

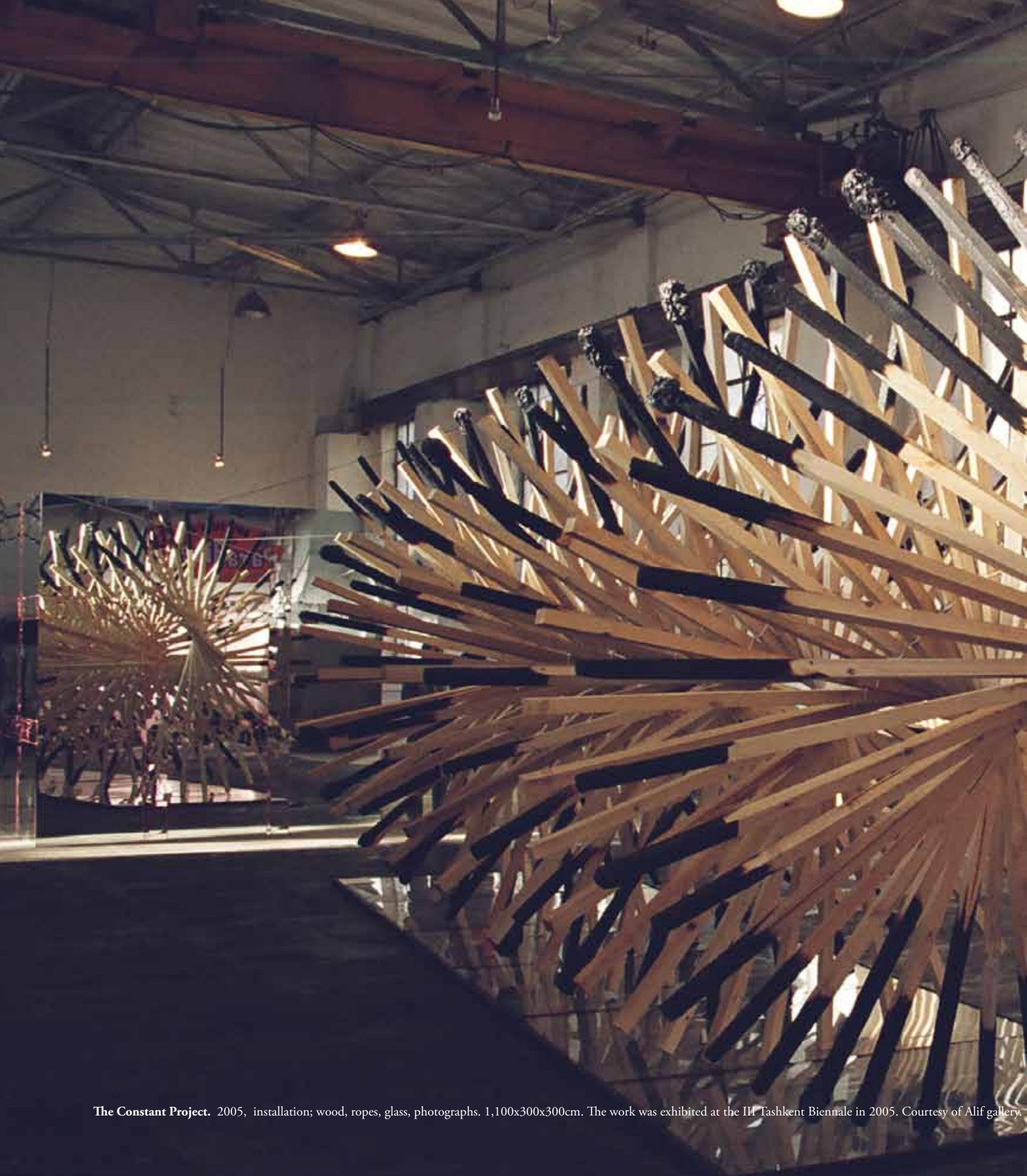
Vyacheslav Useinov: Against the Flow



The Gaestarbeiter Flight, 2006, installation; . clay, wood, plastic bags. 700x200cm. The work was exhibited at the IV Moscow Biennale in 2011. Courtesy of Alif gallery.

