

Press Review

Nel-Olivia Waga, 'How Iranian Artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo Brings 'Hope' to the World', Forbes, January 2017

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How Iranian Artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo Brings 'Hope' to the World (Economic Forum 2019 in Davos)

Iranian artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo was commissioned to create a compelling 186 square metre triptych called 'Finding Hope' for this year's Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum 2019 in Davos.



Ghadyanloo is an artist whose works of art play with light, space and perception. His public murals encourage passers-by to stop, be still and transport themselves deep into the images he creates. He aims to transform our cityscapes from dull and desperate to hopeful and happy through utopian imagery. This helps to build up better morale and inspires us to take action. In his position as a 'WEF' Cultural Leader, above all, he speaks of a desire for things to be different.

I caught up with him in Davos during the WEF, to explore how his creativity can be a driver of change:

Mehdi Ghadyanloo, What was the inspiration for your Davos artwork and why did you call it 'Finding Hope'?

It's especially exciting for me to have received the invitation to create these artworks. From an initial visit to Iran by the Head of Culture from the WEF some three years ago where I showcased some of my work, this project has grown in scope to what we see today. I guess so many people just feel so anxious right now. They're asking what's going to happen next. Sometimes it's hard to stay optimistic but it's always best to. There are so many challenges dominating the lives of so many people. I question the apparent perpetuity of conflict and

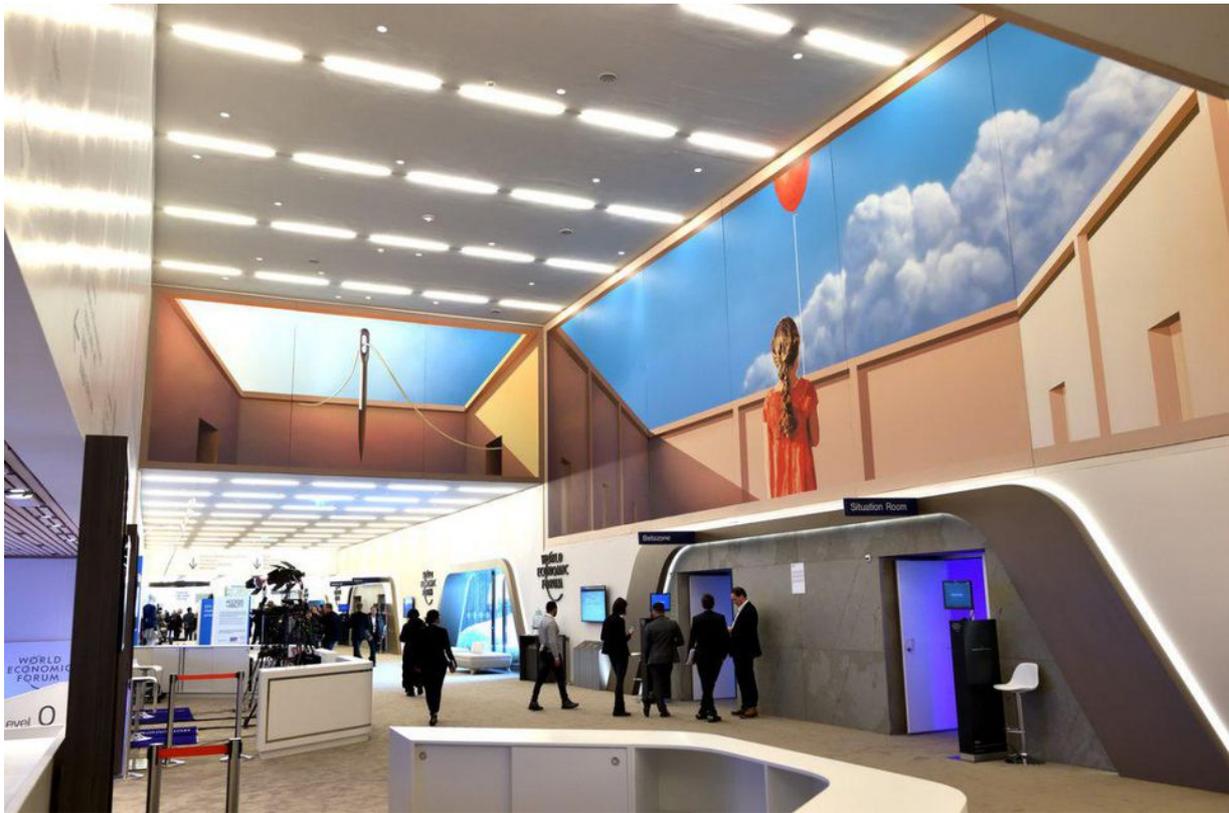
what it means for the innocent. Having those three facing walls right at the heart of the Davos Conference gave me the chance to prompt some thought around the power of hope. It was important for me to set out how hope gives energy to keep moving as we work together to change the world.



"Finding Hope" by Iranian Artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum... [+] WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

What does 'Hope' mean to you?

It speaks of better life chances and new ways of doing things. I think especially of equality of opportunity for young women. They should have the ability not just to plan their dreams but to achieve them. Art can speak of hope by touching the hearts of those who see it. Here at Davos, I wanted to use imagery that was poetic and designed to exert a subliminal influence on those with the power to effect real change in the world.



"Finding Hope" by Iranian Artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo for the Annual Meeting of the World

In your opinion, how can 'Hope' transform the world?

Just think of what our lives would be like without it. We need joy and colour to make life better. There's always work to do and the positive outcomes we all want will, of course, take time. I'd love to see a world where girls can go to school without worry and where conflict is written into history not daily life.

Why have you chosen to portray the girl, a red balloon, the threaded needle and the wall within your piece?

I think it's important for everyone who sees my art to give it just a little more contemplation. Yes, there is always a place for a clear, sharp message. However, I prefer a more measured approach - one that prompts many questions and teases out the answers. Putting the elements of the mural together, it's a parable about opportunity,

equality, threats and barriers. It represents my sense of responsibility towards the next generation and our duty to care about economic, environmental and moral issues. I wanted to make the most of the available space and huge scale right at the heart of the World Economic Forum. It was ideal for the sort of visual effects I create - ones that challenge the perceptions of the viewer. There's light and shade. There's a question around walls confining us but also urging us to scale them. Will the balloon rise or fall? Will the girl be able to achieve all that she wants in life? I want you to see that she is tired but also hopeful.



"Finding Hope" by Iranian Artist Mehdi Ghadyanloo for the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum... [\[+\]](#) WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

The needle, being threaded, can create but destroy too. The sky shows both its beautiful blue but also the gathering of clouds. What I'm trying to do here is to provoke debate and discussion. I'm not setting out to tell a direct story. Instead, I want to create an atmosphere at a specific moment in time where everything is suspended like the calm before the

looming storm. That's why we need to keep hold of hope as it gives us the energy to keep moving to change the world. I not only like the idea of delegates seeing the image every day but want them to return to it in their minds to question what they really saw - perhaps that will help to shape their future actions...



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What is your message to the world?

Let's work together to bear down on our anxieties. We want the next generation to thank us for what we did not curse us for our inactivity. My artistic life and work aims to capture exactly that feeling.



Iranian Mehdi Ghadyanloo working on his Art Installation "Finding Hope" for the Annual Meeting of... [+] WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Thank You Mehdi Ghadyanloo