

## Leeza Ahmady

Leeza Ahmady is an independent curator and educator noted for her organization of critically acclaimed large-scale multidisciplinary international visual art platforms, festivals, exhibitions, artistic collaborations, academic symposiums, and other educational forums. Born and raised in Afghanistan and based in New York, Ahmady is also the founder of and advisor to several arts organizations in the US and Asia and has contributed texts to many publications including: Flash Art, ART21, ArtAsiaPacific, Ibraaz, Creative Time Reports, Manifesta Journal, Asia Art Archives, and more.

### Resume of Projects

#### **Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW) Director & Curator (2006 - Present)**

As the director of New York's internationally recognized educational and curatorial platform Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW), Ahmady brings leading museums, galleries, arts organizations, and academic institutions together to present cutting edge exhibitions, artists projects, performances, screenings, lectures and panel discussions citywide. She has organized 8 ACAW editions, gaining widespread international acclaim for the platform which is hailed as "*a turning point for the discussion of art from Asia in America*" by **Holland Cotter, the New York Times** critic and Pulitzer Prize winner for art criticism.

Through her unique curatorial expertise, Ahmady has cultivated collaborations between for-profit and non-profit organizations comfortably and successfully raising over \$2.5 million dollars thru bespoke corporate & institutional sponsorships + expansion and enrollment of new members for **Asia Contemporary Art Consortium (ACAC)** comprised of select industry & institutional leaders- museum directors, dealers, collectors, scholars, curators and philanthropists. (Including Jack Wadsworth, Melissa Chiu, Alexandra Munroe, Christophe Mao, Arani Bose, Tyler Rollins, James Cohan, Jack Shainman, Criag Yee, Jane Debevoise and many others).

She has expanded ACAW's territorial focus beyond China to include vast emerging regions of South & South East Asia, Middle East, and Central Asia. Ahmady launched over 1000 best new & established artists/works thru strategic relationships, network-building & on-going connectivity with field-insiders across vibrant scenes of China, Japan, Indonesia, India, Korea, Kazakhstan, Singapore, Iran, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Cambodia & Malaysia. See list on p2.

Ahmady has established extensive publicity campaign- print, online and social media including on-going sponsorship contracts with **Art Asia Pacific magazine, Artnet Artsy, Leap Magazine** & others. 20,000+ mailing list /newsletter with local, international, and Asia audience-base including VIP Crème de la crème from all sectors of art, business, design, and academia. ACAW out-reach extends 200,000 + per edition. To address the platform's educational goals, throughout the years Ahmady implemented on-going fellowship programs / internship trainings for young arts professionals in the following fields: Curatorial Work, Archival and Documentation, Graphic and Web Design, Editorial and Art Writing, Public Relations, Digital Outreach Communications, and Art & Event Management.

She have successfully enrolled more than **250** leading & emerging local and Asia-based galleries, museums, art-fairs, auction houses, academic institutions to join ACAW as **Consortium Partners:**

**New York, USA:** Asia Society Museum / Asia Art Archive / The Armory Show / Aicon Gallery / ArteEast / Bose Pacia / Brooklyn Museum of Art / Chambers Fine Art / China Institute / Christie's / Ethan Cohen Fine Art / Gana Art / (ICI) Independent Curators International / Jack Shainman / James Cohan Gallery / Japan Society / Jane Lombard Gallery / Leila Heller Gallery / Metropolitan Museum of Art / MoMA | The Museum of Modern Art / Performa / Public Art Fund / Queens Museum / Residency Unlimited / Rubin Museum of Art / Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum / Sotheby's / Sundaram Tagore Gallery / Taipei Cultural Center / Taymour Grahne Gallery / Tyler Rollins Fine Art / Zürcher Studio

**Asia, Multiple Cities:** Ab/Anbar Gallery (Tehran) Exhibit 320 (Delhi) / LEAP Magazine (Beijing) / Lisson Gallery (London) / M+ Museum (Hong Kong) Spencer Museum of Art (Kansas) / The Korean Museum Association (Seoul) / The National Gallery of Indonesia (Jakarta) / Mori Art Museum (Tokyo) / Aike-Dellarco Gallery (Shanghai)/ Alserkal Avenue (Dubai) / Chi-Wen Gallery (Taipei) / Edouard Malingue Gallery (Hong Kong) / Galeri Zilberman (Istanbul) / Ink Studio (Beijing) / MABSOCIETY (Shanghai) / Richard Koh Fine Art (Kuala Lumpur) Space Station (Beijing) / Vadehra Art Gallery (New Delhi) and more!

