

# FORA

## **Agil Abdullayev**

*b. 1992, Baku, Azerbaijan*

*"I use art to explore and challenge societal structures, unraveling the complexities of identity, memory, and the intersections of queerness and culture".*

Agil Abdullayev is a non-binary contemporary artist whose multidisciplinary practice spans video, photography, and painting. Abdullayev's work delves into the intricacies of queerness, trauma, escapism and identity, weaving personal memory with the cultural and historical narratives of Azerbaijani and South Caucasian traditions. Their art creates a space where gender identity and personal experiences are reimagined, confronting societal constructs and opening pathways for broader dialogues.

Abdullayev's journey as an artist is rooted in a robust educational background. Currently studying at Städelschule - Hochschule für Bildende Kunst (class of Judith Hopf) in Frankfurt, Germany, the artist completed a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, USA, in 2023. Abdullayev earned their BA in Fine Art with first-class honors from Nottingham Trent University, UK, in 2018, following a foundation studies in Art and Design at Nottingham Trent International College, UK, in 2015. These formative experiences deeply inform their interdisciplinary, research-based practice.

Often inspired by artists such as David Hockney and Ellsworth Kelly, Abdullayev plays with the fluidity between private and public spaces. Challenging conventional boundaries between these domains, the artist's work merges intimate moments with universal themes, using vibrant colors and experimental compositions that resonate on a broader scale. Through the transformation of private, internal experiences into shared visual languages, the artist creates spaces where individual histories of trauma, joy, and identity are made visible and present.

Central to Abdullayev's practice is the concept of the queer body as an archive, where personal and transhistorical memories collide. This framework dissolves fixed gender categories and allows for new expressions of identity, liberation, and belonging.

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Abdullayev's work pushes traditional artistic boundaries, transforming deeply personal narratives into collective experiences that challenge cultural perceptions and redefine the intersection of queerness and art.

Through a multidisciplinary practice, the artist invites viewers to engage with the nuances of identity, queerness, and societal change while challenging, rearticulating, and reinventing stereotyped narratives.

## EDUCATION

- 2024 Städel Schule - Hochschule für Bildende Kunst
- 2023 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, US
- 2018 BA Fine Art, Nottingham Trent University, UK
- 2015 Foundation of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent International College, UK

## Selected Solo Shows

- 2023 "Changing room" / The Why Not Gallery, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2018 "Shy boy of the pink future" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan

## Selected Exhibitions, Screenings, Performances

- 2024 Kassel DokFest, Kulturbahnhof, Kassel, Germany
- 2024 "Land Secrets & Sympoiesis" / Microscope Gallery, New York, US
- 2024 Video Pavilion, Limburg Biennale, Maastricht, NL
- 2024 "The secret life of plant and trees" / Innsbruck, Austria
- 2024 "Paadmaan" Video series #3 / Start Art Fair, Stockholm, Sweden

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- 2023 "Pink Black" / Painting Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2023 "Preserved Nature" / National Arts Museum, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2023 "After hope: videos of resistance" / Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, US
- 2022 "Play and Loop IV" / Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2022 "Rewriting childhood" / Gazelli Art House, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2021 "New Horizons" / The Writers' House, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2021 "Haft Paykar" / Kapellhaus, Goethe Institut, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2021 "Do not run!" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2021 "After hope" / Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, US
- 2020 "Two snaps of the post-modern society" / Salaam Cinema, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2020 "Off the velvet chest" / Smena, Kazan, Tatarstan
- 2020 *4th Edition of DokuBaku Film Festival, Baku, Azerbaijan*
- 2019 "F©ictions" / DIY Space for London, UK
- 2019 "Across the mountains: South Caucasus Photography" / MOMA, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2019 Ta(r)rdino6 at Art Spaces Section, Contemporary Istanbul Fair, Turkiye
- 2019 "Forget what you know" / Artim Project Space, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2019 "Video Wortex: There will be different tomorrow" / Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta, Malta
- 2019 "To be woman" / HIVE alternative Pavilion, Tbilisi Art Fair, Georgia
- 2019 "For the time being" / The Photographers Gallery, London, UK
- 2019 "On the tip of other tongues" / Artim Project Space, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2019 "Becoming" / Freehold Projects, Leeds, UK
- 2019 "Hometown Weather" / Salaam Cinema, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2018 "New Contemporaries" / South London Gallery, London, UK
- 2018 "Where are you at these interesting times?" / Scaffold Gallery, Manchester, UK

