

# Armenity 2015: Exploring Armenian Identity in Contemporary Art of the Diaspora

In this second installment from a set of interviews in which Neery Melkonian explores the significance of the year 2015 in Armenian contemporary and modern art, the late art historian, critic and curator discusses the work of three of the artists featured in the Armenian pavilion at the 2015 Venice Biennale. For the first time in its then 20-year history, the pavilion, entitled *Armenity*, exhibited artists from across the Armenian diaspora, winning the prestigious Golden Lion award for Best National Pavilion. Works from 18 contemporary artists from across the world and different generations provided an occasion to reimagine the notion of “Armenianness” and explore the role art plays in curating identity.



Modern and contemporary art historian and educator **Neery Melkonian** (1955-2016) was an independent researcher, curator, and writer based in New York City. Over the course of her professional career, Melkonian served as Director of the Center for Contemporary Arts in Santa Fe (NM), Associate Director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (NY), and organized over 20 solo exhibitions including works by Richard Long, Petah Coyne, James Luna, Celia Alvarez Munoz, Jim Hodges and other well-known artists. Her freelance curatorial work with commercial galleries included Armenian diaspora artists such as Zadik Zadikian, Seta

Manoukian, Ardash, and Onnig Kardash, among others. One of her most recent projects, [\*Blind Dates: New Encounters from the Edges of a Former Empire\*](#), co-curated with Defne Ayas, explored the traces of peoples, places and cultures that once constituted the diverse geography of the Ottoman Empire. Melkonian also served as founding director for the *Accented Feminism: Armenian Women and Art, from Representation to Self-Representation* project and for NK Arts, a small non-profit dedicated to stimulating economic growth and social recovery in Nagorno Karabakh. [show less]

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