### **Presented artists in ACAW programs with continued relationships:**

**Cai Gua Qiang** New York, FX Harsono, Indonesia, Danh Vo Vietnam & Berlin, Mariko Mori, Japan, **Sopheap Pich** Cambodia, Tracey Moffatt, Australia, Vandy Rattana, Cambodia, Wong Hoy Cheong, Malaysia, **Zarina Hashmi**, India & US, Anita Dube, India, Atta Kim, Korea, Chao-Liang Shen, Taiwan, **Qiu Zhijie**, China, Hiraki Sawa, UK, **Liu Xiaodong**, China, Makoto Aida, Japan, **Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian**, Iran, Huma Bhabha, Pakistan/ US, Jakkai Siributr, Thailand, Lee Mingwei, Taiwan, Mitra Tabrizian, Iran & England, Muratbek Djumaliev & Gulnara Kasmalieva, Kyrgyzstan, **Emily Jacir**, Palestine & US, Il Lee, Korea & US, **Lin Yilin**, China & US, Akram Zaatari, Lebanon, Atsuchi Suzuki, Japan, **Bani Abidi**, Pakistan & Germany, **Chieh-jen Chen**, Taiwan, **Fudong Yang**, China, Koki Tanaka, Japan & US, Kwan Han Moo, Korea, Nadiah Bamadhaj, Malaysia, **Tan Xu**, China, Vivan Sundaram, India, Pوران Jinchi, Iran & US, Ranbir Kaleka, India, Shilpa Gupta, India, **Subodh Gupta**, India, Alwin Reamillo, Philippines & Australia, **Amar Kanwar**, India, Atul Bhalla, India, Qiu Xiaofei, China, **Raqs Media Collective**, India, **Rashid Rana**, Pakistan, Lu Ding China, Ushio Shinohara, Japan, & US, Vibha Galhotra, India, **Wang Keping**, China & France, **Yoshitomo Nara**, Japan, and many more.....

## **Other Significant Exhibitions, Projects and Platforms**

### ***\*The Taste of Others: Contemporary Art in Central Asia***

**Multiple Sites, Cities & Countries** (2004-Present)

Ahmady launched her on-going research and exhibition project *The Taste of Others* through which she has presented the largely unknown artists of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at diverse international events such as The Venice Biennial (2005) Istanbul Biennial, and Asia Art Archives Hong Kong. She has presented numerous other related exhibitions & public programs in collaboration with multiple universities, art fairs, biennials and arts organizations. **See the \* sign next to all related exhibitions and projects in this resume**

### ***FIELD MEETING: ACAW Signature Forum***

**Multiple Locations USA, Asia, Europe** (2014 - Present)

***Critical of the Future, Thinking Performance, Practice & Projects***

Hosted at Asia Society Museum, The Met, Performa Biennial, Venice Biennial, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, SVA Theatre, Hunter College Art Gallery & Alserkal Avenue

Ahmady initiated the now acclaimed annual forum for arts professionals, FIELD MEETING aimed at exhibiting and developing lecture-performance as an important contemporary art medium. The forum has staged the process and activities of over 200 of the world's top creative minds (artists, curators, philosophers, novelists, scientists, architects, filmmakers, poets etc) through newly commissioned performances, lecture-performances, provocative talks and lively discussions. 6 iterations of FIELD MEETING has been attended by an exclusive audience of 5000 curators, museum directors, collectors and art connoisseurs.

### ***Lee Mingwei Sonic Blossom***

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art** (2015)

Named amongst the best 20 exhibitions of the year by the New York Times, Ahmady co-presented the renowned artist Lee Mingwei's performance exhibitions at the Met Museum Temple of Dendur as the signature program of ACAW 2015.

### ***Thinking Currents: The Pacific Rim***

**Inaugural Seattle Art Fair** (2015)

Commissioned by Microsoft and Seattle fair founder Paul Allen Vulcan team. Procured some of the most iconic video and sound works from over 25 galleries. Designed and installed the show of mainly very large-scale projections within a 6,000 square foot darkened space at the center of the art fair –attended by over 15,000 people in a period of four days.

