

Creative Industries in Uzbekistan

4th World
Conference
on Creative
Economy

Tashkent
Uzbekistan

October
2 - 4
2024

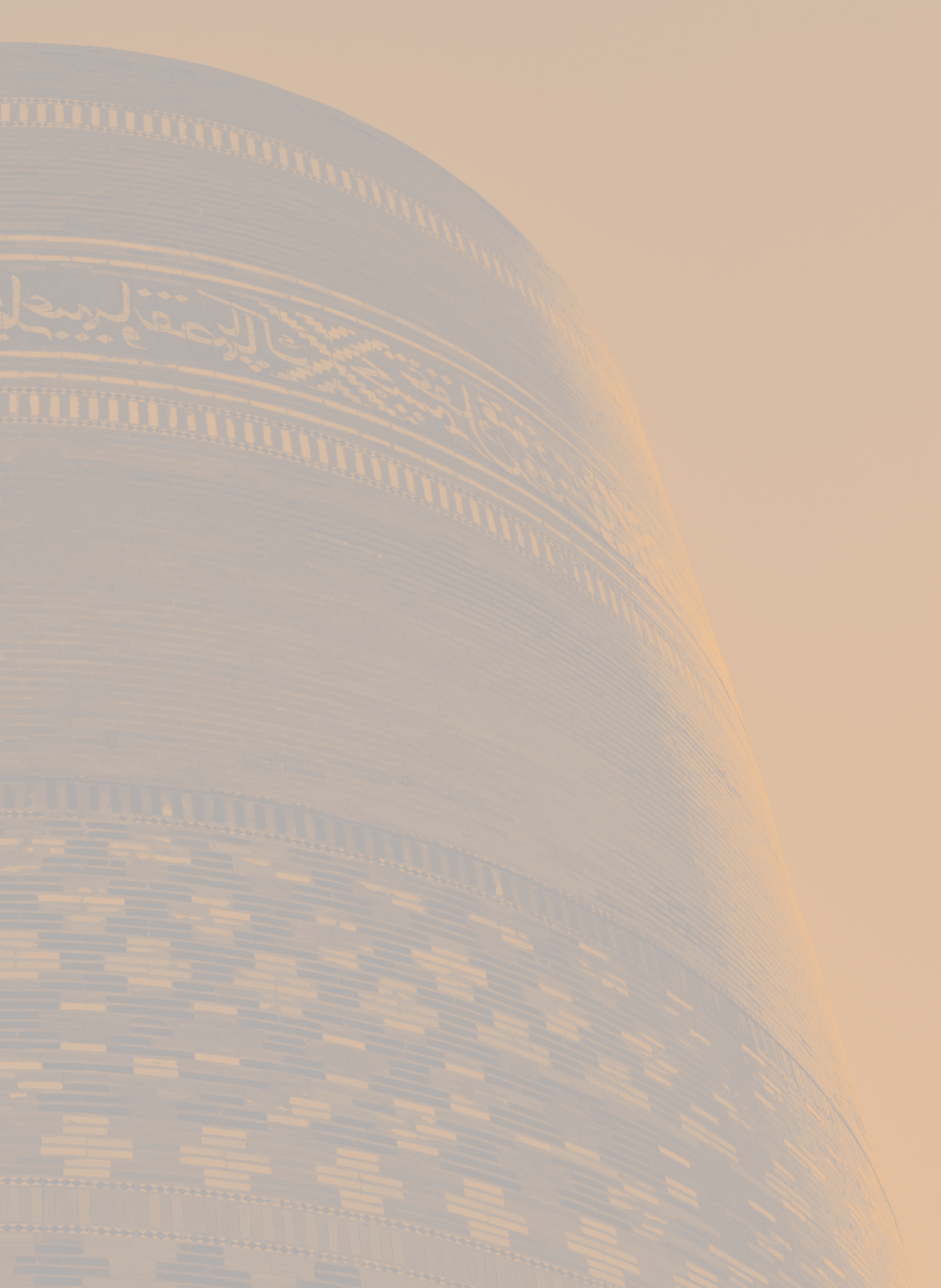
Creative Industries in Uzbekistan

4th World
Conference
on Creative
Economy

Tashkent
Uzbekistan

October
2 - 4
2024





Gold-embroidered chapan from the collection of the State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Uzbekistan



Gold-embroidered chapan from the collection of the State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Uzbekistan





Kalon minaret, Bukhara



Work by ceramic artist Abdulvahid Karimov

Table of contents

10 Forewords

- 12 Saida Mirziyoyeva
 - 14 Gayane Umerova
 - 18 History of WCCE
 - 20 About the ACDF
-

24 Creativity as a Force For Change: Insights from our Partners

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|----|----------------------|
| 26 | Rebeca Grynspan (UNCTAD) | 31 | Nicolas J.A. Buchoud |
| 28 | John Newbiggin OBE | 32 | I Made Adhi Pratama |
| 29 | John Howkins | 33 | Denise Waddingham |
| 30 | Ricky Pesik | | |
-

36 Uzbekistan on the World Stage

- 46 Bakhodir Rakhmatov
 - 47 Prof. Mir-Akbar Rakhmankulov
 - 48 Alisher Sa'dullaev
 - 52 Jamila Khalibaeva
 - 54 Rasuljon Mirzaakhmedov
-

58 Creative Uzbekistan

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--|
| 60 | Republic of Uzbekistan: Creative Industries Summary | 67 | Strategies for Support |
| 61 | Number of Creative Entities by Sector | 72 | Future Steps |
| 62 | Overview: Creative industries in Uzbekistan | 76 | Dimiter Gantchev |
| 62 | Putting Creativity on the Map | 78 | The Development of the Creative Economy in Asia and the Pacific |
| 64 | Harnessing Untapped Potential | 78 | Uzbekistan's Creative Economy: Solid Foundations and Strategic Efforts |
-

82 Uzbekistan's Creative Industries: Breakdown by Sector

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 106 | Shokhrukh Rakhimov | 120 | United Soft |
| 108 | Bibisora Dilshod qizi Rahmatullaeva | 122 | Dalahast |
| 110 | Madina Kasimbaeva | 124 | Ilkhom Theatre |
| 112 | Synthesis | 126 | ACDF |
| 114 | Shokir Kholikov | 128 | Uzbekistan State Museum of Art |
| 116 | Takhmina Turdialieva | 130 | Tashkent International Jazz Festival |
| 118 | Vargunza | | |
-

132 Next Steps

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|-----------------------|
| 134 | Next Steps: Supporting the Growth of Uzbekistan's Creative Industries | 146 | Cecilia Tham |
| 144 | Hala Badri | 146 | Mark Bünger |
| | | 148 | A Call for the Future |



Fore words

Saida Mirziyoyeva
Advisor to the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Gayane Umerova
Chairperson of the Uzbekistan Art
and Culture Development Foundation

History of WCCE
World Conference on Creative Economy

**About the Uzbekistan Art and Culture
Development Foundation (ACDF)**

Saida Mirziyoyeva



As a country with an ancient arts and crafts tradition and booming modern creative industries, the Republic of Uzbekistan is delighted to host the 4th World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE).

The creative economy has become increasingly important, driving economic growth, creating jobs, and promoting innovation. Harnessing human creativity contributes to our societies' well-being and prosperity and fosters cultural diversity. As emerging technologies transform all spheres of our lives, the importance of the creative sector in securing sustainable economic growth cannot be overstated.

The WCCE serves not just as a forum for dialogue and networking but as an embodiment of our collective aspirations for a future where creativity is at the heart of progress. The exchange of ideas and best practices during this conference will shape the future roadmap of the global creative economy. With such collaboration, the creative industries can address the greatest challenges of the 21st century.

This report provides a brief snapshot of Uzbekistan's creative industries, their rich history, the challenges they encounter, and their potential.

Encompassing sectors as diverse as the performing arts, architecture, and software design, Uzbekistan's creative industries are navigating a period of explosive growth. Since 2016, the contribution of creative industries to GDP has doubled, while the number of people employed in these areas has grown by 37.8 percent. With this in mind, the report outlines how the government of Uzbekistan is building a unified national vision for the creative industries as they become an increasingly important part of the national economy.

The government of Uzbekistan currently divides the creative economy into 15 areas: literature, audiovisual art, design and fashion, performing arts, fine art, applied art, mass media, advertising, publishing and printing, digital technology, architecture, engineering and urbanism, museums and art galleries, restoration, cultural events, and production.

These areas already provide new and exciting opportunities for expansion and development. Uzbekistan's tour-

ism, heritage, and food and drink industries are already well established; cinema and fashion sectors are garnering increased attention on the world stage. The IT and software industry is developing rapidly, with a domestic market share of \$562 million.

To support this growth, the government of Uzbekistan is taking further steps to support the creative economy with a new law that will strengthen the foundation for sectors already blossoming to take root.

The new legislation will better define the country's creative industries to help organisations collect data and provide targeted support. It will also outline the role of the state and regulatory bodies in the creative economy and the unified approach they should take in facilitating the creative industries' work.

Most importantly, this report will also give a voice to Uzbekistan's youth. With a median age of just 28.7, the country's population is younger than that of any European country. This new generation of artists, performers, chefs, educators, scientists, and musicians is already breaking fresh ground. With the right support, Uzbekistan's young people will propel the country forward to take its place on the world stage.

On behalf of the Republic of Uzbekistan, let me warmly welcome all delegates. May this conference create a shared vision for an inclusive and thriving creative world!

Gayane Umerova



We are proud to welcome the global creative community to the 4th World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE) taking place in Tashkent – the cultural hub of Central Asia.

The 2024 edition of WCCE, hosted by Uzbekistan, is themed “Inclusively Creative: A Shifted Reality”. We will look at the social, economic, and technological transformations propelled by the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, and will deliberate on the future of the creative industries. Artists, designers, architects, and craftspeople, as well as entrepreneurs, policymakers, and experts, will convene in Tashkent to explore all aspects of creativity and the creative economy.

The Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF) of the Republic of Uzbekistan is proud to present this conference in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia and the UN Trade and Development.

Uzbekistan, with its diverse artistic legacy, prolonged investment in cultural diplomacy, and dedication to the WCCE’s mission and the creative industries, provides a natural setting for this assembly.

The ACDF stands at the core of much of this work. The foundation was established in 2017 — the year before the inaugural WCCE took place in Indonesia. In the years that followed, it has worked to foster international cooperation and promote Uzbekistan’s diverse culture in the global arena. By supporting initiatives in the areas of fine arts and architecture, literature, theatre, music, and dance, the ACDF has been able to bring Uzbekistan’s national heritage to a global audience. Over the past three years, the foundation has showcased Uzbekistan’s heritage at some of the world’s leading museums, holding more than 10 exhibitions in 10 countries attended by over 2 million people.

In Uzbekistan itself, the ACDF seeks to build an inclusive and accessible environment in the country’s cultural institutions and works to develop cultural patronage and professional training for the arts and culture sector.

Our foundation has also initiated a number of large scale architectural projects, including the construction of Uzbekistan’s State Museum of Arts and the establishment of the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Tashkent. It was also integral in putting together the institution’s art residencies, founding one of the first creative clusters in Uzbekistan.

The work of the ACDF is just one of many parts within Uzbekistan’s new era of transformation. The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 seeks to achieve 100 goals over seven priority areas, while the country also seeks to embrace an ambitious new cultural agenda.

The global creative sector too is entering a period of great change. Emerging technologies — particularly the rise of generative AI — are rewriting how creative industries operate and how the world at large views creative labour. The 4th WCCE will dissect, analyse, and face these challenges head-on.

Watching the nature of reality shift in real time can be disorientating. Yet while there are challenges to overcome, the ACDF believes that it is creativity — the most central and immutable of human traits and experiences — that will provide our anchor. With it, we will be able to both conquer the most difficult obstacles and seize the greatest opportunities faced by our sector today.

Guided by both our heritage and our drive for innovation, we look to the future with optimism and hope that the 4th WCCE will be full of insights, discoveries, and meaningful partnerships.



Crafting Uzbekistan: Tradition in Threads exhibition at the Doha Design Biennale in Doha, Qatar, 2024

History of WCCE



WCCE, Dubai, 2021

World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE) is a movement and platform focused on the creative economy's role in global sustainable development.

The conference serves as a space for policymakers, industry players, academics, and other stakeholders to discuss, collaborate, and address challenges and opportunities in this rapidly growing sector. It also aims to promote international cooperation, underscore the role of creativity in building an inclusive, sustainable economy, and shift the focus from a resource-dependent economy to one built on knowledge.

WCCE was established in Indonesia in 2018, when creatives, entrepreneurs, and policy-makers met to discuss the challenges and opportunities that would define and shape the future of the global creative economy.

Today, the WCCE is a biennial event spanning three days with each alternate conference hosted in a different country. In 2021, WCCE was hosted in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, where more than 3,600 participants from 22 countries gathered in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic for a programme that spotlighted the need to embrace technology and cultivate the creativity of the future. Delegates would return to Bali in 2022 to discuss in more depth the vital role of the creative industries as the world's economy recovered from the pandemic's impact.

Throughout its seven-year history, the WCCE has worked to uphold several key objectives: promoting the creative economy as a driver of economic growth, fostering collaboration, identifying and addressing challenges in the creative economy, and sharing best practices and other solutions in order to overcome them. At the core of all of its work is the drive to raise awareness about the importance of the creative economy and its potential to contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable future. This mission is reflected at WCCE 2024 in Uzbekistan and its theme, "Inclusively Creative: A Shifted Reality".

Uzbekistan has long been involved in the work of WCCE, and is a dedicated supporter of its vision for a more creative and sustainable world economy.

WCCE, Bali, 2022



WCCE 2024 will explore the social and economic challenges posed to the creative industries by rapidly advancing next-gen technologies, with a particular focus on the rise of artificial intelligence, intellectual property rights, and creative ethics.

AI is forecast to replace 85 million jobs by 2025 and has the potential to threaten a host of creative professions. Yet joint efforts by countries and communities can ease this transition, reduce inequality, foster new market opportunities, and help protect the environment. Certain sectors of the creative economy, such as production and traditional crafts, are witnessing growth, rather than decline. In fact, by 2030, the creative economy is projected to represent 10 percent of global GDP.

WCCE will explore this complex topic by focusing on six key sub-themes. Sessions looking at workforce dynamics will break down the intricacies of contemporary employment and global shifts in the labour market driven by emerging technologies. Other talks and panels will discuss the rise of creative and smart cities, and the evolution of creative lifestyles.

Highlights include the plenary "Future Frontiers: Unleashing Potential in Creative Workforces", with Sandiaga S. Uno, Indonesia's minister of tourism and creative economy; Gayane Umerova, chairperson of the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation, and Sylvie Forbin, deputy director general of the copyright and creative industries sector at the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

WCCE delegates will also discuss fairer and more inclusive paths for the generations of young creatives, with sub-themes such as the future of arts, creativity, and IP in the age of AI, the future of creative education, and inclusively sustainable futures.

Key sessions include "How Are Arts and Culture Reshaping Diplomacy?", with UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and President of the Board of the Petra National Trust HRH Princess Dana Firas, and HE Hala Badri, Director General Dubai Culture & Arts Authority.

Elsewhere, panellists will join "Creative Industries for System Change" with Marisa Henderson, chief of the creative economy programme for UNC-

TAD, and Edna dos Santos-Duisenberg, economist and vice president for global partnerships of the World Creativity Organisation.

At this pivotal moment for the global economy, WCCE will spark collaborative innovation, champion creative transformation and drive sustainable progress, leading to a significant shift towards shared prosperity and mutual growth in the creative sector.

WCCE, Bali, 2022



About the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF)



Exhibition *The Splendour of Oases of Uzbekistan*.
At the *Crossing of Caravan Routes*, Louvre, Paris, 2022

Founded in 2017, the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation (ACDF) works to build creative intercultural dialogue and to integrate Uzbekistan's rich cultural scene into the global art space.

In addition to fostering international cooperation and promoting Uzbek culture in the global arena, the foundation upholds national heritage by developing and supporting initiatives in the areas of fine arts and architecture, literature, theatre, music, and dance. It also strives to support the arts and culture sector by developing training for professionals and encouraging greater inclusivity.

The ACDF's work is carried out on several key fronts. One of the most successful is its work with global partners to host exhibitions that showcase Uzbekistan's vibrant culture and rich historical heritage.

Over the past three years, the foundation has brought the wealth of Uzbekistan to some of the world's leading museums, including the Louvre in Paris and the Neues Museum in Berlin — holding more than 10 exhibitions in 10 countries attended by over 2 million people.

In April 2022, the ACDF also commissioned the first national pavilion of Uzbekistan at the 59th Venice Biennale. "Dixit Algorizmi – The Garden of Knowledge" questioned the origin myths and narratives surrounding modern technologies, using the lens of contemporary artistic practice to explore their forgotten roots and overlooked resonances with distant places, times, and cultures.

The foundation also works to renovate and modernise cultural institutions across Uzbekistan. Key projects include aiding in the reconstruction of Uzbekistan's State Art Museum, led by Japanese architect and Pritzker Prize winner, Tadao Ando. The project will see the museum's total space double to

20,000 square metres and the creation of a new modern park in the heart of the capital. Elsewhere, the ACDF has helped to establish the Centre of Contemporary Art Tashkent and played an integral part in putting together the institution's art residencies, heralding one of the first creative clusters in Uzbekistan.

This has included initiating new internal cataloguing systems in partnership with Swiss company ZetCom, building online galleries, introducing audio guides and AR experiences for guests, and installing new signage.

Finally, the ACDF works to hold events and supports educational initiatives that will benefit Uzbekistan's wider cultural sphere. One of the foundation's flagship events is the Samarkand Half Marathon, which was established in 2019.

As well as drawing athletes from across the world to enjoy one of Uzbekistan's historic Silk Road cities, the charity event also aimed to highlight an important problem: the lack of inclusivity and accessibility at cultural institutions for people with disabilities. The race was organised alongside Uzbekistan's first tactile art exhibition, which included audio description for blind and visually-impaired guests.

In the following years, the ACDF has continued to work with Uzbekistan's cultural spaces so that they can become more accessible to visitors with disabilities. This support has included educational programmes to train institutions on accessibility issues, and the country's first theatrical performances with audio description, which premiered in February 2020.

Above all else, the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation is committed to investing in the country's youth, providing scholarships for

young people to study in fields such as restoration and preservation, museology, architecture, and cultural tourism at international and Uzbek institutions. In this way, the ACDF knows it is not just building Uzbekistan's art and culture scene in the present, but setting the foundations for a celebrated future on the global stage.



Creativity
as a
Force
For Change:
Insights
from our
Partners

The creative economy and its immense potential to drive change has never been more apparent. In the run-up to the World Conference on the Creative Economy in Uzbekistan, leading experts were invited to share their thoughts on the creative economy, the role of creativity in social change, and how the creative industries can serve as a springboard for innovation and sustainable development in Uzbekistan and beyond.

Rebeca Grynspan

Secretary-General of
UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

John Newbiggin OBE

Chair, Global Creative Economy Council

John Howkins

Author, analyst and strategist, and member of
the United Nations Advisory Committee
on the Creative Economy

Ricky Pesik

Member of International Steering Committee
WCCE 2024, and Head of Digital and Creative
Industries Committee, Indonesia Chamber
of Commerce and Industries

Nicolas J.A. Buchoud

Senior Advisor to the Dean and CEO, ADBI,
and founding member of the WCCE International
Steering Committee (ISC)

I Made Adhi Pratama

Member of the International Steering Committee,
WCCE

Denise Waddingham

Director, British Council Uzbekistan

Rebeca Grynspan



Rebeca Grynspan was appointed the eighth Secretary-General of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 2021. Prior to joining the UN, she served as Vice President of Costa Rica from 1994 to 1998.

At a time when the global community faces unprecedented challenges, the creative economy provides a unique opportunity to harness human ingenuity for a more sustainable and inclusive world. At UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), we see the creative economy as more than just an economic sector — it's a dynamic force driving sustainable development, sparking innovation, and celebrating cultural diversity. A recent UNCTAD survey indicates that the creative economy accounts for between 0.5 and 7.3 percent of GDP and between 0.5 and 12.5 percent of the workforce in countries where data is available. Even more impressively, it accounts for 20 percent of global services exports and 3 percent of merchandise exports, making it a cornerstone of the global economy.

The digital revolution has catapulted the creative economy into new realms, breaking down traditional barriers and enabling new forms of cross-industry collaborations. Today, a creator in any corner of the world can reach audiences on an unprecedented scale, with ideas and creative expressions crossing borders instantaneously. This democratization of creativity is game-changing, especially for a digitally savvy generation that thrives online.

