

Press Review

Samaneh Aboutalebi, 'No need for translation when art speaks: Iranian artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo', Teheran Times, October 2019

By Samaneh Aboutalebi

No need for translation when art speaks: Iranian artist Mehdi Qadyanlu



TEHRAN – Iranian artist Mehdi Qadyanlu, who has collaborated in several major international art projects, has said that the language of art doesn't need translation and people across the world can apprehend it directly

In a recent project, he went into partnership with Italian artist Paolo Bordino in "The Urban Art Unites", an art project that was carried out on the exterior wall of Italian ambassador's residence in Tehran last week.

Two paintings by the artists were affixed to the wall in the project that was implemented based on an initiative by Italian Ambassador Giuseppe Perrone to enhance cultural relations between Rome and Tehran.

Qadyanlu, who has held several exhibitions around the world including the U.S., Russia, the UK, Austria and Norway, has painted over 100 murals across Tehran from 2004 to 2011.

"Although I was occupied with some exhibitions abroad, I thought the project could provide a good opportunity for me to work in Tehran after seven years of hiatus from working in my homeland, and I dedicated the artwork to my own people," he told the Tehran Times.

"It has been some years now since I have been presenting my art overseas because it appears that Tehran's municipal authorities don't want to work with me anymore," he lamented.

Known for his surrealistic paintings, Qadyanlu tries to depict fears, hopes and losses through his art by using symbolic elements such as stairs, balloons and airplanes.

"The balloon is a symbolic icon for me. It is neither positive nor negative. I look for a sarcastic concept in it. It gives people joy and hope as it is always used as birthday party decorations but yet it is so evanescent and unstable, the calm before the storm," he said.

"However, balloons bring colors to the city and most people enjoy them. Also, they will never be boring and every time you look at them you can get a different impression," he added.

In 2016, Qadyanlu completed a massive mural for the Rose Kennedy Greenway project in Boston, while the U.S. and Iranian governments were seeking to normalize relations between the countries. He found it an opportunity to play a role in building a bridge between the countries by his painting entitled "Spaces of Hope".

“Some of my foreign friends are really eager to come and visit Iran but due to the problems they might have in traveling to the U.S. later, they are hesitant,” he said.

One of his recent projects was a 186-square-meter painting on the wall of the main atrium of the World Economic Forum’s Conference Centre in Davos, Switzerland in January 2019.

Entitled “Finding Hope”, the painting depicts a girl in a red dress, who is holding a big, red balloon.

“I wanted to show hope and unsteadiness at the same time. I also wanted to use an element that can deliver the same message for people with different cultural backgrounds and languages, so I used a balloon, my favorite motif,” Qadyanlu stated.

“I have always liked the murals I created across the city. People don’t have to pay money or travel long distances to see them, and these paintings become a part of their daily lives. On the other hand, plans to draw paintings on the city walls convince artists to exit their studios and to interact with people in society with their art,” he said.

Qadyanlu also announced his plans to organize an exhibition in London in October 2020, and to work on a big project as well, in which he will create a mural for the Atlanta airport in the U.S. in the near future.

Photo: Iranian artist Mehdi Qadyanlu works on a mural at the main atrium of the World Economic Forum’s Conference Centre in Davos, Switzerland.