***Arahmaiani: Fertility of the Mind***

**Tyler Rollins Fine Art New York (2014)**

Organized a survey exhibition of over 30 years of works by Indonesia's iconic artist, Arahmaiani; internationally recognized for her powerful provocative commentaries on social and cultural issues.

***No Country: Regarding South and Southeast Asia***

**Solomon R Guggenheim Museum UBS MAP Global Art Initiative (2013)**

Collection and exhibition advisor-placed several prominent works by South Asian artists in this special collection.

***\*Nomad-Ness in No Man's Land***

**Eslite Gallery, Taipei Taiwan (2013)**

Organized a museum-scale exhibition & secured works from various sources including artists, multiple gallery & museums at Taipei's best gallery. Examined the nomadism of contemporary migrant artists who deliberately resist location and de-territorialize the origins of their works; engaged in the act of moving, living, and working on multiple continents or addressing such phenomena in their practices consciously or unconsciously.

***\*History of Histories: Afghan Films 1960 – Present***

**Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013)**

**Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (September 2013)**

In collaboration with artist Mariam Ghani, Ahmady curated selections from the archive of Afghan Films, Afghanistan's national film institute, in operation from 1967 – 96. The month-long series included feature film clips, newsreels, documentary shorts and propaganda films reflecting the ever-changing fashions, mores and politics of the constantly reconfigured state of Afghanistan, including footage from the end of the monarchy (the Zahir Shah period), the Daoud republic, the Afghan Communist republic, and the Soviet puppet state. Presented as part of *No Country: Regarding South and Southeast Asia* exhibition.

***In Residence: Season of Cambodia Festival***

**Multiple Locations New York (2012-2013)**

MoMA Museum of Modern Art, The Met Museum, Bronx Museum, BAM, Creative Time, Residency Unlimited, Lower Manhattan Arts Council, Parsons The New School, Columbia University & Independent Curators International.

Ahmady served as the director / co-curator of the visual arts section of the citywide festival from Cambodia in New York. To compliment the rich array of theatre, dance, and music programs, the visual arts program (co-curated with Erin Gleeson) centered around 10 artists residencies accompanied by a dynamic map of public

programs, solo exhibitions & open studios including a historical academic symposium with artists and curators and scholars critically involved in shaping Cambodia's unique contemporary art scene.

### **DOCUMENTA 13**

#### **Kassel Germany & Kabul Afghanistan (2010 – 2012)**

Ahmady served as part the Agents/ Curatorial Team for dOCUMENTA (13), one of the art world's most prestigious international exhibitions. She contributed extensive research towards selection of artists, works and projects for the main exhibition in Kassel and dOCUMENTA's first ever offsite exhibition and seminar series in Kabul, Afghanistan. She Also contributed a seminal publication of the largely unknown Uzbek's artist *Vyacheslav Akhunov's* secret works from the 1970-1990's as part of dOCUMENTA "100 NOTES – 100 THOUGHTS" (2012)

### ***Dialogues in Contemporary Art***

#### **Independent Curators International / ARTonAIR.org New York (2012 - 2014)**

A series of public conversations and interviews with artists, curators, collectors & critics presented at ICI Curatorial Hub, to address the role of art professionals in an increasingly borderless world; investigating the ways in which artistic practices, curatorial strategies and critical commentary have been reconfigured by intensified patterns of global circulation.

### ***\*Tarjama / Translation: Contemporary Art from Middle East, Central Asia and its Diasporas***

#### **Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University Ithaca New York (2010) Queens Museum, New York (2009)**

Commissioned by New York's prominent arts organization ArteEast, Ahmady served as the chief curator (with Iftikhar Dadi & Reem Fada as co-curators) of one of the most unprecedented large-scale exhibition of contemporary art mapping an influential subset of recent work from the Middle East, Central Asia, and its diasporas, as a complex and dynamic translational undertaking. - The exhibition addressed the work of translation as multivalent; from the specificities of textual and visual maneuvers to the larger sense of revealing fissures of the self, community, site and temporality. Notable Artists included Yto Barrada, Emily Jacir, Gülsün Karamustafa, Bouchra Khalili, Farhad Moshiri, Michael Rakowitz, Khalil Rabah, Wael Shawky, Mitra Tabrizian, and Akram Zaatari.

