



The New York Times

Martha Schwendener, Yinka Elujoba, Jillian Steinhauer, Travis Dehl, and Will Heinrich
29.01.2026
NYT
Saodat Ismailova: Amanat

Art Gallery Shows to See in January

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By **Martha Schwendener**, **Yinka Elujoba**, **Jillian Steinhauer**, **Travis Diehl** and **Will Heinrich**

Published Jan. 1, 2026 Updated Jan. 29, 2026

This week in Newly Reviewed, Martha Schwendener covers Jenny Perlin's marvels of discovery, Ryan Foerster's photograms, Becky Kolsrud's remade surrealism and Saodat Ismailova's dreamy films.

EAST VILLAGE

Saodat Ismailova

Through April 12. The Swiss Institute, 38 St. Marks Place; 212-925-2035,
swissinstitute.net.



A still from Saodat Ismailova's film "Amanat" 2026. Saodat Ismailova

The films of the Uzbek filmmaker and artist Saodat Ismailova are dreamy, lush and unsettling. The featured work at the [Swiss Institute](#), a 36-minute work titled “Amanat” (2026), takes place in a walnut forest in Kyrgyzstan, a centuries-old spiritual site.

Ismailova captures people sleeping, dreaming and handling the precious walnuts, whose tannins stain their hands.

But the forest hasn’t escaped politics. In ancient days, Alexander the Great’s soldiers camped out here and more recently, conflicts among people in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, grouped together under the Soviet Union, have disturbed the region.

Upstairs, the two-channel film “Swan Lake” (2025) uses found film footage from Central Asia to juxtapose different cultures in cinema, often homogenized under Soviet rule (the installation is dedicated to “the children of Perestroika”). The exhibition falters a bit when it goes beyond moving images: A sound installation of field recordings from the forest bleeds into “Amanat,” and sculptures of nuts and seeds are largely unnecessary. The films are enough.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER