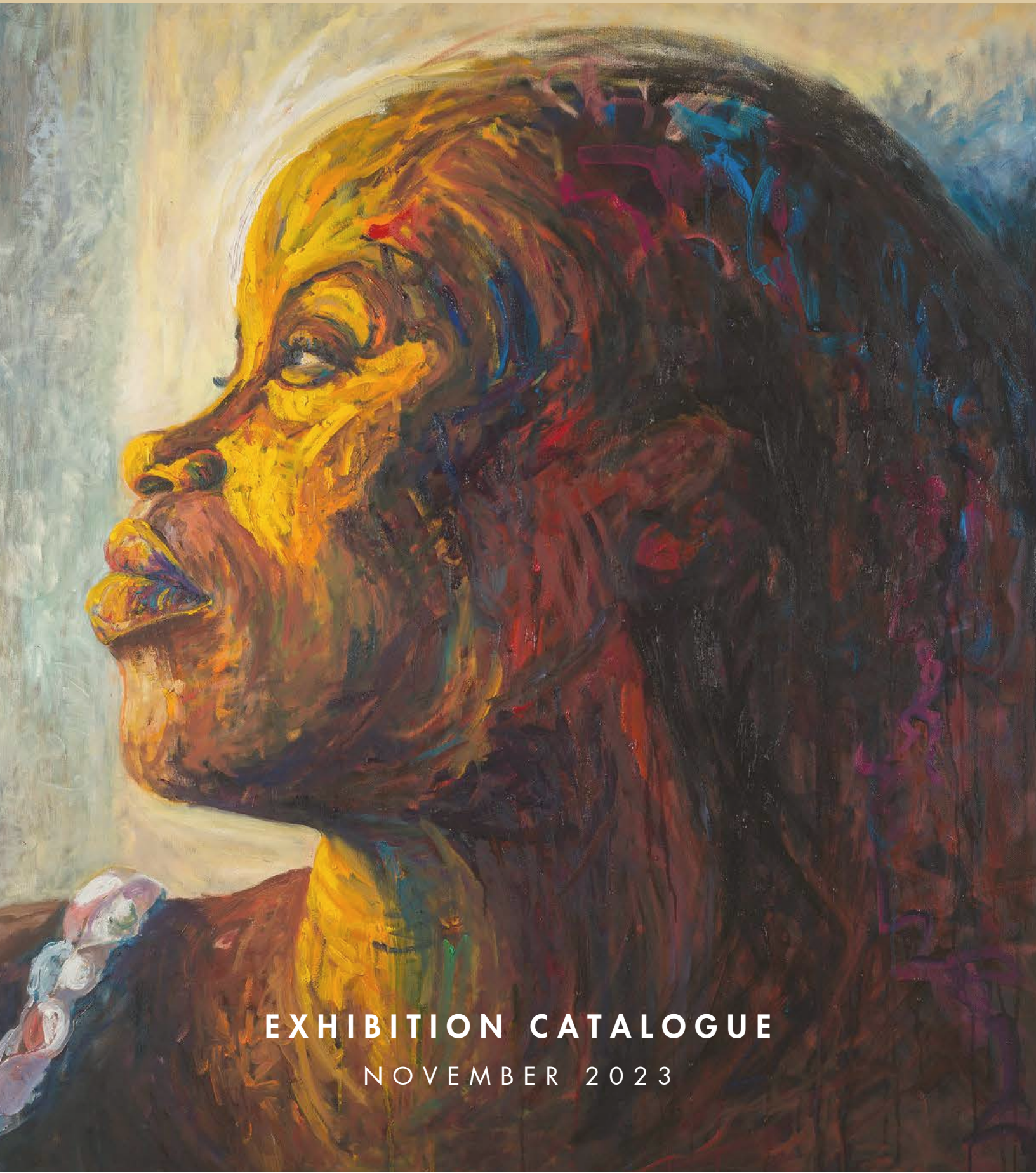


INTERNATIONAL ART CONTEST

MINORITY ARTISTS WORKING ON
INTERSECTIONALITY THEMES



EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

NOVEMBER 2023

International Art Contest for *Minority Artists*
Working on Intersectionality Themes

Exhibition Catalogue

November 2023

Foreword

This second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists focuses on promoting awareness and understanding of minority rights and intersectionality, two issues that have gained significance in today's societies.

Intersectionality highlights the complexity of different forms of discrimination. This contest opens avenues to reflect collectively on a more nuanced understanding of inequality and social justice. Awardees have raised awareness about the struggles that minorities face and their unique experiences. They have demonstrated that art empowers minorities by providing a comprehensive platform to express their concerns and share their stories. In doing so, they have built bridges between people promoting collaborations, encounters and dialogue between individuals and organisations.

Through this contest, artists have used their unique skills to advocate for policies that promote minority rights. Babatunde "Tribe" Akande, one of the main award winners, reflects on how his art expresses the resilience to survive, hope for a better future, and the desire for safety, refuge, belonging, and peace, amidst the chaos of mental health and discrimination. Another award winner Bianca Battle Nguema taps into the othering and exoticizing of the Black female body by the white European gaze as the subject matter of her art. In contrast, Mehdi Rajabian, also an award winner, uses his music to escape the harsh realities of censorship, war bombings, refugee boats and barbed wire prisons, transcending his experiences. By demonstrating that creating art can be pedagogical, healing and therapeutic for both the artists and the viewers, the youth award recipient Karthoum Dembele fights to maintain the delicate balance between the taboo topics of religion, gender and sports.

Finally, the honorary mentions Aluizio de Azevedo Silva Júnior, Elahe Zivardar, and Tufan Chakma raise awareness of the structural discrimination and marginalization facing Romani communities in Latin America; refugee women in the Republic of Nauru and Australia; and the Chakma minority community in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region, Bangladesh, respectively. Andrew Wong aims to challenge stereotypes, empower marginalized communities, and find a genuine sense of belonging in his adopted home, including through an innovative technique that he calls "lifting". These artists remind us how crucial artistic forms of self- and collective care are. Through owning and sharing their unique narratives, the artists embody the convalescent ability to transform their intersectionalities into personal and communal strengths.

**Abdullah, Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo, Carine Ayélé Durand,
Zahra Hassan Marwan, Alexandra Xanthaki**
Members of the Judges Panel of the 2023 International Art Contest
for Minority Artists Working on Intersectionality Themes



INTERNATIONAL ART CONTEST 2023: CELEBRATING MINORITY ARTISTS WORKING ON INTERSECTIONALITY THEMES

The second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists celebrates **artists belonging to minorities who have exposed, explored, and/or addressed matters relating to intersectionality** and the human rights of minority individuals and communities facing compounded forms of discrimination. The contest is organized jointly by UN Human Rights (OHCHR), Freemuse and Minority Rights Group International with the support of the City of Geneva.

