



Press release

51. International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia
THE EXPERIENCE OF ART; ALWAYS A LITTLE FURTHER

IRAN

June 12 - November 6, 2005
Opening hours 10.00 am - 6.00 pm, closed on Mondays

Fondazione Levi (Accademia/S. Samuele boat station, line n. 1-82),
Palazzo Giustinian Lolin,
San Vidal 2893 - 30124 Venice

Commissioner: Ali Reza Sami Azar
Artists: Bita Fayyazi Azad, Mandana Moghaddam
Organiser: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts
Co-organiser: Arte Communications
Supported by: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts

Participation of Iranian artists in the Venice Biennale dates as far back as the 1960's where works by a number of distinguished Iranian artists, taking part in the Tehran Biennale, would be selected to be dispatched to Italy.

The post-revolutionary era brought an end to this participation and after years of reclusion, three Iranian artists - Behrooz Daresh, Hossein Khosrowjerdi, and Ahmad Nadalian - participated in the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003.

Two Iranian artists have been delegated to the International Venice Biennale this year for the second time after the Islamic revolution. Conceptual art and modern visual expression by a few eminent academicians, who were closely following on the heels of modern trends and phenomena in the world of art, were presented in classes and a young generation of artists gradually became familiar with this mode of expression. Through various media, this new generation of artists created works of art that revolutionized the conventional and academic modes of expression in Iran's art arena. Nevertheless, the most effective steps in introducing and defining conceptual art and new approaches in artistic expression was taken by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art through exhibitions including Conceptual Art (2000) and New Art (2001). These events together with supports extended by the Tehran MoCA promoted modern approaches in art among a new generation of Iranian artists that gave birth to two young women who represent Iran in this year's Venice Biennale.

Bit a Fayyazi Azad and Mandana Moghaddam are two distinguished artists whose success in their artistic career made the selection committee opt for them and who participate in the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005 as Iran's ambassadors. Today, the emergence of eminent female artists in cultural, art and social arenas is the harbinger of a bright future for the presence of this "other half" of Iranian citizens in the domain of creativity and contemplation.

Mandana Moghaddam has prepared an installation entitled *Chel Gis* (forty braids of hair) for this year's Venice Biennale. *Chel Gis* is taken from an old Iranian myth and tells the story of a beautiful girl, who is



incarcerated by a ghoul in a blissful garden. She never sees the ghoul, but it is said that the ghoul has blocked the river so as not to let human beings use water. The ghoul is a brazen-bodied creature and to kill him, one must break his spell. The work comprises a block of cement hung from the ceiling by four braids of hair. A red ribbon is stuck in each braided hair coming out of its other end. The block of cement is, on the one hand, a symbol of the absolute, traditional masculinity as well as a manifestation of monotony and coldness. Braided hair of woman with its red ribbon is a symbol of feminine liveliness, glimmer and sensitivity and that is what tolerates the heavy block of cement and keeps it in a suspended position. Duality in the work of the artist has turned into a single, inseparable identity and the reality of either side of the equation has merged with the other side. This artist is a woman, who trespassing the threshold of modern visual experiments, has undertaken to render a work of art that in addition to touching upon the Iranian national mythology, has unfurled hidden realities that rule the relations between modern human beings.

Fayyazi's proposal for this year's Biennale is titled Kismet (destiny). The term was first used by Edward Fitzgerald in his translation of Rubaiyat-e Khayyam and entered the English vocabulary.

*The moving finger writes; and having writ
 Moves on; nor all thy piety nor wit
 Shall lure it back to cancel half a line
 Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.*

This installation consists of a cubic space of 200 x 200 x 400 centimetres. A metal sheet is inserted into one of the walls of the cube acting like a diving board. Fifty life size sculptural infants made of aluminium are placed on the board. They are arranged into an archipelago that is suspended in space or grapes hanging from the skies. A female figure, whose stomach is emitting a yellow light, is lying on the floor. This work, without doubt, possesses certain features that have their roots in the sense of femininity, motherly productivity, immortality and birth. Similar to primitive seas, where life was blown into small particles, water symbolizes light and life. Dominant cold and metallic grey in the installation is a symbol of coldness and water that is especially glittering inside the golden womb of the figure and is akin to the beating of life in the work. At the same time, cold and metallic grey is a symbol of home, while yellow colour suggests warmth and life.

Mandana Moghaddam and Bita Fayyazi are female artists who are in conflict with the existing traditions of society. The central theme of their works is confrontation and right reaction to the mythological phenomena. Their works are reflections of sensitivities of the mankind who is willing to live in and react to a tumultuous world.

Text by
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