

**WOMEN ARTISANS  
OF CENTRAL ASIA:  
A LOOKBOOK JOURNEY**







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**WOMEN ARTISANS  
OF CENTRAL ASIA:  
A LOOKBOOK JOURNEY**



**CLDP**  
COMMERCIAL LAW DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



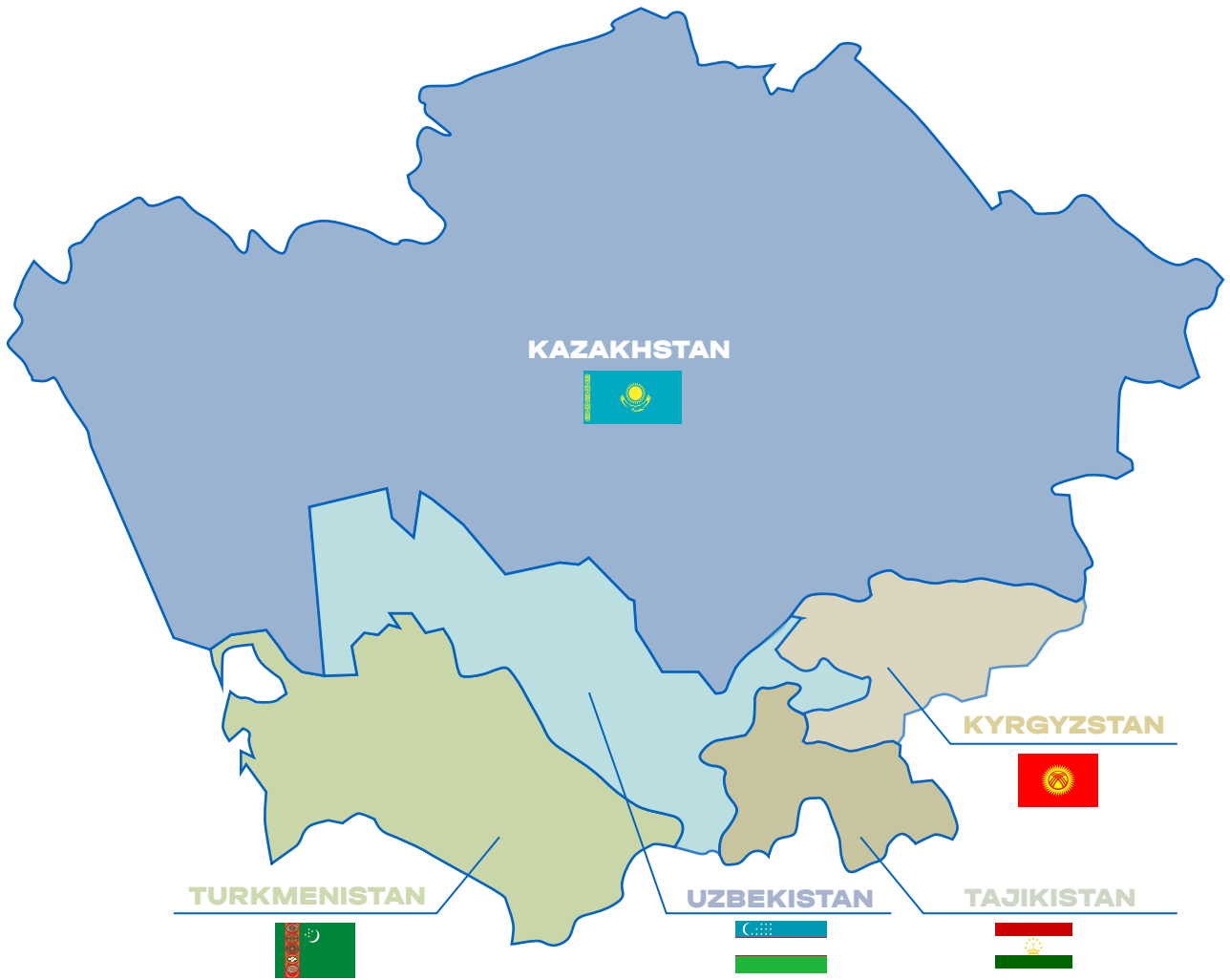


# INTRODUCTION

The "Lookbook of Central Asian Women Artisans" represents a collaboration between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Smithsonian Institution (SI), and the United States Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP). This initiative was designed to uplift the talented and skilled women artisans of Central Asia, showcase their remarkable craftsmanship to the world and expand their commercial opportunities. In rural regions, women and their families not only contribute to household incomes but also stand as guardians of local, national, and regional history and cultural legacy. These women are the custodians of age-old traditions, including the intricate arts of carpet and textile weaving, embroidery, silk production, wood carving, metalworking, ceramics, and jewelry making, among other handicrafts.

For generations, these crafts have been a source of beauty, historical significance, pride, and identity, shaping the rich heritage and traditions of the communities. With effective management and exposure to broader markets, these crafts have the power to substantially increase income, enhance education, and significantly improve the lives of rural families, especially benefiting women and girls. The "Lookbook of Central Asian Women Artisans" fosters economic independence, cultural preservation, and gender equality, marking a significant stride towards a more inclusive and prosperous Central Asia.













**BEADING**



**FELTING**



**EMBROIDERY**



**KNITTING**



**CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES**



**DOLL MAKING**



**CERAMICS**



**LEATHER**



**KURAK**



**WEAVING**



**FABRIC DYEING**



**GLASS PAINTING**



**WEAVING**



**JEWELRY**



**WORKSHOPS FOR TOURISTS**



# **CRAFTS OF KAZAKHSTAN**





**Felt** is the main material for the Kazakh craft practice — used for yurts, wall, and floor carpets (**tekemets** and **syrmaks**), storage boxes (**kaps** and **tenes**), covers for chests, clothes, hats, and stockings for leather boots (**baipak**). There are three main types of traditional felt: **tekemet**, when one pattern is rolled into a warp of a different color; **syrmak**, using appliqué or mosaic carpet made from pieces of colored felt with extra stitching; and **kiiz**, dense and simple, un-patterned felt for household needs.