As early as in 1993, Vyacheslav Useinov was awarded the top prize of “Asia Art” Tashkent Biennale for a series of tapestries and since then has held his presence in the region. As a versatile artist who paints works in different textile techniques, he also who writes poetry and philosophical essays. He enthusiastically works with complex metal structures, or in one instance, created a large portrait with a needle, squeezing ink from a syringe. He experiments with different media, combining photography and painting in his projects such as a multi-part work titled “Fractals” (2009). In its exposition the artist combined his painting, “The Shadow of a Non-existent House” on which he worked for over a decade, with colour photographs revealing only parts of the painting. Printed on the basis of pictorial fragments, at first glance they appear to be digitally-made due to the strong semblance to fractals. However, a close look reveals they are made the old-fashioned way – by the artist’s hand with brushes, paints and crayons. In his manifesto written as part of the project the artist theoretically asserted his discovery of a new visual method for his art – fractal realism. This process combines lyrical interpretation of colour and mathematical poetry of numbers accumulated by the mutable chronometry of fractals. In the painting of each fragment one can discern the Filonov’s principle of madeness, whereby, according to him “every atom has to be made to the ultimate degree of perfection and stress”. An intense search for his own visual vocabulary defines Useinov’s video art and installations. In his first installation, “The Constant” (2005), he reflects on the nature of spiritual constancy, which defined the project. A large-scale spiralling strip ten meters long, made of wooden bars resembled oversize matches symbolizing torn souls. In his approach to installations Useinov follows the principle of enlarging habitual objects changing our perception through their unlikely proportion. In doing so, Useinov positions himself in ambivalence, without any ethnic component or apparent social note. He makes no reference to popular culture. He very sensitively drawing on his own experiences, Useinov develops his strategy of taking an object form seriously, considering its scale an instrument to convey new meaning while being mindful of its minimalist aesthetic. Take for instance “The Gaestarbeiter Flight”, an

installation based on the archetypal aircraft assembled from bricks resting on a mock-runway. Simple, minimal, the work at once addresses a number of issues be it trans-migration, globalization, its bricks representing labour, a redundant workforce. Composed of bricks, a contradictory medium suggesting imposed weight and stagnation, this airplane’s flight is clearly grounded on the runway, its monumentality now insignificant. Nailed to the wall, accompanying this installation of bricks are clothes of migrants from CIS countries. Made from Chinese checked-pattern bags, the artist addresses the invisible collective of underprivileged migrant workers who move countries in order to find a better way of life at the risk of never returning home again. In his interviews, he emphasizes that he considers his installations open to interpretation and unfixed in its intent while attaching great importance to the viewer completing his artwork through their active reception. Another project “The Pantheon of Gold” features a narrative inspired by the 18th century story about Conquistador Colonel Laros who found a pyramid in Peru that had unique gold butterflies possessing aerodynamic properties. The Colonel melted them all into gold bars, sparing not a single specimen. This myth evidencing imperialist attitudes in exploiting less dominant countries, quashing any evidence of their superior scientific advances. The artist’s idea behind the project is to induce sincere regret and longing for the lost possibilities. In the space of a large black cube where shiny gold bars were neatly stacked next to the bust of the brutal Comandor Laros, he managed to capture a quality of magic and mystery. The world of the Spanish conquistador heroes and stacks of gold bars could also provide for a capitalist reading suited to our own times. As his practice has evolved, Useinov moves between interlinked minimalism and philosophy. His undertaking “Geometry of Time” earned him the Grand Prize of the 2013 Tashkent Contemporary Art Biennale. In this artwork, he interpreted and translated symbols of traditional embroidery, carpet and architectural ornaments to create a mystifying geometric patchwork. Every part of the project – textile, embroidery, or skeletons of dinosaurs – are verified specific forms but when laid out together are abstracted away from their ornamentation and towards philosophical quandary.



The Constant Project. 2005, installation; wood, ropes, glass, photographs. 1,100x300x300cm. The work was exhibited at the III Tashkent Biennale in 2005. Courtesy of Alif gallery.