The first edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists was organised in 2022 on the theme of minorities and statelessness. The second iteration of the International Art Contest is a part of the celebrations of the **75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (*Human Rights 75*). From 1 March to 15 May 2023, artists belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities were invited to submit up to five works of art related to themes of intersectionality and compounded forms of discrimination. All forms of art were considered eligible, as long as they provided insights on minority issues, identity or experience in relation with intersectional forms of discrimination. Over a two-month period, eligible applications were carefully reviewed and assessed by an **independent Judges Panel composed of experts from different countries, disciplines and horizons**, who were selected for their outstanding experience and commitment in the fields of arts, cultural rights and minority rights: Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo, artist, Member of Swiss Parliament, and former OHCHR Person of African Descent Fellow; Carine Ayélé Durand, Director of the Museum of Ethnography of Geneva (MEG); Abdullah, Rohingya photographer based in Bangladesh and award-winner of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2022; Zahra Hassan Marwan, author, illustrator and award-winner of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2022; and, Alexandra Xanthaki, United Nations Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights.

Out of a total of 80 applications by minority artists from more than 35 countries around the world, **the Judges Panel selected four Minority Artist Award laureates, including a Youth Minority Artist laureate, and awarded four honorable mentions.** This catalogue is a collection of the artworks of the eight laureates of the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists. Although each of them live in specific contexts with singular life stories, the artists whose work is presented here stand out for their artistic commitments, their very personal interpretation and rendering of complex lived experiences in relation with their own multiple identities or those of their communities, and their creative approach to complex and difficult human rights themes. UN Human Rights, Freemuse and MRG would also like to pay tribute to all artists who took the time to apply for this year's contest and who have shared their artworks and personal stories.

As the year 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – one of the world's most innovative international commitments – the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists aligns with *Human Rights 75* initiative to **celebrate and commemorate those who every day, each in their own way, take part in the movement for a better and fairer world for all.** Among them, minority artists play a vital role around the globe as they use their art to speak up and fight for human rights.

Intersectionality and the Lived Experience of Minority Artists: Thoughts on the 2023 International Art Contest for Minority Artists

Written by **Alexandra Xanthaki**, United Nations Special
Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights & Member of the Judges
Panel of the 2023 International Art Contest for Minority Artists

"I am delighted to be one of the judges in the International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023 and to have in my hands this excellent booklet with the pieces of the artists. Seldom do we see such close pairing of art with human rights as in this contest that colleagues from the OHCHR have initiated. In my work, I use everyday standards, legislation, words really, to highlight the challenges members of minorities face and the protection to which they are entitled. International human rights and their application are effective, but, oh dear, they are so dry! So dry that sometimes we forget why we spend so much of our efforts focusing on them. And then, art comes and sweeps us away with its force, its beauty, its raw emotions... Within a minute of looking at each piece of art submitted this year, the reasons to continue the fight for the realization of minority rights is so obvious, just in front of our eyes.

This year, the emphasis of the contest has been on intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality has challenged the traditional belief that discrimination is a single categorical axis. It highlights that the discrimination on the grounds of ethnic, religious or linguistic minority identity very often coincides with discrimination and marginalization on other grounds too, including gender, sexual orientation, disability or 'class'. These multiple grounds for discrimination mutually reinforcing and intersecting and multiplying the effects on individuals and groups. Discrimination is not merely added as an additional layer to the existing one; it really becomes an impossible snowball that lands on individuals and groups' everyday lives and consumes their core.

Such intersectionality is seldom recognized and addressed. Even universal human rights, although more and more aware of the concept, are still reflecting on how to implement intersectionality in a system that is based on single ground treaties. In its General Recommendation no. 25, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination addressed the relevance of gender in racial discrimination and committed to integrate gender analysis throughout their work. The General Recommendation no. 28 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women recognized that gender is 'inextricably linked with other factors, such as race, ethnicity, class, [...] sexual orientation and gender identity'. The Human Rights Committee also noted in General Comment no. 28 on article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that discrimination against women is often 'intertwined with discrimination on other grounds'. But still, a lot of work has to be done to effectively address intersectional discrimination.

This contest, this exhibition really, allows us important insights into the lives and living experiences of artists with minority identities, guides us to recognise their intersections, their priorities, and the visions for the future through their work. The resilience they had to show, their desire for safety, their need to escape the harsh reality in which they are, their ways of challenging stereotypes and insisting on respect of their different intermingling identities; all these have really moved us. Through their creativity, these artists become active partners in the ongoing debate on intersectionality, in shaping our own ideas and understandings of the concept; and through their talented work, they make us reflect more on ways forward.

This contest shows that art is not an additional luxury in our lives. It is another way, maybe a better way to shape our future together. I have been honoured to participate in the project, to have such astute discussions with the very talented judges of the contest and to gain treasured insights to the identities of our artists. Thank you so much for sharing your creativity with us."

International Minority Artist Award Laureates 2023

Babatunde "Tribe" Akande (multidisciplinary visual artist)

Bianca Batlle Nguema (painter)

Mehdi Rajabian (composer and musician)

International Minority Artist Award Laureates 2023: Youth Category

Karthoum Dembele (photographer)

Honorable mentions

Aluizio de Azevedo Silva Júnior (visual artist, filmmaker and writer)

Tufan Chakma (visual artist)

Andrew Wong (visual artist)

Elahe Zivardar (painter)



Like Confetti with Jaguars to be Yourself, Zahra Hassan Marwan

Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, August 2023

Watercolor and ink on board

**MINORITY ARTISTS WORKING
ON INTERSECTIONALITY THEMES:**

**2023 LAUREATES OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ART CONTEST**





Bianca Battle Nguema

Born in Barcelona of a Spanish father and a Guinean mother, Bianca Battle Nguema (b. 1980) is a painter who self-identifies as a “mixed-race woman in a white society, in search of [her] identity”. “Who am I? How is it that I ended up being born in Barcelona? What is my story? What does it mean to be a Black woman in a society where you are ‘the different one’? How to find answers? How to empower yourself? I confess that, through art, I am finding answers to all these questions,” explains Nguema. The artist uses large-format canvases to depict the existence, narratives and resilience of Afro-descent and mixed-race people in European societies, notably women. “My central theme is the Afro-descendant woman who lives in Spain or in Europe. I like to prepare the paintings by means of sketches, to get to know in depth the bodies of the muses I paint. Afterwards, I do color tests to better understand what the model transmits to me and unveil her soul through color. Once I transfer the work to the large-format piece, I simply try to ‘feel’ what that body expresses, its gaze, its gesture... Then I no longer think, only a figure appears in front of me and, although in silence, she whispers her story to me,” Nguema explains.

