



Peacebuilding & the Creative Arts in Central Asia



Peacebuilding & the Creative Arts

in Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Almaty 2011

A Workshop with Alexei Shindin

Cover Picture: Alexei Shindin



The World Through Art

“Art enhances, prolongs and purifies the perceptual experience.”

John Dewey

Art can be a powerful means of interpreting situations. A workshop over five days in which professional artists assist lay participants to produce their own art. And in the course of doing so, they engage with pressing existential and social questions. They experience the self-empowerment of exhibition, they learn from each other's artistic journeys, they practice offering and receiving critical appreciation of ideas. As they do all these things, they can develop a deepened understanding of human rights as fundamental to peaceful co-existence. For a few days they have been in the role of artists and have experienced the intensity of creative work. Afterwards they are asked to be researchers, and reflect on their experience.

Detailed analysis of the creative arts in peace education is still underway, but it certainly is a very promising field (cf. *The Art Peace Project* at the end of this book). Such processes achieve important goals which peace education sets itself, and participants are offered:

- a multifaceted view of their own identity and collective narrative
- a greater capacity for self-reflection and an appreciation of opposing views
- experience in dealing with controversial issues.

The aesthetic becomes a place where it is possible to express feelings of outrage or of utopian longing, it is where one says things which might otherwise be too difficult to put into words. It provides moments of personal democracy. Artists (and artistic endeavour) therefore have a vitally important role to play. Experienced in looking deeply into themselves and into the world around them, they communicate insight and passion, which are essential to building a humane, critical and peaceful society.

Workshop participants initially had difficulty with the notions “peace” and “peacebuilding” in Almaty. It turned out that that the Russian translation of “peace” *mir*, could have connotations of soviet communist propaganda! From their parents' generation some could recall the slogan «Мир, труд, май» “Peace, Labour, May”. Hesitation about any ideological agenda behind the programme is definitely not a bad way to begin. Alexei Shindin's art compels viewers to come to terms with ambiguity. His pictures are occupied by people who are, at the same time, approachable and dangerous; they are relaxed even when their surroundings are falling apart. Production of meaning is shared with viewers who are invited to bring their own memories and experiences into play as they interpret the works. It is this openness to interpretation that is the best safeguard against propaganda and bigotry.

Professor Gordon Mitchell, University of Hamburg





«Являясь частью общества, через искусство мы выражаем к нему свое отношение, неся заряд собственной индивидуальности.» Алексей Шиндин

“Being a part of society, through art we express our relation to it, by contributing the pulse of our individuality.” Alexei Shindin

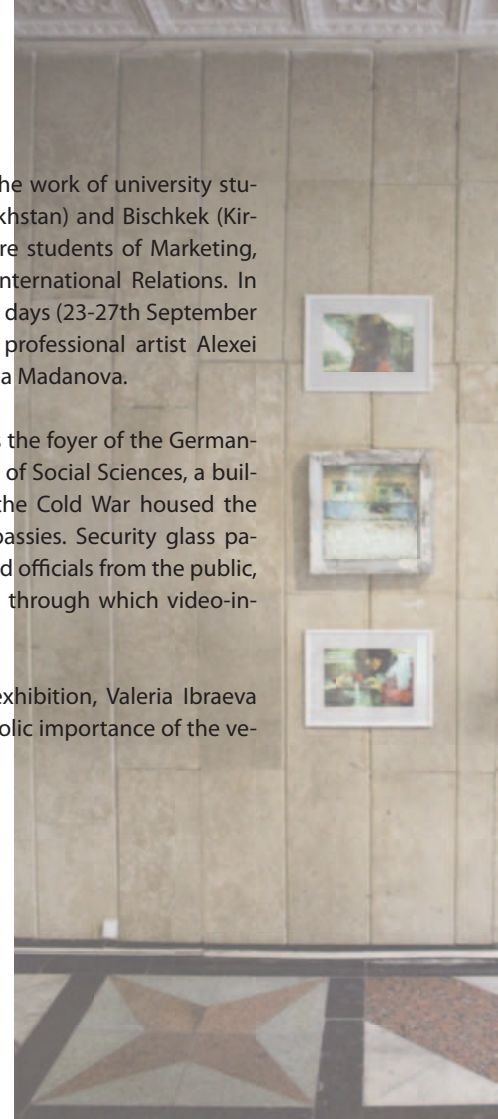


The Exhibition

The exhibition presents the work of university students from Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Bishkek (Kirgizstan). Normally they are students of Marketing, Telecommunications or International Relations. In the city of Almaty, for five days (23-27th September 2011) they worked with professional artist Alexei Shindin, assisted by Gaisha Madanova.

