

A promotional banner for the 31st International Fashion Exhibition (CAF) held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from March 13-15, 2023. The banner features a woman in a blue patterned dress on the left. The text includes 'CAF 31 MEЖДУНАРОДНАЯ ВЫСТАВКА МОДЫ INTERNATIONAL FASHION EXHIBITION', 'CENTRAL ASIA FASHION SPRING-2023', '13-15 марта march 2023', and the website 'WWW.FASHIONEXPO.KZ'. The organizer is listed as 'caTEXPO'.

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Eco Kurak at Spring CAF Exhibition

The ART gallery of the CAF Spring-2023 exhibition has become a driver of public initiative in Kazakhstan. Followers of the creativity of the arts and crafts artist from Kyrgyzstan, Cholpon Alamanova, shared their plans for scaling up a unique public initiative in Kazakhstan. This became known at the Central Asia Fashion International Fashion Exhibition held in Almaty, where a member of the Union of Artists of Kyrgyzstan - Cholpon Alamanova, for the first time in Kazakhstan, presented the "Eco-Kurak project. A life of wonderful things", within the framework of a special ART gallery.



As noted by the author at the panel discussion of the Central Asia Fashion business conference, the creation of a movement revitalizing the forgotten technique of folk arts and crafts - kurak, was prompted by the critical environmental situation: *"Bishkek was recognized as the leading city with the most polluted air. Its residents are thinking about whether to open the window to ventilate the apartment, because now, with such an air, it is unsafe. Many residents refuse to go jogging, because the smog makes it hard to breathe.*

Such a situation with the environment has occurred due to the fact that many manufacturing factories of textile industry (only in Kyrgyzstan its share is 80 percent!) throw away the fabric cuttings, and residents often use these cuttings as fuel for heating houses. We were terrified when we went to a landfill near the city - mostly fabric cuttings were thrown away. Separate piles of so-called patterned fabric wastes smoked with harsh gray and green smoke. Then I thought, why not use all this manufacturing waste for a good cause. We began to collect patterned fabric wastes from sewing shops all over the country, and, engaging students to the workshop, process them into various products using the kurak technique, which I have been working with for more than 10 years. Over the life of the project, that is only 5 months, we have already processed more than 300 kilograms of fabric wastes, and the result



was represented by excellent designer products for the interior, national clothes and a large exhibition,” shared the speaker of the Central Asia Fashion business conference - Cholpon Alamanova.



At the same time, as the Kyrgyz applied arts and crafts artist notes, the project has become a kind of national and now there are more than 80 women from 25 to 79 years old among her students: *"Each one finds something of her own: someone is looking for harmony in creativity, someone turns to the origins, because historically the art of kurak appeared thanks to national traditions: guests were always presented with cuts of fabrics with wishes of wellness and happiness. According to Eastern traditions, it is believed that a single linen created from many shreds will have energy and bring happiness, good health, well-being to the owners, and this is so.*

Among those presented for the first time in Kazakhstan, in the ART gallery of the Central Asia Fashion exhibition, there are panels of Kazakh kurak craftswomen. In such a way, the student of Cholpon Alamanova, Almaty resident, Tolganai Sembaeva, told through the creative work about the most expensive: *"Asyl" – in Kazakh language means "precious", "expensive". When creating this panel, I used clothes and shreds that remind me of my mother and sister Gaukhar. Each piece reminds me of childhood, the warmth of my mother's hands, the smell of bawyr sacks and the most precious happy moments, - says the master, - The art of creating kurak is both a tribute to traditions and extensive opportunities for creativity - after all, technology allows you to create both household items and decorations, as well as admirable clothes and accessories that are on trend today and that you can create with your own hands. We want to share knowledge with everyone, because learning to sew using this technique is really simple. Moreover, the Eco Kurak project itself is very interesting, so we are also intended to implement it in Kazakhstan,"* said Tolganai Sembaeva, a Central Asia Fashion participant.

Meanwhile, the initiative of applied arts and crafts masters amazed the visitors of the CAF ART gallery with its



originality, and they willingly shared ideas on scaling up the Eco Kurak idea: for example, a participant in the CAF business conference, a darling of the people, a popular Kazakhstani designer, the owner of the Aida KaumeNOVA Fashion House and a blogger - Aida Kaumenova, suggested that the artist think over the possibility of creating eco kurak fabric bands in the form of ready-made blanks, which can later be used in the production of designer clothes. So, in the hands of designers, elements of eco kurak will not only be able to get a "new reading", but will also popularize the idea of environmental friendliness on the scale of Central Asia and the world as a whole.

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