### ***Truly Truthful***

#### **Art Asia Fair, Miami (2009)**

A large-scale exhibition of works by well-established artists from China, Korea, India and elsewhere in Asia whose work challenges presentations of truth as established, objective, and specific Lara Baladi, Huma Bhabha, Jeff Cykowski, Anita Dube, Cao Fei, Chitra Ganesh, Yeondoo Jung, Gulnara Kasmaliev & Muratbek Djumaliev, Bari

Kumar, Li Jikai, Marya Kazoun, Kimsooja, Mami Kosemura, Sopheap Pich, Qiu Jhijie, Jean Shin, Ushio Shinohara, Jakkai Siributr, Sislej Xhafa

***\*I Dream of the Stans***

**Winkleman Gallery New York (2008)**

**Museo de Arte de El Salvador MARTE, El Salvador (2008)**

The exhibition centered on the remarkably strong single and multi-channel video works produced in Central Asia, a fact often attributed to the region's centuries-old traditions of storytelling, street theater, and weaving.

***\*Parable of the Garden: New Media Art from Iran & Central Asia***

**The College of New Jersey Art Gallery (March 2008)**

Co-curated with Sarah Cunningham and Deborah Hutton, this exhibition focuses on former Persia and its cultural legacy. It examines not only the traditional garden and the contemporary sense of place, but also notions of paradise lost and found, lessons learned and forgotten, and traditions cherished and rejected.

***\*Collection Advisor***

**Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi India (2008-2010)**

Ahmady expanded *The Taste of Others* initiative to include placement of a number of important works in private and public collections as exemplified by her work with collectors Anupam & Lekha Podder, & MoMA The Museum of Modern Art

***\*The Paradox of Polarity: Contemporary Art from Central Asia***

**Bose Pacia Gallery New York (Feb 2007)**

As a first major exhibition from the region in the United States, the show surveyed the richly varied forms of art flourishing in Central Asia today.

***\*Afghanistan & Central Asia Pavilions***

**Venice Biennale (2004-2005)**

Advisor for the first Afghanistan and Central Asia Pavilions, as a result of which, the featured artists become highly visible on the international art scene.

***\*Martell Contemporary Asian Art Research Grant Winner***

**Asia Art Archive Hong Kong (2005)**

In June 2005, as a recipient of Asia Art Archive's Martell Contemporary Asian Art Research Grant, Ahmady returned to Central Asia to research the development of contemporary art in the region by interviewing & documenting 85 artists, curators, collectors and art managers. Her findings are published in a comprehensive research report on AAA online-journal.

**Other Notable Collaborations/ Public Programs /Symposia:**

**Art Basel Hong Kong** as part of *Expanded Horizons, The World Beyond the Map* panel organized by Stephanie Bailey considering how curators are subverting the regional frame in which a map of the world is drawn through its memories and relations, rather than its borders and definitions.

**Mathaf-Arab Museum of Modern Art Doha, Qatar** (September 2014) *Do Peripheries Become Center: A 3-day intensive workshop / seminar, designed for Mathaf staff and network of professional communities.*

**Art Dubai** (2014) *Advisor for the fair's Marker Program: Central Asia and Caucasus.*

**Osage Gallery** Hong Kong (2014) *Art & Value Symposium* - organized by curator David Elliot as part of Charles Merewether's exhibition: *Market Forces*

**Cornell University & MoMA, Museum of Modern Art** (April 2013) *Contemporary Art in Cambodia: A Historical Inquiry* - A major Symposium considering the history of culture & aesthetics in Cambodia

**DOCUMENTA "100 NOTES – 100 THOUGHTS"** *Vyacheslav Akhunov (2012)*  
A seminal publication of the largely unknown Uzbek's artist's secret works from the 1970-1990's

**Art Singapore** (October 2008) Conceptualized and organized a special symposium with collectors, curators and gallery owners: *On Practice and Collections*

**\*The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC** (July 2008) *New Videos as part of Afghanistan, Hidden Treasures from the National Museum Kabul*

**\*Istanbul Biennial** (2007) A major symposium: *International Discourse vs. Local Vibrancy: Challenges and Opportunities* with artists, institutional leaders and historians working across the five countries of Central Asia.

**Robert Pardo Gallery** (2000-2001) Managed this dedicated space for exhibition and placement of sculptural works in private and public collection.

**LL Gallery** (1998-2000) curated and produced unique art programs inside of the famous Chelsea clubs the Limelight and Tunnel. Artist exhibited included Dan Flavin, Ray Johnson, Gerald Laing, Dennis Oppenheim, Malcolm Morley, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol.