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IMPRESSUM
Presented by



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Cinema in collaboration with Fotoatelier represents “Legend of Surami Fortress”

A joint work by Sergo Parajanov and Dodo Abashidze, the film was released in 1984 and is based on an old Georgian legend. According to the tale, in an effort to defend themselves against foreign invaders, the Georgian people attempted to build a fortress. However, each time the construction reached a certain height, the walls would collapse. The oracle declared: “The fortress will only stand if a young boy is entombed within its walls.” In an act of ultimate sacrifice, a boy offers himself to be buried alive so that the structure—and the homeland—might endure.

In 2009, The Guardian film critic Ryan Gilbey described The Legend of Surami Fortress as “one of Parajanov’s most powerful visual works.” The film unites Georgian folklore, religious symbolism, and traditional art. Gilbey emphasized that it is not driven by narrative logic but unfolds as a sequence of visual poetry—each frame composed as a work of art in itself.

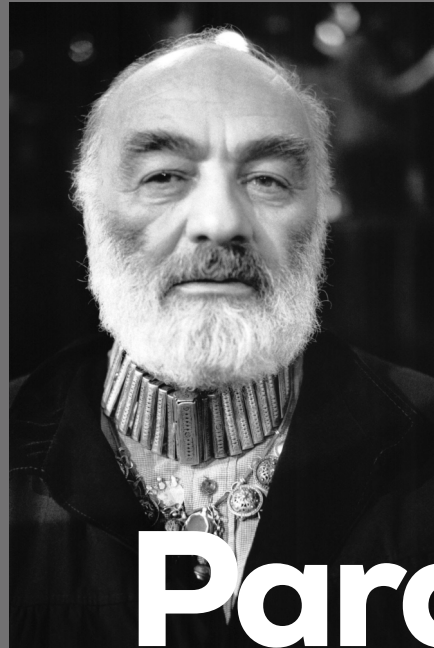


GALLERY
FOTO presents
ATELIER

Sergo Parajanov Giorgi Shengelia The Legend of Suram Fortress

AFA PHOTO / AFA CINEMA

EXPLORING THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF BEING



“We were
searching for
ourselves in
each other.”
**Sergo
Parajanov**



Fotoatelier presents a unique documentary record from the making of *The Legend of Surami Fortress* (1985), capturing Sergei Parajanov's cinematic method and working atmosphere. Preserved in a private collection, these photographs offer not conventional documentation but a distinct visual historiography. Positioned between archive and artwork, they reveal Parajanov's creative process—his mise-en-scène, the spatial poetics of his set, and the collaborative labor behind it.



The exhibition is shaped around the idea of the anonymous gaze: the photographer, though unnamed, becomes an essential chronicler of artistic process. Through compositional framing and attention to the environment, Parajanov is revealed in process—engaged in his ritualistic directing style, symbolic visual storytelling, and the construction of cinematic myth.

These photographs resist static categorization. As visual historiography, they document ephemeral moments of cultural creation while also constructing their own symbolic register. The exhibition invites viewers to consider still photography not as a passive record but as an active site of meaning-making and cinematic memory.

Sergei Parajanov (January 9, 1924 – July 20, 1990) is widely regarded as one of the most visionary and uncompromising filmmakers in the history of cinema. Inventing a cinematic language grounded in nonlinear montage and expressive imagery, Parajanov radically departed from the stylistic constraints of socialist realism—the only officially sanctioned art form in the Soviet Union. As a result, his work and personal life became targets of repeated persecution. Despite being imprisoned, censored, and declared a persona non grata by Soviet cultural authorities, Parajanov's legacy only deepened: his films are now ranked among the greatest of all time, and he was named one of the 20 Directors of the Future by the Rotterdam International Film Festival.



“Accidental portraits are faces
and moments I notice in everyday
life that echo the ones we lost.”

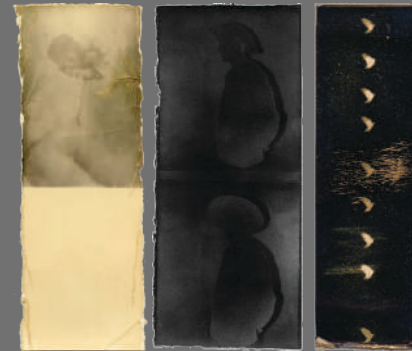
Fotoatelier presents a selection of analogue and digital works by Giorgi Shengelia, created across various stages of his practice. Shengelia's photographic vision reflects a conceptual approach that transcends direct representation. The central focus of the exhibition brings together two of his most significant series: *Accidental Portraits* and *Untitled Sheets*. In these bodies of work, the philosophical dimension of observation is extended through visual experimentation in image-making and printing techniques. Within these photographs, the boundaries between human, animal, and landscape dissolve, disrupting conventional separations between subject and object. The resulting visual archive is shaped by an aesthetic of accident.

Shengelia's works evoke a multilayered temporality in which beauty and estrangement coexist. Blur, distortion, and technical imperfection are employed not as flaws but as creative methods that intensify the surreal and imaginary qualities of the image. Accident, in this context, is treated as a philosophical category—an expression of time's deformation and the unstable nature of memory.

Rather than capturing conclusive moments, the photographs record the subtle traces of gesture, gaze, and movement—offering presence through its transient imprint.



**Giorgi
Shengelia**



Giorgi Shengelia was born in 1984 in Tbilisi, Georgia. He graduated with a degree in Power Engineering and Telecommunications from the Georgian Technical University in 2006. Shortly thereafter, he relocated to Florence, Italy, with his family. It was during this period that he developed a growing interest in art and photography. In 2012, he began formal studies in photojournalism at the Fondazione Studio Marangoni.

Following the completion of his first personal project, *Four Rooms*—a photographic investigation into the everyday lives of Georgian women migrants in Italy—Shengelia returned to Tbilisi, where he currently works as a freelance photographer. Alongside his documentary work, he also explores a more conceptual and experimental approach, with a focus on researching the material and visual aspects of photography.