Kazakh craftswomen traditionally embroidered homespun fabrics, leather, felt, and imported fabrics such as cloth, silk, cotton fabric, and velvet with woolen, cotton, silk, silver, gold threads, mother-of-pearl, coral, and turquoise. Some of the best examples of embroidery are in museum collections in Kazakhstan: **tuskiiz** with gold and silver patterns, suede and velvet clothes, and hats (**saukele**, **kasaba**, and **murak**).

The Kazakh patchwork technique of **kurak** uses geometric figures, such as stripes, squares, and triangles, which form more complex ornaments. Kurak is used to create blankets (**kurak-korpe**), fragments of clothing, and accessories, and often serves to preserve the memory of people and events.

Every yurt contains **woven textiles**, such as a set of woven ribbons and stripes (**bau** and **baskur**) responsible for fastening the yurt and decorating it, and lint-free (**tykyr**) and piled (**tukti**) woven carpets.

Historically, leather was a primary material for producing many household utensils such as buckets, chests, horse harnesses, and storage bins for fermented mare's milk (**koumiss**). Although ready-made leather is more common today, some Kazakhs still employ traditional processing methods for embossing, inlaying, stitching, and tinting.

**Beads** made from coral and river pearls are another traditional material, which Kazakhs embroider on fabric and leather, stringing them on horsehair.



**MEREKE AIDARSHA**





As a felt maker and weaver, Mereke Aidarsha is a part of every step of production, from processing local wool, hand-dyeing yarn, to the creation of the final piece that she personally weaves and felts. She has mastered the crafts of felting and weaving, using hand-spun and dyed wool to create colorful wall hangings, garments, ***syrmak*** carpets for the home, as well as ***baskurs***, decorative textiles for yurts. She pays particular attention to symbolism in her work, using color and pattern to create ornamentation that holds personal meaning.



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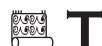
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Turkestan, Kazakhstan







**MADINA AKHMETOVA**





Madina Akhmetova is from the Beisbekov family of artists and artisans who run a gallery, school, and studio in Shymkent. She has formed her own artistic vision and style, creating carpets through explorations in felting, weaving, and mixed media techniques. Her approach to color and image composition is influenced by an active research process. Before proceeding with new work, Madina researches traditional ornamentation to ensure her work has a connection to traditional symbols and meaning. Her one-of-a-kind pieces are expressions of her artistic vision and creativity.



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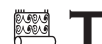
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**TOGZHAN BABIYEVA  
& SALTANAT KUSPAYEVA**





"Tekemet" is the creative partnership between artists Togzhan Babiyeve and Saltanat Kuspayeva. They create intricate collages using leather, felt, copper, brass, and wood - bringing together these mixed media materials into accessories and decorative works for the wall. Each one-of-a-kind piece is made by hand and through the collective vision of the artists. Togzhan and Sultanat attach great importance to the meaning of the symbols and designs used in the product. "Among artists, we are considered artisans, and among artisans-artists".



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**ZHUPAR BEISENOVA**





As a traditional art form of Kazakhstan, felt making has surrounded Zhupar Beisenova since childhood. Intricate **tekemet** felt carpets were envisioned and created by her grandmother. Zhupar helped her create these colorful carpets, mastering the skills of working with wool over many years. As an adult, she received training in new felt techniques including creating three-dimensional seamless objects from felt. Through these techniques, she shapes colorful felted objects and two-dimensional felted paintings.



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**ULBOSSYN DAULENOVA**





Ulbossyn Daulenova has been a clothing and accessories designer for over 20 years. Her work features a combination of felt and silk, interpreting Kazakh ornamentation into beautifully textured abstract figures and floral elements. Using repetition, scale, and an emphasis on lines and composition, she has achieved a signature style in each of her pieces, from shawls to one-of-a-kind garments. She believes that her skill with felt was passed on from her ancestors, and in turn, she works to pass this technique to future generations.



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**AIDA KUANTAEVA**



Aida Kuantaeva is a university-trained artist who has been creating playful toys and dolls since 2011. Aida studied different types of crafts, but when she discovered needle felting, she knew that she had found her calling. Extremely important for Aida is the image of an *apashka*, a Kazakh grandmother figure that is a representation of mature female energy. Aida has won numerous awards through international competitions for her approach to felting. When she is not in her studio, she is teaching art at a local college.



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**VICTORIYA SULTANOVA**





Victoriya Sultanova uses the craft of beading to create one-of-a-kind pieces of jewelry. Although beading is not a traditional craft of Kazakhstan, Victoria has found a way to bring her culture into her work through using locally sourced stones, like the Pavlodar turquoise. Inspired by Kazakh national ornaments and symbols, she combines beading and embroidery to create pieces that speak of her culture and the rich traditions of Kazakhstan. For over 13 years, Victoria has not repeated a single product. Her work is made into a range of pieces for the body, including bracelets, earrings, and pendants.



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**NURZIYA TASHIMOVA**





Nurziya Tashimova became interested in felt as an adult, finding a deep connection to felt-making and realizing she wanted this to be her life's work. Living in a city where the felt tradition was disappearing, she struggled with access to wool, eventually finding local and regional producers who provide her with the fiber. Now, Nurziya has a workshop and studio in Semey where she creates **tekemets** (felt carpets), slippers, bags, vests, scarves, and interior items.



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**GULMIRA UALIKHAN**





Gulmira Ualikhan is a ***kurak*** quilt artist. Her work incorporates complex patterns and rich colors that are made into home goods and accessories. Her unique style of elaborate patchwork blocks explore the intersections of shape, color, and function. The source of inspiration for Gulmira is her spiritual quest. She states, «When a person does her job for a long time and does it with love, when energy and intuition are superimposed on it, then art is obtained». As a successful entrepreneur, Gulmira creates a range of products for the home and recently launched her clothing collection.