The Judges Panel was moved by the strength and depth of Nguema’s paintings, as well as her fine technical skills. “Bianca’s art speaks volumes, capturing the essence of women in her community with a clarity that transcends words. Each piece is a testament to her transparent imagination, where the canvas becomes a vessel for unspoken voices,” says Abdullah, one of the Judges. In the view of the Judges Panel, the faces and bodies at the center of the artist’s paintings evoke, in a compelling manner, the feelings navigated by mixed-race and Afro-descendant women on a daily basis. For instance, the “Exhausted” painting from the *Speaking Bodies* project, depicts the artist’s personal feeling of exhaustion triggered by the lack of empathy that may exist toward minority communities. The Judges Panel was also struck by how the artist uses her painting to portray the strength of Afro-descendant women to heal, overcome trauma, and fight for the visibility of their bodies, while also connecting with their own ancestries, personal stories, and diaspora.

“My pieces help me see myself, contemplate the shapes of my body, become aware of the color of my skin, deeply feel where my soul comes from. My paintings help me understand the path all my African ancestors have walked, the battles they have fought. I feel like, in every brush-stroke I take, I am honoring my predecessors, honoring their struggle, recognizing their extraordinary strength and, ultimately, contributing to the healing of their trauma,” explains Nguema. The color and shape contrasts in the painting entitled “Who is she waiting for?” made a particular impression on the Judges Panel who could feel the profound questionings that the Afro-descendant woman is going through, as she is leaning against a window and gazing nostalgically from her bedroom at the unanimated city outside. “When we are alone in new spaces, what are we waiting to be?,” asks Nguema.

 biancanguema.com

 [nguema_bianca](https://www.instagram.com/nguema_bianca)

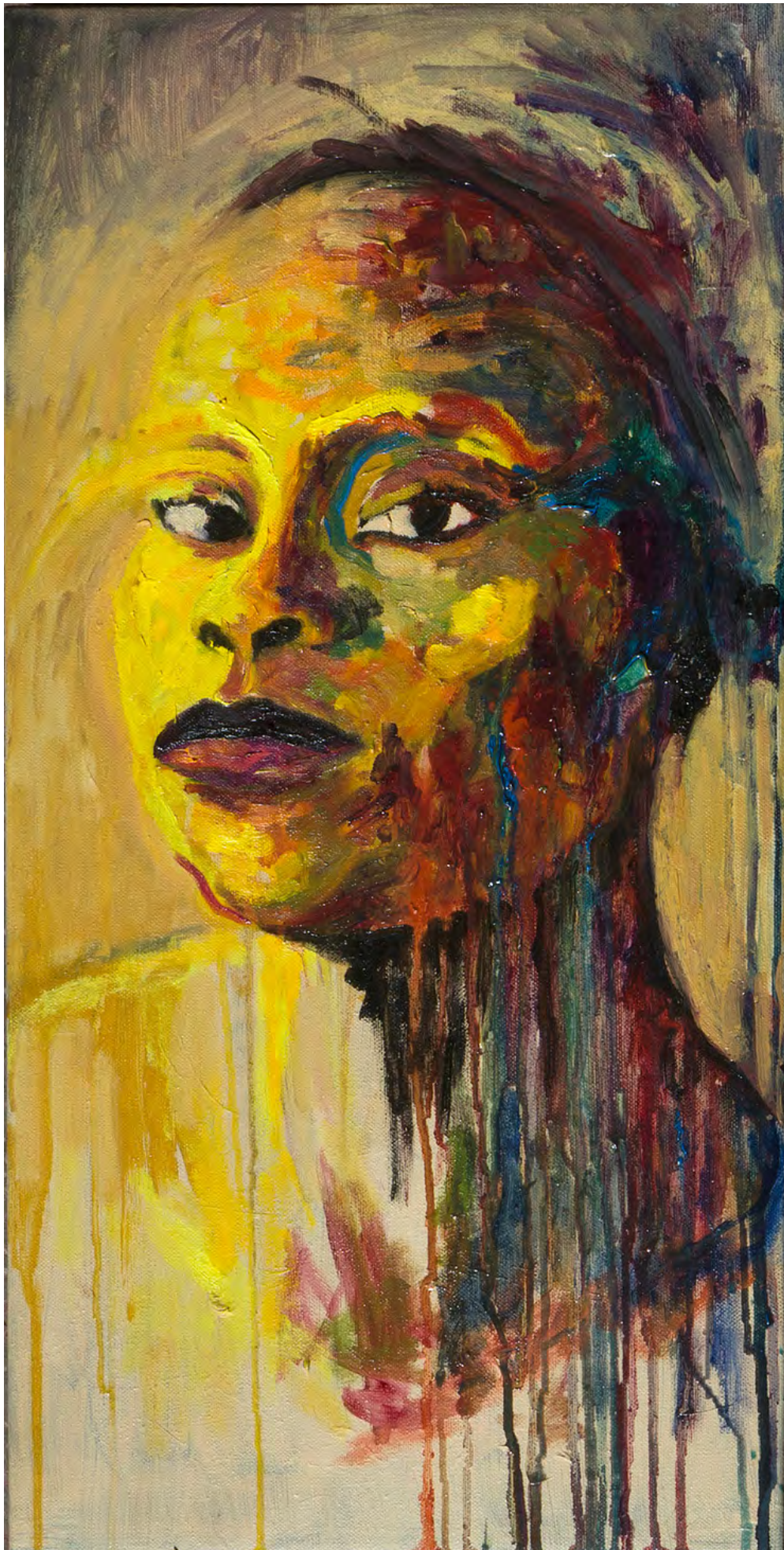
“ Bianca’s figurative paintings are vibrant, full of life, and don’t put the figure into question. It feels soft, real, and a beautiful counterbalance to the harsh light that is so often unfairly imposed on the Black, female body.

– Zahra Hassan Marwan, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”



Nsang, dreaming Africa, "Looking towards the roots" series
Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2016
Mixed media on canvas, 80x46"



Naa, "Looking towards the roots" series

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2016

Mixed media on canvas, 24x12"

"Naa means Mother in Fang, my mother's language. She arrived to Barcelona to study when she was 12 years old. She was one of the few African girls in the city, when Guinea still was a Spanish colony. She came with a Spanish ID, but she has always been stigmatized due to her skin color."



