



Nursing a pile of old memories and exhausted feelings: how you confront white, blue, yellow Kashgar wool, 2014
dyed and undyed felted lamb's wool

La Trobe University, Geoff Raby Collection of Chinese Art.
Donated by Dr Geoff Raby AO through the Australian
Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2019. © Aniwar Mamat.
Photo: Jia De

Throughout his career, Uyghur artist Aniwar Mamat has investigated the language of abstraction. Born in 1962, in the oasis town of Kashgar in China's Xinjiang region, he studied at the Tianjin Institute of Art and Design before graduating in oil painting from the Central Institute of National Minorities in Beijing. Having also spent time working in the design studio of a carpet factory, Aniwar engages with a dialogue between traditional craft practices and contemporary modes of expression.

Xinjiang is characterised by its dry climate, rugged mountains and large desert basins and occupies an intermediate position connecting China with Central Asia and Europe. The artist's hometown of Kashgar was a significant post along the ancient Silk Road and remains a centre for textile production and trade. Aniwar's tapestry paintings are informed by this history of exchange and encounter, particularly the relationship between the urban centre and the rural periphery, as well as by his Uyghur heritage.

Using traditional Uyghur felting techniques, Aniwar translates the visual language of geometric abstraction into a slow, labour-intensive process. *Nursing a pile of old memories and exhausted feelings: how you confront white, blue, yellow Kashgar wool* (2014) is one of his large-scale 'tapestry paintings'. Bands of yellow, green and blue are arranged across a neutral background, with each colour being laid down separately before being compressed against a layer of undyed lamb's wool. Aniwar's interest in abstraction can be understood as a rejection of fixed narrative meanings, especially as a counterpoint to the styles of socialist realism that dominate 20th-century Chinese art.

Shanti Shea-An, 2022