



Iranian short film ‘Raana’ wins best screenplay at Italian festival

Social Desk

Iranian short film ‘Raana,’ written and directed by Ahmad Monajemi, won Best Screenplay Award at the 15th Social World Film Festival in Sorrento, Italy from June 22 to 29. The drama marks Monajemi’s second international award. His film had earlier taken home the Audience Choice Award at the Milano Film Festival. This time, Rana was selected from among nearly 100 entries in various categories, ILAN reported. Shot in Persian and produced by

Mohammad Hassan Sa’adat Hindi, Raana tells the story of a kindergarten teacher whose encounter with a child’s crisis forces her to confront a personal trauma. The film explores themes of empathy, memory, and social responsibility. Monajemi, who walked the red carpet with a “No to War” slogan pinned to his chest, received the award directly from the jury. His presence underscored the festival’s broader focus this year on peace and humanitarian issues. The cast includes well-known Iranian actors such as Afsaneh Kamali,

Alireza Ostadi, Shaghayegh Farahani, Amir Sam Mousavi, Faramarz Roshanaei, Amir Mayar, and Mahsa Shakouri. Italy-based Pathos Film is handling international distribution. No official comment was made on the film’s next festival stops, but a source close to the production said Raana “has sparked interest from multiple European festivals.” Held annually in the seaside town of Sorrento, the Social World Film Festival draws independent films from around the world, often spotlighting socially driven narratives.



Iranian cartoonists fire back with satirical blows in ‘Muzzle’ exhibition



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian artists launched a group exhibition of political cartoons and caricatures on Monday, using humor to push back against what organizers described as “foreign aggression” by Israel and the United States.

The show, titled ‘Muzzle,’ opened at the Abolfazl Aali Gallery at the Art Bureau in central Tehran, just days after a tense ceasefire ended a 12-day military flare-up, ISNA reported. The exhibition features 82 works by prominent Iranian cartoonists, including Seyyed Masoud

Shojaei Tabatabaei, Mohammad Hossein Niroumand, Maziar Bijani, and Mohammad Ali Rajabi. According to the Art Bureau’s Visual Arts Center, the pieces tackle what they called a “media and military war” waged against Iran. “This is a tribute to truth,” said Shojaei Tabatabai, the show’s curator. “In these difficult days, our society came under serious attack from outside, and the artists rose to the occasion.” The cartoons use sharp visual metaphors, many mocking Western leaders, to portray recent events and Iran’s response. Shojaei called the medium “a global language,” one that “delivers deep messages with a dose of humor.” He added that even Iranian artists abroad had contacted organizers after seeing the

work, asking to contribute. ‘Muzzle’ is meant as both a literal and symbolic response to political threats, censorship, and foreign narratives, organizers said. The exhibition was organized by the Visual Arts Center of the Art Bureau, a body linked to Iran’s Islamic Development Organization. It drew high-profile cultural figures to its opening, including Mohammad-Mehdi Dadman, head of the Art Bureau; Shabab Shakiba, director of the Visual Arts Center; and Mostafa Momenirad, director of the Islamic Architecture Center. Resistance literature expert Morteza Sarhangi and language advocate Nasser Feiz also attended. In a statement released at the opening, curators described the show as “a thunderous response to nonsense, sanctions and vi-

olations,” citing recent quotes from Iran’s Leader. One cartoon reportedly reflects the Leader’s phrase, “We crushed Israel,” following recent strikes. The works are expected to go far beyond gallery walls. Shojaei said the team is working with Tehran’s Beautification Organization and metro authorities to display select cartoons in public spaces like billboards and subway stations. Plans are also underway to adapt the artworks into motion graphics, short animations, and promotional teasers for distribution on national and international media in Persian, English, and Arabic. “This is just the beginning,” Shojaei said. “We’re tapping into citywide advertising, social media, and television to make sure this message is heard.”

Cartoonist Hossein Youzbashi, who contributed two pieces to the show, said artists “have a duty to reflect the truth through symbolic and artistic language.” His work aims to capture “layers of reality the enemy tries to distort.” The exhibition runs from July 1 to July 15, Saturday through Wednesday, at the Abolfazl Aali Gallery. Organizers hope the project becomes part of a larger effort, called Dot-Strike, to document and amplify artistic responses to geopolitical tension. A portion of the exhibition will appear in future media campaigns and educational initiatives. While the tone is satirical, the message is clear: Iran may not fire the first shot, but artists will not stay silent.