But with great opportunity comes great responsibility. The rapid growth of the creative economy especially in creative services, presents challenges that cannot be ignored. Issues related to intellectual property rights, fair compensation for creators, and the potential displacement of jobs due to artificial intelligence (AI) are pressing concerns. Furthermore, issues related to competition policy related to the creative economy, particularly as they affect the Global South, require careful navigation to ensure equitable growth.

The creative economy is also integral to structural economic transformation, particularly in the

Global South. It offers a path to diversification, reducing reliance on traditional industries and providing resilience against external shocks. The rise of South-South trade in creative goods, which made up 25 percent of all creative goods exports in 2022, underscores the vital role these regions play in shaping a diverse and vibrant global creative economy.

As Uzbekistan hosts the 4th World Conference on the Creative Economy, we at UNCTAD extend our warmest wishes for its success. We've been proud to partner with the WCCE since the very beginning and are committed to continuing this journey. Our mission is to help nations around the world tap into the full potential of their creative economies. With our expertise, we are ready to support countries in maximizing their creative industries for trade and development. Together, we can ensure that creativity and culture are the driving forces behind a sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous future.



Restoration of the work of V.V. Kandinsky, State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, Tashkent

John Newbiggin OBE



John Newbiggin OBE is a member of the International Steering Committee of the WCCE and serves as the London Mayor's Ambassador for the Creative Industries and as Special Advisor to the UK Minister for Culture.

Creativity is the quality that enables us to express our dreams and realize our ambitions. It allows communities to celebrate their cultural distinctiveness and allows us collectively to shape the world around us, solve its riddles and address its challenges.

At a time when we face the unprecedented challenges of climate change, resource depletion, massive urbanisation, and the danger of pandemics, our ability to respond creatively has never been more important. It is the vital resource for a future that is sustainable, harmonious, and prosperous. Nations that nurture and celebrate creativity and critical thinking in their education systems, their economies, and their public administration hold the key to that future.

You could say that if oil was the fuel that powered the world in the twentieth century, creativity is the fuel that can power it in the twenty-first. The difference is that the more oil we use the less we have — but creativity is limitless; creative talent exists in every community.

We owe it to young people to give each of them the opportunity to express their creativity in ways that are fulfilling for them and contribute to a better future for all.

John Howkins



The WCCE demonstrates that the scope of the creative economy is now an extensive one, covering almost everything from education, culture, media, startups, tax, foreign policy, and trade to intellectual policy, smart cities, immigration, and now AI.

What is distinctive about the creative economy approach to these things? I believe it has two components. The first is rooted in people's passion for creativity, inspiration, make-believe, invention — call it what you will. I call this the creative mindset.

Second is the effort required to bring these ideas alive and make them known: work that is distinctive and important, yet seldom brought into the discussion or headlined.

Until recently, we knew little about the creative mindset: its motivation, attitudes, and cognitive processes. There were lots of theories, but they bore little relation to what creative people experienced and talked about. Only recently, thanks to better neuro-imaging and faster computation, and research into neural networks, have biologists, psychologists, and others been able to put together a workable model that fits with what creative people say.

Perhaps the most remarkable discovery is the similarity between the processes of perception and creation; between our perception of what already exists and our creation of something new for others to perceive.

The second component of a creative economy is the hard work required to turn an idea into reality. Here, theory and practice are better integrated. But policymakers face two problems. Firstly, we fail as much as we succeed and policymakers dislike failure. Secondly, many policymakers rely on economic data, but economists are often unreliable experts. Many fail to grasp the creative mindset and cannot appreciate the stop-start wanderings of the creative mind. They underestimate the number of

ideas exchanged freely and the amount of work done for free. They downplay the effects on business and the economy. They prefer to talk about innovation, which is not the same thing.

The WCCE is an important platform for recognising and upholding these two components — the new creative mindset and effort needed to 'make things happen' — so that our policies are based on reality and truly sustainable.



Initiated by the Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf) of the Republic of Indonesia in 2018, the World Conference on Creative Economy continues to be the main multilateral forum for mainstreaming the creative economy to the level of global economic policy.

The establishment of 2021 as the Year of the Creative Economy by the United Nations, and the latest adoption of the Creative Economy Resolution in 2023, makes the 4th edition of the World Conference on Creative Economy an important moment to prioritise the big agenda of the creative economy on a multilateral level.

The contribution of the world's creative sector to the global economy is seeing hugely significant growth: according to a 2015 report by PWC, its contribution is greater than global military expenditure and total oil exports from all OPEC states. At the same time, the sector can also create greater quality and promote inclusive participation.

It is time for the creative economy to become a motor for new global economic policies and a primary strategy for sustainable development.

This 4th edition of the World Conference on Creative Economy will nurture greater awareness among policymakers worldwide about the important role of this sector in building a more inclusive, prosperous future.



Nicolas J.A. Buchoud joined the Asian Development Bank Institute in October 2022. He played an integral role in guiding ADBI's hosting of Think7 under Japan's 2023 G7 presidency and other collaboration with international forums, especially the G20 and ASEAN.

Recent investigations in the field of American Studies tend to demonstrate that the term 'creative' to describe a person or class was coined in the second half of the 19th century by essayist and philosopher R.W. Emerson — rather than the sociologist R. Florida who prospered globally by marketing the concept at the turn of the millennium. But why is this finding so important during the 4th edition of the World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE) in Tashkent?

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the University of Columbia was the cradle of overly influential trends of research at the junction of urbanisation, economics, and sociology. A focus on both the 'creative classes' and 'global cities' emerged at the same time and co-flourished rather unequivocally. The background was that of growing urban demographics and economic growth building on the aftermath of the Cold War, pushed onwards by increasingly seamless digital connectivity and the rapid development and liberalisation of cross-border trade.

Looking back at these years, it seems many decisions and policies were also underpinned by a strong belief in a 'post-industrial' world driven by the knowledge economy: a context that favoured the development and vision of a creative economy while ignoring imbalances and other dynamics in global development. In 2024, this vision of a 'post-industrial' world looks misleading. It seems more like the result of inward-looking visions by developed economies eager to overcome the economic, political, and environmental legacies of the industrial revolution, and competing to create new standards beyond the confrontation between statism and liberalism. It was an approach that left aside more than half of the world's population.

When Indonesia proposed to ignite a new multilateral and inclusive agenda on the creative economy in 2015, it immediately captured a lot of attention in Indonesia, in the ASEAN region, in the Global South, and beyond. Indeed, it was no longer about an arti-

ficial 'class-based' approach. Instead, it was rooted in the dynamics of developmental and societal transformation in Southeast Asia, in the Middle East, in Latin America and the Caribbean, in India and the Pacific, in East and Central Asia, and across Africa.

Following the 1st WCCE summit in Bali in 2018, a group of policymakers, experts, civil society champions, artists, economists, and local and global leaders gradually emerged, aiming to strengthen the case for the creative economy from a macroeconomic and institutional perspective. These creative economy pioneers could not benefit from the influential capabilities of elite academic institutions in developed countries. Thus, its promoters privileged a multilateral approach through the UN and the G20. In this way, the dual WCCE and Friends of Creative Economy (FCE) process has initiated several policy transformations. A synergistic approach has been encouraged by G20 leaders to overcome the gridlock created by recurrent competition among UN institutions such as UNCTAD or UNESCO, and to build on multilateral global and regional organisations not only within the UN system, but also ASEAN, APEC, and others. This new approach is interconnected with initiatives to address unsustainable production and consumption systems such as the Life Economy. Meanwhile, the role of civil society and the private sector has also gained greater recognition.

This method of driving the creative economy forward will succeed if the WCCE can further anchor it as a driver for inclusive economic development across geopolitical spheres and boundaries, multilateral institutions, civil society dynamics, and macroeconomic fora. The implementation of the new UN Resolution on Creative Economy towards 2026 could become a milestone to safeguard and reform the 2030 agenda. As a country closely associated with the blossoming of world civilization and the interchange of ideas, Uzbekistan could well play a vital role in the development of the creative economy by assuming a pivotal role in Asia.

I Made Adhi Pratama



A cooperation analyst at the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Made Adhi Pratama has been involved with WCCE initiatives since 2018. He has assisted in consulting WCCE host countries and moderated the WCCE's International Steering Committee.

Creativity looks beyond our senses and characteristics. Everyone, regardless of gender, economic stratum, age, or personal values, possesses a certain degree of imagination. Whether we share a similar way of thinking or an entirely different perspective, creativity allows humans to define their way of living, construct a common understanding, decide their future destiny, and energise civilization. Creativity is a reminder that nothing is impossible as long as it remains “inclusively creative”, where no one is left behind.

Creative industries invigorate local communities, playing a vital role in economic growth. As a Balinese, I have witnessed how the creative industries offer people real opportunities. From mesmerising performing arts and ethnic music to meticulous craftsmanship and innovative gastronomic experiences, I believe this industry captures the essence of people's character.

There is no fixed recipe for thriving in this sector. The creative economy can manifest in various forms. Some countries might prosper under a regime that champions intellectual property. Others might foreground communal arts and heritage. Yet a common foundation in this sector is its potential to open doors for everyone. Who would have thought that a mixed-race child like Trevor Noah, growing up in apartheid-era South Africa, could become a successful stand-up comedian? Or that a mastermind digital pirate named Daniel Ek would establish a game-changing music platform called Spotify?

When a country recognises the value and importance of imagination, it empowers its creative community to innovate and produce meaningful work for the greater good. Creativity is indeed a treasured asset. When a nation commits to its creative sector — not merely with financial support but also by enhancing creative-based education, capacity building, and offering technical support to its

creatives — that nation is bound for success.

Do not hesitate to harness your God-given imaginative talents. This is not an invitation to anarchy but rather a suggestion to let varied perspectives enrich your understanding. Embrace the dynamic nature of creativity, which pushes you to think, observe, and experiment more. Stay curious, as it will foster innovative actions. Respect different viewpoints, even from the most stringent critics, for they can inspire. Celebrate your culture and identity for you stand as the future guardian of your nation.

Denise Waddingham



Denise Waddingham has worked for the British Council for over 20 years in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. She took up her current post in October 2021.

The United Kingdom started looking seriously at the potential and impact of the creative and cultural industries in the late 1990s. Now, its creative economy is recognised worldwide as a source of innovation, economic growth, personal wellbeing and community cohesion. In the UK, the creative and cultural industries have been generating income at a rate two to three times faster than other sectors of the economy for the past 20 years. The creative economy is estimated to account for about 15 percent of all employment in London. The establishment of creative and cultural hubs in targeted cities has been transformative for local areas, offering employment and, in some instances, contributing to the preservation of traditional arts and crafts along with local cultural identity.

The British Council leads the way in advocating for the international creative economy. We have collaborated with governments and creative entrepreneurs globally to foster the growth of the creative and cultural industries. Our creative economy programme centres on policy, research, advocacy, and the professional development of creative professionals and policymakers. We build networks and support collaboration, for long-term impact, mutual benefit, and greater international understanding. Our work aims to aid the development of dynamic, diverse and future-facing creative economies, with long-term links to the UK.

In Central Asia, we have developed a network of creative entrepreneurs, many of whom have taken part in British Council programmes to support their careers. We have also undertaken creative economy mapping in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and worked with higher education institutions to develop a more creative education. Uzbekistan is a young country, with a fantastic cultural heritage to be proud of, and it's exciting to see what the future holds. We are delighted that WCCE is taking place here.



Republican Children's Library, Tashkent



Uzbekistan
on the World
Stage

Bakhodir Rakhmatov

Director of the Agency for Strategic Reforms under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Prof. Mir-Akbar Rakhmankulov

Director of the Institute of Legislation and Legal Policy under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Alisher Sa'dullaev

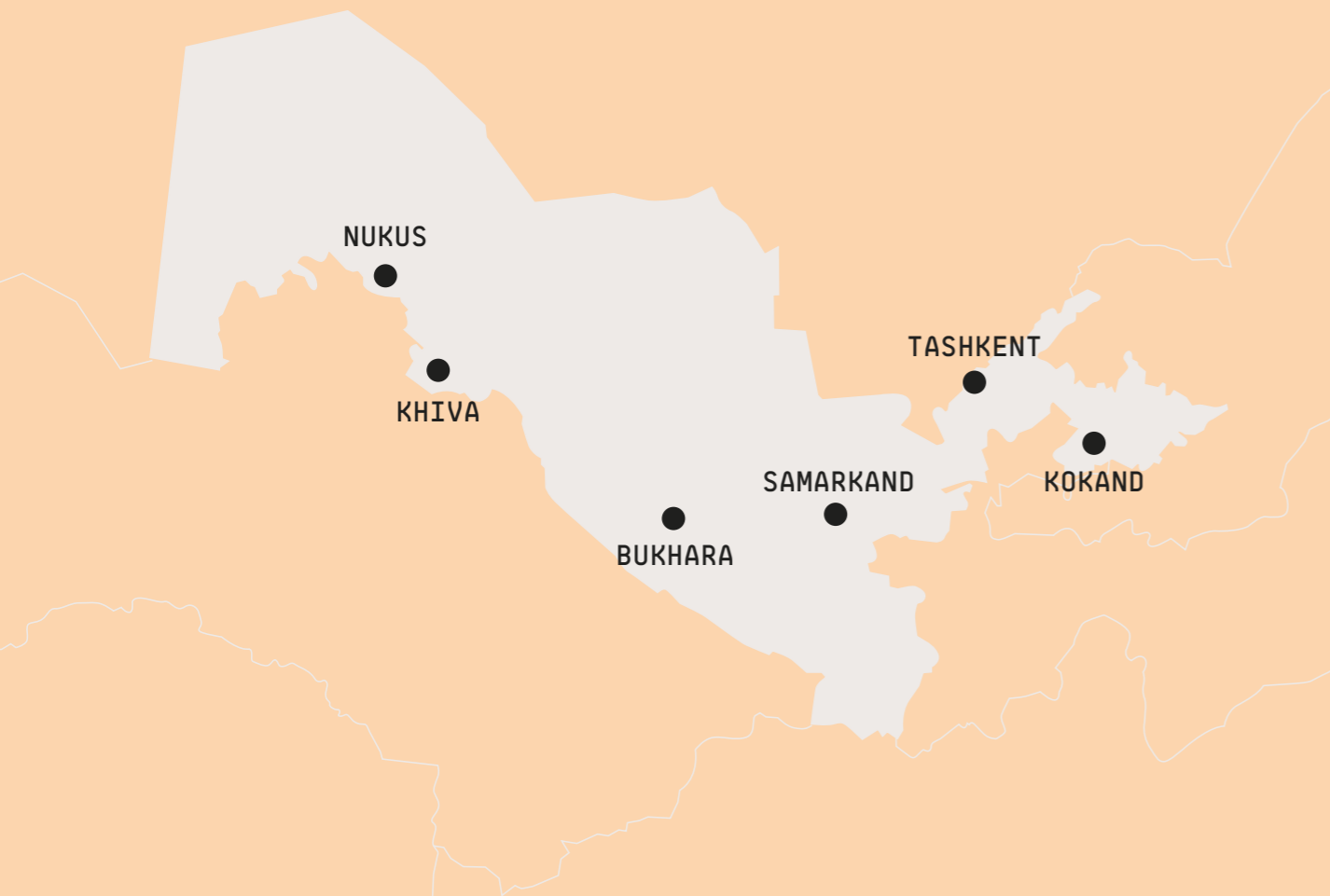
Director of Agency for Youth Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Jamila Khalibaeva

Global Marketing Director
IT Park Uzbekistan

Rasuljon Mirzaakhmedov

Chairman, Hunarmand Association



°C TEMPERATURES



Bordered by the Syr Darya and Amu Darya rivers and their route towards the Aral Sea, Uzbekistan stretches from the Kyzylkum Desert in the west to the Tien Shan mountains in the east.

Uzbekistan sits at the very heart of Central Asia, sharing borders with Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan to the east, Turkmenistan to the southwest, Tajikistan to the southeast, and Afghanistan to the south. This location gives Uzbekistan a climate of extremes. Dry, hot summers can see temperatures rise past 40°C (104°F), while winters can fall past -20 °C (-4 °F).

Today, Uzbekistan is home to approximately 36 million people, of which 3 million live in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent. Framed by the Chatkal mountains, the city is the most populous in Central Asia and remains the epicentre of Uzbekistan's rich cultural and political life.

Much of Tashkent's Old Town was destroyed in an earthquake in 1966, and today the city is better known for its modernist architecture. These buildings now join with modern skyscrapers to form an architectural patchwork of Uzbekistan's recent history.

Just as striking on the streets of Tashkent is Uzbekistan's youth. More than half of the country's population is under 30, driving rapid growth across the country's capital and beyond.

Other large cities in Uzbekistan include Namagan and Andijan on the edges of the lush Fergana valley, and Nukus, the capital of the semi-autonomous region of Karakalpakstan in the country's west.

But best known are the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, famed as stopping points along the ancient Silk Road. Founded before the turn of the first millennium, both cities quickly grew to become pillars of learning, culture, and faith.

Active between the 2nd century BCE and the mid-15th century CE, the Silk Road was a transcontinental trade route that brought goods from China in the east to the Mediterranean Sea.

But the route's real significance transcended economic might. The Silk Road powered the exchange of cultural, political, and religious ideas, fuelling technological, philosophical, and artistic advancement.

The wealth of the Silk Road attracted philosophers and artists, but also military leaders. Alexander the Great conquered the area then known as Sogdiana — including Samarkand and Bukhara — in 329 BCE. In the years that followed, the territory of modern-day Uzbekistan passed through a long line of conquerors, from the Arab Abbasids to the Persian Samanids to the Turkic Khwarazmians.

However, the region's most influential leader would be the 14th-century ruler Amir Temur: an Uzbek-born conqueror celebrated both for his military might and artistic patronage.

Amir Temur's conquests seized lands from western Central Asia, Iran, the Caucasus, and Mesopotamia, ultimately forging the Timurid Empire. In turn, Samarkand became the capital of his dynasty and the epicentre of what would become known as the Timurid Renaissance.

Under the guidance of Amir Temur and his descendants, art, literature, and science flourished, fuelling a flurry of cultural activity that took hold some years before Europe saw a similar rebirth in Italy. Grand public projects heralded the construction of some of Uzbekistan's best-known landmarks, while Uzbek scientists made great strides in science, mathematics, and astronomy. Sultan Ulugbek, who reigned over the



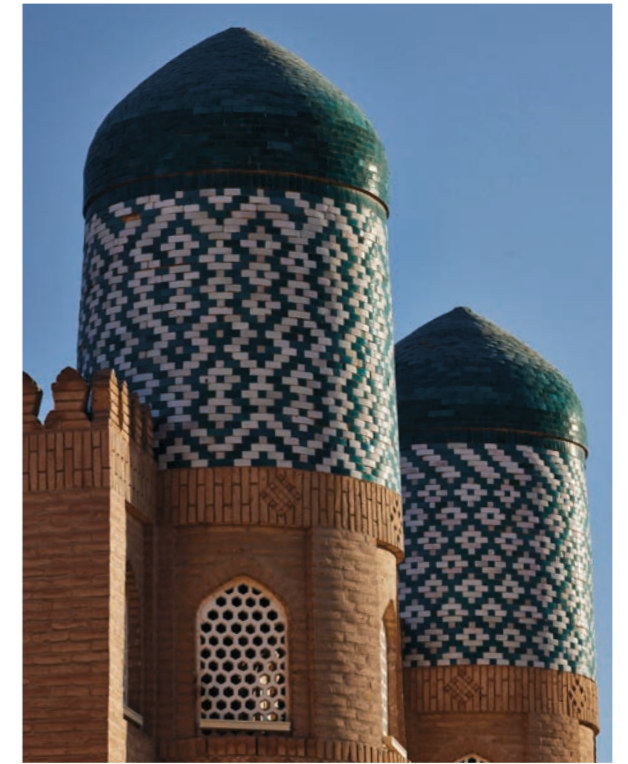
Islam Khoja Minaret, Itchan Kala, Khiva

Timurid Empire between 1447 and 1449 CE, was recognised as one of the most important astronomers of the 15th century. His observatory still stands in Samarkand today.

Both the Timurid Empire and the Silk Road began to lose influence in the 15th and 16th centuries. Yet they left an indelible mark on modern-day Uzbekistan.

Today, Uzbekistan's culture draws on the generations of artisans, scientists, and leaders who travelled to the country from across the world. Although the ornate buildings of the Timurid Renaissance remain a prominent reminder of the Silk Road's legacy, its influence can be found everywhere, often intertwined into the textures of everyday life.

Examples include Uzbekistan's ikat fabrics, woven from silk and cotton and prized for their distinctive patterns. Embroidery is also highly valued, incorporating carefully handcrafted nature motifs and geometric patterns into intricately adorned household items or national dress. Most celebrated are the embroidered suzani, the large wall hangings that decorate Uzbek homes.



Kunya-Ark fortress, Itchan Kala, Khiva



Ark Citadel, Bukhara



Miri-Arab Madrasah, Bukhara

Meanwhile, Uzbek master potters use local materials to create traditional ceramics, styled with interlocking strapwork and motifs such as fruits, animals, and flowers. Many are fired with a glaze made from Uzbekistan's native ishor plant, giving the pieces a distinctive blue colour.

In 2024, many of these crafts are seeing a revival. As Uzbekistan finds its footing in the modern world as an independent state, a generation of young artists is finding new appreciation for these crafts as an intrinsic part of their national identity.

Additionally, Uzbekistan is increasingly selling creative goods and services on the global market. The country has been a net exporter of products related to the creative industries since 2021, and in 2022, the value of creative exports reached \$936 million. The share of exports generated by the creative industries now make up 4.74 percent of Uzbekistan's total, a figure that is set to grow as creative sector exports grow on average 29 percent each year.

Tourism is also becoming an increasingly important economic driver, as visitors from across the globe come to trace the footsteps of the ancient Silk Road. Uzbekistan has seen its ranking on the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) climb by 7.8 percent since 2019, and today the country sits in 78th place worldwide, up from 94th place.

The contribution made by Uzbekistan's heritage sector to the country's GDP is rising an average of 14 percent each year. For the tourism and entertainment sector, that figure rises to 22.32 percent.

Uzbekistan is already responding to this shift by increasing investment: the amount of money invested in the heritage sector each year is rising on average by 93 percent YoY, reaching over \$73 million in 2022. In turn, tourist numbers are also rising, with 360,176 tourists in 2023 compared with 187,728 in 2022. In 2023, Turkey sent the most tourists to Uzbekistan overall, with more than 106,000 guests, followed by China, South Korea, Turkey, Italy, and Germany. Most tourists visited Tashkent, with significant numbers also heading to Samarkand and the city of Khiva.

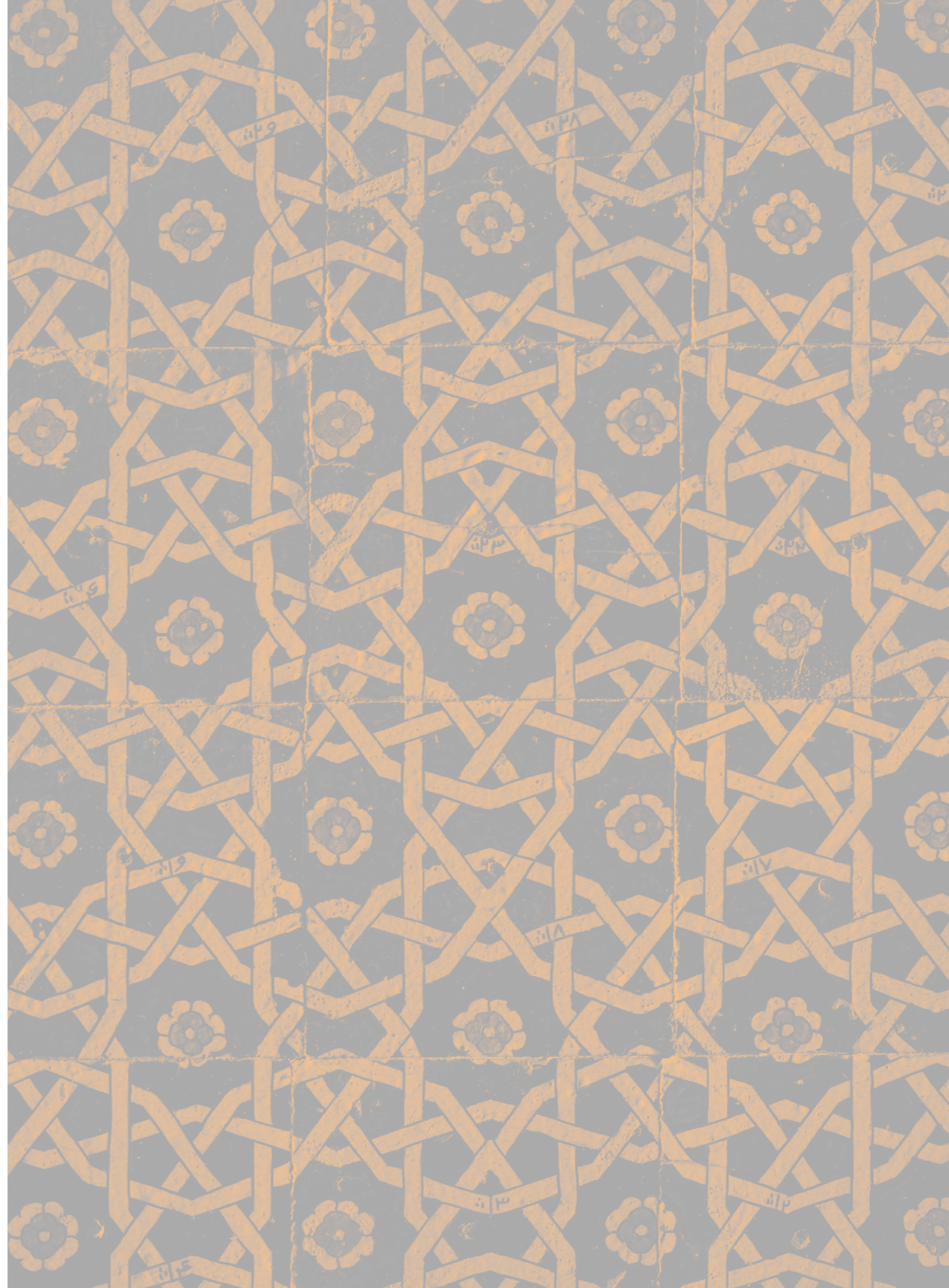
The government is now taking steps to support this boom. A presidential decree signed in January greenlit the construction of tourist centres throughout the country, with a fleet of modern hotels, shopping and entertainment complexes, and duty-free stores planned for areas judged to have a high tourism potential. These areas will not focus solely on historic centres, but will also turn investment to several ski resorts and Uzbekistan's budding outdoor and winter sports scene.



Gur-Emir Mausoleum, Samarkand



Walls of the ancient city, Itchan Kala, Khiva





The global creative economy is developing at a rapid pace, playing a vital role in the economic growth of many countries across the world.

Today, the creative industries are earning almost \$2.3 trillion each year, while global creative exports have reached \$250 billion. According to forecasts looking at both current growth rates and the importance of creative industries to the world economy, the sector is set to make up as much as 10 percent of global GDP in the next 10-15 years.

For young people, the creative industries are one of the economy's most promising sectors — which is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where children and young people under 30 account for 60 percent of the population.

With this in mind, the government of Uzbekistan is paying considerable attention to this sector.

At the president's request, the government is drafting the "Law on the Creative Economy", to support the development of the creative industries. It will include the creation of creative clusters, better regulation for creative enterprises and their activities, and the development of digital platforms targeted at businesses operating in this sector.

It will also herald greater protections for employees working in the creative industries and develop stronger mechanisms for state support and special grants for creative startups — all catered to Uzbekistan's unique national culture. The law will also outline the task of developing a united concept to develop Uzbekistan's creative economy until 2030.

The 4th World Conference on Creative Economy, hosted by Uzbekistan, is the most fitting platform to present these plans to the world — and will lay a solid foundation for sustainable future development.



On Dec. 12 2022, the president of the Republic of Uzbekistan signed resolution PP-462. It outlined the responsibility of the Institute of Legislation and Legal Policy to carry out systemic research to forecast the development of national legislation.

As part of this task, the institute carries out research on the legal regulation of Uzbekistan's creative economy. That work shows that the creative industries are becoming one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy and that the international community is paying special attention to forming regulatory framework that will support its growth.

Many of the world's countries — including the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Colombia, and Russia — have adopted relevant legislation in this area, thus creating a legal mechanism to support and regulate the creative economy.

According to UNESCO, the creative industries generate revenues of \$2.25 billion worldwide annually and, according to forecasts, the global creative economy will account for more than 10 percent of global GDP by 2030.

The creation of a legal framework for the creative economy will, in turn, allow for the creation of legal mechanisms that will support and develop the creative industries: ensuring greater employment, developing small and medium businesses, and ultimately leading to the country's economic growth.

Alisher Sa'dullaev



The Agency for Youth Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan develops and implements state policy to support the country's young people. It implements socio-economic, organisational, and legal measures to create the right conditions for Uzbekistan's youth to reach their intellectual and creative potential.

Some of our activities include developing and implementing a state policy, guidance, and programmes in areas related to young people, and protecting young people's rights and interests.

We also strive to create the right environment for young people to become involved in small businesses and private entrepreneurship, facilitating youth employment, and distribute state grants and subsidies to finance youth programmes, projects, and scientific research.

We see a great future in the development of creative industries as a tool to unlock the potential of young people and ensure their active participation in Uzbekistan's economic and social life. We endeavour not only to support existing enterprises within the creative industries but to initiate new projects that promote innovation and creativity among young people.

We actively participate in the creation of infrastructure for the creative economy, contribute to the development of educational programmes, and organise events promoting creative professions and skills. We also plan to strengthen our participation in cross-sector initiatives developing creative clusters, and collaborating with the private sector, educational institutions, and international organisations to ensure sustainable growth and the integration of the creative industries into the country's economy.

We were particularly proud to launch a "creative park" on the first floor of the "Palace of Youth Creativity" building in Tashkent. It has allowed us to create a comfortable environment for talented young people and provide financial support for

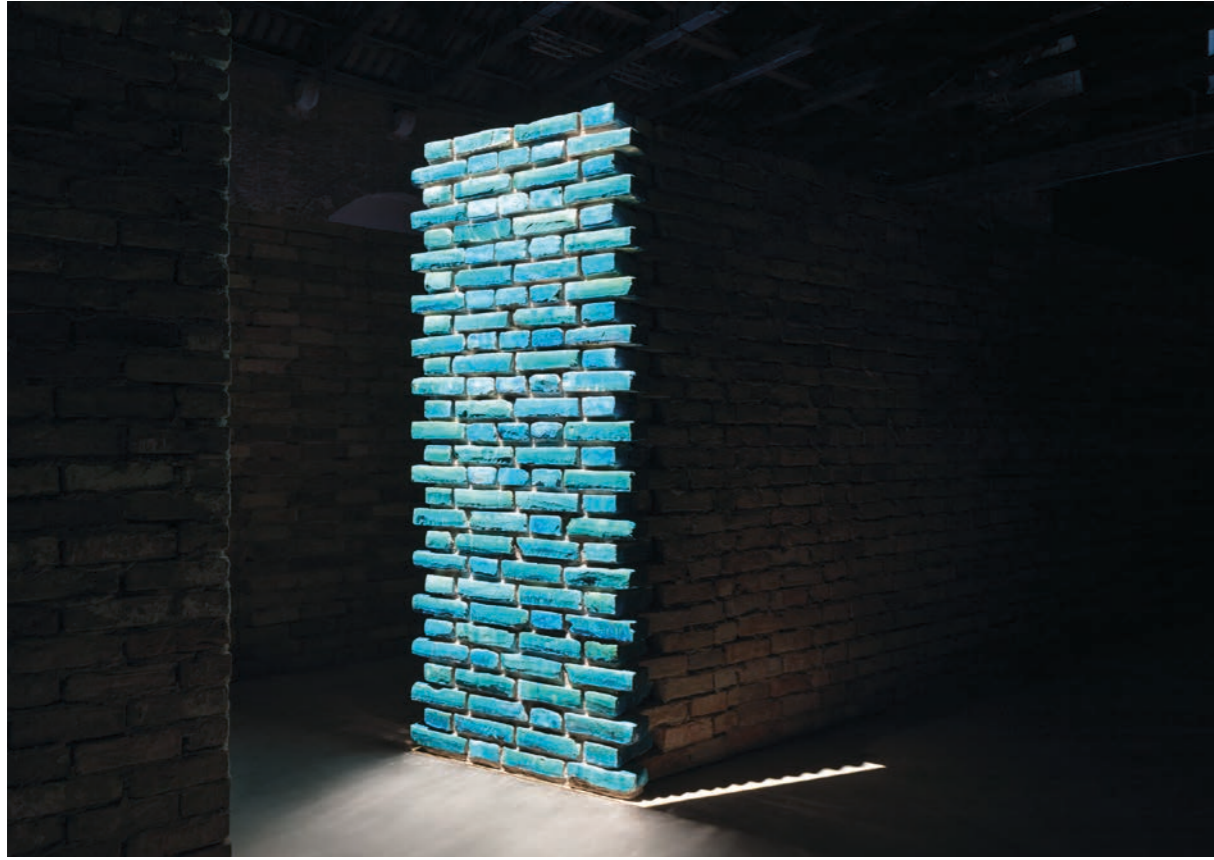
some of the country's best startups and creative projects — in turn increasing the contribution of creative entrepreneurs to the country's economy.

In this space, some 200 young people can take part in activities that involve sectors such as architecture, landscape design, visual arts, volunteering, arts and crafts, mobile photography, media and publishing, advertising and marketing, graphic design, animation, 3D modelling, fashion, painting, calligraphy, pottery, and many more.

There is also a cafe and co-working centres for young people and more than 10,000 books on hand for lovers of literature. The "Bookshop of Creativity" on the palace's ground floor has 150 seats, and an atmosphere where we hope that young craftspeople and artists can realise their artistic potential.

We are certain that the 4th World Conference on Creative Economy will be a significant event that has a profound impact on the development of young people in Uzbekistan. It provides a unique opportunity for the country's youth to get acquainted with global best practices in the creative industries, establish international contacts, and present their projects on the world stage.

We believe that the development of the creative industries will inspire young people to strive for new achievements — providing new incentives to create innovative projects that will further Uzbekistan's position as a global leader in the creative sector. In the meantime, the Agency for Youth Affairs will continue to support talented young people, facilitate their ideas, and pioneer projects to create a bright and sustainable future for our country.



National Pavilion of Uzbekistan, Italy, 2023



National Pavilion of Uzbekistan, Italy, 2023

Jamila Khalibaeva



The creative industries are becoming a global movement that erases all boundaries and unites people of different cultures and traditions through innovation. Global trends show that the creative economy's turnover exceeds \$2.3 trillion annually, with global export indicators reaching \$250 billion. According to forecasts, given the current growth rates and the increasing importance of this sector in the global economy, it is expected to account for 10 percent of global GDP in the next 10-15 years. Uzbekistan is eager to become a significant player in this global industry, having laid the foundation needed to unleash its full potential.

Uzbekistan has long been a cradle of creativity, with its rich heritage in handicrafts, architecture, and the arts, captivating the world and shaping the evolution of modern culture in the region. Inheriting this legacy from our ancestors, we continue to innovate and actively develop the creative industries, striving to build the ideal environment for creators and supporting their projects in every possible way, including through financial backing.

Today, the creative industries in Uzbekistan are experiencing a period of rapid growth, becoming a vital part of the country's economy and cultural identity. With over 85,000 employees across more than 9,500 entities actively engaged in creative projects, the industry is thriving — and gaining more momentum still. The impact of these artisans is felt not only locally but also on the international stage, showcasing the immense potential of Uzbekistan's creative sector. The integration of technology, innovation, and creativity is crucial to the production of these goods and services, driving the industry forward and solidifying its role in the global market.

To further advance this sector, the government has placed significant emphasis on supporting creative initiatives and fostering their develop-

ment. One key initiative starting in 2024 was the expansion of IT Park Uzbekistan to include creative teams. This allows creative businesses to become members and benefit from special legal regulations, tax incentives, and comprehensive support programs designed to help them enter new markets and boost exports to foreign countries.

In less than a year, we have already seen remarkable progress:

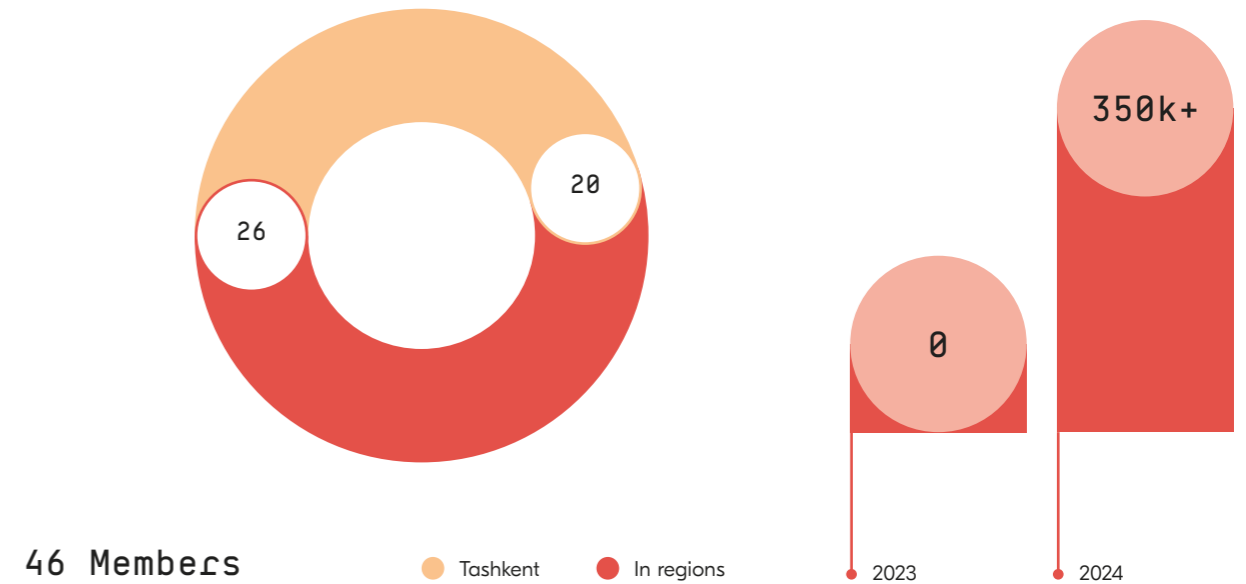
- Forty-six companies providing services across the creative economy have become members of IT Park Uzbekistan, eight of which were established with foreign capital.
- Twenty of these companies are located in Tashkent, while 26 operate throughout the rest of Uzbekistan.
- Some 245 jobs have been created by IT Park Uzbekistan members working in the creative industries.
- Exports have reached more than \$350,000, with main export destinations for creative services including the UK, South Korea, Georgia, and India.

IT Park Uzbekistan supports member companies in the creative industry not only with tax benefits and streamlined business operations, but also through comprehensive programs such as Zero Risk and Local2Global.

We believe that creativity is deeply ingrained in our national character. As we continue to support and nurture this sector, Uzbekistan is poised to become a hub of creative innovation on the global stage, and IT Park Uzbekistan is building a solid foundation for it to take route. We believe that this will enable us to contribute significantly to the global creative economy.

CREATIVE ECONOMY INDICATORS

Exports



Export Geography



Rasuljon Mirzaakhmedov



Uzbekistan's creative industries are experiencing a phase of rapid growth and transformation, and reflect both the country's rich cultural heritage and modern trends. Artisans play a key role in this new age as the guardians of ancient traditions, and also the driving force of new creative processes.

Uzbekistan has long been famous for its crafts: weaving, ceramics, wood carving, carpet weaving, embroidery, metalwork, and many more. These traditional arts are passed down from generation to generation, preserving their unique character.

However, in recent years artisans have faced both new opportunities and new challenges. Greater globalisation and new technologies have opened up new markets, but they also require fresh adaptation to modern standards and demands.

One key element in developing Uzbekistan's creative industries has been to build the right conditions to integrate traditional crafts into modern creative processes. To achieve this goal, work is underway to support and promote artisans through various programmes and projects. In one example, creative clusters are being built where craftsmen can exchange experiences, develop their skills, and adapt traditional techniques to modern demands. It also allows them to collaborate with designers, artists, and other creative professionals to craft unique products and enhance their market value.

Uzbek crafts are becoming an integral part of the country's cultural brand. They attract the attention of not only local residents but also tourists, which contributes to the development of the tourism industry and increases the economic potential of different regions. The participation of Uzbek artisans in international exhibitions and fairs, such as EXPO and the International Folk Art Market (IFAM) festival, also plays an important role in promoting their products on the world stage.

The sustainable development of Uzbekistan's craft and creative industries will require comprehensive support from the state, businesses, and the public. Educational projects to train young artisans and designers and spaces to share knowledge and experience will play an important role. Investment in innovation, such as building digital platforms to sell and promote handicrafts, will also open up new pathways for growth.

It is gratifying to note that all of these areas have been taken into account while drafting Uzbekistan's upcoming "Law on the Creative Economy". The bill will unite various creative industries together in a single register, providing opportunities for collaboration both domestically and abroad. It will also address another pressing issue in the crafts sector: the establishment of authorship and copyright protection. In my opinion, all of these legislative acts are designed to protect artisans.