The exhibition venue was the foyer of the German-Kazak University's Faculty of Social Sciences, a building which had during the Cold War housed the German and French embassies. Security glass panels, which once separated officials from the public, became now the screens through which video-installations were beamed.

During her visit to the exhibition, Valeria Ibraeva commented on the symbolic importance of the venue itself.





side the constant and shared human nature is expressed through signs suggesting stability. The exhibition covers the wide range of the young people's world-views – from feeling oneself as insignificant and helpless in the wide world (G. Madanov), to emphasizing the importance of the “small” life through the visual and verbal fixing of its every moment (E. Putshkova). Attention shifts from the ideal of human beauty imposed by glossy lifestyle magazines (S. Hmelevskaya) to a feeling of the permanent menace of war, dissolved in daily life by means of militaristic symbols occurring everywhere (R. Bektshintaev). But the main achievement of the exhibition is the possibility for the authors to explore the role of stereotypes in the creation of forms. This is why the representations of these forms are so ironical, in games with the advertising images as well as in direct interpretations. So the “small man” of G. Madanova is really small, because this is tiny portrait photography! Sometimes the inexperience of some authors

Art and Society. A Visit to an Exhibition

The small art photography exhibition within the context of the “Art Peace Project”, located in the hall of the Kazakh-German University, surprised with its scope and social astuteness. The works – only two of them by professional artists – manage to capture with remarkable precision the issues which concern contemporary young people in Central Asia. In this way the main peace-building task of the workshop was fulfilled. The young seminar facilitator, photographer Alexei Shindin, made the problem more precise: concentrating the attention of the students on such dichotomies as the individual and society, inside and outside, the human and the world. At first glance it appears that most of the works in the exhibition are built on the visual stereotypes such as the eye, mirrors or windows. On the other



meets with the sophistication of their perception. So in one of the most spectacular works "If you need a helping hand" (B. Askarova, T. Koshnazarova, M. Savirbaeva) the research into the society is achieved by means of video observation of passersby beamed through the picture of the open palms. Thereby, the belief that human beings are essentially kind, an idealism perhaps characteristic of youth, is reaffirmed a hundredfold.

In 1997, at the opening of the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art's exhibition Human Rights: second wind in the Kazakh University of Law, I wondered at a question of one student: "Who allowed you to do such a thing?". One can understand this reaction of the young law students, brought up as they had been in an environment of Soviet style prohibitions. It is not surprising that the new artistic technologies, new means of artistic expressions would shock; indeed the theme of the ex-

hibition itself was unusual for Kazakhstan at that time. But now, more than a decade on, the Art Peace Project has brought to light a very significant shift: the future diplomats, politicians and managers, these current students, declared that it was interesting for them to look at their country, its citizens and themselves from another point of view. For the people of the immediate post-Soviet period, the stereotype was a guide to action. But as the workshop showed, for these young people in Central Asia there is the possibility to break any kind of stereotype concerning education, nationality, religion, age – through playing with it! And this is the most significant achievement of the project, from my point of view.

Valeria Ibraeva





Для человека постсоветского времени стереотип был руководством к действию. Для современных молодых казахстанцев это, как выясняется, возможность игры и, как следствие, возможность ломки стереотипа во всех его проявлениях – образовании, национальности, религии, возраста. Что, на мой взгляд, и является весьма значимым результатом проекта.

Валерия Ибраева

Valeria Ibraeva was Director of the *Soros Center for Contemporary Art* in Almaty (1998–2008). A widely acknowledged observer of the contemporary art scene, she has curated major exhibitions in Central Asia and Europe, including “Videoidentity: The Sacred Places of Central Asia” (2004), and “East of Nowhere” (2009). Her most recent publication addresses questions of war, peace and what it is to be human: *La sindrome die Tamerlano - Arte e conflitti in Asia centrale, 2005*.

Valeria Ibraeva has tirelessly promoted her belief in the creative arts as essential to democracy. She has therefore not only encouraged contemporary artists and art, but has insisted on the necessity for ordinary citizens to interpret and produce their own art.