Si eso me voy, "Speaking Bodies" project
Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2021
Mixed media on paper, 39x59"



Maguette, "Speaking Bodies" project

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2020

Mixed media on paper, 55x33"



Necesito mi tiempo [I need my time], "Speaking Bodies" project

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2020

Mixed media on paper, 26x64"

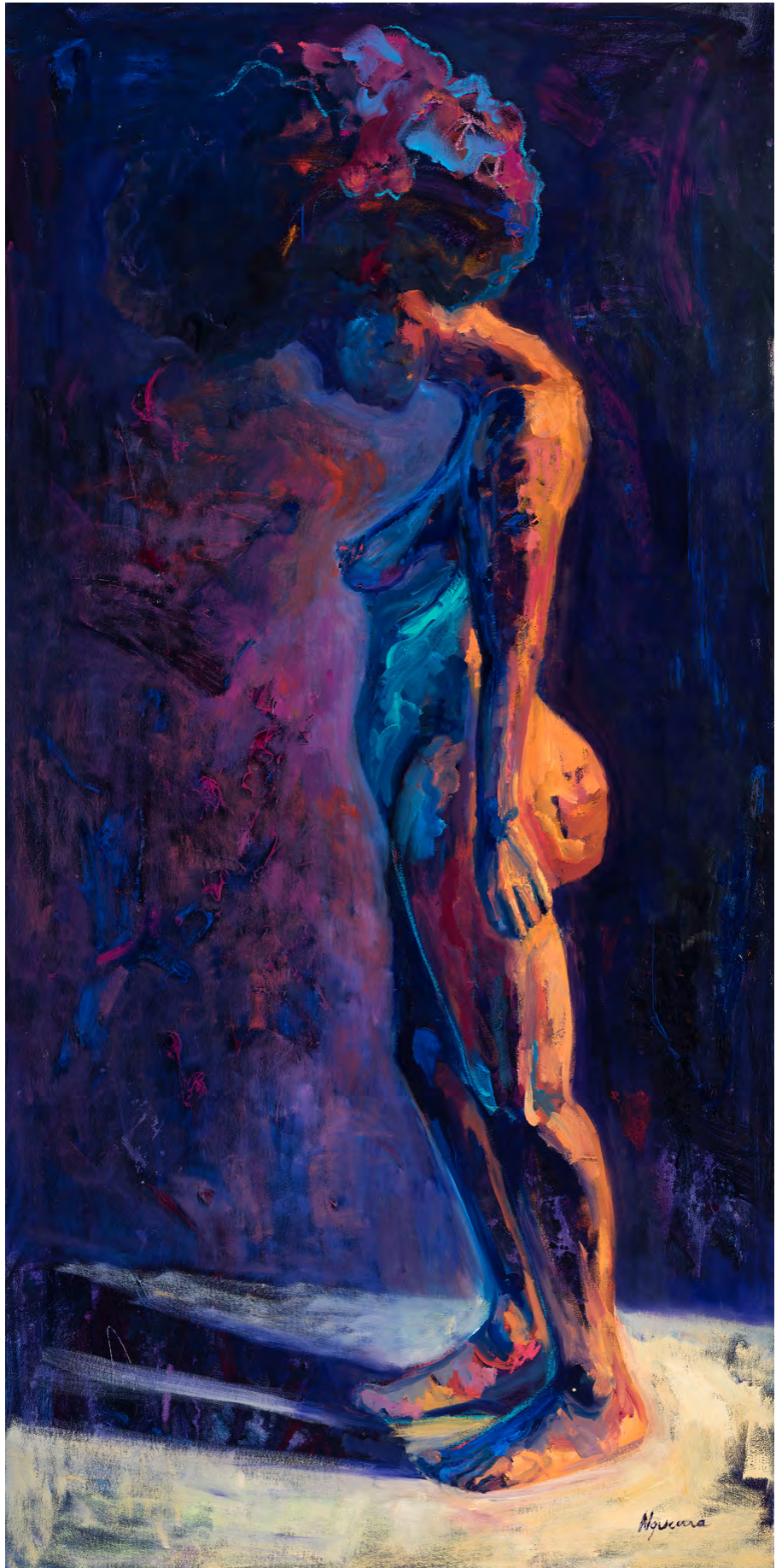


Light from the dark, "Speaking Bodies" project

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2020

Mixed media on canvas, 42x72"

"In this series from the *Speaking Bodies* project, the dialogue is amplified by the presence of two black women. In real life, when we, as women, share our nudity, it's in places built in a white society, like a gym locker room. But we don't share anything else. As Black women, we always try to escape quickly from these situations, as our bodies are questioned in public spaces – our breasts, our hips, our hair... This work reflects on the intimacy and deep connection in a sisterly space, and how strength and energy emerge from these connections."



Exhausted, "Speaking Bodies" project
Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2022
Mixed media on canvas, 68x33"



Marina inside, "Reflections" project

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2019

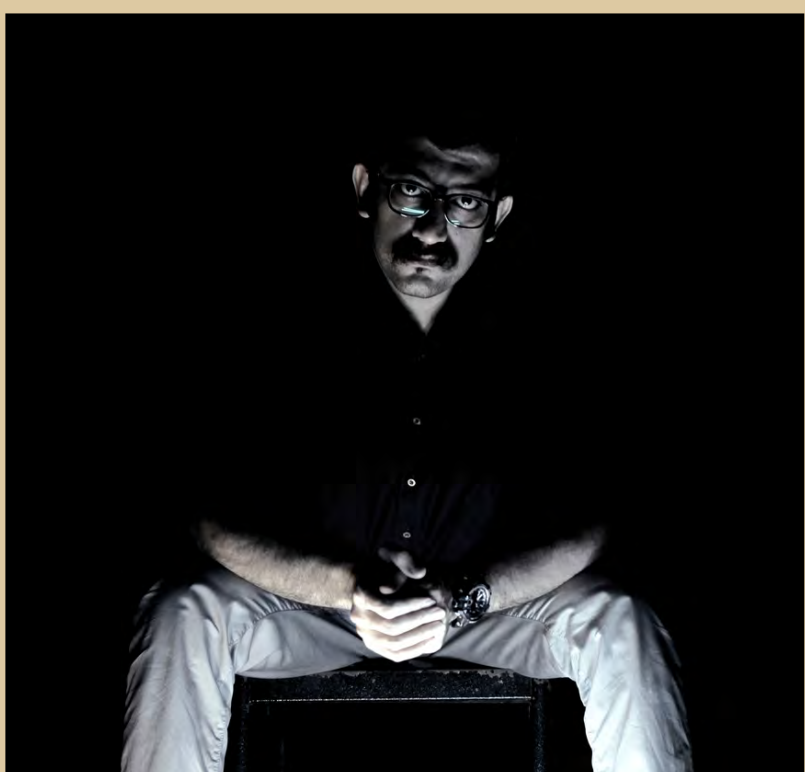
Mixed media on canvas, 24x37"