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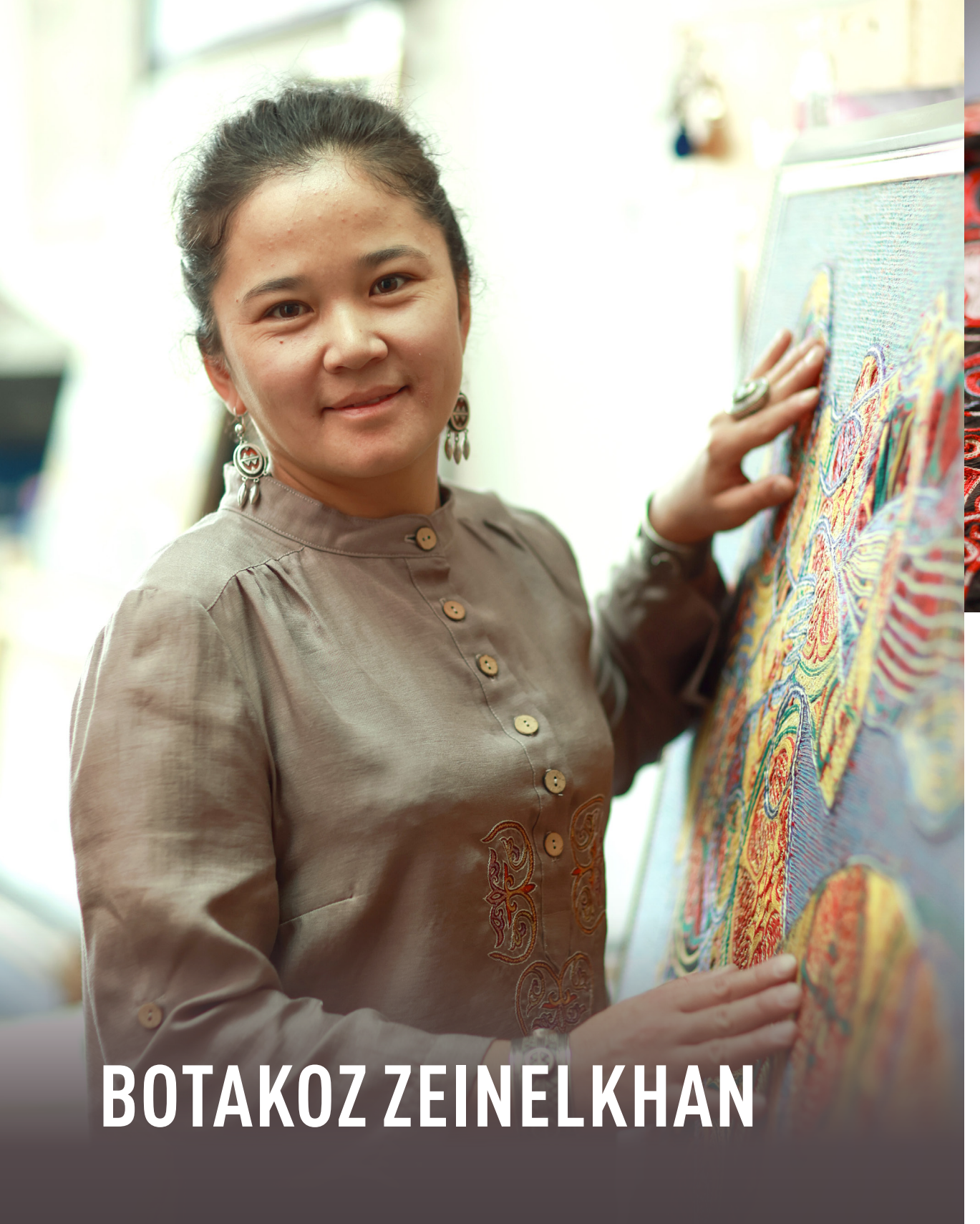
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Almaty, Kazakhstan







**BOTAKOZ ZEINELKHAN**





Botakoz Zeinelkhan is a successor in a family dynasty of artists and embroiderers. According to Botakoz, she inherited the sense of line from her father and the sense of color from her mother. Botakoz's works are distinguished by her search for beauty in ordinary objects and ordinary environments, exploring a rich vocabulary of interlacing color lines. The technique she uses is called *biz kiste*, a traditional Kazakh embroidery technique. Through this art form, Botakoz creates small embroidered «paintings» in a modern style, while also making accessories embroidered with national motifs.



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# **CRAFTS OF KYRGYZSTAN**





The most prevalent form of craftsmanship in Kyrgyzstan involves the production of felted items, which have held significant importance in the lives of the Kyrgyz people for centuries. Felt is not only the traditional cover for the yurt (**boz uy**), but is also used for carpets, bags, hats, and much more.

The art of making **shyrdak** (a felt appliqué carpet) is in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Kyrgyz embroidery is used to decorate clothes, traditional accessories, and home textiles. For men, the items include belt scarves (**ychkyrs**), skullcaps, and felt hats (**kalpaks**). Women's clothes are traditionally more abundantly decorated, including collars of children's and women's dresses, swinging **beldemchi** skirts, belts, and women's hats. For weddings, brides embroidered gloves made of red cloth, veils over the face, and bags for storing toiletries. Embroidery, often together with appliqué, was used to cover strips of felt (**tetege**) for the dome of the yurt, embroidered felt carpets, and bags.

**Traditional weaving** is another significant women's craft in Kyrgyzstan. Carpets and **kilems**—beautiful and distinctive products with traditional patterns and colors—are highly important for the Kyrgyz. They are functional (providing protection from the cold, fastening some parts of the yurt, and replacing furniture), and also create coziness and serve as home decoration.

**Kurak** is common throughout Kyrgyzstan, especially in the south, and has associated rituals. When a child turns forty days old, they put on a kurak koinok, a shirt sewn from forty shreds collected from neighbors. The Kyrgyz **kurak** has two main forms: one made from square and triangular pieces, and one made from long strips of various colors.

