

Parasol unit

foundation for contemporary art

TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East
Collateral Event of the
61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia
ACP–Palazzo Franchetti, Venice | 9 May – 31 October 2026
Pre opening: Wednesday 6 May 2026



La Biennale di Venezia

61. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali



L-R: Hera Büyüктаşçıyan, *The Dream of a Falling Star*, 2019–2023 | ACP–Palazzo Franchetti, Marco Pavan | Lida Abdul, *White House*, 2005

The Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art presents **TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East**, Collateral Event at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia *In Minor Keys*, with a group exhibition of works by eleven significant female artists from Central Asia and wider regions of the East. Curated by Dr Ziba Ardalán, the exhibition **TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East** will be presented in the historic ACP–Palazzo Franchetti from 9 May – 31 October 2026. The exhibition, Parasol unit's third in Venice, marks the beginning of a new era in the foundation's international programming focused on bringing the work of leading contemporary artists to audiences in different locations around the world.

TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East

The exhibition features both new and iconic artworks that span multiple genres, from video work by **Lida Abdul**, **Hera Büyüктаşçıyan**, **Daria Kim** and **Tala Madani**, installations by **Afroz Amighi**, **Saodat Ismailova**, and **Nazira Karimi**, sculpture by **Huma Bhabha** and **Mona Hatoum**, painting, video and spoken works by **Farideh Lashai**, textile and sound work by **Madina Joldybek**. These eleven artists engage profoundly with human, societal and global concerns, addressing themes as diverse as existence, myth, and history.

Turandot is certainly one of the most complex and enigmatic figures in world mythology, literature and opera. Her story traverses centuries, languages and artistic forms, all the while reflecting ongoing cross-cultural hybridity and reinterpretation. The earliest known versions of the Turandot tale appeared in Persian literature, notably in the twelfth-century epic work *Haft Paykar* (Seven Beauties) by Nezami Ganjavi. In one of his tales the poet writes of a far distant princess, Nasrin Nush of Slavic/Russian origin, whose wisdom and inaccessibility make her seem cold-hearted. The name Turandot first appeared in a 1710 retelling of Nezami's tales by François Pétis de la Croix who, having translated them from Farsi into French, chose to depict her as a Chinese princess. Her name and character seem to have been modified to fit Western Enlightenment-era fascination with the 'exotic' East. Two centuries later, Giacomo Puccini skilfully fused the Turandot tale with the Italian dramatic tradition to present one of music's most dramatic operas to a global audience.

A common given name for Persian females, Turandokht in Farsi means daughter of Turan, an historical and geographic region northeast of Iran. Known today as Central Asia, Turan includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which together with other regions such as Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, have at times been integral parts of the Persian

Empire. Although considered arch-rivals throughout antiquity and in mythological memories, Iran (settled) and Turan (nomadic) were intricately intertwined through their history and culture.

The Collateral Event **TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East** pays homage to women artists from those geographical regions, whose individual and collective histories and works reveal their strength, convictions and creativity. Together, they honour the voice of Turandot as remarkable, intelligent and confident women.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a major publication featuring newly commissioned essays as well as an evolving programme of talks and performances in Venice.

Relaunching Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art was founded in 2004 by Dr Ziba Ardalán as the first non-profit contemporary art foundation in London established by a private individual. For more than 15 years at its North London gallery, Parasol unit delivered a critically acclaimed programme of challenging and thought-provoking exhibitions, new commissions, and educational programmes for children and adults. In July 2020, the foundation closed its London gallery and repositioned its activities internationally, without the limits of a single location, so as to bring world-class exhibitions to wherever an art related dialogue is needed. Following a two-year hiatus, Parasol unit launch at Biennale Arte 2026 the Collateral Event *TURANDOT: To the Daughters of the East*, and thereby further its commitment to supporting contemporary artists through exhibitions and to producing international art projects for the public without having to maintain a permanent gallery space.

Dr Ziba Ardalán, Founding Director and Curator, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, said: 'As a key city in the development of historical trade routes from the East into Europe, Venice is the perfect place to present an exhibition in homage to women artists of Central and West Asia and to provide a platform for their concerns and ideas about the world. This exhibition also coincides with the celebration of the centenary of *Turandot's* premiere at La Scala in 1926. We are thrilled to be relaunching our programme with this impressive group of artists and look forward to opening more international exhibitions in whatever part of the world the dialogue is needed.'

Parasol unit is grateful for the generous support of various charitable foundations, organisations, and individuals.



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NOTES TO EDITORS

Participating artists

Lida Abdul (1973–, Afghanistan)

Afroz Amighi (1974–, Iran)

Huma Bhabha (1962–, Pakistan)

Hera Büyüktaşçıyan (1984–, Turkey)

Mona Hatoum (1952–, Lebanon)

Saodat Ismailova (1981–, Uzbekistan)

Madina Joldybek (1991–, Kazakhstan)

Nazira Karimi (1996–, Tajikistan)

Daria Kim (1988–, Uzbekistan)

Farideh Lashai (1944–2013, Iran)

Tala Madani (1981–, Iran)

Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art

Founded in 2004 by art historian and curator Dr Ziba Ardalan, Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art is a non-profit organisation that operates purely for the public benefit. Central to the Parasol unit philosophy is a pledge to support artists and their creative endeavours, an attitude which leads to lasting relationships between each exhibiting artist and the foundation.

ACP–Palazzo Franchetti

The ACP–Palazzo Franchetti by Fondazione Calarota is a cultural organisation specialised in the production and promotion of high-profile exhibitions, featuring both Italian and international artists. It collaborates with international foundations, museums and institutions, relying on a multidisciplinary team. Based at Palazzo Franchetti, overlooking the Grand Canal in Venice, it combines curatorial vision, managerial expertise, and a broad network of international relations.

Palazzo Franchetti

San Marco 2847 – 30124 Venice

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