Who is she waiting for?, "Black Brick" series

Workshop in Tiana, village near Barcelona, Spain, 2022

Mixed media on canvas, 35x59"



Iranian musician risks his freedom to promote human rights
By Haroon Janjua | 5h ago

“拒绝战争”
制“和平专
MUSIC
The National
ARTS & CULTURE
Mehdi Rajabian: The Iranian musician who was jailed for his craft
The songwriter tells us about his new 'Middle Eastern' album and his passion for artistic freedom

ICI Toronto
Sections
FINANCIAL TIMES
Music
+ Add to myFT
Mehdi Rajabian: songs of sorrow and liberation
The Iranian musician has continued to create music despite prison and other hardships

making
n comp
ng mus
nposer
REUTERS

than two years
The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

DAILY SABAH
War-affected musicians send message of peace new project
DAILY SABAH (3)

Could Be Arrested
Any Moment': Dissident Musician Mehdi Rajabian Collaborating With Artists for His Risky New Album
Formerly imprisoned Turkish artist Doğan created a series of works inspired by the music.
Sarah Cascone • 2 hours ago

QUARTZ
News > World >
For a dissident musician, Covid-19 quarantine is another day
8, 2020
By Justin Rohrlich
Geopolitics reporter

Home News More

VIDEO
ODDLY ENOUGH
Iranian Artist Imprisoned for Music Releases New Album
August 7, 2019

radio
CBC | MENU
Arrêté en 2013 et exilé deux ans, cet artiste a malgré les difficultés créé un album de musique contemporaine.
Iranian musician Mehdi Rajabian has created an album of Middle East artists (Mehdi Rajabian interview)
livier L...
ire 5 min.

Entertainment & Arts
Rajabian: Risking

Apr 8, 2019 | 01:36
How a jailed Iranian musician sends a message of peace
An Iranian musician has collaborated with artists from across the Middle East to send a message of peace.
TRANSCRIPT +
Listen 5 min

World Music Central.org
You cannot prohibit art: Iranian musician Mehdi Rajabian on releasing album that could get him in prison
09, 2019 9:00 AM
TheFamousArab
Please Enter a valid sea
Homepage: In-depth, Sentinels powerful message of resistance musician leads Middle East album collaboration

Mehdi Rajabian

An Iranian composer, producer and human rights activist, Mehdi Rajabian (b. 1989) uses music to spread messages in defense of human rights, women's rights, artistic freedom, freedom of religion or belief, and peace. Due to his artistic activities and political engagement, Rajabian was detained and sentenced to prison various times between 2013 and 2020 in Iran. Arrested for the first time in October 2013 and detained in Evin prison in Teheran, Rajabian was put in solitary confinement for three months. In 2015, while he was working on his first album *History of Iran Narrated by Setar*, Rajabian was sentenced to jail for six years after a three-minute trial for "offending Islam", having conducted "illegal audio-visual activities" and having "spread propaganda against the system," according to Amnesty International's report of 2016. After two years of detention at Evin prison, the musician undertook a 40-day-long hunger strike, that caused him to lose 15 kilograms and 40 per cent of his vision. Despite these hardships, Rajabian has continued to compose and record music as an act of resistance. In his second album *Middle Eastern*, he worked with more than a hundred musicians from most countries of the Middle East. In 2020, while Rajabian was working on his third album *Coup of Gods*, he was arrested again following the release of a video of a female dancer performing his music.

The Judges Panel was deeply struck and moved by the bravery, resilience and commitment of Rajabian who, at the risk of his health and own life, has used his spirit and music to be a human rights light in the darkness. Artistic activities have been a point of contention since the 1979 Revolution in Iran, and cultural and artistic productions such as music, film and performances are heavily regulated, controlled and censored. Since the protests that have followed the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody in September 2022, a growing number of artists have been arrested in Iran. Nonetheless, Rajabian has refused to be silenced or to give up the fight against censorship despite adversity, arrests and threats. The Judges Panel was humbled by Rajabian's tireless fight to put his music out in the world and speak about the human rights situation facing diverse groups in the Middle East, including women, refugees, minorities, and civilians confronted with wars. While Rajabian is forbidden to travel abroad since August 2020 and due to lingering health issues caused by the hunger strike, he now makes music in the basement of his house and almost entirely online with musicians from abroad, because many Iranian artists are scared to work with him for fear of reprisals. Recently, Rajabian has collaborated with several female singers, including to produce his fourth album entitled *It Arrives*, in a context where women are often banned from singing in Iran, both in public or on recordings. "I believe that everything in the universe can be questioned and so far I have done this with art," says Rajabian, "silence in the face of oppression is complicity with the oppressor. I cannot be silent."

 mehdirajabian.com



Mehdi embodies what many of us feel in the Persian and Arab world. A deep love of our cultures and people while wishing and knowing that our societies can be better. Banned from producing music after imprisonment and risking arrest at any moment, Mehdi moves through this potential by not giving into this threat, but rather valuing communicating his thoughts and giving voice to people through his music. Protesting a system of authority that violates human rights, he does so with eloquent melancholy and hope for a better world.

- Zahra Hassan Marwan, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023



History of Iran Narrated by Setar

History of Iran Narrated by Setar is a multi-track musical album produced by Mehdi Rajabian, in which he plays the setar, a three-string instrument used in Persian traditional music. Through this project that he started in 2007 and that evokes the history of wars including those involving Iran, Rajabian recorded musical narratives of old men and women about religions, war, death, victory, freedom, coming from many different remote villages and areas of Iran. As a result, the tracks of this album depict events that have marked the history of Iran, based on the melodies and dialects collected from all part of the countries, then interpreted and narrated by Rajabian's setar instrument.

Yet, "some of these stories were unpleasant to the politicians of the Islamic Republic," tells Rajabian, who was arrested on 5 October 2013 by the security forces of Iran. His album was banned, and all the materials, websites and hard drives related to Barg Music, a company that Mehdi Rajabian had founded in 2007 to support censored musicians in Iran, were seized. To this day, all of the materials and hard drives of this project have not been returned to him. Following his second arrest in 2015 and jail sentence in Evin prison, Rajabian started a hunger strike that lasted 40 days and caused serious damage to his muscles and his eyesight.