Central Asia. Twenty Years after Independence

When analyzing the role of Kazakhstan in the development of post-Soviet countries of Central Asia – in particular Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – it is necessary to focus on some key developments in the region.

Firstly, Central Asia is a very dynamic part of the world, on the crossroads between Europe and Asia, and surrounded by fast-growing economies such as Russia, India and China, who in turn seek to expand their spheres of political and economic activity in this region.

Secondly, the favorable geopolitical position of Central Asia, as well as Kazakhstan's active foreign policy for regional integration, significantly enhances stability. At the same time however, it is necessary to take into consideration the potential sources of conflict from neighboring geographical zones of political instability, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan.

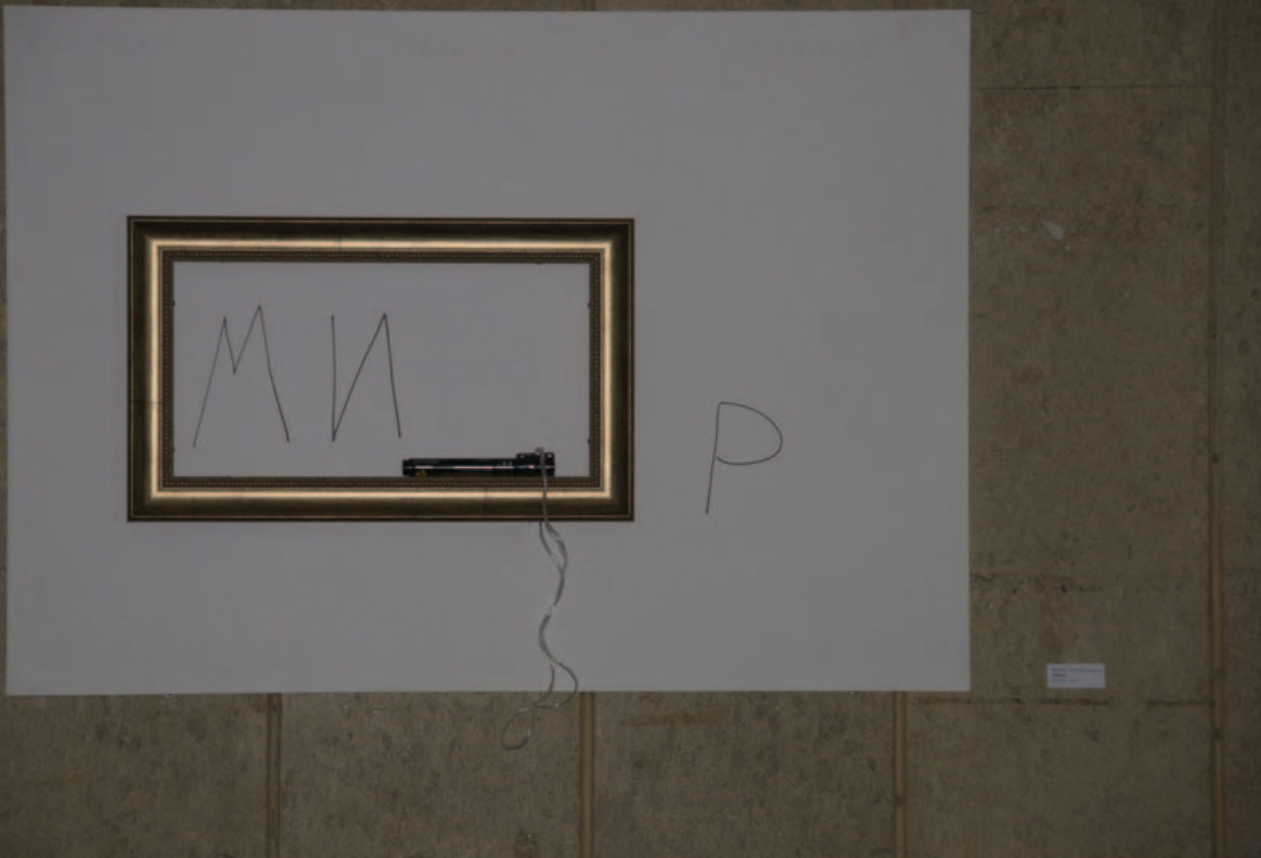
Thirdly, remaining regional discrepancies – economic, political and social – are improving, but only at a very slow pace.