Watching this process unfold, I wish to celebrate that the craftspeople of Uzbekistan are both maintaining ties with tradition and actively integrating into the modern creative industries. As a result, they contribute not only to the preservation of our cultural heritage — but also to the creation of new economic opportunities.



Archaeological Treasures of Uzbekistan. From Alexander the Great to the Kushan Empire exhibition, James Simon Gallery, Berlin, 2023



Archaeological Treasures of Uzbekistan. From Alexander the Great to the Kushan Empire exhibition, James Simon Gallery, Berlin, 2023

C r e a
t i v e



U z
b e k i
s t a n

**Republic of Uzbekistan:
Creative Industries Summary**

Number of Creative Entities by Sector

Overview: Creative Industries in Uzbekistan

Putting Creativity on the Map

Harnessing Untapped Potential

Strategies for Support

Future Steps

Dimiter Gantchev

Deputy Director and Senior Manager in the
Copyright and Creative Industries Sector, World
Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

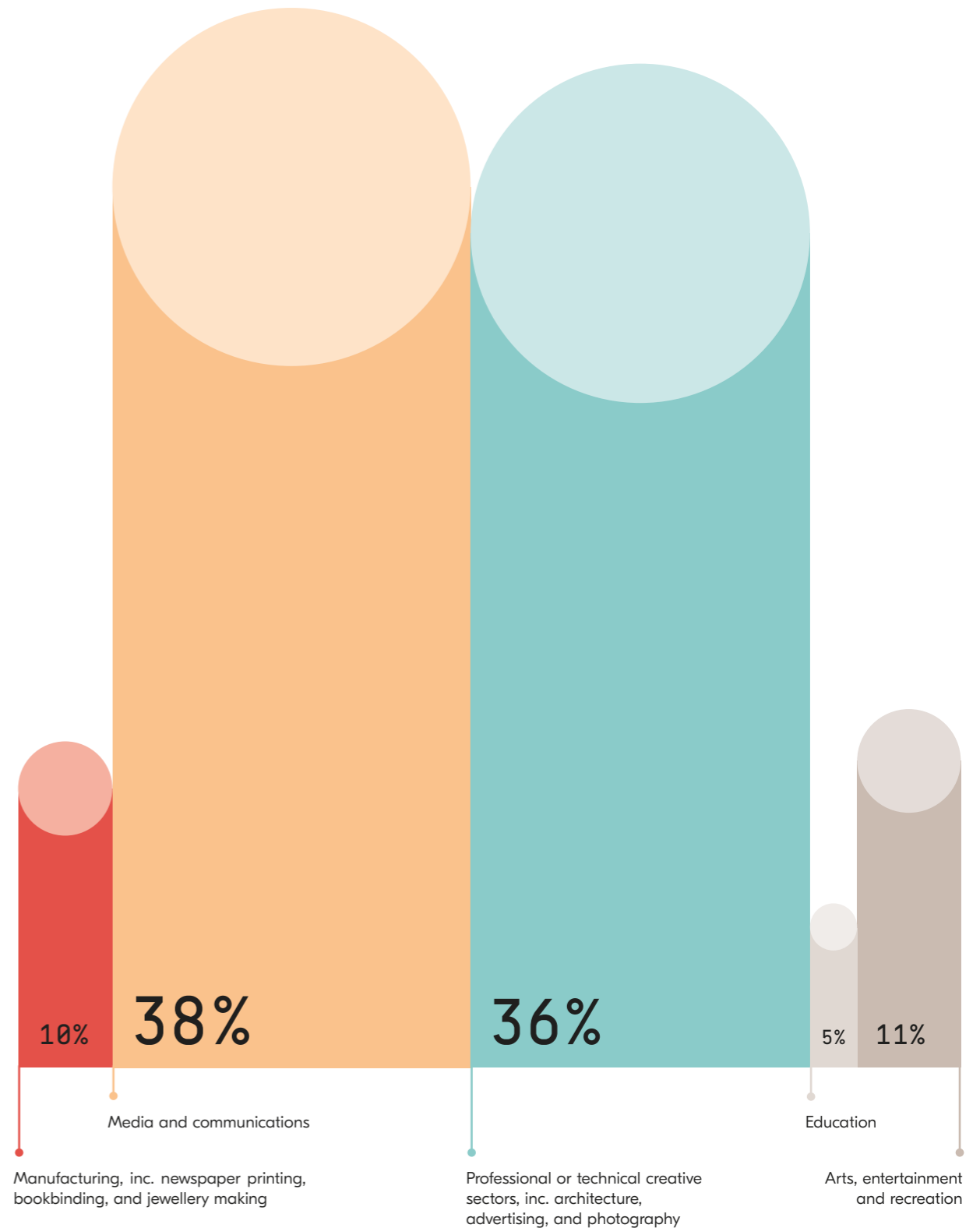
**The Development of the Creative Economy
in Asia and the Pacific**

**Uzbekistan's Creative Economy:
Solid Foundations and Strategic Efforts**

Republic of Uzbekistan: Creative Industries Summary



NUMBER OF CREATIVE ENTITIES BY SECTOR



OVERVIEW: CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan's creative industries encompass a dynamic and diverse array of activities, businesses, and markets.

Traditional creative sectors include crafts, such as textiles and ceramics, as well as both traditional and contemporary visual and performing arts, fashion, and design. There are also a host of technical creative professions, including architecture, advertising and publishing, video and cinema, and the media.

Other elements of the creative industries may not be immediately obvious to outsiders. The tourism and events industry, the heritage sector, and gastronomy are all important contributors to a country's creative economy and responsible for introducing thousands of global travellers to Uzbekistan's vast cultural wealth. IT and software development, encompassing areas such as the video game industry, are also on the rise, challenging old binaries and building bridges between science, technology, and creativity.

Data gathered by the British Council in 2022 recorded 9,563 businesses working in Uzbekistan's creative industries in 2020, providing work to 84,068 employees. But the most striking aspect of this data is how it captures creative enterprises' explosive growth. The number of creative businesses in Uzbekistan rose by an average of 60 percent between 2016 and 2020, with the number of employees also growing by 11 percent.

PUTTING CREATIVITY ON THE MAP

Uzbekistan's creative industries can be found in every corner of the country, with each region adding its own unique ideas and innovations to Uzbekistan's cultural map.

Certain sectors, however, gravitate to specific geographic areas. Businesses operating in the tourism and heritage sectors, for example, tend to gather close to key historic sites, such as those in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva. Other regions have traditional ties to specific industries or art forms. Master artisans in these areas pass on their knowledge to young apprentices, making certain crafts particularly prevalent in these areas.

The majority of Uzbekistan's creative economy remains concentrated in the capital, Tashkent. Businesses are drawn by the city's size and extensive international infrastructure: Tashkent has ample domestic and international travel routes and is the largest city in Central Asia.

But they are also attracted to the city's vibrancy. More than half of Uzbekistan's population is under 30, providing a talented and innovative workforce for industries such as architecture, design, and software development.

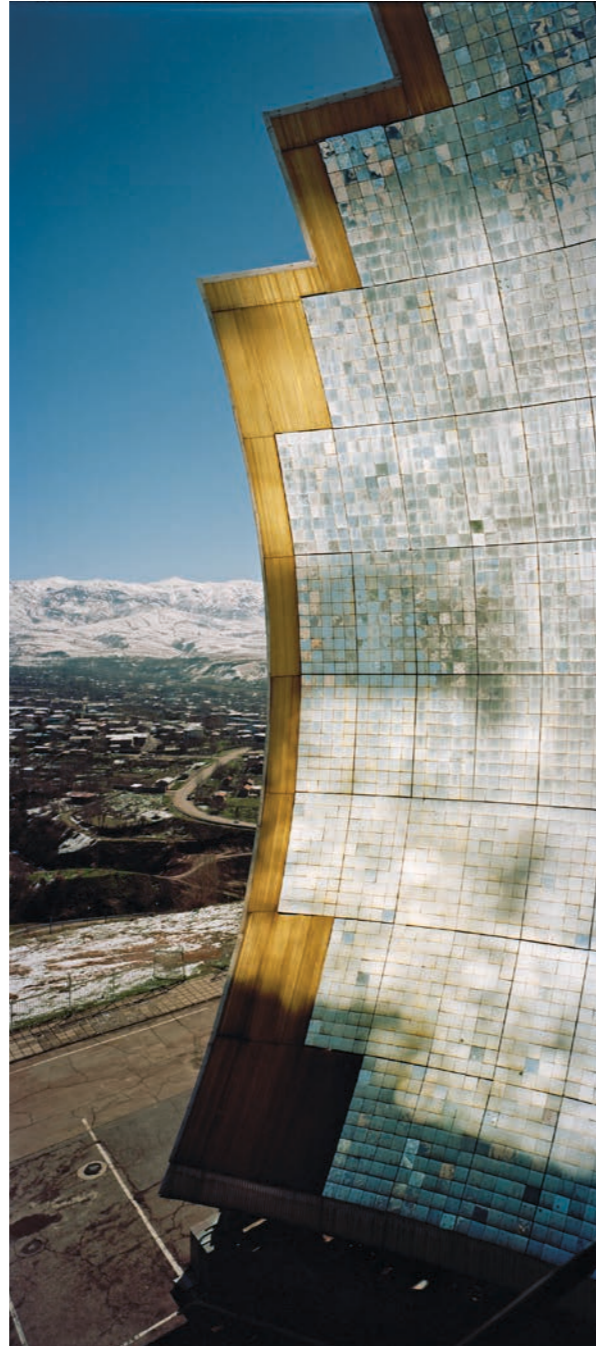


HARNESSING UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Uzbekistan's creative industries are rapidly reaching new heights. Yet there is also untapped potential and space for development.

The 2022 report placed Uzbekistan's creative industries into five categories: creative businesses with a link to some kind of manufacturing — such as newspaper printing, bookbinding, and jewellery making — media and communications, professional or technical creative sectors — including architecture, advertising, and photography — education, and arts, entertainment, and recreation.

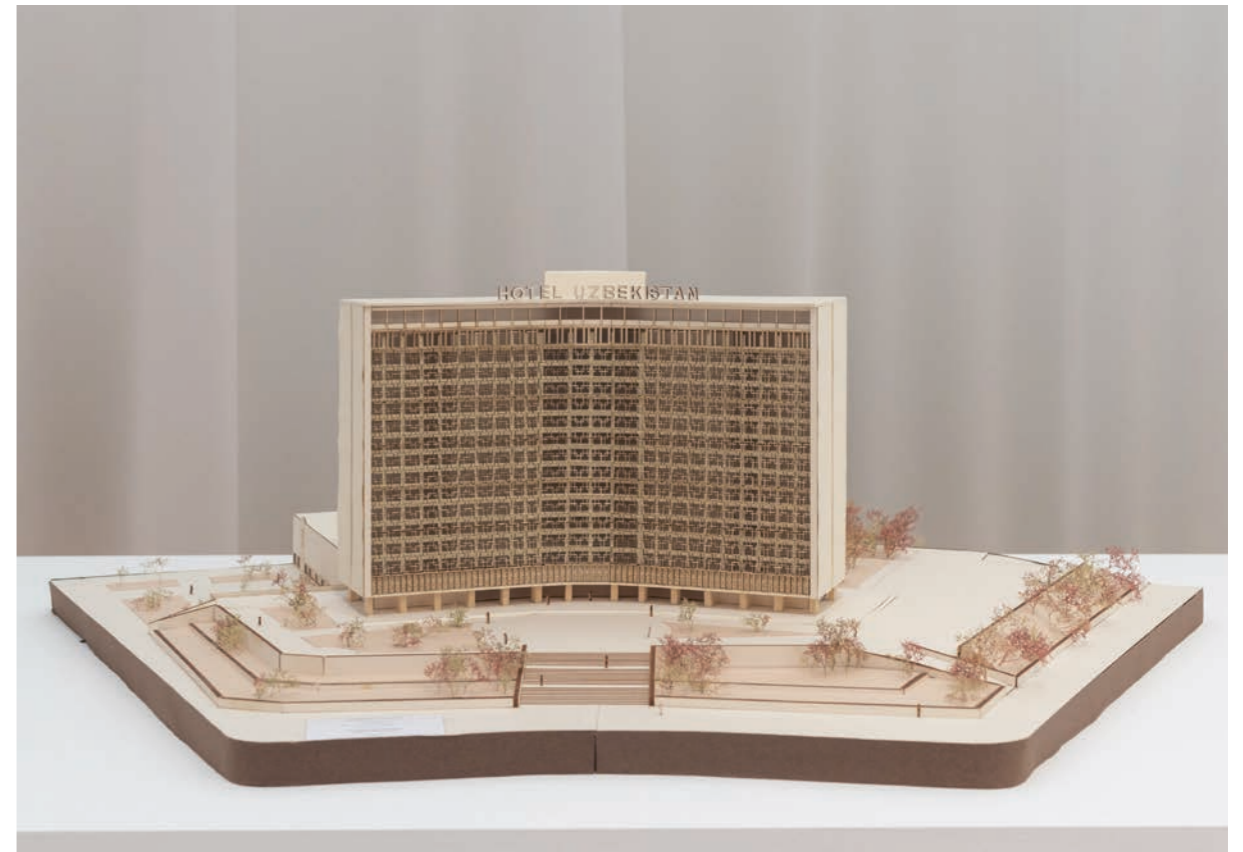
Breaking down this data shows multiple areas ripe for investment. Crafts, for example, a vibrant and vital part of Uzbekistan's heritage and one of the country's most unique cultural selling points, accounted for just 0.6 percent of the country's creative enterprises.



Heliocomplex – Physics-Sun Institute, Tashkent Region



Tashkent Modernism.Index, Triennale, Milan, 2023



Tashkent Modernism.Index, Triennale, Milan, 2023



Scientific catalogue created as part of the *Abu Rayhon Beruni* exhibition, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 2023



STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT

The government of Uzbekistan already has several programmes in place to develop and promote the country's growing creative industries.

State-funded groups focused on building the country's creative economy include the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation, which works to promote the performing arts, museums, and galleries, Uzbekkino, which finances local film production, and the Hunarmand Association, a public body that supports artisans to develop, promote and sell traditional handicrafts.

- **Financial aid**

Monetary support has been a key part of Uzbekistan's support for the creative sector, empowering entrepreneurs to invest in and expand their businesses.

Craftspeople who are members of the Hunarmand Association can benefit from preferential loan rates and state finance is available to cover the cost of materials, wages, and digital marketing. Subsidies, meanwhile, seek to offset the cost for artisans who wish to export their work abroad or to explore the domestic tourist market.

- **Infrastructure**

For the creative industries to function, they must be supported by a robust, practical, and easy-to-navigate legal and bureaucratic structure that protects the rights of companies and consumers. Reforms introduced by Uzbekistan to build and reinforce that framework include measures to support copyright protection and a centralised portal for event licensing.

The government of Uzbekistan has also created a national directory for craftspeople and a register for artisans working in the tourism sector so that they can benefit from valuable targeted support.

Physical infrastructure also matters. In a bid to further stimulate the growth of Uzbekistan's creative and business ecosystem, 13 regional IT parks are being developed to serve as startup incubators and boost investment nationwide.

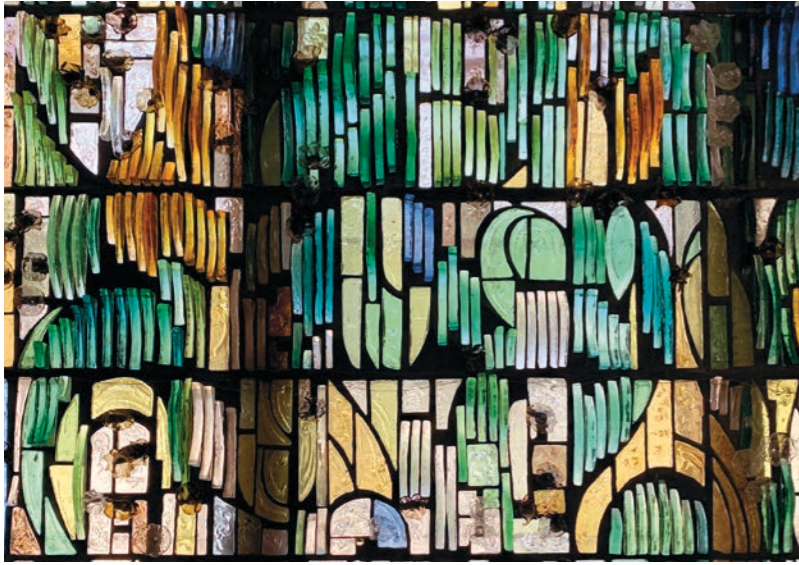
- **Youth engagement**

The government of Uzbekistan has sought to drive youth engagement in the creative industries by embracing the country's ancient culture of *usta-shogird* — the act of passing down skills from generation to generation. It supported the investiture of 38,090 master craftspeople and 59,075 apprentices between 2017 and 2020.

Similarly, officials have sought to promote the concept of shared community between artisans, as seen in traditionally Uzbek neighbourhoods known as *mahallas*. Just as Uzbek *mahallas* would provide care and support for residents, craftspeople in these areas will be able to rely on each other to share knowledge and identify new markets.



Concert by the National Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan in the framework of the *Abu Rayhan Beruni* exhibition, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 2023



Delegation House of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the UzSSR, Tashkent, 1975 © Armin Linke, *Tashkent Modernism. Index exhibition*



Peoples' Friendship Palace, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2021 © Armin Linke, *Tashkent Modernism. Index exhibition*





Design concept for the Centre for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Tashkent

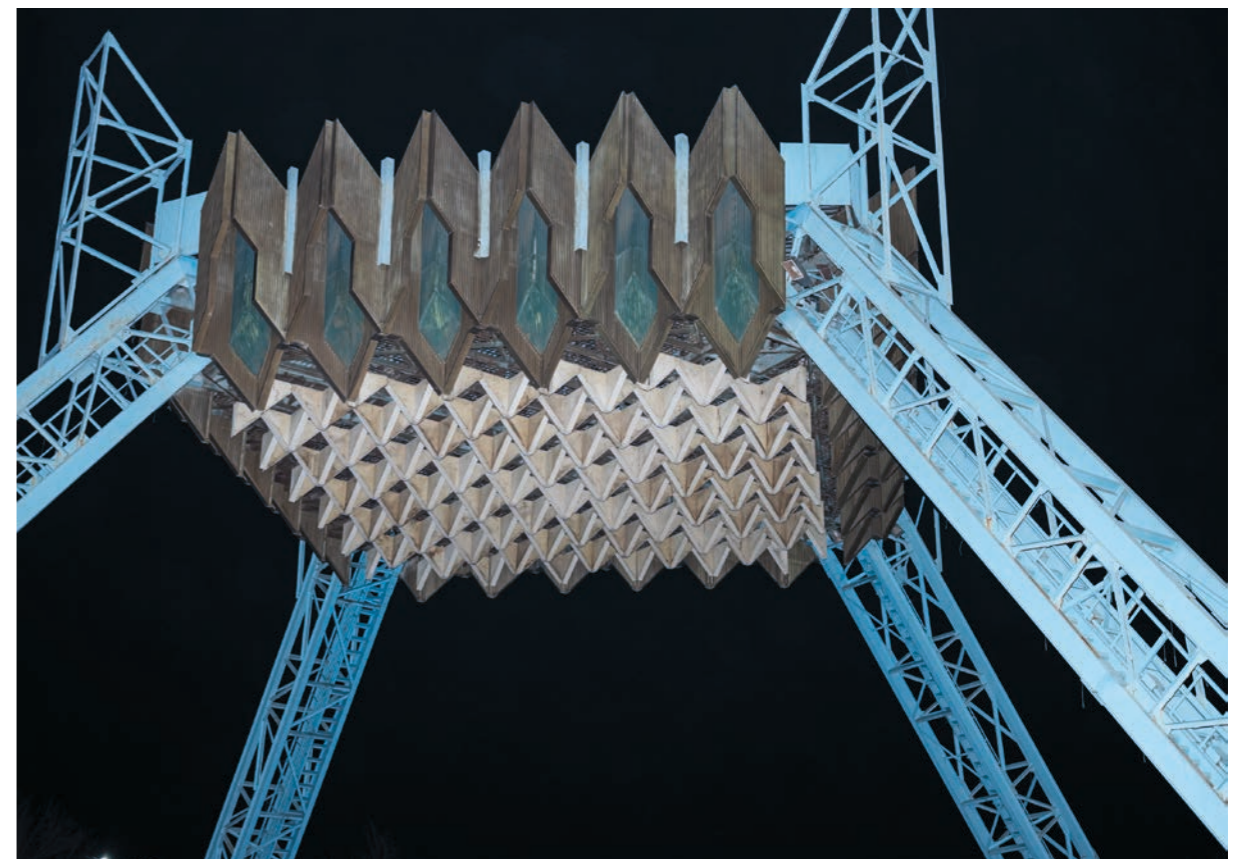


Tashkent Music Encounters at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Tashkent, 2022

Uzbekistan is now quickly moving forward to create a unified approach that will better support the country's burgeoning creative economy.