**Quilted clothing** is especially well-suited for the living conditions of the ancestors of the Kyrgyz, including traditional nomadic and military lifestyles. Made from natural fabrics, quilted clothing is functional and naturally «breathes».



**GULMIRA AKMATOVA**





Gulmira Akmatova's company, Mountain Cedar Woolens, creates unique handmade clothing and accessories from locally sourced fibers. Gulmira grew up surrounded by sheep, her father has one of the largest sheep farms in Kyrgyzstan. Having such a close connection to the source of wool, Gulmira is able to manage each step of the process — from sheep breeding, to yarn production, to the hand weaving and finishing of the fabric. The mission of Mountain Cedar Woolens is to revive weaving as an endangered craft, creating beautiful textiles from her rich history of working with wool.



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Mountain Cedar Woolens



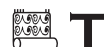
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**CHOLPON ALAMANOVA**





Cholpon Alamanova is an artist who expresses her creativity through an eco-minded approach to *kurak* patchwork. Her specialization is one-of-a-kind wall hangings and garments made from the remnants of the clothing industry, including ateliers and sewing workshops. These fabric scraps range from velvet, silk, wool, and cotton in a range of colors and tones. For Cholpon, the designs of her artwork are determined by the materials and her creative imagination. Each piece she creates is quilted entirely by hand and are unique editions.

**Cholpon**  
kurak  
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**AIDAI ASANGULOVA**





Aidai Asangulova specializes in both felt making and embroidery. Her signature style uses the combination of silk and felt, creating intricate patterns of wool on a background of transparent silk. Her interest in crafts extends to embroidery, where she works to revive traditional Kyrgyz embroidery, in particular the reconstruction of the Kyrgyz costume, headdresses, and forgotten embroidery techniques. Aidai releases one collection of designer garments, as well as a line of scarves, accessories, and small souvenirs each year. In 2010, she created the public fund "*KIYIZ DUINO*" which is engaged in the revival, preservation, and popularization of traditional culture.



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AIDAI ASANGULOVA / FELT CLOTHES & ACCESSORIES



КИЙИЗ ДҮЙНӨ — МИР ВОЙЛОКА — FELT WORLD





**ASYL KASYMBEKOVA**





The Tumar Company is one of the largest handicraft companies in Kyrgyzstan. Asyl Kasymbekova runs the experimental felt division at Tumar. They specialize in the creative exploration and production of *ala-kiiz*, felted carpets, made by hand using techniques passed down from one generation to the next. Quality, creativity, and craftsmanship is at the core of their studio, using locally sourced raw materials including Kyrgyz wool in their work. In addition to carpets, Asyl and her team make various items from felt, including bags and scarves.

**TUMAR**



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**KAMILA KOJOKMATOVA**





Kamila Kojokmatova launched her studio in 2018. As she was cataloging endangered crafts, including "*chiy*" weaving and patchwork, she found inspiration as a designer in the traditional *chapan* and other national clothes created from *kurak* patchwork. Her brand, Aila Ethno, translates as "there is a way out". This is Kamila's life philosophy — any person, if she searches, will always find a way out. Kamila and her studio produce clothing, accessories, and panels from natural cotton and wool using the *kurak* technique.

**aila**



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**NESTAN MAMBETAIPOVA**





Nestan Mambetaipova creates felted handbags, accessories, and wearables through a technique of drawing with wool. Inspired by her first master felting class, she quickly developed a signature style and launched her studio. Using mixed media techniques, she creates painterly surfaces and unique combinations of fiber. In her products (bags, hats, scarves, stoles), Nestan tries to achieve the highest quality in her work by using Italian wool and cashmere.



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**JUMABUBU SARIEVA**





As a fashion designer, Jumabubu Sarieva takes a thoughtful approach to the design of her garments. She creates high-quality eco-friendly clothing, adhering closely to the principles of slow fashion. Her garments are a distinct combination of stitched surfaces with unique fabrics and colors. Jumabubu works with both traditional ornamentation and a free nature approach to design. The mission of Jumabubu and her workshop is to increase the recognition of Kyrgyzstan through original creativity.

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**FARZANA SHARSHENBIEVA**





Farzana Sharshenbieva is the eldest of sisters who work under the brand "Seven Sisters", a family who has worked with felt for over 25 years. Each of the sisters has their own approach to the creation of their unique products, the source of inspiration for Farzana is the desire to do what others are not. One of her signature techniques is a combination of layers of silk with felt to create uniquely textured surfaces and felt that she turns into outerwear and scarves. The Farzana family has nine UNESCO certificates, a record in Central Asia.



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**BURUL ZHAKYPOVA**





Burul Zhakypova lives and works in Naryn, an area known for making the highest quality **shyrdaks**, felted two-layer carpets, in Kyrgyzstan. The technique is known for distinct color and shape combinations that are hand stitched together through several layers of felt made from local wool. Burul produces **shyrdaks** of both traditional and modern shapes and colors, employing women from Naryn and nearby villages.



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**NURZAT ZHEENBEK KYZY**





Nurzat Zheenbek kyzy is an artist and interior designer specializing in eco-design. Her works are unique explorations of felt, including sculptural objects, wall hangings, textured rugs, and seamless clothing using only local raw materials and natural dyes. Each of her pieces, from large scale interior installations to clothing, is made by hand in her Bishkek-based studio. She takes an innovative approach to material combinations, using a painterly approach to felt in combination with embroidery to create highly textured surfaces on her felted work. She works on one-of-a-kind pieces and commissions.



ZHARASHAT®  
~ ART GROUP ~



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# **CRAFTS OF TAJIKISTAN**





One of the most popular women's crafts in Tajikistan is embroidery, especially **chakan** embroidery, which is done on different color backgrounds, depending on the region of the country: east — white, north — yellow, west — green, and south — red. **Chakan** appears on skullcaps and bags, paintings, and utensils, **odari** wedding bedspreads, and the famous **kurtai chakan** dresses. Tajik **chakan** is included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

**Beading** holds a special place among the vibrant communities of the Pamir and Khujand regions. Within this craft, there is a particular treasure to behold in the form of national necklaces known as **gerdans**. While these gerdans have evolved and adapted with the passage of time, certain essential elements have remained steadfast, preserving the rich cultural heritage they represent.

