied with blue thread and traced with a black ink using and horse-hair object that functioned as a brush. The dynamic gestures of the performance and the process are captured, while tracing the dimensions of the broken tree.



WRITING WITHOUT WRITING (JUNIPERUS SABINA L)

Site-specific floor piece, Juniper from Otgontenger Mountain, 300x300cm.



THE ENDLESS SPACE FROM THE WORLD OF THE SUN TO THE WORLD OF THE DARK
horse hair from Uvurkhangai, thread, lapis lazuli, black pearl, white pearl 390x100x10cm.

The Endless Space from the World of the Sun to the World of the Dark originates from a single point, the spiral. It embodies origin, the flow of time and its ripples across space. It speaks of the inherent interconnectedness of all, and symbolizes through the black and white pearls each end of a spectrum, light and dark. The use of lapis lazuli symbolizes trinity, in itself a recurring symbol in various cultures, but in this work it communicates the three worlds and the three souls as in shamanic cosmogony. *The Endless Space from the World of the Sun to the World of the Dark* was originally site-specifically created for the exhibition «White Milk Paints the Blue Sky» in Paris.



WHISPERS OF EEJ MOD

cyanotype, milk, red birch branches from, bronze bell,
Bogd Khan Mountain, 152x213cm



What if an entire mountain disappeared and was replaced by a man-made building? Turned into a hollow shell to serve humans. This is what happened to the sacred tree Devseg Eej, or also known as Eej Mod, the Mother Tree. She burned to ashes and in her stead a building stands now, without the slightest justice to her former grandness.

The only refuge and relief is that, she as the Mother Tree is but one fragment of larger whole—that is the forest. In the forest, with all the other trees she is deeply connected with, her soul lives on. The physical vessel, the form, the shape may have been erased but her immaterial spirit—soul—life force and energy persists in the other trees. This is consolation, and simultaneously a powerful reminder of the vast and chthonic interconnectedness and shared life of trees, and how they act as one organism.

The original trajectory of «Whispers of Eej Mod» was an endeavour that sought to portray the sacred tree, Eej Mod, in Selenge, Mongolia. Complying to the circumstances, the work process and approach expanded to the surrounding forest of which Eej Mod was an integral part of. The overall methodology is to preserve, trace and portray natural sites without altering ecological, spiritual and natural habitats. By utilizing cyanotype, the project captures the fleeting shadows and fallen branches of another hauntingly beautiful tree. The process of cyanotype involves placing light-sensitive fabric within the tree's shadow and exposing it to sunlight for development.

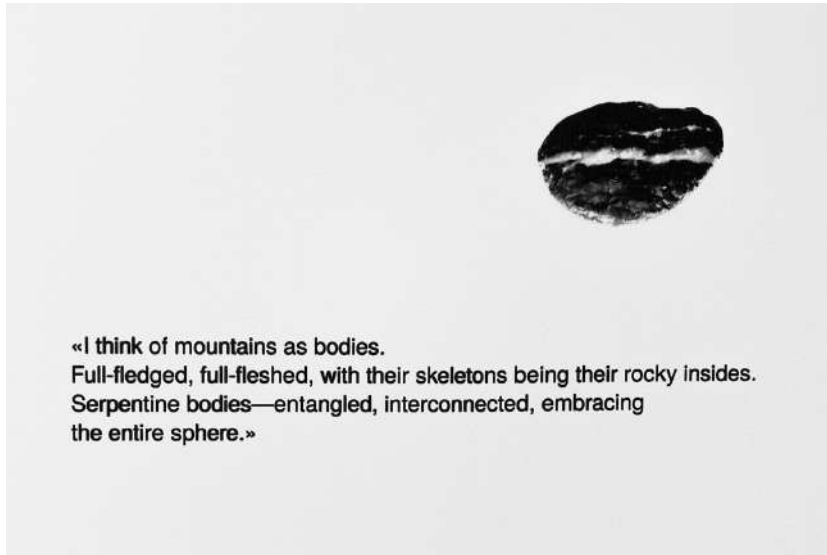
The work encourages reflection on the profound interplay between art and the environment. By honouring the sacredness of Devseg Eej and emphasizing the preservation of natural sites, the project highlights the significance of safeguarding our fragile ecological and spiritual heritage. It serves as a reminder to protect and cherish the fragile balance between humans and the natural world, promoting sustainable practices and appreciation for the natural world.