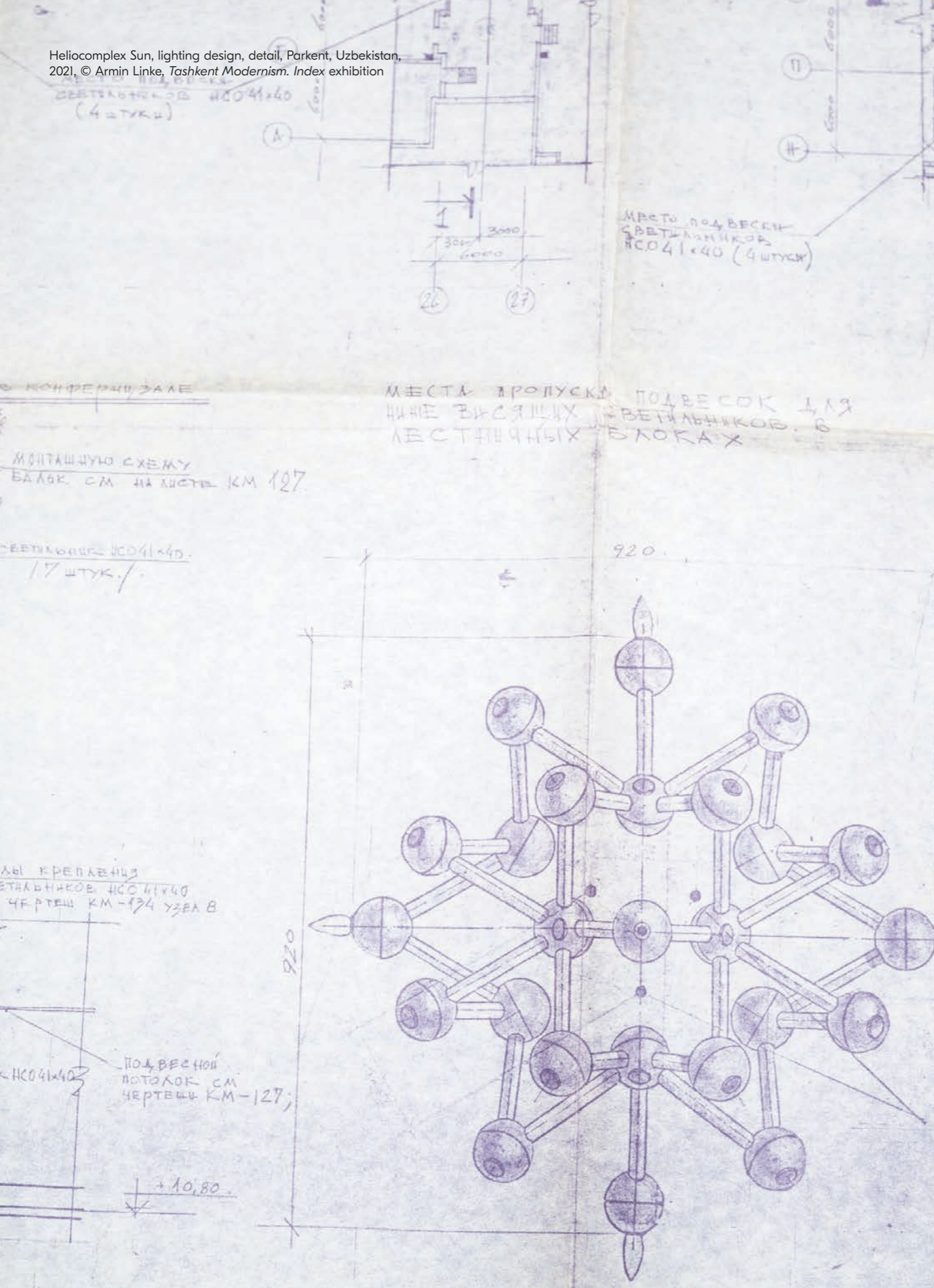
A bill is being developed by lawmakers to provide a stable, unified foundation from which the creative industries can grow. The new legislation will define the country's creative industries and divide them between core sectors, such as audiovisual and performing arts, design, architecture and publishing, and related industries, including tourism, IT and entertainment.

These clear guidelines will be clear to help organisations collect data and provide targeted support. The bill will also define the role of the state and regulatory bodies in the creative economy, and lay out basic measures that the government will take as it continues to support the creative industries.



Theater Arena, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2021,
© Armin Linke, *Tashkent Modernism. Index* exhibition

Heliocomplex Sun, lighting design, detail, Parkent, Uzbekistan, 2021, © Armin Linke, *Tashkent Modernism. Index exhibition*



Tashkent Television Center, façade mosaic by E. Ablin, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 2022, © Armin Linke, *Tashkent Modernism. Index exhibition*



Dimiter Gantchev



Creativity can mean different things to different people. It has always been present in people's lives, but today it acquires a new role. In the context of the creative economy, creativity is no longer merely a support for entertainment; it is an object of economic, social, and cultural policies.

The creative industries have become synonymous with innovative and forward thinking. They characterise a society where new ideas are encouraged and transformed into fuel for development. The creative industries enrich our lives and provide inspiration for everyone. However, to genuinely promote creativity, it's essential to ensure that it is properly rewarded and that creators can make a living from their work. The intellectual property system provides both incentives and rewards to creators, ensuring they continue to generate invaluable cultural and creative wealth. It is a potent tool that aids in understanding creative industries and defining the scope of the economic activities, occupations, products, and services included within the creative industries.

Evidence from countries implementing successful creative industry strategies suggests that for this sector to flourish, it requires a functional infrastructure, an efficient and balanced system of intellectual property rights, distribution channels, payment methods, and different elements enabling the administration of rights and consumption of creative products. This system needs to be clear, easy to understand, operable, and beneficial to all stakeholders in the creative ecosystem.

Creativity needs nurturing and support. It has no boundaries or limits. To the young creatives of Uzbekistan, I want to say: While working on developing new and original products, remember that protecting your intellectual property rights can provide sustainable income over time and a competitive advantage over other creators in your field. Conduct due diligence to ensure you don't infringe on other owners' rights, register your intellectual creations when possible, and monitor their use. It's primarily your responsibility to detect misuse and take action. Knowing your rights goes hand in hand with raising public awareness that creativity comes at a price, and if we don't harness it, everyone will lose.



The creative economy has emerged as a vital driver of economic growth and resilience, social inclusion and equity, international influence and intercultural dialogue, and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific. The sector currently represents approximately 3 percent of global GDP, with predictions suggesting this share could triple by 2030. Its upward trajectory has been evident in a 20 percent increase in trade of creative goods between 2010 and 2020, alongside a more than doubling of creative services exports during the same period.

The sector is dominated by micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and is a significant source of employment, accounting for 6.2 percent of all workers and 50 million jobs worldwide. The creative economy employs more of those between 15-29 than any other sector, and about half of its practitioners are women. Diversifying the economies and societies of Asia and the Pacific away from environmentally intensive industrial production and boosting the creative economy will enhance our collective resilience to climate-related shocks, reduce our contribution to them, and advance sustainable growth and development across and beyond the region.

Against this backdrop, Uzbekistan is emerging as a hub for the creative economy and industries in Central Asia. The country demonstrates how to combine strong foundational elements for the creative economy with proactive and sustained efforts to capitalise on its potential. The strategic prioritisation of the creative economy is readily visible in the enactment of seven decrees directly focused on developing the sector in the past four years alone. This builds on a longstanding record of providing tax incentives and economic support for tourism, folk art, media, and theatrical arts since the mid-1990s.⁹ The creative economy accounts for more than a quarter of the country's overall output, contributing approximately 210,000 billion soums to its total GDP of 734,587.7 billion soums.

Uzbekistan is making significant strides in improving governance, investing in education, and pursuing economic diversification, with a view to fostering the regulatory framework, human capital, and macro-structural transition toward services that are essential for the creative economy. With a rich cultural heritage and 60 percent of citizens under 30, Uzbekistan has both the historical foundation and future potential for a dynamic, vibrant, and creative economy. The World Conference in Creative Economy (WCCE) in October will catalyse further progress, bring global attention to the country, and position Uzbekistan as a leading force in the global creative economy in the years to come.

AUTHORS

DR. RIZNALDI AKBAR



Dr. Riznaldi Akbar is a senior capacity building and training economist at the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), which he joined in January 2022. He spearheads capacity building and training programmes across ADB member countries and designs high-impact training workshops, policy dialogues, and conferences addressing sustainable development challenges, including the creative economy as a driver of inclusive growth. He is a co-editor of the book "Creative Economy 2030: Imagining and Delivering a Robust, Creative, Inclusive, and Sustainable Recovery," published in 2022. At ADBI, he also develops e-learning courses, expands digital training capabilities, creates knowledge products, and manages the institute's results management framework for monitoring and evaluation. With over 20 years of experience at the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, his expertise spans fiscal policy, taxation, investment, macroeconomics, G20 affairs, and disaster risk financing. Dr. Akbar holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Western Australia and a Master of Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon University.

JAMES CORREIA



James Correia is a research, capacity building and training associate at the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI). In parallel, he is currently pursuing his PhD in Global Environmental Governance and International Climate Policy at the University of Tokyo. He has previously held a range of posts in the New Zealand Government in Wellington and Brussels, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) in London, the European Union (EU) in Brussels, and Trinity College Dublin. James holds a Masters of Public Policy (MPP) from Maastricht University in the Netherlands, a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Politics and International Studies from the University of Melbourne, and executive certificates on Law and Sustainability and Migration Policy from Oxford University and the European University Institute.

SHEENA KANON LEONG



Sheena Kanon Leong is an intern with the capacity building and training team at the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI). Prior to her internship role, Sheena worked in the areas of anti-corruption and good governance within political and financial systems with the Japan Network of Anti-Corruption Researchers (JANAR) and the Asia Africa Forum on Corruption (AAFC). She also worked as a research assistant at the Department of Human Science at Osaka University (Japan), focusing on disaster resilience and the recovery of disaster-ridden areas in Japan. Sheena obtained her Bachelor in Human Science from Osaka University with a concentration in Political and Global Studies. She is currently completing dual master's degrees, in Public policy at the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Tokyo (Japan) and another in Law at the School of International Studies at Peking University (PRC), in conjunction with the Graduate School of International Studies at Seoul National University (ROK).



Ballet *Lazgi*. *Dance of Soul and Love*
performed by the National Ballet of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's Creative Industries:



Breakdown by

Sector

Sectors

Visual Arts
Performing Arts
Crafts
Fashion and Fine Jewellery
IT and Software Development
Design Industry
Cinema and Animation
Media
Events and Tourism
Architecture
Advertising and Marketing
Food and Drink
Publishing
Heritage
Science and Education

Shokhrukh Rakhimov
Ceramicist

Bibisora Dilshod qizi Rahmatullaeva
Miniaturist

Madina Kasimbaeva
Master suzane

Synthesis
Branding and communications agency

Shokir Kholikov
Film director and screenwriter

Takhmina Turdialieva
Architect

Vargunza
Graffiti artist

United Soft
VFX, CGI, and Virtual Production studio

Dalahast
Musicians

Ilkhom Theatre
Contemporary Theatre

**Uzbekistan Art and Culture
Development Foundation**
Restoration

Uzbekistan State Museum of Art
Museums and Art Galleries

Tashkent International Jazz Festival
Cultural Events

SECTOR 1: VISUAL ARTS

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

VISUAL ARTS INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.56 million USD 6.20 billion UZS	77.96%

Contribution to GDP

\$13.4 million
USD
148.13 billion UZS

Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
3,695	8.23%

0.02%

Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
752	15.91%

GDP contribution
average annual growth
12.45%

Domestic market size	Average return on sales
\$6.58 million USD 72.68 billion UZS	5.76%

Visual Arts

Including fine arts and painting, photography, museum services, and literature and poetry

Long lauded as one of the country's most exciting and dynamic creative sectors, Uzbekistan's visual arts industry has shown steady and consistent growth throughout the past decade. In particular, the museum sector has gone above and beyond as a key economic driver. This has brought tangible benefits nationwide, although most sector employees remain clustered around Tashkent. (Some 26.63 percent of industry workers live in the capital, followed by 10.55 percent in the Bukhara region and 9.42 percent in the Fergana region).

Yet while Uzbekistan's museums continue to move from strength to strength, the most profitable area of the country's visual arts industry has more modern roots. With its lens firmly focused on daily life, Uzbekistan's photography sector is blossoming, with average returns rising to 12 percent.

SECTOR 2: PERFORMING ARTS

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

PERFORMING ARTS INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.001 million USD 0.013 billion UZS	417%

Contribution to GDP

\$31.83 million
USD
351.83 billion UZS

Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
7,168	2.5%

0.04%

Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
432	4.08%

GDP contribution
average annual growth
6.6%

Domestic market size	Average return on sales
\$11.46 million USD 126.63 billion UZS	14.6%

Performing Arts

Including theatre and live music, technical production and support services for live performances, and music publishing

Uzbekistan's performing arts industry retains a primarily domestic focus. Imports outstripped exports in 2022, hitting \$0.137 million.

As the country's artistic scene becomes more established, however, its presence on the global stage grows. Exports are rising by 417 percent on average each year; growth in the number of companies and employees working in the sector also continues to skyrocket. Annual investments in the industry reached \$5.16 million in 2023, with the world increasingly keen to experience Uzbek artists on stage.

By far the largest share of all companies within the sector are those providing technical support services for live performances, making up some 71 percent of registered enterprises. Yet companies focused on theatre are by far the biggest employers, with 4,853 staff members nationwide.

SECTOR 3:
CRAFTS

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

CRAFTS INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC PROFILE
(2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$303.57 million USD	29%
3355.05 billion UZS	

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$61.45 million USD	20,493	7.8%
679.16 billion UZS		

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.07%	2,472	14.2%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
8.0%	\$346.52 million USD	6.6%
	3,829.77 billion UZS	

Crafts

Including the manufacture of carpets and rugs, ceramics, musical instruments, costume jewellery, games and toys, and the cutting, shaping and finishing of stone

Uzbekistan's crafts industry is the result of thousands of years of artisanship. Today, the sector is proliferating, particularly as more people seek to embrace and benefit from Uzbekistan's ancient artistic traditions. Companies producing wood products, costume jewellery, and toys are particularly benefitting from this boom, with the number of enterprises in these areas growing by as much as 20 percent YoY.

In terms of employment, however, it is carpet weaving that dominates, with 26 percent of all sector employees involved in such work.



Nodir Rasulov, master of golden sewing,
member of the *Homo Faber Guide*

SECTOR 4: FASHION AND FINE JEWELLERY

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

FASHION INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$461.74 million USD 5,103.19 billion UZS	31.1%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$109.14 million USD 1,206.28 billion UZS	39,870	11.94%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.13%	9,815	20.77%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
16.18%	\$306.04 million USD 3,382.33 billion UZS	5.79%

Fashion

Including the manufacturing of clothes and accessories, incorporating fur and leather products, and fine jewellery production and design

Uzbekistan's fashion scene is flourishing. A new generation of designers, keen to embrace and explore their cultural heritage, are reimagining traditional costumes and textiles — creating collections that blend the knowledge of centuries with avant-garde streetwear and couture.

Uzbekistan is a net fashion exporter, and industry profits from international trade are increasing steadily. Currently, more than three-quarters of fashion industry employees are engaged in producing clothing, but the fine jewellery sector is also

undergoing rapid growth. The number of people employed in jewellery is growing on average 56.2 percent YoY, supporting an industry worth \$268.19 million.

SECTOR 5: IT AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

IT AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$97.65 million USD 1,079.27 billion UZS	178%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$227.82 million USD 2,517.91 billion UZS	16,699	25.7%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.28%	4,755	17.4%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
47.35%	\$562.04 million USD 6,211.67 billion UZS	27.5%

IT and Software Development

Including the video games industry, software production, computer programming and IT consulting services

The IT and software industry is one of Uzbekistan's fastest growing industries. Programming services are a particular strength, making up three quarters of the industry's exports. It's no surprise that the country is seeing the most growth in this field, with the number of companies providing programming support rising on average 28 percent each year.

With this young and talented workforce, the country can continue to focus its efforts on growing a more diverse — and more creative — range of sectors within the IT and software industry. The video game industry in particular shows signs of promise, reporting the sector's highest rates of return at 36.16 percent.

DESIGN INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN
(2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.023 million USD 0.258 billion UZS	1,149%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$1.92 million USD 21.19 billion UZS	712	13.32%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.024%	458	14.87%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
11.32%	\$10.21 million USD 112.88 billion UZS	5.4%

Design

Including product and graphic design

Drawing on the country's rich patchwork of natural beauty and cultural heritage, Uzbekistan's designers are moving from strength to strength. Exports in particular have seen rapid change, with growth hitting an average of 1,149 percent YoY.

The country's design landscape is dominated by the capital, Tashkent, which is home to 58 percent of all companies working in the sector, followed by the city of Samarkand, with 7.4 percent.)

CINEMA AND ANIMATION
INDUSTRY ECONOMIC
BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.002 million USD 0.022 billion UZS	3,065%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$7.24 million USD 80.06 billion UZS	1,392	3.0%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.01%	627	12.30%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
4.97%	\$16.41 million USD 181.99 billion UZS	-1.5%

Cinema and Animation

Including movie and television production, post-production and editing services, movie distribution and screening, video rental

Uzbekistan's cinema and animation industry centres on movie production. Some 63 percent of all companies in this industry are involved in the sector, which also accounts for three-quarters of all industry employees. Nevertheless, it remains an area rich for further investment, thanks not only to Uzbekistan's movie-ready, cinematic landscapes, but also existing tax rebates.

Other sectors are also showing strong and exciting signs of growth. The number of companies working post-production is growing on average by more than 20 percent each year, while the workforce behind the film distribution sector is also rising sharply.

MEDIA INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN
(2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$17.39 million USD	175%
192.20 billion UZS	

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$140.43 million USD	12,511	7.0%
1,552.07 billion UZS		

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.17%	2,044	9.20%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
20.94%	\$303.94 million USD	29.20%
	3,359.11 billion UZS	

Media

Including radio broadcasting, data hosting and processing, news agencies and online media

Uzbekistan's media industry is evolving to meet the digital age. Today, online media outlets far outstrip traditional radio and television broadcasters in terms of employment and business growth, making up 40 percent of the country's media exports. Online and new media also boasts the greatest profitability, reporting returns of more than 120 percent, although media incomes remain strong across the board.

Much of this success is thanks to growing investment in this thriving sector. Since 2016, media investments in Uzbekistan have risen from \$11.2 million to \$67.3 million — proving that the right backing is key to growth.



Immersive installation *Don't Miss Your Exit* at the National Pavilion of Uzbekistan, Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2024, authors – Aziza Kadiri and Qizlar Collective



SECTOR 9 : EVENTS AND TOURISM

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

TOURISM AND EVENTS INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size

\$9.26 million
USD

billion UZS

Average annual growth
of industry exports

77.0%

Contribution to GDP

\$32.72 million
USD

148.13 billion UZS

Number of employees
engaged in sector

7,223

Average annual growth
of number of employees
engaged in sector

13.0%

Number of registered
enterprises operating
in sector

2,509

Average annual growth
of number of registered
enterprises

17.09%

GDP contribution
average annual growth

22.32%

Domestic market size

\$142.37 million
USD

1573.49 billion UZS

Average return on sales

4.7%

Events and Tourism

Including recreation and entertainment, theme parks, and the
organisation of trade fairs and conferences

Uzbekistan's tourism industry continues to blossom. While many visitors can be found experiencing historic cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara first-hand, a growing number of people are travelling to the country for business, visiting Tashkent and beyond.

To meet this growing need, the number of businesses involved in organising events and conferences is rising steadily, with an average YoY increase of more than 30 percent.

The same sector also contributes heavily to industry exports and profits. Such emerging sub-sectors are vital to Uzbekistan's creative future: providing the essential know-how and experience to build a business ecosystem that thrives on collaboration and sharing knowledge.

ARCHITECTURE
INDUSTRY ECONOMIC
BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$18.28 million USD	10%
202.21 billion UZS	

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$337.78 million USD	40,759	5.8%
148.13 billion UZS		

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.42%	3,294	11%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
11.85%	\$508.37 million USD	9.5%
	5618.56 billion UZS	

Architecture

Including structural design, surveying, and consultation

Architecture is an already established powerhouse of Uzbekistan's creative economy, employing 19 percent of all people who work in the country's creative industries as it embellishes and reshapes the country's urban fabric.