**Carpet weaving** is one of the oldest Tajik folk crafts. In the highlands of the country, ancient looms were preserved. Tajik carpets come in various forms, including lint-free varieties like **guilem**, **palos**, or **gilemi kokma**, and carpets with lint like kolinbofi. They can also be either sheared or unshorn.

In Tajikistan, **wickerwork** is also common. Bags, vases, even furniture are made using this technique, but baskets are most common. From eight strong rods they make the basis for the basket: it should look like the sun. These «rays» are braided with a thinner vine - this is how ornate patterns are born.

One of the hallmarks of Tajikistan is the **Pamir jurabs** (thick hand-knitted socks with tightly knitted soles and heels). For knitting socks, goat and sheep wool yarn was used, which was specially processed and dyed with natural dyes (onion peel, henna, barberry, etc.). The colorful patterns of the **jurabs** are not only colors, but also a kind of combination of ancient Indo-Iranian, floral and animal symbols.

The art of Tajik jewelry retains numerous pre-Islamic symbols and patterns in its ornamentation, the customs surrounding its use, and the cultural significance attributed to these adornments. Tajikistan has its own reserves of gold and silver, as well as ruby, alexandrite, amazonite, turquoise and other precious stones, which gives great potential for the development of jewelry production.



**MAVLUDA  
ABDURAHMONOVA**





Mavluda Abdurahmonova is a recognized master of gold embroidery, widely popular not only in Tajikistan but also in the adjacent regions of southern Uzbekistan. Traditionally, gold embroidery was used for elaborate wedding dresses and camisoles, but now Mavluda produces a variety of gold embroidered accessories including purses, bags, and home goods. To keep future generations engaged in this craft, she teaches young girls and women the craft.



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Penjikent, Tajikistan







**MUNIRA AKILOVA**





Munira Akilova creates hand embroidered home textiles and accessories. Inspired by the Zarafshan Valley, she incorporates symbols that represent the valley, from a circle as the sun, to a triangle as the mountains, and more. With the combination of these symbols, she is bringing a unique story of the landscape and culture into each of her pieces. Munira engages highly skilled female artisans in each step of making her textiles, from embroidery specialists to those finishing the products, achieving the highest quality in her work.



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*Munir*





**MAVLUDA ASOEVA**





Mavluda Asoeva learned the craft of willow basketry from her mother. As a family business, the Mavluda family grows the willow plant, processes the vine, and uses it in their specialized crafts. Baskets are traditionally used throughout Tajikistan – from drying fruits to carrying firewood, and to carrying gifts for celebrations and weddings. Through knowledge she has gained over her lifetime, Mavluda is able to achieve various colors of the vines without the use of dyes. Her work includes baskets of various sizes and shapes, as well as larger functional items for the home.



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Vakhdata, Tajikistan







**NIGINA IKROMI  
& KAROMAT TURSUNOVA**





Nigina Ikromi leads "Gulzar Village", a business that works with over 1500 artisans from a range of crafts. Located in Dushanbe, the Center, features a gallery, as well as provides artisans with opportunities to improve their skills, organize production, and learn about promotion and marketing of their handicraft products. Working closely with master craftswomen including weaving specialist Karomat Tursunova, the team works to revive and promote the art of weaving *ikat*, satin, and *adras* fabrics. They create a range of products including pillows, shawls, and yardage for designers.



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Dushanbe, Tajikistan







**SANOVBAR  
IMOMNAZAROVA**





Twenty-five years ago, Sanovbar Imomnazarova founded the Chashma NGO to help women and children in southern Tajikistan affected by the civil war. Still today, she works alongside women to revive the art of ***kokma***, a type of woven carpet for which the Shakhrituz region was famous for, and that was nearly lost. From design development to dyeing with natural dyes, the craftswomen of Chashma produce small prayer rugs of elaborate designs using traditional techniques.



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**MALIKA JURAEVA**





Jeweler Malika Juraeva takes a modern approach to traditional Tajik jewelry. She creates one-of-a-kind pieces, including rings, earrings, and pendants meant to be worn every day and for special occasions. Malika uses replica and locally sourced natural stones with certificates of origin, including Badakhshan turquoise and lapis lazuli. Working with a range of metals, from gold to silver, Malika creates beautiful combinations of metals and stones for her modern, original work.



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**ASPARMO  
MAVLONAZAROVA**





***Jurabs***, traditional Pamir high socks, have been knit for generations by Asparmo Mavlonazarova and her family. Using yarn from camel, goat, and sheep, she creates traditional knitwear from the Gorno-Badakhshan region in traditional black and white as well as new, vivid colors. In addition to traditional knitted socks, Asparmo creates ***pokols***, knitted hats, as well as scarves, bags, and hair accessories. Her work has received the UNESCO Quality Mark for its craft and innovation.



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**MAVJUDA NABIEVA**





Mavjuda Nabieva leads the Ozara Company, which produces national clothes and home textiles decorated with hand embroidery. Mavjuda creates each embroidered composition herself, inspired by ancient suzani ornamentation that she transforms into small, intricate designs. She works with a team of women who use the traditional *bosma* embroidery technique to create the intricate work. For her products, she uses local fabrics and embroidery threads made from 100% mercerized cotton and dyed with natural dyes.



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**SHUKRONA NAVRUZOVA**





Shukrona Navruzova is an accessories designer specializing in traditional beading techniques. Beads have traditionally been popular in the region of Tajik Pamir, famous for their stones. Shukrona takes inspiration from this tradition and creates national and modern accessories, including gerdans, necklaces, and earrings. Shukrona works in the Pamir style, using imported high-quality beads and natural stones from the mountainous Badakhshan area, including turquoise, lapis lazuli, and amethyst.