After his release from jail, Rajabian recorded a Setar solo album at his home, that he trashed less than 24 hours before its planned release. "I destroyed my artwork today in protest. Today I burned the hard drive and all the materials. Because of the lack of media [coverage of his plight], because of the ban, government pressure, imprisonment, housekeeping, despair... Today I destroyed and burned my album," he said to the QZ news agency. Due to his health condition, Rajabian announced that he would give up playing professionally as a Setar instrumentist, and would only compose and arrange music.



Cartoons of Mehdi Rajabian by drawers from all parts of the world, in support of the artist during his hunger strike.



"Mehdi Narrates with a Setar" by Zahra Hassan Marwan
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA, August 2023
Watercolor and Ink on Board

Middle Eastern (2019)

Conceptualized by Rajabian while he was behind bars at Evin prison in Teheran, *Middle Eastern* is a multi-medium project that encompasses music, painting, dance, photography, and literature. The album was released by Sony Entertainment in 2019 and features contributions from around 100 artists living in most countries of the Middle East. Coming from diverse political and cultural backgrounds, “the musicians of each country had different messages of peace, human rights, freedom, independence, world without borders,” says Rajabian.



“The musicians of this project were in different situations. I recorded music in the middle of war bombings, I wrote music in the middle of a refugee boat, I whispered music in the barbed wire of a prison, I shouted music in between two borders, I made music in the middle of poverty,” Rajabian explains about the recording process of the 11-track *Middle Eastern* album.

In August 2020, Rajabian was arrested again by the Iranian authorities, after he released a video of an Iranian female dancer as part of the *Middle Eastern* project. “After the production of this album, I thought that I would never be able to produce music again. It really makes me proud to work with the most important musicians in the world. If it wasn't for their help and persistence, I would never have been able to produce music,” said Rajabian in an interview with Forbes.



Poster of Middle Eastern album
Mohsen Kaboli, 2018

“The photo that is featured in the poster of the album was taken by the photographer Mohsen Kaboli, at the border between Afghanistan and Iran. A musician has lost his hands due to war, and is now deprived of his most important tools to play an instrument.”

Album: Middle Eastern

- Track 1 - Iran
- Track 2 - Turkey & Syria
- Track 3 - Azerbaijan & Turkey
- Track 4 - Oman
- Track 5 - Yemen
- Track 6 - Iraq & Palestine
- Track 7 - Palestine
- Track 8 - Jordan
- Track 9 - Egypt
- Track 10 - Bahrain
- Track 11 - Tajikistan

Listen to *Middle Eastern* album



Spotify
@Mehdi Rajabian



Soundcloud
@Mehdi Rajabian



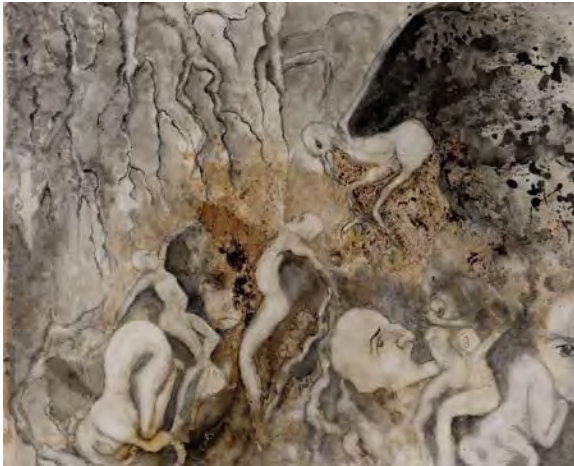
Cover of *Middle Eastern* album

Reza Deghati, 2019

“The original cover photo of the album was taken by an Iranian photographer named Reza Deghati in the destroyed palace of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The photo of the destroyed roof of Saddam Hussein's palace tells the message that no dictator is stable.”

Paintings of the *Middle Eastern* tracks by Zehra Doğan (2019)

All songs of the *Middle Eastern* album were turned into paintings by Zehra Doğan, an Iranian artist now living in exile in France who had spent various years behind bars for painting a work that depicted Turkey's attack on a Kurdish district. Because Zehra Doğan did not have access to art supplies while she was in prison, she used spices in lieu of paint. Her eleven pieces of art for *Middle Eastern* are done in a similar style, using materials such as coffee, tea, and turmeric.



Track 1. Iran



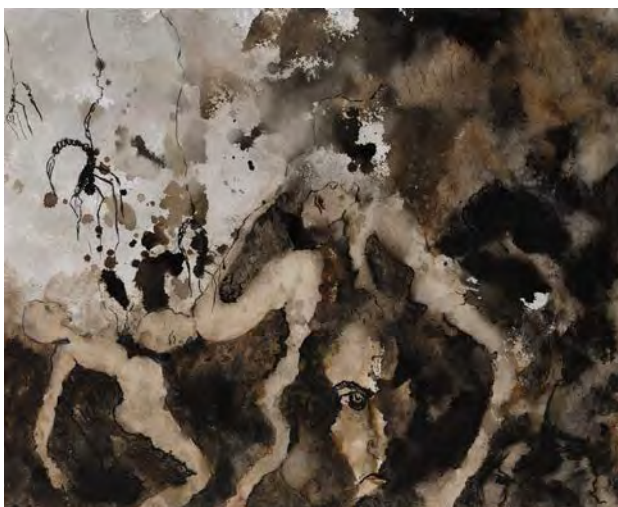
Track 2. Turkey and Syria



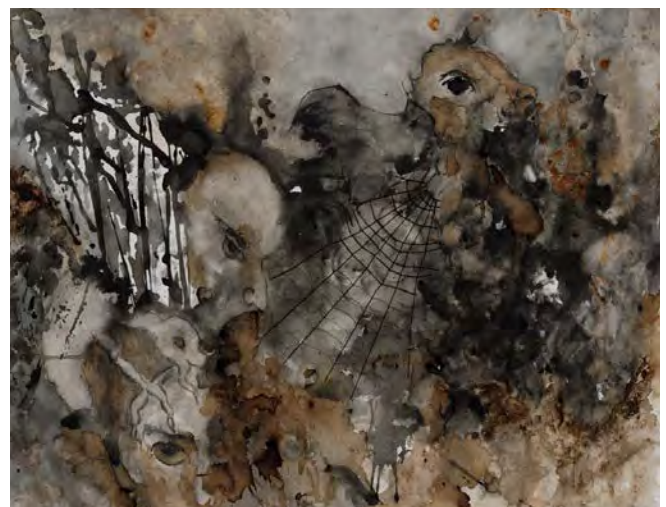
Track 3. Azerbaijan & Turkey



Track 4. Oman



Track 5. Yemen



Track 6. Iraq & Palestine



As an artist, I am really excited to be part of Mehdi Rajabian's project. I draw for each song separately. As an artist who spent time in prison, it really motivates me to be part of such beautiful and peaceful projects on these strategic lands and to paint for this album. Cooperating with someone who was condemned and jailed for his art in Iran makes me truly happy.

