

# Visual arts, media bridge Qur'an to today's world

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## INTERVIEW

At the intersection of faith and creativity, the Arts and Media section of the 33rd International Holy Qur'an Fair brings the Qur'an to life through the universal language of art. Showcasing 170 works of visual art, live workshops, media campaigns, and urban art installations, including striking artistic billboards, this section seeks to



Ali Tan

bridge the timeless message of the Qur'an with the sensibilities of contemporary society.

The 33rd edition of Iran's largest Qur'anic event opened on February 20, coinciding with the start of the holy month of Ramadan, in the main prayer hall of Imam Khomeini Mosalla, Tehran, and will run for 15 days. With 11 exhibition sections and three commercial zones, spanning 70 subcategories across 14 thematic axes, the event is designed to cultivate a deeper connection between Quranic teachings and the rhythms of everyday life.

Set across 16,000 square meters, with 11,000 square meters of functional space, the exhibition hosts a diverse program that includes wholesome games for



children and teenagers, media productions and artistic creations, cultural and creative industries, applied research, new publications, Qur'anic product displays, modern educational programs, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Specially designed areas cater to families, scholars, and dedicated Qur'an practitioners, offering immersive experiences for all audiences.

This year, the exhibition carries the motto "Iran Under the Protection of the Qur'an." According to organizers, the slogan is more than a cultural tagline, it represents a civilizational and identity-oriented vision for Iranian society, positioning the Qur'an as a pillar of national cohesion and cultural strength. The exhibition explores a wide range of themes,

including: The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), social optimism, national solidarity, the Islamic Revolution, ideal prayer and mosque, sustainable consumption, modesty and hijab, enjoining good while forbidding evil, (a collection of the sermons, letters and short sayings of Imam Ali (PBUH) and Sahifa Sajjadiya (hymns of Imam Sajjad (PBUH)), Mahdism, Ghadir, the lives of prophets and the infallible Imams, and contemporary sciences.

Amid all this, the Arts and Media section focuses on visual arts, handicrafts, media productions, and urban artistic initiatives, striving to communicate the Qur'an's message through the creative and digital sphere.

Ali Tan, director of the Arts and Media section, told Iran Daily, "Vi-

sual arts and media are the bridge linking the Qur'an to today's society. They deepen the public's bond with the Qur'an, which is why we ensured this section had a prominent place in the 33rd exhibition." He explained that the Arts and Media section comprises six subsections. The exhibition subsection showcases works by visual artists and craftspeople. "We've gathered 170 pieces from master artists, displayed gallery-style for public viewing."

The exhibition features 170 visual art pieces, including painting, calligraphy, calligraphic painting, miniature painting, illumination, floral-and-bird motifs, photography, sculpture, illustration, and caricature. Tan noted, "Visual arts comprise 50 to 60 disciplines; we've highlighted nine key foundational ones here."

All works are carefully curated and sourced from leading artists. "The pieces reflect both the spirit of Ramadan and the Qur'an, while also connecting to current events, such as recent gatherings, the 12-day conflict, resistance movements, and other significant occurrences from the previous exhibition until now," Tan added. Foreign artists are also represented, with their works featured in the International Section alongside the Arts and Media exhibits.

The Workshop subsection hosts seven live workshops nightly, where artists in various visual and craft disciplines create in real time, allowing visitors to witness



the artistic process up close.

A new initiative, the Urban Gallery, displays 30 works by artists throughout the city on billboards, including caricature, calligraphy, calligraphic painting, photography, and other visual forms.

Inside the exhibition, a special section titled "Martyrs' Memorial" presents paintings commemorating 12 Qur'an-focused martyrs of the 12-day war. Another section is devoted to themes of resistance and Gaza, featuring 25 works by Mohammad Kazem Hasanvand, head of the painting department at Tarbiat Modares University, an Australian Ph.D. graduate, and a prominent revolutionary artist whose acclaimed works spotlight resistance; these are exhibited in a dedicated space within the Arts and Media section.

Furthermore, the section runs a media campaign called "Iran Under the Protection of the Qur'an," which includes competitions and



media activities. Content production spans motion graphics, podcasts, films, photography, and other formats, distributed across multiple platforms.

Tan added, "We also have choral performances in the Arts and Media section. Each night, several pieces are performed, including a special anthem composed for the 33rd exhibition and occasion-specific hymns. These performances now take place in high-traffic urban spaces like subways, rather than inside the exhibition, so more people can experience them without the limitations of the indoor venue."