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**SHAHLO VATANOVA**





Shahlo Vatanova is a professional clothing designer who creates clothing collections, home textiles, and textile accessories. She is an advocate for the revival of carpet weaving, a tradition that was nearly lost in Tajikistan. Traveling to neighboring countries with rich carpet traditions, including Iran, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Shahlo brought back knowledge, looms, and fibers to revive the carpet making in Tajikistan. She and her team make tapestry woven carpets and pile rugs in addition to garments made from traditional embroidery techniques.



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Dushanbe, Tajikistan





The background of the image features traditional Turkmen carpet patterns. In the top-left corner, there is a vibrant, detailed pattern with red, yellow, green, and white geometric shapes. The rest of the image is covered by a lighter, semi-transparent version of a similar geometric pattern, creating a layered effect. A large white diagonal shape cuts across the right side of the image, providing a clean space for the title.

# **CRAFTS OF TURKMENISTAN**





Carpet weaving is one of Turkmenistan's ancient traditions and the pride of the Turkmen people. Carpets symbolize harmony, home, beauty, and peace. The five main ornaments correspond to the country's major tribes. The most famous in the world are **Tekke** and **Yomud** carpets.

Among the world-famous products that are the pride of Turkmens, woven scarves and shawls occupy a special place. The largest in size and most expressive in beauty is **duypli gynach** (also known as **agyr gynach**). This scarf is made only in Turkmenistan. Triangular in shape, red in color, more than three meters long at the base, it is sewn from as many as eight separate woven strips. On the outside is a multi-tiered pattern made on a loom.

Turkmenistan is also known for **keshde** embroidery, which uses wool, silk, gold, silver, pearls, semi-precious stones, coins, and even corals to decorate skullcaps, dresses, costumes, capes, or almost any item of clothing. The art of Turkmen embroidery is included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The pattern indicates the velayat in which the embroidery originated.

Although the profession of a jeweler (**zargyar, kumushchi**) in Turkmenistan was once exclusively male, women are now increasingly turning to this craft and making jewelry using embroidery, multi-colored stones, and beading techniques.





**SHEKER AKINIYAZOVA**





Sheker Akiniyazova leads Art Keshde, an art studio that works with diverse artisans who specialize in Turkmen crafts. As a designer, her work spans interior design, fashion, painting, and art photography. She and her team produce clothing, home decor, jewelry, paintings, carpets, and a range of other traditional crafts of Turkmenistan. Their specialty is handmade Turkmen embroidery, creating jewelry and accessories for local and international clients.



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**KYMYSH BAYMURADOVA**





Kymysh Baymuradova is a professional designer who specializes in the production of tableware – tablecloths, runners, placemats, and napkins. Kumush sources locally produced Turkmen cotton fabric as well as hand-made silk *keteni* fabric, famous in Turkmenistan, in her home goods. For her, the aesthetics of the table are very important, one must "not only pay attention to the taste of the dishes, but also to the design of the table".



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**IRINA DOROFEYeva**





Irina Dorofeyeva is a self-taught artist who has achieved national recognition for her beadwork. She uses unique combinations of techniques to create her elaborate pieces, including tatting, beading on a loom, and traditional beading. Irina was a pioneer in bringing these techniques to Turkmenistan, creating beaded decorations in the national style of the country. She makes each piece by hand, from weaving on the loom to adapting traditional ornaments and symbols into beaded designs. In addition to creating wearable jewelry, she often makes special *gerdans*, large traditional pendants.



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**AKMARAL GARAYEVA**





The source of inspiration for Akmaral Garayeva's creativity is national Turkmen clothing. She carefully studies its history and use, and with this knowledge creates her collections of dolls in national dress. Each doll is created entirely by hand, using a combination of materials and techniques to make the dolls. Intricately sculpted heads, arms, and legs are made from polymer clay while the costume is sewn from traditional homespun fabric and decorated with hand-embroidered small jewelry and accessories.



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**SHASENEM GARLYYEVA**





Shasenem Garlyyeva of Unique Camel Wool Workshop creates textiles and home goods that support the preservation and development of hand weaving in Turkmenistan. Made entirely by hand, from spinning their own yarn to hand weaving each textile, Shasenem uses locally sourced fibers including camel wool, silk, and cotton. Their fabrics are a combination of each fiber, from 100% camel wool to unique blends with silk and cotton. Unique Camel Wool has created jobs for women in remote villages of Turkmenistan, providing new opportunities to create products for the home.



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**JEREN GURBANOVA**





Jeren Gurbanova is a university-trained designer who works exclusively with stained glass painting technique. Her signature style is a pointillism technique, layering dots to create intricate patterns and design for her collection of wall clocks. To create her work, Jeren researches Turkmen national *keshde* embroideries, then creates her own interpretation of these designs. Jeren also works on custom projects from large stained glass windows to smaller ceilings, niches and doors.



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**TAJIGUL GURBANOVA**





Tajigul Gurbanova is an artist and designer engaged in the preservation and development of Turkmen crafts. Leading the group "Design Plus" they work with a number of artisans and crafts techniques, offering a range of products. They specialize in Turkmen felting techniques, creating pieces for the home. They also manufacture jewelry and accessories made from the national braided thread called *alaja*, using hand embroidery to embellish the designs. In addition, Tajigul creates paintings of significant Turkmen ancient headdresses, clothing, and symbolism that are one-of-a-kind pieces.



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**OGULJENNET  
& MAYA KEMJAYEVS**





Oguljennet and Maya Kemjajevs are a mother-daughter team who produce a wide range of small accessories inspired by national embroidery traditions. Together they have formed their unique creative approach to a range of products, including jewelry, handbags, hair accessories, and other unique items. Their deep knowledge of national symbols and colors and focus on market research have brought their work to new audiences.