– Zehra Doğan



Track 7. Palestine



Track 8. Jordan



Track 9. Egypt



Track 10. Bahrain



Track 11. Tajikistan



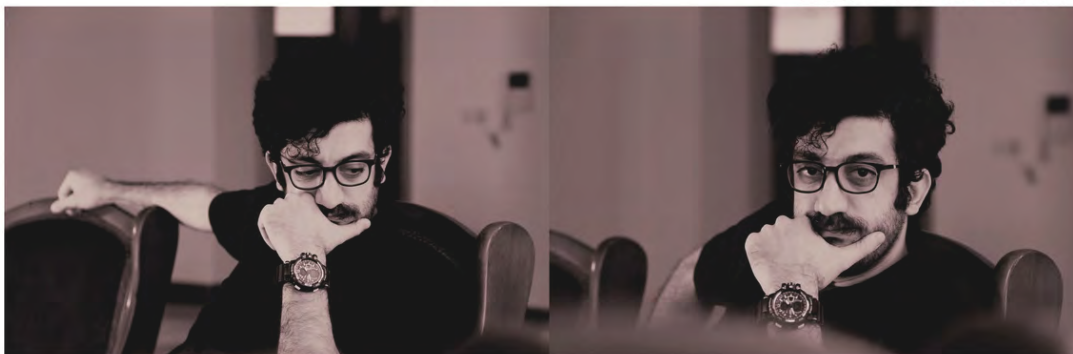
Artist Zehra Doğan (2019)

Coup of Gods (2021)

Elaborated in less than a year with musicians from all over the world and released for the first time on 17 September 2021 in the United States, the *Coup of Gods* album mixes Iranian traditional music with contemporary classical. Heavily inspired by the artist's most personal experiences and sufferings, the album navigates the feelings he went through during his hunger strike – “a state of unconsciousness and consciousness, between the earth and the sky, between death and life,” Rajabian explains. The album opens with “Whip on a Lifeless Body” track, a powerful representation of his own experience of anxiety, melancholy and strength. While Rajabian was too weak to perform due to health issues triggered by the hunger strike, the creation of the album took place almost entirely online. Drawing on the tone of native players like the Indian musician Sarangi or the Armenian musician Duduk, the album also features two US-based female folk singers, Lizzy O'Very and Aubrey Johnson. Mixing Middle Eastern sounds with Western strings, the album musics are also played by diverse instruments, including the Yaybahar, an innovative electric-free instrument, and solo classical musicians accompanied by Sao Paulo's National Orchestra.

Before global release, this album was praised and admired by more than forty great critics of the music world, including critics from the Billboard Newspaper, the Rolling Stone, the Financial Times, Forbes, BBC and the Times. In a 2020 interview with BBC World, Rajabian announced that he would release his album soon which led to his arrest right after the publication of this interview. After his liberation from detention, he completed this project with the help of the internet: while many artists from Iran were afraid of working with him because of the bans and risks of reprisals and imprisonment, Rajabian wrote instrumental parts from the basement of his house and sent them to mixers, singers and musicians from around the world, including Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, Russia and countries across the Middle East. The scores were given a final mix by the American producer Harvey Mason Jr., CEO of Grammy Academy, who was responsible for mixing, mastering and releasing the album.