Fourthly, despite decreasing investments during the recent world economic crises, the countries in the region remain highly attractive to foreign investments due to its large overall population (over 92 million) and vast natural resources.

Key to the ongoing economic and political development is the “human capital”. Fortunately, due to the education system inherited from the Soviet Union, the level of the population's literacy is very high, estimated currently at 98%. Nevertheless, for the maintenance of competitiveness, a highly skilled labor force is needed, and this requires further reforms in the spheres of education, social security and public administration. Democratic platforms are needed and international relations are to be carefully managed.

Twenty years of independent development has offered the most important lesson: freedom without responsibility does not exist. Accordingly, our future depends on choices taken by people in the present. And most importantly, any hopes of future prosperity, innovation and growth are dependent on new ideas. And these flourish best in environments where people are prepared to make their voices heard! Such a shift of values and consciousness can further spiritual integration across borders in Central Asia.

Dr. Svetlana Petrenko
Dean of Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Kazakh-German University
(Kazakhstan, Almaty)



PEACE – МИР

"I want to talk about „world peace“. The background is a clean sheet, and inside of a frame are letters **М** and **И**, but **Р** is outside. The world has both negative and positive sides. Conflicts, international terrorism etc., belong to a negative side. To settle it all, in my opinion, a tool is necessary, the hand is necessary, it can pencil in the remaining letter **Р** in a framework to promote world peace: **МИР – PEACE.**"

Turashbek uulu Bektur *Bishkek*



Elizaveta Puchkova Almaty
Yes, I do have crazy friends – I love my life. The idea of this work is a bit like Facebook, I create myself through my friends. The project is from my heart, I love these people, I like extremes. It is not so much the results, it is the process that interests me."

“Impressions of Life” «Отпечатки жизнью»

People are unique, each in their own way, and irreplaceable. Everyone is a whole world in themselves, but only if they are not alone. Impressions of Life, is the world as we see it. These are simply people: people from different generations, nationalities, opinions and attitudes – simply as they are, no more and no less. It is honesty, without masks, without pretence or deceit.

It is a longing for absolute honesty with our fellow humans that is the motivation behind this project. This is why there are not only photographs but also extracts from private letters. For us this creates an atmosphere of the past that can be touched from inside. The main presenters in our work are all the people photographed. Time is brought to a standstill, vital moments which we cherished together are held onto, and in the end the photographs tell a story which is about us.

Elizaveta Puchkova
Eugenia Kitova

Люди... Каждый, по своему, уникален, неповторим.... Каждый человек – это целый мир, но только если он не один... Если в Этом мире он не один...

«Отпечатки жизни» – это мир такой, какой он видится нам, это просто люди, люди разных поколений, наций, настроений, взглядов на жизнь ... просто такие, какие есть... Ни больше, ни меньше... Это честность, отсутствие масок, фальши, притворства...

Пожалуй, именно желание быть максимально честными с окружающими, побудило нас к созданию этого проекта, подтолкнуло включить в работу не только фотографии, но и фрагменты личных переписок, что на наш взгляд дало возможность почувствовать изнутри атмосферу происходящего. Герои нашей работы - это жизни большого количества людей, в которых фотоаппарат сыграл возможно маленькую, но очень значимую сейчас роль – остановил время, поймал моменты, которые родны и дороги, которые могут много рассказать о нас не только окружающим, но и ним самим...

Елизавета Пучкова
Евгения Китова



Elizaveta Puchkova
Eugenija Kitova
Almaty

Раскрась, не запятнав...

Жизнь как чистый лист, полотно, которое мы наполняем содержанием. Делаем это каждый день, каждую минуту своими словами, поступками, мыслями. Любое наше проявление – это как новый мазок, новый принесенный элемент и очень важно поставить этот элемент на свое, предназначенное ему место, просто чтобы не испортить это прекрасное произведение, этот проект всей жизни, не запятнать его бесчинством, злобой или непростительностью.

Символом чистоты для нас явилась женщина. Женщина, дающая жизнь, улаживающая конфликты, несущая в себе свет во всех отношениях. Простое, чистое существо, хранящее мир.

Елизавета Пучкова
Евгения Китова

Paint, but don't dirt

Life is a clear canvas which we colour. This we do every day and every minute with our words, our actions and our thoughts. With brush and paint we create something beautiful of life. But it can be spoiled by bitterness.