A life through the lens

Iran’s top camera collector dreams of int’l photography museum in Tehran

EXCLUSIVE

In a quiet corner beneath Tehran’s iconic Azadi Tower, visitors step into a different era. Lantern-style box cameras used by Qajar-era photographers, massive projectors once hauled to weddings, and hundreds of vintage lenses, negatives, and photographic equipment fill the walls of Iran’s only museum of its kind. At the heart of this vast archive is its curator and creator—Mohammadali Jadidoleslam, the man behind the Middle East’s largest collection of vintage cameras. Born on April 6, 1952, in the historic city of Tabriz, Jadidoleslam’s journey into photography began not in academia but on the streets and in the studios of mid-century Iran. “I finished sixth grade when my father took me to his friend, the photographer Ahmad Kiabakhsh,” he said in an interview with the reporter of the Persian speaking newspaper “Iran”. “That’s when I fell in love with photography.” Though his father dabbled in singing, calligraphy, and amateur photography, it was Jadidoleslam who transformed that inherited spark into a lifelong devotion. He began taking photos in 1964 and never

stopped, even during Iran’s political upheavals and his two-decade career teaching first grade. His path to formal training was shaped by the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Accepted into the Tehran Institute for Art Education in 1977, he became part of the student movement that helped convert the institute into a full-fledged university. When the Cultural Revolution closed the institution, Jadidoleslam returned to Tabriz with a forced associate diploma and started teaching—but he also opened a photography studio to stay close to his passion. Over the years, he documented everything from street protests to quiet family moments. His early obsession with Leica cameras—“I bought one thinking it was a real Leica, but it turned out to be a fake”—eventually matured into a refined understanding of portrait photography. Inspired by masters like Armenian-Canadian photographer Yousof Karsh and American portraitist Arnold Newman, he studied English to better access photography books and magazines. Jadidoleslam’s technique stands out for its sensitivity to light and emotion. “I never tell my subjects, ‘One,

two, three.’ I capture them in the moment their soul shows,” he says. “My goal is to illuminate their inner world through light.” One of his proudest achievements was photographing Mohammad-Hossein Shahriar, Iran’s celebrated poet. Through a family connection, Jadidoleslam was invited to the poet’s home in Tabriz and captured several portraits using a twin-lens Lubitel camera. But disaster struck—the lab technician overexposed the negatives. When he called Shahriar to confess, the poet simply said, “Never mind. Come again and take more.” The resulting photos are now considered some of the best ever taken of the literary giant. Jadidoleslam’s collection, however, goes far beyond individual portraits. His private museum houses over 1,500 items: cameras, lenses, filters, projectors, enlargers, and more. The oldest piece is an 1850 German Voigtlander once owned by the renowned Italian photographer Luigi Montabone. The smallest—a 250-gram Leica Minox spy camera. The largest uses 18x24 cm film sheets. Among the museum’s most valuable artifacts are more than 100 glass plate negatives, including the

first known photograph of a Tabriz carpet factory—bought in 1994 for 100,000 toman. Others depict Tehran landmarks like Imam Square and Golestan Palace, or scenes of traditional trades and crafts. His path to becoming a collector was gradual. After opening a studio in 1983, he began setting aside old cameras in a cabinet. “People were fascinated,” he says. “So I bought more, studied their history, and created ID cards for each one. Today, I believe this is one of the most comprehensive collections in the region.” The museum draws daily visits from students, researchers, and photography enthusiasts. Jadidoleslam acts as both guide and historian. “There used to be a place in Tehran called the city’s house of photos with 250 cameras,” he says. “It’s now closed. So my museum at Azadi Tower fills a crucial gap.” Previously, his collection was displayed at the Tabriz Museum of Occupations. But poor maintenance and damage during transport forced him to shut it down. He sold many pieces at low prices, and others were broken. It wasn’t until Abbas Azimi, then-director of Azadi Tower, expressed interest that



the museum found a new home in Tehran. Today, the museum spans 500 square meters and is open six days a week, drawing visitors from around the world. Jadidoleslam even received offers to sell or export the collection, including a proposal from Dubai, but turned them down. “They said I could buy two apartments with that money,” he says. “But I told them, ‘This belongs to my country. I’ll only retire when I die.’” He has donated 150 cameras and 70 vintage prints to the photog-

raphy museum in Tabriz’s Sa’at Tower and still keeps rare items—like glass negatives and Qajar-era prints—at home due to space constraints. But he dreams of expanding the Azadi Tower museum into an international center for the history of photography. “If I’m given the facilities,” he says, “I’ll bring the rest here and turn this into a world-class institution.” The museum at Azadi Tower is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Fridays. It is closed on Saturdays.