

Press Release

Connective Strings of Resilience

DUBAI, UAE— Tehran-based Bavan Gallery presents “Connective Strings of Resilience”, its debut edition of a series of projects titled “The Land of the Cypress Tree”. The exhibition, which features works by 28 Iranian artists across several media, opens on February 27, 2023 and will be open for public viewing through May 4. “Connective Strings of Resilience” is hosted at Gallery 8, Foundry Dubai. This exhibition has been made possible by the collaboration of Maryam Majd Art Projects (MMAP), with additional support from NAMISANATI Fine Perfumery. This project takes inspiration from the Cypress Tree of Abarkuh, a legendary cypress tree in Iran’s province of Yazd, and seeks to reflect on how Iranian artists have unwaveringly continued to imagine, create and foster.

The eventful contemporary history of Iran has been rarely absent from the programs of media outlets and the talk of politicians and activists. However, one wonders how realistic it is to think of a comprehensive general image of the country and what happens within its borders. With the plethora of narratives, perspectives, analyses, the continuous flow of events and constant transformations, it is extremely difficult to form a panoramic portrait of Iran. When one considers the diversity of its population, ethnicities, cultures, geography, and climate, such an idea becomes even more elusive.

In this context, both as an artist and a viewer of art, what would be one’s approach to forming a general picture of reality? How would one try to define themselves while keeping out the ideals imposed by the media, politicians, intellectuals, and the general public? For many Iranian artists, the answer has been an introspective exploration and an emphasis on individuality and the individual experience. As the sociopolitical reality remains quite unique to Iran, so does the quality of individual experience in this country, and many artists offer inward journeys in their work that ultimately connect to the broad spectrum that is life in Iran.

In this exhibition, Iranian artists from multiple generations working across media are gathered to display glimpses of the worldviews offered by the lifeworlds of creative tenacity, and build up a collage of ideas and ideals, some shared by a few, some shared by many. For these artists, the question of survival is often elevated by the idea of expression: how far can one take one’s thought and imagination?

The Cypress Tree of Abarkuh, located in a spot somewhere almost in the very center of Iran, is believed to be one of the longest-living lifeforms of the world, estimated to have been growing for somewhere between four and eight thousand years. In addition to the numerous legends attributed to this tree, its original planting and the travelers who came to gaze upon it in awe, the tree, an undying symbol of resistance and resilience, of survival within the most extreme conditions, can itself resemble the ideal of expression and the perseverance of artistic vision. In this exhibition perseverance is not the theme but rather only a limited exposure to the truth, or a reality which often yields a sensible image of the truth.

The exhibition does not seek to unify personalized approaches under an umbrella theme. Following the idea that each of the artists has developed their own voice based on their life experience, it rather aims to bring together a coherent multiplicity, one that creates meaning and sense through harmonies, consonance and contrapuntal motion as well as atonalities, dissonance, discord and opposing tones, rather than mere noise and cacophony.

"Connective Strings of Resilience" includes the work of, in alphabetical order, Morteza Ahmadvand, Samira Alikhanzadeh, Maryam "Mimi" Amini, Maryam Ashkanian, Navid Azimi Sajadi, Ladan Boroujerdi, Nasser Bakhshi, Mojgun Bakhtiary, Homa Delvaray, Bita Fayyazi, Ahoon Hamedi, Dariush Hosseini, Shohreh Mehran, Laleh Memarardestani, Mina Mohseni, Koosha Moossavi, Elham Nafissi, Roghayeh Najdi, Pooneh Oshidari, Elham Pourkhani, Peyman Shafieezadeh, Rozita Sharafjahan, Soraya Sharghi, Tarlan Tabar, Mojtaba Tabatabaei, Shideh Tami, Mahsa Tehrani, and Hoda Zarbaf.

Bavan Gallery, established in 2018 by Ava Ayoubi, is a Tehran-based art gallery focusing on presenting the evolving landscape of Iranian contemporary art, working across media and disciplines, and making an international presence for the vibrant art scene of Iran.

Maryam Majd Art Projects (MMAP) is a boutique research-centric curatorial and archival platform established in 2021, based in Tehran.

NAMISANATI Fine Perfumery, established in 2018, is a Tehran-based fine perfumery atelier focusing on the scents and fragrances of Iran's rich regions and cultures.