## PERSPECTIVE

### 'Recidivism of Blood'

## No curtain falls on hunger for power

Great theatrical adaptations rarely succeed by retelling a story; they endure by interrogating it. Mehdi Salahi's 'Recidivism of Blood,' a reinterpretation of 'Macbeth,' does not concern itself with whether Macbeth is evil, guilty, or tragic. Instead, it zeroes in on something far less comfortable: The unsettling proposition that Macbeth is not an aberration of history or literature, but a mirror of humanity's compulsive appetite for power.

This conceptual pivot is what makes Salahi's production noteworthy beyond the usual sphere of theatrical experimentation. By stripping away narrative ornamentation and leaning into physical theater, ensemble movement, and visual abstraction, the play effectively reframes Shakespeare's world not as medieval Scotland, but as an allegorical ecosystem of ambition. In this framing, blood is not merely the residue of murder; it becomes a cyclical condition, a stain humanity repeatedly steps into, washes off, and then returns to.

The original tragedy by William Shakespeare has often been staged as a morality tale about vaulting ambition.

Salahi's vision pushes further, implying that ambition is not the disease, it is the default setting. The disease lies in our inability to recognize its insatiability. Power, once tasted, recalibrates desire rather than satisfying it. The production's emphasis on repetition, choreographed movement, and collective embodiment of violence visually reinforces this thesis: tyranny is never a solitary act; it is a system perpetuated by participants who rarely perceive themselves as complicit.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of 'Recidivism of Blood' is its use of scale. With a large ensemble functioning almost as a kinetic organism rather than a collection of individuals, the production dissolves the myth of the lone tyrant. Macbeth ceases to be a singular villain and becomes a conduit, an avatar through which collective impulses toward domination are channeled. In this sense, the staging challenges one of the most persistent theatrical clichés: That tragedy is driven by extraordinary personalities. Salahi instead suggests that



tragedy is driven by ordinary instincts operating at extraordinary intensity. The minimalism of the set, offset by deliberate costume and makeup design, contributes to a neoclassical aesthetic that feels uncannily timeless. By eschewing heavy scenography, the production avoids tethering itself to any historical moment, allowing the thematic focus to remain squarely on psychological and philosoph-

ical terrain. The absence of decorative distraction compels audiences to confront the performers' bodies as the primary narrative medium. Movement, rhythm, and spatial composition replace dialogue as carriers of meaning, underscoring how power often operates beneath language rather than through it. This emphasis on physicality also reframes the roles of Lady Macbeth and King Dun-

can. Rather than functioning solely as characters within a plot, they emerge as symbolic nodes in a network of desire, legitimacy, and betrayal. Duncan becomes less a king than the embodiment of authority itself, a structural position that invites usurpation. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, ceases to be the archetypal manipulative spouse and instead reads as the voice of internal rationalization, the whisper that converts ambition into necessity. What makes this reinterpretation resonate is its refusal to offer catharsis. Traditional productions of Macbeth often lean toward moral closure: Tyranny collapses, justice reasserts itself, and order returns. 'Recidivism of Blood' withholds that reassurance. Its aesthetic language implies that the cycle does not end with Macbeth's fall; it simply resets. Power vacuums invite new contenders, and the choreography of ambition begins again.

In doing so, Salahi's work taps into a deeply modern anxiety, the suspicion that history does not progress morally so much

as it mutates structurally. The costumes may change, the rhetoric may evolve, and the technologies of control may become more sophisticated, but the underlying grammar of domination remains stubbornly intact. If anything, the production suggests that contemporary societies have become more adept at disguising their Macbeths, not eliminating them.

Ultimately, 'Recidivism of Blood' succeeds because it treats Shakespeare not as a sacred text but as a diagnostic instrument. It reads Macbeth not as a story about one man's downfall, but as an x-ray of humanity's recurring temptations. The result is less an adaptation than a philosophical reframing, one that asks whether the real tragedy is not Macbeth's rise and fall, but our persistent recognition of ourselves within it.

If theater is meant to disturb complacency rather than affirm comfort, then Salahi's production accomplishes precisely that. It leaves us with an unsettling afterthought: Perhaps the most frightening thing about Macbeth is not that he existed, but that he never stopped existing.

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