

## Mongolian Artist's Resistance to the Dark Days

Urjinkhand Onon

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The two artworks included in this publication were featured in “Mongol Zurag: The Art of Resistance” at the Garibaldi Gallery, in conjunction with the 60th Venice Biennale, Italy, from April 17 to November 24, 2024.

### Curatorial Statement

Mongol Zurag (literally, Mongolian picture) is a painting style that was first developed by Mongolian artists in the mid-twentieth century during the Cold War Era as a creative response to the mainstream Socialist Realism which then was being reinforced in socialist states around the world. The style of Mongol Zurag was invented as a new tradition—as British historian Eric Hobsbawm would have put it—in this historical context due to the dire need for a national identity and preservation of traditions. Besides showcasing the works by Nyam-Osoryn Tsultem (1924-2001), Mongolia's pre-eminent artist and writer, this exhibition also demonstrates Mongol Zurag painting as a living tradition based on the diverse works by three prominent contemporary artists: Baatarzorgi Batjargal (b. 1983), Baasanjav Choijiljav (b. 1977) and Urjinkhand Onon (b. 1979), whose selection of paintings are featured in this publication. In the new millennium, these artists express their resistance to neoliberalism through their creative work in the Mongol Zurag style. Urjinkhand's concern of modern-day incarceration, whether due to the pandemic or to the obsessive dependence on smart phones, reveals it as a global issue. The creativity of these artists in mastering the Mongol Zurag style and its specific features—such as the flat, decorative quality, the delicate yet meticulous line work of the brush, the immersive viewing experience that demands both a close-up engagement and a panoramic, bird's eye view—is uniquely saturated with their explicit disenchantment with the neoliberalism that continues to reinforce a global infrastructure which supports and enables the “capitalization of nature” around the world, and in Mongolia in particular.

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## **Immunity-2**



Acrylic on canvas, 130 x 100cm. 2019.



### Our Life-3



Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 60cm. 2021.