The woman in the picture symbolises purity. It is she who gives life and reconciles people, she who brings light into relationships – an innocent, vulnerable being who guards the peace.

Elizaveta Puchkova
Eugenija Kitova



Мир как рафинад (сахар)

Центральной идеей моего проекта является антропогенное воздействие на мир, который представлен в качестве рафинада. Сахар также хрупок как наш мир. Подобно цунами, которое в считанные секунды может уничтожить все живое на планете, вода также быстро растворяет сахар. Человек способен как разрушить, так и сохранить наш мир. Модель олицетворяет собой человечество, юное относительно мира, и нестабильное в своих желаниях и настроениях.

Dragunova Anastassiya
Almaty



Lump sugar like a World

"The central concept of my project is lump sugar. Sugar is as fragile as our world. Like a tsunami that can easily destroy a world, you may spill hot water on sugar and it will dissolve. Or you can try to save this world.... In my project I would like to show the interaction between Humans and the World. The model is of an incarnational, anthropogenic impact on our world. She can keep saving this World, or destroy it." (Неуверенна в грамотности текста)

Dragunova Anastasiya

Almaty

Erkenne die Innenwelt

Das Thema meines Projekt lautet: „Erkenne die Innenwelt“. Dazu möchte ich sagen, jeden Tag sehen wir uns im Spiegel und ziehen verschiedene Masken an.

Es bedeutet, dass es uns manchmal leichter fällt, die wahrhaften Gefühle und die Emotionen hinter der unsichtbaren Maske zu verbergen. Du ziehst die Maske an und jetzt bist du nicht der Gegenwärtige! Möglicherweise bist du verwundert, und es kann dich überrascht haben. Nimm sie ab und blicke noch einmal. Wen siehst du jetzt?

Der Spiegel ist die Welt, in der du dich wahrhaft sehen kannst!





“Sei Gegenwart!”

Diese Aussage wurde mein Motto im Leben. Ich befinde mich auf dem Standpunkt, dass wir diese Aussage in beliebigen Emotionen und in beliebigen Bewegungen übernehmen sollten. Wir sollen uns wissentlich vorstellen, was wir in der Wirklichkeit wollen. Dieses Projekt veranschaulicht die Erkenntnis der Welt, und zwar die Erkenntnis der Persönlichkeit durch die Spiegelreflexion!

Swetlana Chmelevskaya

Almaty





Initials of the Soul

“Art is a source of peace, perfection and beauty – which helps people to comprehend how very fragile peace is and how important that it be supported by millions of people. We see the initials of the soul through our eyes. In our project we set out to interview people and ask them how they imagined building peace. At the same time we photographed their eyes as a way of finding out more about who they are deep inside. The answers they gave were very diverse, each seemed to have their own unique vision.”

Kenzhe Bokonova and Aigul Orozbekova

Bishkek







Create the World

"If you ever need a helping hand, it is always with you – your own.

Everything that we create in our lives, all we have, who we are ... this is all the work of our hands, literally. Who if not we will take care of our lives. We are Blacksmiths of our own happiness. This should always be remembered.

Large and small, beautiful and with the scars, soft and coarse, strong and weak.... they are different, these hands. How much they can say about their owners, how clearly they can express the man's age, sex, and social status. And how much they can do. Certainly, any idea is born in the mind of a person, but it can remain so, unrealized. Hands are our anvil, how and where to apply them, chooses one for himself."

**Askarova Baglan
Kozhnazarova Tamila
Sadyrbayeva Malika**
Almaty

Твори Мир

Если вам понадобится рука помощи, она всегда при вас — ваша собственная.





Rinat Bekchintayev, Ринат Бекчинаев
“death-support machine”, 2`30`, «аппарат смерти-обеспечения»
animation, 2011, анимация, 2011

Synopsis: The work is called «death-support machine». This animation illustrates the operation of gaming machine (slot - machine), in which the slot-symbols of the most common causes of death such as heart failure, drugs, accidents, radiation, etc.

Project concept: Every day we hear and see - death. About death printed in the newspapers, broadcasted on TV, published on the Internet. I saw in this something similar to a game, in which each of us – only bet. And who gets into a treasured combination -a matter of chance nothing more.

Синопис: Работа называется “death-support machine”/ «аппарат смерти-обеспечения». В данной анимации показана работа игрового аппарата (слот - машины), в которой на слотах изображены символы наиболее распространенных причин смерти людей, такие как остановка сердца, наркотики, катастрофы, радиация и т. д.