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**LEYLI KHAIDOVA**





Leyli Khaidova is an enthusiast in the revival of the traditional Turkmen fabric, *keten*, made of silk. This as well as other locally produced fabrics are used in her line of wearables that includes chapans, shirts, dresses, and shoes. She explores the secrets of traditional cuts and embroidery, felt, patchwork, dyeing with natural dyes, and printing on fabrics using motifs and elements of Turkmen ornaments. Leila is a supporter of an environmentally friendly, waste-free approach to materials and making.



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**ANNA SAPAROVA**





Anna Saparova launched her studio in 2016, her first bag design was a modern tote that reflected national symbols and colors. Today, she has over 50 different handbags and accessories, from clutches, totes, cross-body, and more. Using national embroidery, *keten* fabric, and patchwork, all her pieces are made by hand. Anna often collaborates with other artisans, using their embroidery in her bags as well as adding her own embellishment to the designs. In addition to bags, Anna has a collection of home textiles.



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# **CRAFTS OF UZBEKISTAN**





The most common type of needlework for Uzbek women is embroidery, an integral part of the traditional interior. They embroider decorative panels (**suzani**), bedspreads (**shoshabi** or **ruijo**), prayer rugs (**joynamoz**), tablecloths (**dastarkhan**), cradle covers, and skullcaps. They also use embroidery to decorate clothes and accessories, cases, and wedding vestments. Two of the most popular embroidery techniques are **gulduzi** (flower embroidery) and **zaminduzi** (a completely covered background). The floral and animal patterns often have symbolic meanings; for example, the lion symbolizes courage and the dragon symbolizes wisdom. Gold embroidery is an ancient art, using gold and silver thread on velvet. The small embroidery of Karakalpakstan is especially distinctive with its black background. Suzani embroidery has developed several different schools, including Bukhara, Ferghana, Nurat, Samarkand, Shakhrisabz, Tashkent, and Urgut. Because **carpet weaving** requires perseverance and attention, as well as speed and precision in the movement of hands, women have traditionally played leading roles. Uzbek carpet ornaments use stylized plant and zoomorphic motifs, magic symbols, and totem signs. Multicolored **abr silk**, called ikat in international practice, is one of the most expressive symbols of Uzbek culture. The **abrbandi** back-dyeing method (literally «tied cloud») produces semi-silk **adras** fabrics and pure silk fabrics known as **shoyi**, atlas, khan-atlas, and **bakhmal**. The main feature of “abr” silk is abstract patterns, reminiscent of light feather clouds. The manufacture of printed fabrics, known as **chitgarlik**, has been a popular craft for several centuries. Using wooden stamps (**kalybs**), women apply a pattern to a fabric soaked in tannin. Traditional motifs of the stamps include pomegranate (**anor**), petals (**tol bargi**), and branches (**shoch**). Knot dyeing of **gulbandi** or boglama **tasvir** fabrics is akin to the well-known tie-dye technique, but uses only hand knitting, not stencils or patterns. Popular patterns include flowers, stars, moon, and sun. Uzbek women also engage in pottery-making: they shape various dishes, vases, and pitchers using a variety of techniques. Traditionally, clay toys and whistles were also crafted exclusively by women.





**GULNORA CHORIEVA**





Gulnora Chorlieva is a professional textile artisan from a family who have been weavers and embroiderers for generations. She lives and works in Shakhrisabz, one of the main centers of handicraft production in Uzbekistan. Preserving the traditions of both her family and her region, Gulnora, together with her company, produces embroidered clothing and bags, woven rugs, and headpieces decorated with bright, floral ornaments that symbolize the beauty of nature.



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**GULNARA EMBERGENOVA**





Gulnara Embergenova lives and works in Karakalpakstan, a region with a tradition of embroidery and ornamentation that has a distinct geometric style. Gulnara and her assistants create clothing, accessories, and small souvenirs which are decorated with a combination of hand and machine embroidery in the karakalpak technique. They have created a signature style, creating elaborate embroidered collars, sleeves, and cuffs on their garments, and rich surfaces on their headwear.



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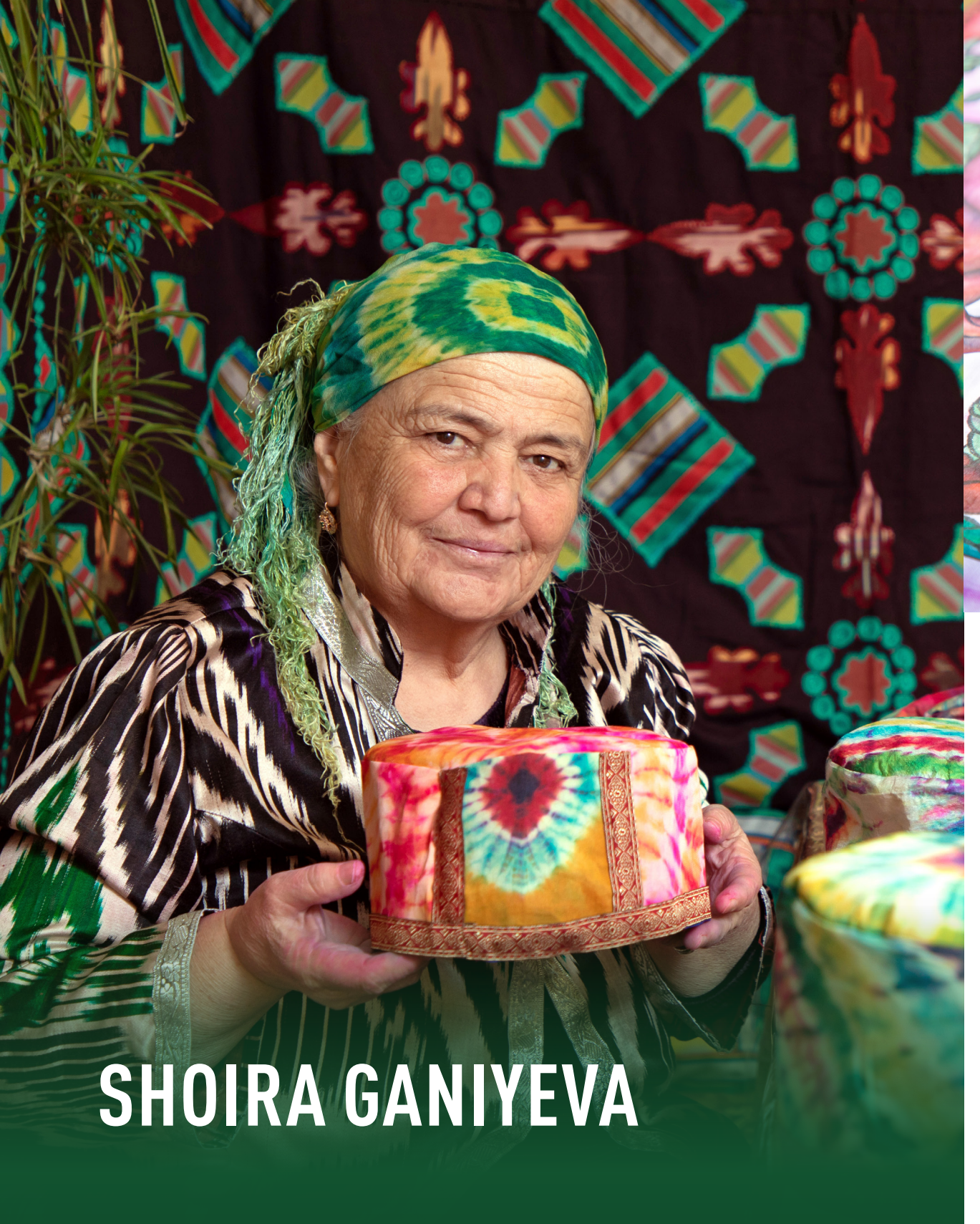
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Uzbekistan