Investments in the industry make up approximately 1 percent of all investment nationwide. In turn, the architecture sector builds and supports Uzbekistan's economy — most notably in Tashkent, where it contributes 1.87 percent of gross regional product (GRP).

Companies that provide structural design services make up roughly three-quarters of Uzbekistan's thriving architecture industry. They have also seen the most investment in recent years with backing rising to \$167.95 million in 2023.

But it is the more expressive and creative elements of Uzbek architecture that have a more global impact. Architectural design services account for 56.4 percent of all industry exports, and have an annual growth rate of 36 percent.



SECTOR 11: ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$17.42 million USD	110%
192.53 billion UZS	

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$49.89 million USD	7,997	-5.4%
551.45 billion UZS		

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.06%	2311	2.24%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
6.77%	\$235.08 million USD	14.7%
	2,598.17 billion UZS	

Advertising and Marketing

Including public relations, market research,
and intellectual property services

Future-thinking advertising campaigns are not only needed for the creative industries to grab audiences — they're often creative works of storytelling and design in their own right.

Interest and investment in Uzbekistan's advertising and marketing industry spiked during the Covid-19 pandemic, and at the end of 2022, investment in the industry sat at roughly 5.5 million USD.

Advertising agencies dominate the sector — making up 55 percent of all companies on record and 40 percent of all employment — but market research firms are having a considerable impact in building a fuller image of Uzbekistan's young and long-underserved consumers and producing more local campaigns. Currently, they lead the industry in profitability, reporting average returns of 34.2 percent.

SECTOR 12: FOOD AND DRINK

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRY ECONOMIC PROFILE (2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$3.91 million USD	361%
billion UZS	

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$89.84 million USD	38,097	7.3%
992.94 billion UZS		

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.11%	14,432	9.6%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
10.7%	\$475.99 million USD	1.1%
	5260.70 billion UZS	

Food and Drink

Including restaurants and food delivery services

Gastronomy sits at the heart of Uzbek culture, its full, diverse, and vibrant flavours hinting at the country's long history as both a meeting place and a bastion of hospitality. It's little surprise that the sector is one of the largest within Uzbekistan's creative industries, employing 14.2 percent of all creative industry workers, and making up 15.7 percent of the entire creative industries market.

Its presence is felt across the country, and increasingly abroad, with industry exports growing an annual average of 361 percent.

PUBLISHING INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN
(2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.033 million USD 0.373 billion UZS	31.3%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$20.58 million USD 227.51 billion UZS	3,785	-2.2%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.03%	1,404	8.76%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
-2.68%	\$56.5 million USD 624.43 billion UZS	9.9%

Publishing

Including the publication of books, newspapers, directories and magazines, translation and interpretation services

Drawing on Uzbekistan's deep roots as a centre of learning and education, the publishing industry holds a prestigious position in the country's creative landscape. Investment in the sector grew eight-fold between 2016 and 2022, reaching an estimated \$18.62 million USD by 2022.

Newspaper and magazine publishing takes up more than half of the Uzbek market at 55 percent, worth an estimated \$31.46 million USD. Nevertheless, book publishers and translators continue to report particularly healthy rates of return at 10 percent and 26 percent respectively.

HERITAGE INDUSTRY
ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN
(2022)

Industry export size	Average annual growth of industry exports
\$0.001 million USD 0.006 billion UZS	3,634%

Contribution to GDP	Number of employees engaged in sector	Average annual growth of number of employees engaged in sector
\$32.84 million USD 362.96 billion UZS	9,250	8.23%

	Number of registered enterprises operating in sector	Average annual growth of number of registered enterprises
0.04%	552	15.91%

GDP contribution average annual growth	Domestic market size	Average return on sales
14.07%	\$17.17 million USD 72.68 billion UZS	-134.9%

Heritage

Including library and archive services, nature reserves and botanical gardens, and organisations involved in the protection of cultural and historical monuments

Uzbekistan's heritage industry plays a vital role not only in the country's economy, but also in its ability to protect and preserve the country's past. The sector has been a government priority for several years, with investment increasing an average of 93 percent YoY between 2016 and 2022.

Yet while Uzbekistan's heritage industry is synonymous with towering monuments, the sector also depends on quiet work behind the scenes. More than three-quarters of all employees in the heritage industry are based in libraries and archives, which make up some 80 percent of all organisations working in the sector.

SECTOR 15: SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

Statistics Agency under the President
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

SCIENCE AND EDUCATION INDUSTRY ECONOMIC BREAKDOWN (2022)

Industry export size

\$6.16 million
USD

58.98 billion UZS

Average annual growth
of industry exports

8.3%

Contribution to GDP

\$285.98 million
USD

3,160.67 billion UZS

Number of employees
engaged in sector

58,144

Average annual growth
of number of employees
engaged in sector

5.3%

Number of registered
enterprises operating
in sector

5,003

Average annual growth
of number of registered
enterprises

14.96%

GDP contribution
average annual growth

9.43%

Domestic market size

\$43.69 million
USD

482.90 billion UZS

Average return on sales

13.7%

Science and Education

Including cultural education, research and development in the
social sciences and humanities

Strong financial backing and a young, highly educated workforce are supercharging Uzbekistan's science and education sector. Investment in R&D increased by 1219 percent from 2016 to 2022, reaching 34.58 million USD.

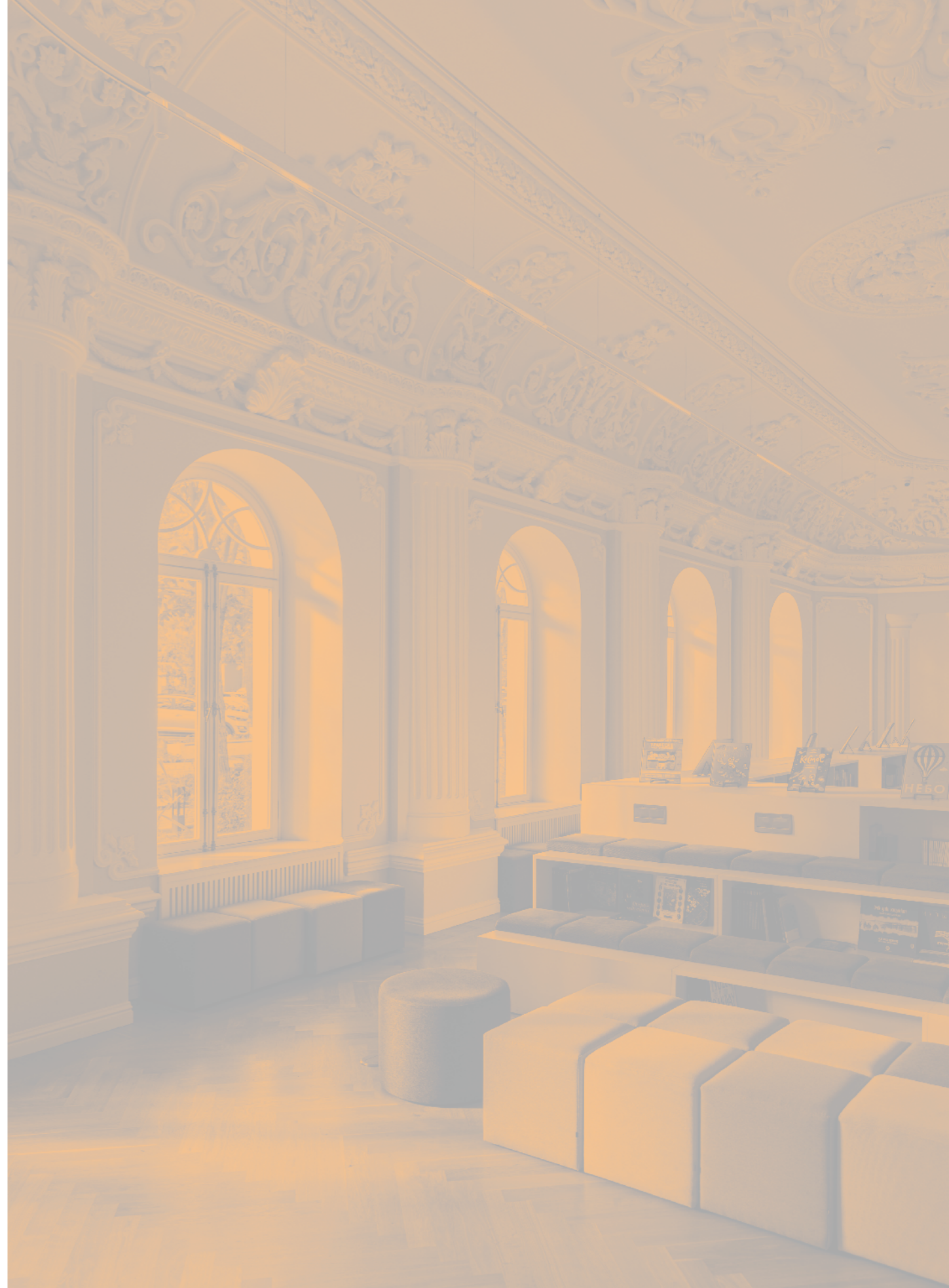
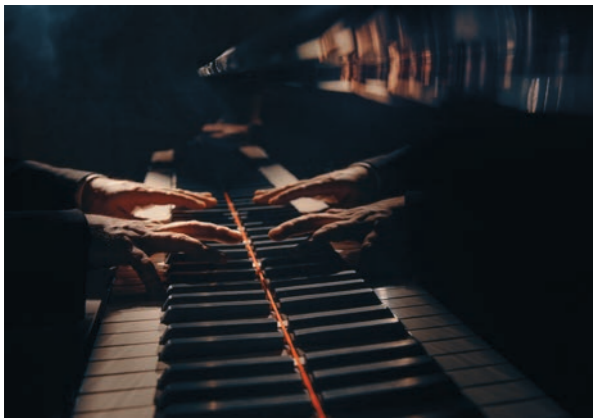
Education and research dedicated to natural sciences and engineering dominate the sector, making up more than 80 percent of industry exports. Most of this activity is focused on the Uzbek

capital of Tashkent, where 37 percent of the sector's employees reside — unsurprisingly, the industry also makes a significant contribution to the area's regional economy, at 1.23 percent of GRP.





Behzod Abduraimov, Uzbek pianist





Shokhrukh Rakhimov

Sector: Applied Art

Ceramicist

“I am a seventh-generation ceramicist in the Rakhimov dynasty. I carry on our family traditions, mastering the skills and knowledge passed down through generations with the deepest respect for the artistry of my ancestors. By honouring their legacy, I continue to create new works that both preserve and extend the timeless beauty of our craft.

I consider it a privilege to be surrounded by such a rich heritage. But our family’s traditions are not just something to preserve: they are a living flame, constantly renewed with fresh ideas and knowledge, ensuring that this art continues to thrive. Each project we work on is infused with a part of our soul, making every creation uniquely special. The process of bringing a new piece to life is gradual and deeply personal; over time, it becomes something close to the heart.

Uzbekistan is my home, and travelling throughout the country and exploring its diverse regions is a cherished tradition for us. My grandfather Akbar has a passion for collecting local legends, and we often visit remote villages to meet with local elders and hear their stories over tea. The tales we gather greatly inspire us and infuse our work in the studio with new ideas and perspectives. We take this inspiration and create pieces that reflect the beauty and traditions of Uzbekistan.

Our vision for the future of the Rakhimov dynasty is to continue honouring the rich traditions of our family while embracing innovation and global collaboration.

We aspire to extend our reach by partnering with artists and institutions from around the world, fostering a vibrant exchange of ideas and techniques. We also hope to enrich our craft and introduce our unique creations to a broad-

er audience by using new technology and exploring new design possibilities. We are committed to preserving the essence of our heritage while shaping the future of contemporary ceramics, ensuring that the Rakhimov family remains a bridge between the past and the future of ceramic art.

The future of the creative industries in Uzbekistan is incredibly promising. With our rich heritage of artistry and a growing presence on the global stage, we foresee a thriving creative landscape where traditional craftsmanship meets cutting-edge innovation. Uzbekistan’s unique cultural legacy is increasingly attracting international attention, positioning our country as a significant player in the global creative economy. We anticipate a flourishing of cross-cultural collaborations and an expansion of our artistic influence, which will inspire new generations of artists and establish Uzbekistan as a leading hub for creative excellence.”





Bibisora Dilshod qizi Rahmatullaeva

Sector: Applied Art

Miniaturist

Bibisora Dilshod qizi Rahmatullaeva was born on June 8, 2004 to a family of master woodworkers in the Tashkent region. She pursued her own passion for the craft by studying fine art at the Pavel Benkov Republican Specialised Art School.

Bibisora's journey in the world of miniature art began at the age of ten. She attributes much of her knowledge and skills to the influence of her grandfather, mastercraftsman Sirojiddin Rakhmatillaev. Inspired by literary masterpieces, her work showcases a unique ability to blend traditional techniques with contemporary creativity. A rising star in her field, Bibisora's achievements include winning the "Youngest Craftsman" category at the II International Handicraft Festival in Uzbekistan's Kokand.

Bibisora envisions a bright future for her craft. She recently collaborated with designer Azukar Moreno on a new collection for 2024, where she created a wooden handbag adorned with miniature art.

In the future, Bibisora hopes to showcase her craft on a global scale with international exhibitions and a studio where she can train apprentices. Above all, she believes that the promise of Uzbekistan's creative industries lies in reviving traditional crafts in order to offer genuine and authentic works of art.





Madina Kasimbaeva

Sector: Applied Art

Master Suzane

Uzbekistan is opening a new chapter in its cultural and creative history, with ancient crafts becoming an important driving force in contemporary art and the economy. As a master craftsperson of traditional Uzbek suzani — large pieces of embroidery that often decorate Uzbek homes — I see first-hand how ancient crafts are becoming an integral part of the modern creative economy. Today, our country stands at the intersection of cultural revival and innovation, opening new opportunities for both local craftspeople and the entire creative industry.

The traditional art of suzani-making that I practice is passed down from generation to generation. However, growing interest in Uzbek cultural traditions on the international stage is pushing this art form to new levels. Uzbekistan's creative industries include crafts, design, fashion, music and many other forms of expression, and each of these elements makes a unique contribution to the country's developing cultural identity.

In my experience, combining tradition and innovation doesn't just allow us to better preserve our cultural heritage — it gives us new ways of interpreting it. I always strive to integrate traditional patterns into my work, but at the same time, I look for ways to introduce modern perspectives, creating something new and relevant for today's world. In this way, we don't only preserve our traditions, but inspire the younger generations to study and develop our cultural heritage.

Uzbekistan has great potential to develop its creative industries, which we can see in the interest our art attracts from international collectors, museums, and fashion brands. Today, handicrafts such as suzani not only decorate homes but have also become part of the fashion industry, showcasing

our unique national motifs. Nevertheless, I believe that this is just the beginning: our craftsmen have much more yet to offer the world.

The creative industries in Uzbekistan are not just mere traditions: they are a living organism that develops, adapts, and grows. We are at a point when culture and art can become real drivers of economic development, and our task is to make the most of that moment, both to preserve our identity and to open up new horizons for creativity.





Synthesis

Sector: Advertising

Branding and communications agency

“Synthesis was founded in 2015. Over the past nine years, we’ve built a strong team of professionals and real expertise, and today we work with large local and international brands.

We consider it important to represent Uzbekistan on the global stage in order to develop the country’s advertising and creative sector. Each year, we’re proud to be among the winners at numerous international marketing festivals: at the moment, we’re ranked first place among advertising agencies in Uzbekistan, and fifth across Central Asia as a whole.

We particularly value projects with a socially-responsible slant that benefit both our clients, and the wider community. In the past, such projects have included the ISHONCH Cool Store, which provided places for shoppers to cool down at open-air markets during the height of the Uzbek summer, and “Not Only on the 8th of March”, which promoted the importance of gender equality all year round, rather than just during occasions such as International Women’s Day.

These are landmark local projects that have been discussed and shared abroad, allowing us to share our cultural identity further afield.

In the future, we ourselves developing the Uzbek market, training and supporting young professionals, and promoting Uzbek culture and identity in the international arena.

The market for creative services in Uzbekistan is growing rapidly. Clients are increasingly recognising the value of strategies and ideas, and realising that even limited budgets can achieve serious results with the right creative mindset.

It isn’t just advertising that is expanding rapidly, but creative sectors such as fashion, film and music. The planned adoption of new legislation supporting the creative economy in Uzbekistan will be an important step in opening new horizons for creative business and entrepreneurs.”





Shokir Kholikov

Sector: Audiovisual Art

Film director and screenwriter

“My name is Shokir Kholikov and I’m a screenwriter, director and editor.

I love every part of my work. The most enjoyable thing is to feel that I am doing something new and moving forward. I believe my great achievements are yet to come — and for now, simply that I have found my own path is achievement enough.

All of my projects are my favourites, and it will be that way in the future. Every director should love each and every one of their project. Things that aren’t made with love aren’t loved in return.

I think the fact that I was born in Uzbekistan is enough to motivate me to create.[MOUI]

When people are hungry, they think about filling their stomachs, not about making things. But when the conditions are right, there will always be creativity. I think that in the near future, the creativity we see will be far greater than now.

In the future, I’d like to see more people who believe in the youth, who are free from politics, who understand what art is, and think only about art. Only then do I believe that this sector will develop.”





Tahmina Turdialieva

Sector: Architecture, Engineering and Urbanism

Architect

Tahmina Turdialieva was born in Kashkadarya in 1991. Creative since childhood, she tried her hand at various design disciplines before settling on architecture. In the years since, she has studied and worked in Uzbekistan, China and Italy, winning a number of competitions including the Turkistan Architects Award and the Better Together Award. In 2024, she was included in a book by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) about 100 global women architects.

Turdialieva's work is characterised by the balance between aesthetics and practicality. She creates holistic architecture that tells a story about the relationship between a structure's interior and its environment. This often includes the use of sustainable materials and energy efficient solutions, as well as simplicity of execution.

Turdialieva believes that a country's prosperity is seen first and foremost in its cities — or, as the great Uzbek ruler Amir Timur said: 'If you doubt our power, look at our buildings'.

She hopes that the Uzbekistan's urban landscapes will continue to acquire their own distinct identity, with architects, designers and muralists all playing unique and important roles.





Vargunza

Sector: Fine Art

Graffiti artist

“I’m Mirshod, but as an artist I’m also known as Vargunza. I create graffiti for commercial projects and to educate local people through art.

I’m currently working on a project to accelerate the growth of graffiti art in Uzbekistan — both improving its appearance and creating jobs for artists. I’m gathering information about all the walls in the city where graffiti could potentially be placed, and then approaching the local authorities to approve street art in the areas. Once an agreement has been reached and the wall has been marked with my project’s logo, artists will be able to put their work on these walls legally.

I also offer custom designs for brands: through these commissions, my graffiti community will be able to sustain itself. I want to show that advertising can be non-intrusive and aesthetically pleasing. I love it when brands choose to use artistic designs for their advertising rather than tasteless printed banners.

For me, Uzbekistan is a country where new opportunities for personal and entrepreneurial growth are constantly emerging. I’m particularly pleased with the warm reception my art receives from the local population. I’m also proud that I’m being invited onto local television more and more often to discuss the development of street art in Uzbekistan. It’s particularly rewarding to be recognized as an expert alongside professors and leading scholars.

My goal is to break the stereotype that artists are always poor. I’m satisfied with my financial situation and want to give this opportunity to other artists as well by creating my own creative association of street artists.

Talent exists in every person. Vandalism is not a result of ignorance, but a lack of freedom in creativity. With state support and confidence in one’s career choice, every artist is capable of creating works of unimaginable beauty.”





United Soft

Sector: Digital Technology

VFX, CGI and Virtual Production studio

“United Soft is an industry leader in animation, visual effects, and virtual production. Since 2011, we’ve completed over 100, collaborating with teams across eight different countries. We want to make a significant impact on the development of this rapidly growing industry and continue to expand our international presence. We strive to be recognised worldwide and hope one day to have Oscar-winning films in our portfolio.

The most exciting part of our work is interacting with people and observing how creativity, technology, and innovation intersect. Working at United Soft offers a unique opportunity to be at the crossroads of art and innovation. The company believes that every step forward — even the smallest — is a success, particularly as our sector is still in its early stages.

We’re convinced that the creative industries in Uzbekistan have enormous potential. Uzbekistan has a rich cultural and historical heritage, and we’re particularly inspired by how this heritage intersects with modern technology and innovation.

In the future, United Soft plans to open branches in the regions of Uzbekistan and eventually expand globally, further developing and sharing our expertise on the international stage. The exchange of experiences and perspectives that comes with collaborating with both local and international creators, creates a powerful synergy that fosters industry growth at all levels. We intend to make a significant contribution to the development of creative industries in Uzbekistan.”