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- 2018 "Watch in a bright room" / The Trophy Room, Liverpool, UK
- 2018 "Fluid Sense of Presence" / One Thoresby Street, Nottingham, UK
- 2018 "lgbt+f: planet 2028" / LUX, London, UK
- 2018 "New Contemporaries" / Liverpool Biennale, UK
- 2017 "The 15 Cmdments" / The Wrong - New Digital Art Biennale, Online
- 2017 "Is this real lyf???" / B&D Studios, Newcastle, UK
- 2017 "Boys don't cry" / ARTIM, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2017 "Howz Sho" / Alternative art location, Nottingham, UK
- 2017 "Film free and easy: Spring Roll" / Primary, Nottingham, UK
- 2014 "ASTAR" / MoMA, Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, Russia

## Artist-in-residency and Visiting Programs

- 2023 Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen, Innsbruck, Austria
- 2023 Creative Solutions, Almaty, Kazakhstan
- 2022 Meet Factory, Prague, Czechia
- 2021 New Horizons, artist-in-residence, Goethe Institute, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 2021 afterhopeproject's visiting artist, California Polytechnic Institute, US
- 2019 Cittadellarte - Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy
- 2019 International Summer Academy of Fine Arts, Salzburg, Austria
- 2019 The Art Prospect Exchange Fellowship, CEC Artlinks, NYC, US
- 2019 Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2018 Group Residency, One Thoresby Street, Nottingham, UK
- 2018 Dostum January, Online Residency, Whitepube.co.uk

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## Curatorial Projects

2021 "Presence" / Nur Art House, Baku, Azerbaijan  
Artists: Mehrin Ali, Sujayat Ismayilova, Elchin Mikailov, Bashga Rassam, Nermin Zey

2019 "Women with moustaches and men without beards" / Salaam Cinema, Baku, Azerbaijan  
Artists: Ilkin Huseynov, Rene Matic, Taus Makhacheva, Equals Collective, AZAD LGBT

2018 "My chain hits my chest (with Heidi Chan)" / One Thoresby Street, Nottingham, UK  
Artists: Annie-Marie Akussah, Wendy Asumadu, Sitara Ibrahimova, Rene Matic, Seema Mattu, Zarina Muhammad, Zandile Nyamande, Grace Payne

2018 "Capitalism stole my virginity (with Katie Bishop)" / Surface Gallery, Nottingham, UK  
Artists: Pádraig Condron, Charlie Dean, Christos Gkenoudis, Demi Hill, Tiffany Hunt, Phoebe Neil, Jake Moore, Takudzwa Mukomberanwa, Aiden Slee, and Tiffany Slowick

## Grants and Awards

2022 Field research x mobility grant, EU4Culture

2022 Seed Award, Prince Claus Foundation

2022 ArtLink.CH, 100 artists' winner

2019 August Month's Fellowship Program by Art Prospect, CEC Artlink. Russia/USA

2019 Short course grant by BKA Eastern Europe. Salzburg, Austria

2018 3 Months-long studio bursaries by One Thoresby Street. Nottingham, UK

2018 Artist of the month, TOMBOY LTD. LONDON, UK

## Public talks and Workshops

2024 Artist talk, Kunstlerhaus Buchsenhausen, Innsbruck, Austria

2023 Artist talk, BuLT, Almaty, Kazakhstan

2022 Workshop:Art School with Femutopia and Q Collective, B Community Space, Baku, Azerbaijan

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2021 Panel discussion, The Writers' House, Tbilisi, Georgia, Organized by Goethe Institut

2020 Panel discussion, California Polytechnic University, San Francisco, US, Organized by Asian Art Museum

2019 Panel discussion, 8th Floor Rubin Foundation, New York City, US

2018 Artist talk, Yarat Contemporary Art Space, Baku, Azerbaijan

2018 Artist talk, Trophy room, Liverpool, UK