On Bogd Khan Mountain: The Bared Below shifts between performance, sculpture and painting. They were created in collaboration with the sacred Bogd Khan mountain and the current season's byproducts of snow and ice. The subject of the works is lightning-struck tree stumps that expose what is usually not to be seen, under the earth. There is a vast field of these burnt and bared tree stumps on *Baruun Shireet* of Bogd Khan Mountain—uncanny and inevitably chthonic.

With the intention to capture and replicate this phenomenon, while respecting and leaving its original and natural state untouched, the tree stumps were draped and wrapped in linen and then brushed over with ink, tracing the shape of the tree stump. These ripped-out-of-the-earth tree stumps expose and bring to light a fragment of an endless interwoven underground net of roots, reaching far beyond imagination.

**ON BOGD KHAN MOUNTAIN:
THE BARED BELOW, 25.11.22, -30°C**
Ink on linen, 170x138cm



«I think of mountains as bodies.
Full-fledged, full-fleshed, with their skeletons being their rocky insides.
Serpentine bodies—entangled, interconnected, embracing
the entire sphere.»

quote from *different mountains, different encounters*:
natural world urlan



the void is

It is darkness, deeply hollow. Yet moving like an unknown mass, pulsating. A dark, alive mass. At the same time, there may be numbness. It is neither static nor rigid. Every time it scares me anew. Was I the empty? Am I shy this empty?

Then I realize, the void is an essential as the creative process itself for any act of creation—for anything to emerge from this darkness. Without the void, there would not be any artistic genesis, catharsis. The void is the creative process. It is the most fundamental, elementary part. However, the void I'm describing is different from the idea or even symbol of the fabric void.

We are vessels. Ancient vessels. We carry so much within us—it is deeply embedded in the void, in the depth of the void where we cannot access its entirety. Without access to the dark unconscious, we would genuinely become hollow beings. Everything is within us already.

In time, I realized that without the darkness, or from the darkness, no light can shine. Nothing can be awakened. No ember to keep the fire going. Nothing to be unperfected. Nothing to sow the seeds of. Where would your thoughts ferment?

It is the dark humus, the mythic fertile soil that keeps the balance of the mind, of the heart, of the psyche—the balance of creation. The void is an integral passive, yet active agent in keeping the balance in relation to the soul, emotional health, mental health, and physical health—if connected.

Hence in a way, the void becomes our greatest pillar, vehicle and catalyst. Once one realizes this, maybe it will be less intimidating next time the void envelops, sucks one out, haunts one. Maybe it becomes possible to switch perspective: The void gives you the gift. The gift, the invitation, and of letting to create anew, to unearth from the sleep, dark waters.

The vessel needs to be emptied entirely,
before it can be filled again, overflowing.

the void is
excerpt from the publication *different mountains,*
different encounters

ABOUT
LKHAM GALLERY

Based in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Lkham Gallery strives to promote contemporary art and culture of the Mongolian-speaking world and the broader Central Asian region. Lkham represents both emerging and mid-career artists working in a wide range of media.

As the first gallery of its kind in Mongolia, Lkham envisions itself as an open door. Through regular exhibitions, publications, and a dynamic public program, the gallery aims to facilitate dialogue between local artists and the public, and to galvanize patronage of local artists throughout its community, the region, and beyond. Lkham also regularly hosts lectures by experts working in a variety of fields and will provide residency opportunities for local and international artists.

Founded in 2022 by entrepreneur Natsagsuren Mangalam, the gallery bears the name of her grandmother.

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