Dalahast

Sector: Performing Arts

Musicians

“Dalahast was founded at the end of 2016. At that time, the band focused on instrumental music and improvisation. Then we added a vocalist and the band started performing songs in Uzbek.”

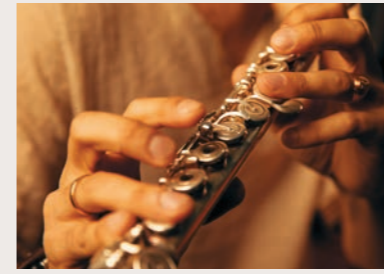
Dalahast’s work can be labelled as ‘global music’ or ‘ethno-fusion’; you can hear a mixture of different genres and styles in our songs. We create music very different from anything else currently in Uzbekistan’s mainstream and underground in Uzbekistan. We have our own special handwriting. Our songs are in Uzbek and tell about dreams, life and death, joy and sadness, humanity and love.

My favourite part of the job is how something new can rise from the chords and verses: you shape it, refine it, nurture it, and gradually it becomes a part of you, so special and loved. Then you share that love with others and are happy when they share it too.

We would like to tour all over Uzbekistan so that people who are used to phonograms and monotonous wedding songs get to hear live sound and something different. We want to tour all over the world so that people from different countries hear how beautiful the Uzbek language is and feel the love for our country through our music.

We are inspired to work in Uzbekistan by the peaceful sky above our heads and the wonderful, talented people around us. Uzbekistan has a huge wealth of creative, extraordinary personalities who are eager to open up and give warmth and joy to this world.

I would like to see the future of the creative industries as the integration of different art forms into a single whole, breathing life into incredible collaborations and projects that can be shown to the whole world. I’d like this integration to take place not only within Uzbekistan, but around the world. Creatives from different countries need to communicate more often: all of us should be more tolerant and kinder to each other and consider ourselves first as people, rather than a representative of a certain nationality, race, religion, or social class. Peace to all of us!”





Ilkhom Theatre

Sector: Performing Arts

Contemporary Theatre

The Ilkhom Theatre Centre for Contemporary Art unites creative theatre, music and exhibitions. It is an open space for young professionals and a non-profit organization with 49 years of experience in the field of contemporary art.

The Ilkhom Theatre uses its work to explore society's most pressing issues: gender discrimination, domestic violence, threats to the environment, and intergenerational relationships. Over the next three years, Ilkhom Theatre will be researching the ideas of freedom and independence: freedom of expression, freedom of judgment, freedom of choice, and artistic freedom.

The Ilkhom Theatre is taking an active part in building the new Uzbekistan. The country is going through a period of cultural revival, with an emphasis on preserving and promoting its cultural heritage. But contemporary art still needs additional state support. Access to funding and resources for artists and theatres, especially if they're independent, are limited. Some artists face challenges in achieving a balance between preserving traditions and introducing more modern approaches.

The Ilkhom Theatre hopes] that the creative economy will soon be recognised at the legal level, ensuring equal access for all creative sectors to the right infrastructure facilities and state support measures. It is also important that there is a favourable tax system for creative enterprises, reformed licensing measures and easier ways for artists to coordinate events with public authorities, as well as a grant system to support independent artists.





Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation

Sector

Restoration

Restoration is an important sector in the growth of Uzbekistan's cultural industries, as it allows us to preserve the country's unique cultural heritage: saving precious artefacts for future generations at home and allowing them to attract greater attention abroad.

The Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation actively supports restoration projects, often working in partnership with international specialists to exchange best practices.

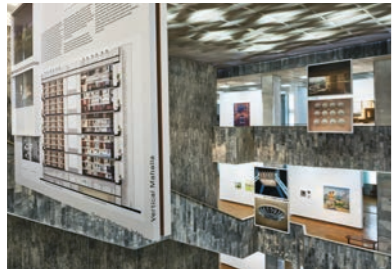
Some of our most successful projects to date have included the restoration of a fresco in the ancient settlement of Varakhsha — a 7th-century hunting scene that stands as one of the most significant finds in the field of Sogdian culture — and the restoration of stage costumes once belonging to celebrated Uzbek dancer Tamara Khanum.

Often, projects will encompass a number of artefacts: in May 2024, the foundation launched a restoration programme with the Ural Tansykbaev House Museum. It saw 18 works by the 20th-century artist, considered one of the founders of contemporary fine art in Uzbekistan, brought back to life with the aid of French and Uzbek restoration specialists.

The foundation believes such international cooperation and exchange is an important element of our work. It strives build strong relationships with global institutions and experts: in one example, Patricia Verges, a specialist in preventive conservation from the Centre for Research and Restoration of Museums of France, will be working as a consultant on several Uzbek restoration projects to strengthen the capacity of local specialists.

This is because historical restoration — and the creative industries as a whole — are vital in creating a new international dialogue on the role and significance of Uzbek culture on the world stage. The Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation plays a key role in supporting and implementing these projects and will continue to strengthen international cooperation and shine new light on Uzbekistan's culture on the world stage.





Uzbekistan State Museum of Art

Sector

Museums and Art Galleries

Across Uzbekistan today, 134 museums are working to preserve and promote the country's heritage for future generations. Some 2.6 million items and artefacts are currently under the care of state institutions, of which more than 135,000 are on display. There has been a strong push in recent years to digitise this work and introduce electronic cataloguing systems: 46 state museums are currently part of a central online cataloguing system, with 1.2 million items registered electronically.

But aside from their permanent exhibitions, these museums also provide important focal points for Uzbekistan's cultural life. In the first half of 2024 alone, the country's museums organised 1,920 events, including 138 scientific and practical conferences and seminars, 880 cultural and educational events, 373 master classes, and 147 theatrical performances. This work helped to bring more than 2 million guests to the country's museums in the same time frame, of which more than 560,000 were international visitors.

The Uzbekistan State Museum of Art is one of the country's oldest and largest museums, hosting a unique assortment of artwork spanning different eras and cultures. The museum is an important centre in Uzbekistan's artistic life, bringing together both national and international art. Its collections include paintings, sculptures, graphics, and decorative and applied art from across Uzbekistan, Russia, Western Europe, and Asia.

The museum regularly holds shows and exhibitions to promote art and culture at home and abroad, often combined with work to research and preserve Uzbekistan's national heritage. One recent example, Tashkent Modernism.Index, first opened in the Milan Triennale space in April 2023, showcasing

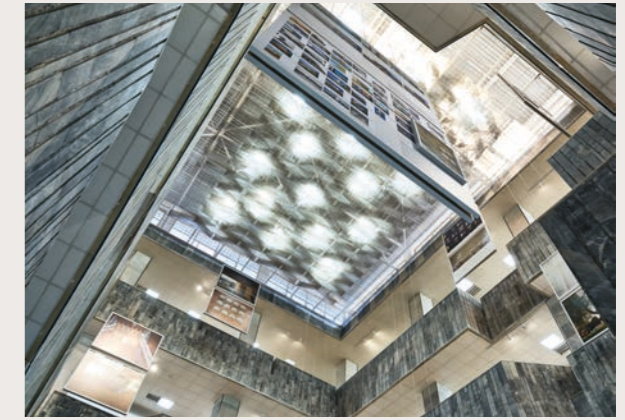
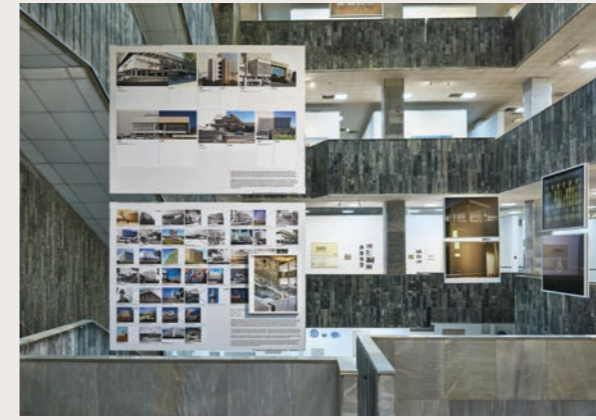
Uzbekistan's unique modernist heritage in art and architecture. At the heart of the exhibition was the work of Italian photographer Armin Linke, whose images of Tashkent's modernist architecture prompted visitors to reimagine often overlooked buildings within the city's urban fabric.

These were placed alongside archival materials — original documents, drawings, and photographs from the time of the buildings' construction — and paintings made by Uzbek artists from the 1960s to the 1980s. Opening the exhibition was Alisher Mirzaev's monumental 1984 triptych "Tashkent – City of Peace..." which united modernist style with images of the city's major landmarks.

But the curatorial team behind the project — including Ekaterina Golovatyuk, Boris Chukhovich, Davide Del Curto, and Saidaziz Ishankhodjaev — did more than curate images of Tashkent's modernist marvels. They researched key modernist buildings in the capital and presented research strategies outlining how they could be better preserved and protected.

This strategy won praise from both local guests and international experts — during its month-and-a-half run, some 5,000 people visited the show.

Tashkent Modernism.Index showed in real time how the creative industries can contribute to the study and popularization of cultural heritage, promoting cultural dialogue and international cooperation. But it also highlighted the value of often overlooked cultural elements in our everyday lives and their importance in shaping our identities.





Tashkent International Jazz Festival

Sector

Cultural Events

Observed each year on April 30, International Jazz Day was founded by UNESCO to celebrate jazz as a tool for peace, unity, and international dialogue.

The International Jazz Festival in Tashkent aims to uphold these same values. It is held at the end of April every year and organised by the Uzbekistan Arts and Culture Development Foundation alongside the embassies of Germany, Israel, Indonesia, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, France, and Switzerland, as well as under the auspices of the UNESCO Office in Uzbekistan.

Hosted outdoors, close to the white colonnades of the Uzbekistan Palace of International Forums, the festival is a unique opportunity for local audiences to experience the diversity and depth of contemporary global jazz. Previous performers have included Gregory Porter, Kenny Garrett, Italian singer Mario Biondi, and Israeli drummer Yogev Shetrit. Each of these international guests strengthens Uzbekistan's global ties.

Uzbek bands such as jazz group Jazzirama also perform, blending genres by combining jazz and traditional maqam music. Elsewhere, the festival supports young and emerging Uzbek musicians with masterclasses with teachers at some of the country's leading schools.

Cultural events such as the International Jazz Festival not only promote Uzbekistan on the world stage but also have a significant impact on the development of the domestic cultural market: stimulating interest in music and creativity and building a springboard for emerging talents.

Every year, the festival brings more and more international participants and guests to the capital, benefitting the local economy. Meanwhile, local creative professionals also prosper as their talents become increasingly in demand.

Far more than just a cultural event, the festival has an undeniable social impact — truly befitting the genre of jazz.



Next steps



Next Steps: Supporting the Growth of Uzbekistan's Creative Industries

Hala Badri

Director-General, Dubai Culture
and Arts Authority

Cecilia Tham

Founder and CEO, Futurity Systems

Mark Bünger

Co-Founder and CTO, Futurity Systems

A Call for the Future

About the Authors

Next Steps: Supporting the Growth of Uzbekistan's Creative Industries

Ancient Heritage, New Horizons

Uzbekistan's rich and diverse creative industries are already flourishing. However, there is also space for further investment, and significant opportunities still to be explored as the country builds an innovative and resilient creative economy.

Uzbekistan's rich cultural and historical heritage provides one such opening. The history and architecture of Silk Road sites such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva form a strong foundation for creative endeavours in arts, crafts, and tourism while providing an endless source of inspiration for local authors, designers and producers. The country's strong tradition of craftsmanship in textiles, ceramics, and jewellery is ripe for revitalisation and modernisation in order to broaden its appeal to local and international markets.

Further untapped opportunities lie in the growing domestic demand for creative products and services. In the burgeoning tourism and hospitality sector, there is a need for the immersive and authentic cultural experiences coveted by Millennial and Gen Z travellers. Construction and real estate industries require innovative architecture and interior design services to give their developments an edge in the visually-driven digital age. Similarly, Uzbekistan's fashion industry is seeing growing demand for designs that blend traditional elements with contemporary styles, while media outlets reflect an increased appetite for local content.

Harnessing this internal creative and economic potential will put Uzbekistan in good stead to take its place in a growing global marketplace. According to the Creative Economy Outlook 2024 published by the UNCTAD, global creative services exports have doubled over the last decade and surged to \$1.4 trillion in 2022. The widespread adoption of digital platforms and business models has significantly lowered barriers to entry, making it easier for companies and entrepreneurs from Uzbekistan to reach international audiences and

enhance the country's cultural footprint on the international stage. Even greater opportunities lie in the vast Eurasian markets, Iran and Turkey, to which Uzbekistan has historically had strong ties, and fast-growing GCC markets such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

This growth will be driven by Uzbekistan's youth. With a median age of just 28.7 years, Uzbekistan's population is younger than that of any European country. With encouragement, financial support, training and mentoring, Uzbekistan's young people will become a driving force of the creative economy. In particular, the knowledge and know-how of these "digital native" generations will allow the country to embrace its potential in the realm of creattech: the digital technology in creative industries such as digital art, animation, film, and gaming.

Creattech presents a vast opportunity for Uzbekistan's creative sector. The integration of digital platforms into the creative economic ecosystem can unlock new avenues for entrepreneurship, enabling local artists and creators to reach wider audiences. Digital art and animation can revolutionise traditional artistic techniques, while film and gaming can captivate global audiences with unique stories and immersive experiences rooted in Uzbek culture. Creattech solutions such as metaverse advertising and gamified consumer interaction will enable creative enterprises to offer cutting-edge services to Uzbekistan's key industries. Much like the digital space itself, the potential that such innovation could provide truly is limited only by imagination.

Pathways for Development

In order to truly embrace the opportunities that Uzbekistan's creative economy has to offer, artists, officials, and non-state actors have several pathways to build upon and explore. They include:

1. Launching a comprehensive and ambitious national vision for Uzbekistan's creative industries, supported with a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach
2. Launching a creative industries agenda for regions and cities, encompassing smart specialisation policies, cluster development, and creative hubs
3. Introducing skill development and youth engagement programs
4. Fostering entrepreneurial activity in the creative industries by further strengthening the country's wider business environment
5. Promoting access to national and international markets for creative businesses and encouraging 'creative FDI'
6. Protecting, showcasing and leveraging cultural heritage
7. Embracing international cooperation to put Uzbekistan on the global creative map

1. A Comprehensive National Vision

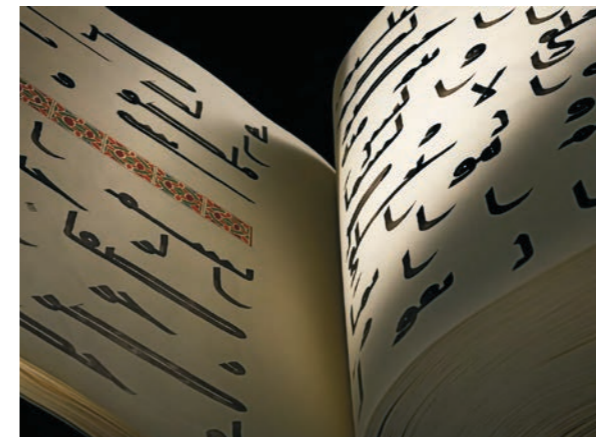
In order to reach Uzbekistan's true creative potential, the country must move forward as one. An ambitious national vision for the creative economy could serve as both a map and a beacon on this journey. By taking a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, state departments and agencies would be able to work together with industry actors to push forward unified policy targets and address cross-sector issues.

National goals should be set to guide these efforts, such as increasing creative industries' contribution to GDP, raising Uzbekistan's share of global exports for creative goods and services, or expanding high-paying creative employment opportunities for young people.

This national vision could include a number of complementary initiatives:

- *The creation of a national creative industries strategy*

A comprehensive national strategy and industry roadmap would identify new opportunities for accelerated growth in creative sectors, outlining clear goals, priorities, action plans, resource allocation, and timelines for implementation.



Calligrapher Khabibullo Solikh, Tashkent



Calligrapher Islom Mamatov, Tashkent

- *Clear regulations to help the creative industries thrive*

There is a need for a thorough legislative framework that will support the creative industries by defining and consolidating relevant legal concepts, clarifying business activities, and establishing regulatory approaches. Such a framework would also support stronger future research by creating a more concrete definition of the creative economy and more precise classifications that could be used to monitor sectors in line with international best practices.

- *Intellectual property protection*

National legislation on intellectual property and copyright protection could be more strongly aligned with international best practices to better protect artists' rights and support the growth of the creative industries. The development of new intellectual property is the essence of the creative economy, hence protecting local creators from piracy and fraud is of the utmost importance.

- *Creative economy governance*

A new, high-level council could be established to steer the development of the creative industries in line with the country's national vision. Comprising of representatives from both professional and business associations and relevant government departments, this council could meet regularly to discuss opportunities, address barriers, and develop effective support measures for Uzbekistan's creative economy. Such discussions could be instrumental in engaging non-state stakeholders in government-led initiatives. Meanwhile, a dedicated government agency could be established to implement key programs, drive coordinated policies, and foster international cooperation.



Concert by Richter Trio and the National Symphony Orchestra of Uzbekistan under the direction of Alibek Kabdurakhmanov, Tashkent, 2023

2. Regional Agendas and Specialised Infrastructure

Comprehensive regional policy-making is key to unlocking the creative industries' economic potential. Using a smart specialisation approach to build upon individual regions' unique advantages and narratives — such as their local traditions, crafts, cultural heritage, and existing enterprises — could help engage community actors in Uzbekistan's national vision, while helping different regions to harness their own creative strengths.

- *Creative Park*

The government of Uzbekistan is in the process of forming a Creative Park. Businesses that have received at least 80% of their profits over the last 12 months from the creative sphere, or those that have a business plan for growth within the creative industries, are eligible to become members. Membership will allow entrepreneurs and organisations to benefit from sales support measures and staggered payment plans for VAT on exports. The park will also provide needed creative infrastructure and masterclasses for artists and creative companies.

- *Pilot regional or city clusters*

Creative industry clusters could be established in major cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Fergana, Namangan, and Andijan as models for future expansion. Key tasks for these clusters would include developing cluster-specific roadmaps, supporting creative entrepreneurship, providing training, and creating specialised infrastructure.

- *Creative districts*

Co-locating creative businesses and professionals in 'creative districts' could help to stimulate synergy, innovation, and exchange. Such districts usually encompass diverse spaces

such as studios, galleries, theatres, and cultural institutions, with examples that include SoHo in New York City, Shoreditch in London, and 798 Art District in Beijing. Establishing 'creative districts' in key cities such as Tashkent and Samarkand could speed up knowledge diffusion and collaboration between local actors.

3. Skills Development and Youth Engagement

The talent and entrepreneurial spirit of Uzbekistan's youth presents a major opportunity in the development of the country's creative industries. By providing education, mentorship, and resources to nurture young creators' entrepreneurial endeavours, Uzbekistan can cultivate a vibrant creative economy that harnesses the full potential of its dynamic and ambitious young population.

- *Creative education*

Expanding higher education and vocational training programs focused on arts, design, media, and technology is essential in cultivating a skilled creative workforce. Specialised design schools could be established to train young professionals, with flagship programs in modern disciplines such as fashion design, computer gaming, filming, and video art. Creative education should also be extended beyond the confines of university campuses. Implementing artistic workshops and exchange programs will expose local creatives to global trends, while integrating design disciplines into school curricula will foster early interest and proficiency in relevant skills.

- *Shows and performances*

Giving young people the opportunity to take to the stage — whether through gala performances, showcases, or talent shows — is instrumental in mentoring talent in the performing arts and helping young people to master artistic skills. By supporting

such shows, events, and performances, Uzbekistan can provide visibility to its young artists and provide a public platform to celebrate the country's cultural richness.

- *Grant programmes*

Financial grants are often used to support creative endeavours. Uzbekistan could launch grant programs targeted at young and emerging artists to support their growth while also developing high-priority creative industries, promoting local history and culture, and stimulating the production of locally relevant creative content.

4. Fostering Entrepreneurship

Improving creative enterprises' business skills through education, mentoring, and networking, while lowering administrative burdens and providing access to finance, is vital in ensuring these sectors can make a meaningful contribution to Uzbekistan's economy.

- *Enhancing business skills*

Robust entrepreneurial skills will enhance the competitiveness of Uzbekistan's creative industries in both domestic and international markets. Establishing specialised acceleration programs for creative entrepreneurs in collaboration with educational institutions could significantly boost the potential of creative startups, especially if these programs are embedded within wider international networks. A dedicated digital platform for the creative industries could also provide wider access to educational content, mentoring and networking, and government support.