**SHOIRA GANIYEVA**





Shoira Ganiyeva is a 7th generation craftswoman who preserves the traditions of hand dyeing that have been passed down by her great-grandmothers. Shoira uses natural dyes such as pomegranate peel, onion peel, herbs and spices in her tie and dye fabrics. With her daughter Lola, Shoira has been developing products using hand painted batik silks. Together they produce a variety of scarves and shawls, decorative pillows, and table linens.



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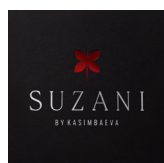


**MADINA KASIMBAEVA**





Madina Kasimbaeva is one of the leading specialists in Uzbek embroidery, achieving mastery in several regional styles. She worked to revive an intricate embroidery technique of her region, the Tashkent *palak*, and uses this in much of her work. As a designer, she creates richly colored embroidered home goods and clothing using a variety of distinct patterns and techniques, while working on regional and international collaborations. In addition to wall hangings and other hand-embroidered home textiles, Madina has a line of clothing and shoes including *chapans*, jackets, and skirts.



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**FERUZA KURBONOVA**





Feruza Kurbonova is a professional designer who creates jewelry in the national style: tiaras, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, pendants, as well as hair accessories. Feruza assembles her jewelry from parts cast according to her sketches. She mainly uses cupronickel and silver, natural stones, but also makes a lot of jewelry in the national Uzbek style. Feruza is inspired by the history and traditions of Uzbekistan, which can be clearly seen in her products.



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**SADOKAT MIRZAYEVA**





Sadokat Mirzayeva leads Art House Sadosh, a studio that works with local women to create sewn and knit products. With more than 100 women on her team, the studio produces a variety of products from handmade Uzbek fabrics of cotton, silk, and wool. They create playful knit toys in modern and national styles, work with handmade velvet called *bakhmal* to create a line of bags and accessories and create intricate embroidered clothing.



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**DILOROM MUKHTAROVA**





Dilorom Mukhtarova learned the art of ceramics from her father-in-law, Usto Abdurakhim Mukhtarov, a master of Samarkand ceramics. Following in this tradition, she became a master of her own small studio, Samarkand Ceramics. Together with her son, Dilorom carries out the entire production process, from clay preparation, sculpting, painting, and firing. She makes a variety of unique sculpted ceramic figurines, playful animals, and decorative painted dishes. Each of her products are full of humor and love for the characters she imagines and creates.



Dilorom Mukhtarova



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**DILNOZA NARZULLAEVA**





Dilnoza Narzullaeva is a member of the Narzullaev family, master artisans who have worked with ceramics and textiles for six generations. The studio of the Narzullaev family is a center of tourist and cultural attraction in the city of Gijduvan, featuring the crafts of suzani embroidery, ceramics, and carpet weaving. Dilnoza specializes in home goods and gifts including painted *lyagans* (ceramic dishes) and sculpted clay whistles in the form of fantastic creatures.



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**LOLA SAYFI**





Lola Sayfi is founder of Human House, a unique Central Asian gallery and studio space in the center of Tashkent where visitors can buy art, crafts, and designer clothing, while participating in a variety of educational programs. For over twenty years, this has been a creative center, cooperating with over 250 Uzbek designers and artisans. Lola is also a textile designer, showcasing her work through her brand Human Wear. Her line includes hand-printed clothing inspired by national ornaments, history and traditions of the Silk Road.



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**SVETLANA SHIKHOVA**





Svetlana Shikhova specializes in creating bags and accessories using Uzbek handwoven and embroidered fabrics. She incorporates *bakhmals* (velvet), *bekasans* (striped fabric made of silk and cotton or silk and wool), *adras* (cotton and silk), *khan-atlases* and fabrics into each of her pieces. Svetlana works with individual fabrics to create one of a kind bags for her collection. The patterns and colors of the fabrics inform the unique shape and design, leading to endless possibilities.



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Our heartfelt thanks go to the women artisans and artists who shared their exceptional talents, creating the magnificent pieces featured within these pages. Your commitment to preserving traditions and fostering innovation is truly commendable.