Концепция проекта: Каждый день все мы слышим и видим – смерть. Про смерть пишут в газетах, показывают по ТВ, публикуют в интернете. Я увидел в этом нечто схожее с игрой, в которой каждый из нас – лишь ставка. А кто попадет в заветную комбинацию – дело случая, не более того.

Gaisha Madanova



Gaisha Madanova was born in 1987 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. In 2007 she participated in the project “The Transformation of Space in Almaty”, Soros Center for Contemporary Art and the Worth Ryder Art Gallery in Berkeley, USA. Since graduating as an architect in 2009, she has worked as a full-time artist. Her work is primarily with photo and film, and has been in major exhibitions throughout Central Asia, including Bishkek, Tashkent and Almaty. Her first solo exhibition was “The instinct of the present” at the Goethe Institute in Almaty.

Contact e-mail: madenenok@gmail.com



“Unit of measurement: The Universe as a personal story”

«Единица измерения: Мир как личная история»

fragment 2010 - 11

photograph 6,3 cm x 9,4 cm

Gaisha Madanova

Alexei Shindin



Alexei Anatolevich Shindin was born in 1978 in Rudniy, Kazakhstan. In 2003 he graduated in Applied Decorative Arts/Design at the National Art Academy in Almaty. In his way of working he combines textile and painting with photography and video art. In 2006 and 2007, his slide show "Earthly Happiness" was exhibited in Bishkek (Kirgizstan) and in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow. Further works of the artist have been shown at exhibitions in Almaty ("House of Tolerance" 2007, "Parallelism" 2008, "Eko-Echo" 2010). Interest in his work reaches beyond the Central Asian region, as in the 2009 exhibition in Turin (Italy), "East of Nowhere: Contemporary Art from post-Soviet Asia".

Contact-email: shindin78@mail.ru



Photo: Alexei Shindin

Interview 23rd September 2011, Chukotka Bar

"We may want to change the world but we must recognise the futility of it all. But a human can understand his own position in collective consciousness. When making art I try to invite the viewers in, so that they can go deeper into the art within themselves. He or she has rights, and can use these rights to see society and not just accept everything."

Interview 27th September 2011, Efes beer bar Nash Pub

"I could hardly believe it. Many students also didn't believe they could do it. The art opened something in their souls. Modern art overlaps with politics. Artists can be politicians and politicians can be artists."



Photo: Alexei Shindin



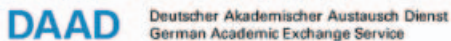
Photo: Alexei Shindin



The Art Peace Project

The **Art Peace Project**, located at the University of Hamburg, has grown out of a number of experiments to see whether producing art or analysing art can help to generate fresh ways of seeing oneself and the world, and thereby make a contribution to stimulating a culture of human rights. Methods used in workshops have ranged from improvisation theatre, puppetry, storytelling and photography, to the critical analysis of films and novels. Included in this testing of methods has been working with professional artists. In the “art school” or “writer’s retreat format” there is opportunity for ordinary people to be taken seriously as artists. The Art Peace Project serves therefore as a forum for the exploration of ways in which the creative arts can contribute to Human Rights and Peace Education. Documentation and analysis of the divergent experiences of participants in the workshops provides the necessary information for ongoing improvement and innovation. *2006-2008: “Empowerment of Minorities through the Education for Creativity”/2009: “Powerplay”/2010: “Images in Place”/2011: “Sommeruniversität Kunst und Frieden”.*

blogs.epb.uni-hamburg.de/artpeaceproject



“Peacebuilding & the Creative Arts in Central Asia 2011” is a cooperative project between the University of Hamburg and the German-Kazakhstan University, financed by the DAAD Program on Conflict Prevention in the Southern Caucasus, Central Asia and Moldavia.

Coordination: Sarina Adambussinowa, International Office, Deutsch-Kasachische Universität, *Almaty*

Impressum

The Art Peace Project
Universität Hamburg
Fakultät für Erziehungswissenschaft
Von-Melle-Park 8
20146 Hamburg
Germany

Prof. Gordon Mitchell
gordon.mitchell@uni-hamburg.de

Sofie Olbers M.A.
sofie.olbers@hotmail.de

blogs.epb.uni-hamburg.de/artpeace-almaty

Layout: Sofie Olbers

© Universität Hamburg