- *Strengthening professional and industry associations*

Networking is essential for building skills and increasing competitiveness in the creative industries. Strengthening (and where appropriate, establishing) professional and business associations could promote creative sectors at a national level. Empowered creative industry organisations would be able to collaborate with the public sector and participate in government decision-making. In order to be as effective as possible, they would also advocate effectively for their members, foster industry standards, and drive initiatives to enhance the overall growth and sustainability of creative industries nationwide.

- *Access to finance*

Increased access to financial resources would significantly advance the development of creative industries. Programs providing seed capital to aspiring entrepreneurs could enable them to launch and grow creative ventures, while introducing financial and could encourage investment. Reducing administrative barriers and creating incentives for philanthropy would also provide a significant stimulus to the creative economy.

5. Promoting Market Access

For creative enterprises to grow, they must have easy access to large domestic and international markets. The government could enable market access by hosting flagship events, stimulating demand for creative goods and services in local industries, and promoting exports.

- *Flagship events*

Major events such as design weeks, international arts festivals, fairs, and auctions serve as global platforms to showcase local creativity and innovation. By attracting participants, visitors, and media workers from around the world, such events amplify the visibility of their host country as a hub for creative excellence. Aside from hosting major international events such as this year's World Conference on Creative Economy, Uzbekistan could initiate new regional and global events, such as a Central Asian contemporary art fair or a global digital art festival. By strategically leveraging these events, Uzbekistan can enhance its own creative ecosystem, attract talent and investment, and strengthen its position on the global creative stage.

- *Demand in key industries*

Stimulating demand for creative products and services in key economic sectors of the economy can also be an important way to promote the creative industries. Encouraging collaboration between local creators in arts, media, and design with industries such as tourism, construction, and textiles can provide benefits for both sides — for example, a hotel that works with local interior designers could find itself attracting more guests.

- *Export promotion*

Uzbekistan can improve its creative industries' export potential by supporting participation in international competitions, exhibitions, and festivals that provide valuable exposure and networking opportunities. Ensuring that creative businesses have access to key international trade and digital platforms will facilitate global market entry and expansion, while inviting international firms to establish a local presence will also attract foreign direct investment.

6. Protecting Cultural Heritage

Protecting Uzbekistan's cultural heritage for future generations of artists will require legislative changes, sound funding policies, public awareness campaigns, and international collaboration.

- *Legislative protection*

Uzbekistan's formal process for designating and registering significant cultural sites and monuments should be streamlined so that such areas receive legal protection and conservation priority. Laws that safeguard cultural sites, artefacts, and intangible cultural heritage should include provisions for the protection, preservation, and conservation of such assets, along with penalties for violations.

- *Preservation grants*

The conservation of cultural heritage requires significant financial resources. Grants and funding should be provided to support the restoration, conservation, and maintenance of cultural heritage sites and artefacts. This could include financial assistance for both public and private owners of heritage properties.

- *Public awareness*

In order to truly protect historic cultural heritage, society as a whole must appreciate its importance. Public awareness can be built via school curricula, community workshops, and public lectures. Cultural festivals, exhibitions, and events that celebrate and promote cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride among local communities, can also be instrumental in strengthening a sense of collective responsibility.

7. A Place on the World Stage

Uzbekistan should put itself firmly on the global creative map by increasing participation in bilateral and multilateral initiatives, and by pushing for greater involvement in the collaborations led by international organisations.

- *Bilateral cooperation*

Uzbekistan can enhance its creative industries through partnerships with cultural institutions such as the UK's British Council or the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange. These collaborations could lead to joint educational programs for creative professionals, arts exchange programs, or collaborative exhibitions and cultural events, or facilitate joint productions in areas such as film, theatre, and digital media. This cooperation could also be institutionalised through specific foundations, following the example of groups such as the ASEAN – Korea Cooperation Fund.

- *Cooperation across Central Asia*

A collaborative regional agenda for the creative industries could be further developed through multilateral cooperation with neighbouring Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as with other nations. Regional initiatives could encompass fairs and festivals, regional forums, and other joint efforts to promote common narratives. New regional institutions could be established to coordinate these activities, modelled on organisations such as the Creative Economy Council Network (CECON), endorsed by ASEAN member states.

- *Global multilateral cooperation*

Uzbekistan could also widen its participation in multilateral programs and initiatives with organisations such as UNCTAD and UNESCO, as well as country blocs like BRICS, the European Union, and ASEAN. These entities offer various programs aimed at stimulating the development of the creative industries, focusing on culture, youth, and supporting institutions such as creative hubs. Their agendas include developing and implementing partnership programs with individual countries and regions, similar to those of the European Union. This cooperation extends beyond the national level, promoting collaboration between cities and regions through international networks like the Districts of Creativity Network. Partnerships between universities can also be facilitated by global associations dedicated to art and design education and research, such as Cumulus.



Layout of the new Museum of Art in Tashkent

A Call for Partnership: Collaborating with Uzbekistan's Creative Industries

Keen to build upon its rich cultural heritage and burgeoning creative sector, Uzbekistan is actively seeking dynamic partnerships to propel its creative industries onto the global stage. We invite international organisations, companies, and educational institutions to join us in fostering collaborative cultural exchange, economic growth, and talent development.

1. International Collaboration in Arts and Culture

Uzbekistan is committed to fostering a vibrant and dynamic cultural landscape through international collaboration. We invite cultural institutions, artists, and organisations to participate in bilateral projects that celebrate and promote Uzbekistan's rich cultural heritage. By hosting international festivals, events, and cultural exchanges, we hope to create platforms where global and Uzbek artists can come together, share their creative visions, and inspire audiences worldwide. Join us in bridging cultural divides and enriching the global arts community through meaningful partnerships.

2. Encouraging Joint Ventures in the Creative Industries

Uzbekistan seeks to harness the transformative potential of the creative industries by establishing joint ventures between Uzbek and international companies. These collaborations will embrace the unique strengths of both local and global partners, driving economic growth and fostering creativity. Whether in fashion, media, design, or technology, joint ventures can unlock new markets, enhance product offerings, and lead to groundbreaking developments. We encourage international companies to explore the diverse opportunities within Uzbekistan's creative sector and join us in building a thriving creative economy.

3. Talent Development Through Joint Educational Programmes and Student Exchange

The future of our creative industries lies in the hands of talented individuals. To nurture this talent, we aim to develop joint educational programs and student exchange initiatives with leading international institutions. These programs will provide Uzbek students with access to world-class education and training, while also offering international students the opportunity to immerse themselves in Uzbekistan's rich cultural context. Through these exchanges, we will cultivate a new generation of creative professionals equipped with the skills, knowledge, and global perspectives needed to excel in an interconnected world.

We invite you to partner with Uzbekistan and contribute to the vibrant growth of our creative industries. Together, we can nurture talent, inspire new ventures, and forge meaningful connections that transcend borders. Join us in shaping a future where the arts and creative sectors thrive, benefiting communities worldwide.



Hala Badri has been the Director-General of Dubai Culture and Arts Authority since 2019, orchestrating the launch and execution of a new creative economy strategy, as well as public art and Al Fahidi rehabilitation strategies.

Creativity is the essence of human expression and innovation. It's the ability to envision and produce unique and imaginative work, whether in the arts, culture, or any field, that adds value to society. Creativity catalyzes cultural enrichment by bridging heritage with contemporary interpretations, breathing new life into traditions, and celebrating our legacy while propelling it forward. It plays a vital role in economic growth, guiding the cultural and creative industries into uncharted territories as they spark entrepreneurship and foster new markets, industries, and job opportunities. The cultural and creative industries serve as cultural ambassadors, enhancing a nation's soft power, global influence, and attractiveness, enriching the country culturally, socially, and economically. Moreover, creativity extends into social development by unifying individuals and communities, introducing diverse perspectives, and contributing to a more inclusive world.

In Dubai, the cultural and creative industries are paramount as they are the essence of our cultural tapestry and a significant contributor to our economic diversification. These industries encompass a wide spectrum, including arts, design, film, music, and heritage preservation, among others. They celebrate our rich cultural heritage while simultaneously driving tourism, promoting entrepreneurship, and offering opportunities for all community members, including the youth. By empowering the younger generation to embrace their abilities, these industries contribute to Dubai's reputation as a global center for culture, an incubator for creativity, and a thriving hub for talent.

To the young creatives of Uzbekistan, my advice is: embrace your uniqueness and heritage; your cultural identity is a wellspring of inspiration. Be fearless in exploring new horizons, and never underestimate the value of your creativity. Collaborate, learn, and persevere; every obstacle is an opportunity to grow. Embrace technology to amplify your work's impact, seek mentors, and connect with fellow creatives globally. Remember, creativity knows no boundaries; your talent can resonate across cultures. Ultimately, stay passionate and dedicated to your craft, inspired by everything around you. In your journey, you will not only shape your future but also contribute to the cultural richness of Uzbekistan and the world.



The Road to Samarkand. Wonders of Silk and Gold, Paris, 2022

Cecilia
Tham



Mark
Bünger



Throughout history, creativity has been tied to novelty - not doing the same thing better than everybody else, but doing something that no one has done before. And every time a new medium emerges, there is an explosion of creativity, with new iconic pioneers taking a place in history. So our advice to Uzbekistan's emerging creatives, is to go beyond what is already happening in merely "international" collaboration, and merely computer-based other intelligences. To embrace the theme of Inclusively Creative: A Shifted Reality.

We often think of art as intrinsically human. But seeing non-human life - animals, fungi, and plants - as co-creators is the most inclusive view possible. Creative arts, far from being a luxury, are evident in the earliest human civilizations - so pervasively in fact, that they likely have a role in our survival along with water, food, and other necessities of life. It seems natural then, that other species also need arts to survive - but we humans (in industrial societies anyway) have been largely ignorant and dismissive of this idea. Now breakthroughs in artificial intelligence are helping us decipher how animals and even plants communicate, express creativity, and play. And maybe, they can help us create together. Could iconic and vulnerable Uzbeki species - like the Markhor, (*C. falconeri*), Menzbier's marmot, (*M. menzbieri*), and the Long-fingered bat (*M. capaccinii*) become star co-creators with you? How will you design interfaces and systems that these non-human users can benefit from?

At the same time, AI is increasingly seen as a rival, or a threat - to occupations, to creativity, even to civilization. And indeed, AI creativity has leapt from abysmal, to mediocre, to fairly decent in fewer years than it would take most humans to learn any single craft - whether that is visual arts, music, copywriting, or coding. Trying to surpass AI in one existing human creative field is hard enough -

in all of them, impossible. Uzbekistan was recently named as the leading nation in Central Asia for responsible artificial intelligence, by the Global Center on AI Governance's Global Index on Responsible AI - can you develop tools and principles that help not just Uzbeki, but international developers embrace and improve AI for society?

These are formidable challenges, but the best way to solve them might not be in isolation, but in combination. Specifically, by combining biological, digital, and human creativity and intelligences - what we call "natural intelligence." It builds on movements like Rights of Nature (giving legal personhood to species and ecosystems, which several countries have added to their governance) and Robot Rights, which would give legal personhood to AI - a clear case for Responsible AI if ever there was one! Countries like Ecuador and Estonia have been leading these conversations on other continents - maybe your creations will drive Uzbekistan to become the Asian hub.

For the past several years, our team have been building devices and writing code to seed an interspecies economy, because the only way we will achieve a sustainable, regenerative ecology is by giving economic agency to non-human life. In



Multimedia exhibition project *Jadids*.
Letters to Turkestan, Tashkent, 2024



Multimedia exhibition project *Jadids*.
Letters to Turkestan, Tashkent, 2024

our first project, we gave Herbie, a houseplant, the ability to create art and sell it to humans in the form of NFTs ("NFTrees"). We are now working to build on the scientific work of interspecies communication and non-human intelligence to create dialogs, games, and even governance structures where humans and other forms of life will collaborate and create together. The capabilities and ambitions of Uzbeki creatives can reach the future beyond the boundaries of nation and species.

While interspecies creative collaboration may sound far-fetched and complex, it is all very accessible to anyone with interest in the science and desire to learn the skills. And we believe it will inevitably become part of the future economy and ecology, in Uzbekistan and beyond. Being as Inclusively Creative as possible will Shift Reality to a more hopeful and prosperous future.

A Call for the Future

Artists are drawn to the unknown. Using crafts or music, performance or poetry, they pull new concepts into existence, forming substance from a flurry of intangible yet infinite possibilities. Perched on the cutting edge of our societies, they challenge the very idea of what humanity can achieve.

It is little surprise then that artists have always been destined to play an important role in pioneering new technologies — from the printing press to the radio and generative AI. They are often at the forefront of imagining the opportunities that such innovations can bring. But they are also key in unravelling humanity's place amid such technologies. As reality itself shifts and warps, creativity retains the power to carve new pathways and build new beginnings.

Research has already shown the immense benefits of harnessing such a force. Properly supported, the creative industries can improve social equality, bring pride and resilience to communities, and create sustainable, valuable employment.

Uzbekistan is dedicated to ensuring that the power of creativity is used to benefit both the Uzbek people and the world as a whole. The country's cultural ecosystem is growing rapidly, drawing on its deep heritage. Organisations such as the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation are present and future drivers of creative and economic success.

Yet in order to truly reach their potential, artists cannot work in isolation. They need to be able to profit from and protect their work. They need to work in an environment with a free flow of ideas and discussion. They need educational opportunities to give them the skills that will bring their ideas into reality, and the space, tools, and infrastructure with which to work. A flourishing creative economy requires a community.

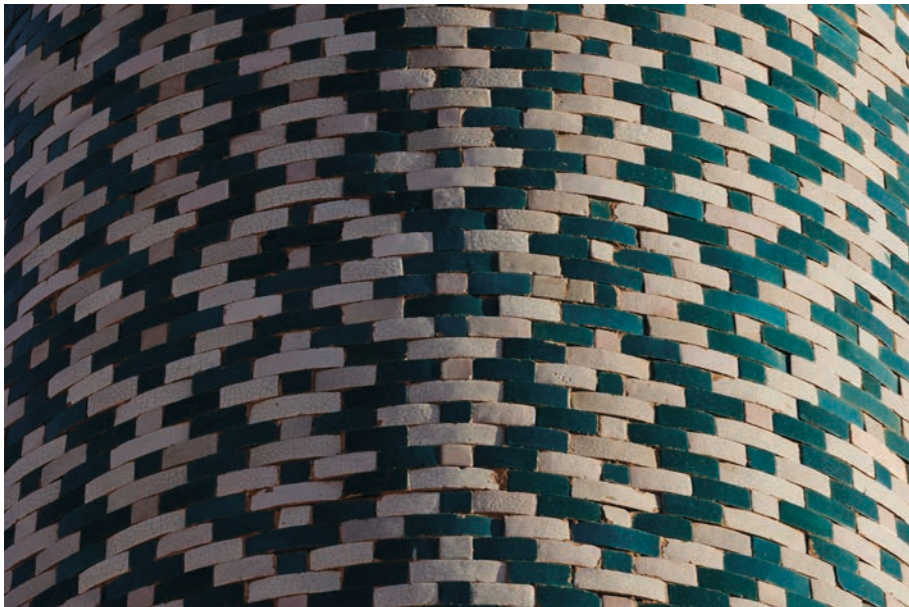
Uzbekistan too is looking for a community of like-minded international partners in order to further the global creative economy. We are actively seeking organisations, companies, and educational institutions to join us in fostering collaborative cultural exchange, economic growth, and talent development, whether that is through international festivals, events, cultural exchanges, or something else entirely.

Whether in handicrafts or software design, architecture or fine arts, we believe that a new generation of joint ventures will open new markets, offer new perspectives, and create cross-border opportunities.

We invite you to partner with Uzbekistan and contribute to our drive towards a truly sustainable and future-facing creative economy. Together, we can shape a future where the arts and creative sectors transcend borders to the benefit of communities worldwide.



Itchan Kala, Khiva



Itchan Kala, Khiva





Gold-embroidered chapan from the collection
of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan



Miniaturist Davlat Toshev,
Bukhara, Homo Faber member

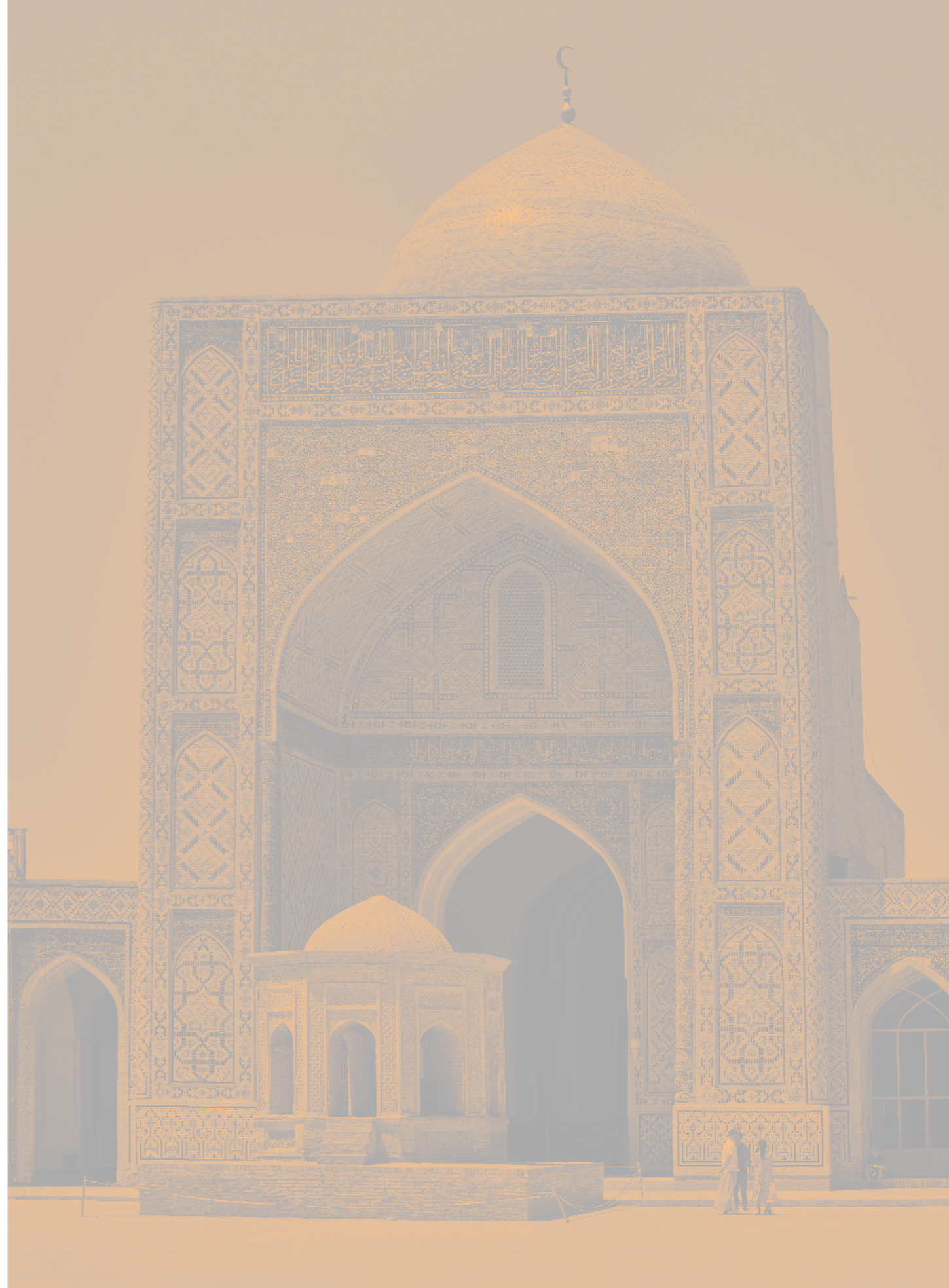




The process of creating carpets in the workshop of Sabina Burkhanova, a member of Homo Faber



Ceramist Abdulvahid Karimov, member of Homo Faber, at work



About the Authors

Under the general editorship of
Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation

Gayane Umerova Chairperson of the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation

Contributors

Katie Marie Davies NEDA Solutions
Anastasia Kalinina reState Foundation
Tasha Adamsky reState Foundation
Alexandra Seaman reState Foundation
Alexey Prazdnichnykh Eurasia Institute
Denis Shchukin Creative Practices Foundation

Proofreader Zabikhulla Saipov

Graphic design Undo-Redo

Research

Ilya Tokarev Chairman of the Union of Creative Clusters,
Managing Partner of POLIS Institute
Alexander Krasavtsev Managing Partner of POLIS Institute
Vladislav Nikolaev Analyst
Roman Zolin Managing Partner of POLIS Institute
Ruslan Gayfullin Analyst, POLIS Institute
Vitaly Aksenov Designer, POLIS Institute

Published in Italy © **Uzbekistan Art and Culture
Development Foundation**
Tashkent, 2024
www.acdf.uz

