

# CROSS-TIMESTORIES

global subjectivities after 1989

1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2

is set and where the former Georgian Military Road, now crossed by the Caspian gas pipeline, is located.

Responding to the same period of transition in the former Soviet Union, **Sophia Tabatadze** (born 1977, Tbilisi, Georgia) focuses on the consequent collective amnesia and generation gap. Tabatadze describes Georgia as a country "going through its teenage period, where the objects of its love and passion change drastically each year."<sup>18</sup> Returning to her hometown in 2005 after eight years in the Netherlands and startled by the newly morphing urban texture, Tabatadze began to document these changes. *PIRIMZE* (2011) is based on her long-term research on the eponymous building in Soviet Georgia, constructed in 1971. On its six floors, this edifice housed myriad forms of production and repair—of shoes, watches, glasses, jewelry, suitcases, belts, and kitchen devices—as well as services, including fine tailoring and hair styling. The activities took place within booths personalized by the individual craftsmen, not only with the tools of their respective trades but also with cutouts from glossy foreign magazines and photos of naked girls. In summer 2007, following the dismissal of all the workers, Pirimze was demolished and replaced by Pirimze Plaza, a fancy shopping mall. After many years of serving customers from the whole city and the villages as Pirimze, the new Pirimze Plaza has become yet another shopping center with business offices. The inclusion of the foreign word *plaza* in the building's new name points to the direction that Georgia is heading. Tabatadze reconstructs the building based on memories of the people who used to be part of it. Interviews with them and their counter-interviews with the artist, old photographs of the structure, press clippings about the old and new Pirimze and the craftsmen's resistance against the demolition accompany the artist's architectural sketches, videos of innumerable tiny shops called Pirimze that spread around the old one after it was torn down, and many other materials either collected or produced by the artist. Tabatadze creates

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.sophia-tabatadze.com/texts>.

a storyboard and timeline of the building that parallels many other stories related to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and to Tabatadze's own family. Fascinated by the overlapping of rapid, extrinsic commercialization on a national level with the weariness of individuals, Tabatadze documents a state of change that is also a state of no-change.

Challenging the status quo in China might well be a headier task than anywhere else. An extremely determined government has developed a unique economic structure functioning somewhere between communism and capitalism. China's urban development is accelerating at a pace that seems almost too fast and glamorous to be real. In the early '90s, the government began to shift its emphasis from the political reforms of the '80s to countrywide economic development; the aim was to soothe tensions stemming from the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989 by compensating the people with improved living conditions. A society that had been mainly rural, organized around unified agricultural communities, became rapidly urbanized. A new middle class emerged in large

**Sophia Tabatadze.**

*PIRIMZE My Love*, 2011.  
Photoshop manipulated  
color photograph. Part of  
mixed media installation  
*PIRIMZE* part 3, 2012.