COMPOSER ARRANGER PRODUCER **MEHDI RAJABIAN**



ALBUM COUP OF GODS





Album: Coup of Gods

Track 1 - Whip On a Lifeless Body

Track 2 - Murmur of the Naked Nun

Track 3 - An Epitaph on the Tomb of Companions

Track 4 - Coup of Gods

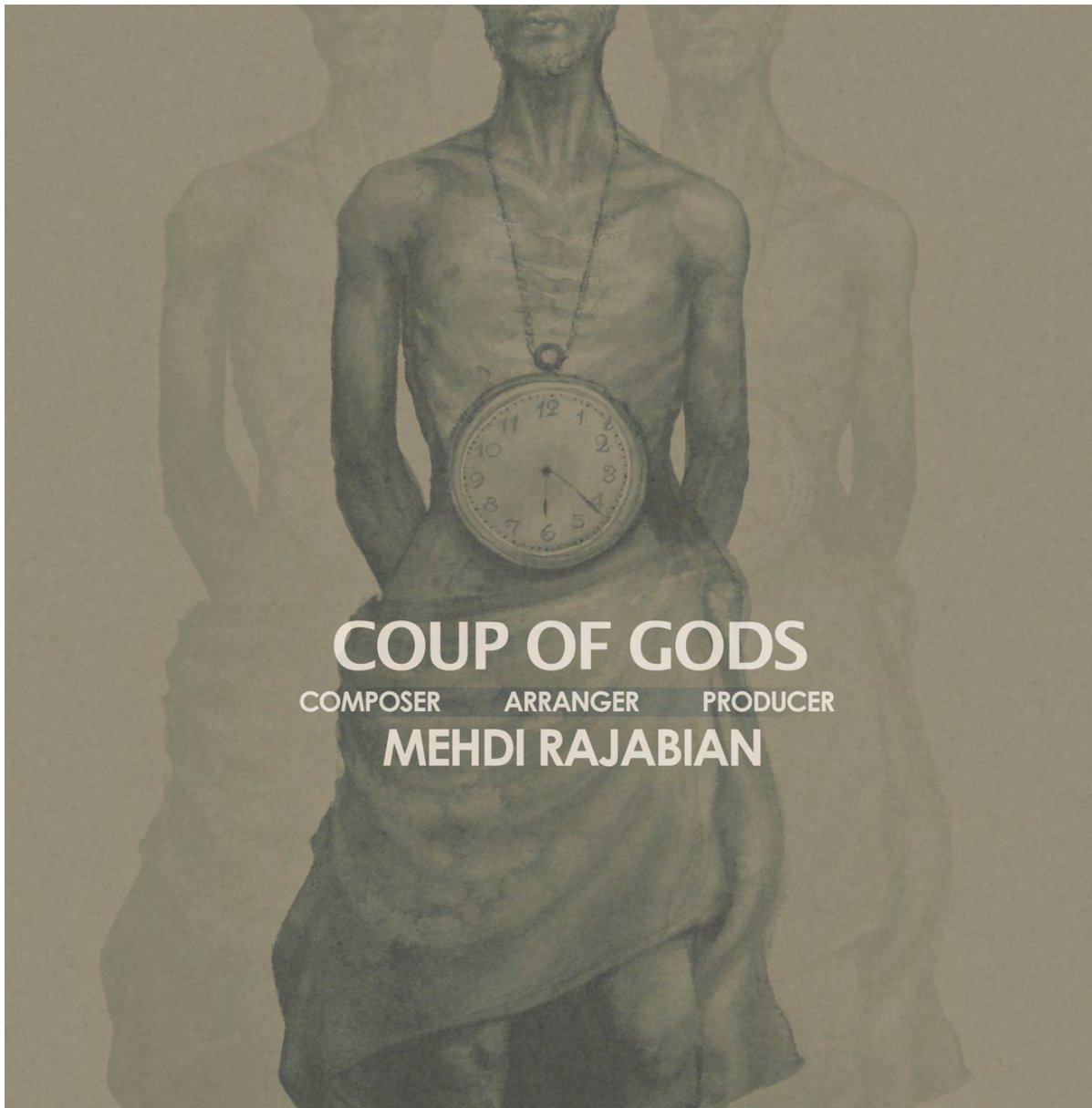
Listen to *Coup of Gods* album



Spotify
@Mehdi Rajabian



Soundcloud
@Mehdi Rajabian



It Arrives (2021)

Released on 10 September 2022 jointly by Rajabian's label - Barg Music - and by Grammy Award-winning conductor Amy Andersson, *It Arrives* is a New Age genre album completed remotely with the help of the internet. "I couldn't even play an instrument on my album. I could only compose and arrange. I did it just to say that no power can stop the freedom of music," Rajabian said in an interview with Billboard Media on 15 September 2021.



While banned from travelling abroad, Rajabian used the internet to collaborate from his own basement with numerous Grammy Award winners and nominees such as saxophonist Jeff Coffin, jazz pianist Taylor Eigsti, drummer M.B. Gordy, guitarist Daniel Ho, cellist Peter Jacobson, flautist Wouter Kellerman and violinist Curtis Stewart. "We did all the parts online, from musicians, studio recording, album art, mastering. Everything you see in this project was done over the internet," Rajabian said in a press interview. The cover of the album was painted by multidisciplinary artist Claudio Roncoli, who won the Grammy Award for the best album cover, and the album's mixing was done by the Grammy Award-winning sound engineer Michael Romanowski. Pushed forward to create music despite oppression, Rajabian describes this album as a testament to the will to survive and to the creation of art despite all odds; and a tribute to the musicians of the world who work together for free in order to defend artistic independence. He believes that independent and banned artists should have a separate flag, so that they can introduce their works of art to the rest of the world without permission.





Album: It Arrives

- Track 1 - Last Breath to Survive
- Track 2 - Stomping for Grief
- Track 3 - A murmur in the dark
- Track 4 - Adoration
- Track 5 - A storm to extinguish the candlelight

Listen to *It Arrives* album



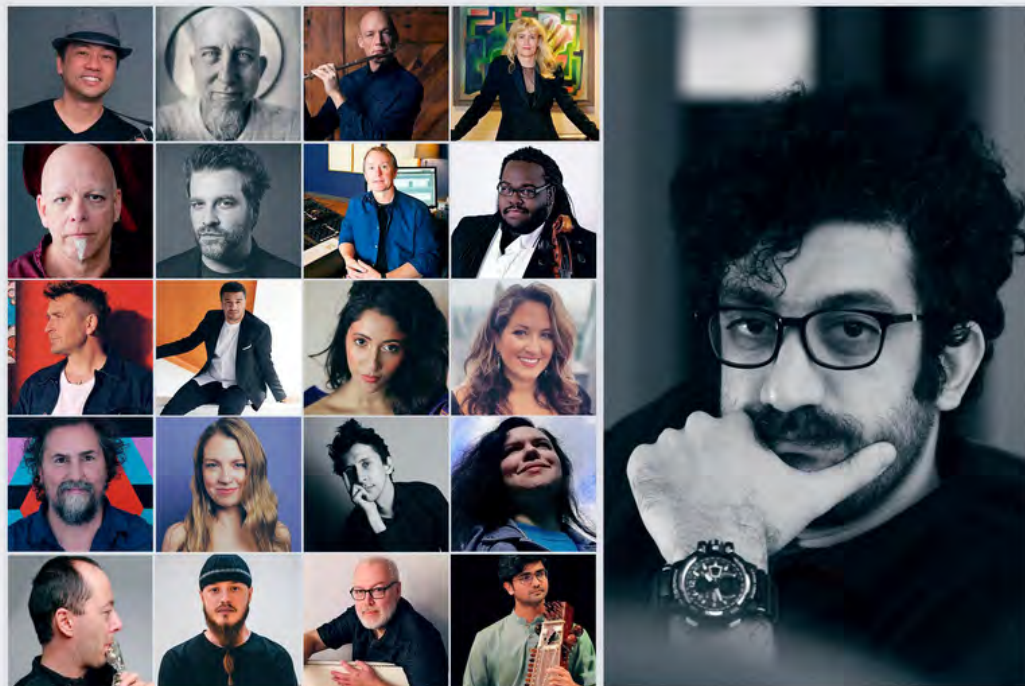
Spotify
@Mehdi Rajabian



Soundcloud
@Mehdi Rajabian



COLLABORATIVE ARTISTS



IT ARRIVES
COLLABORATIVE ARTISTS



Babatunde “Tribe” Akande

Babatunde “Tribe” Akande (b. 2001) is a queer and nonbinary, self-taught storyteller and multimedia artist from Lagos, Nigeria who self-identifies as member of the Yoruba community. Influenced by personal experiences, trauma and the everyday interactions at the core of human existence, they are interested in evoking emotions, feelings, and questions from viewers through their artwork and the use of diverse mediums that best tell their story. Babatunde’s work draws on diverse colors, textures, strokes and drawings as a testament to the healing power of arts and as a way to invite viewers to contemplate the complexities of individual identities and the existence of intersectional experiences of discrimination. “My art reflects themes of mental health, discrimination, loss, sacrifice, grief, and uncertainty, while also expressing the resilience to survive, hope for a better future, and the desire for safety, refuge, belonging, and peace,” says Babatunde. Their artwork further brings attention to the ways in which the public discourse can silence and the media can perpetuate negative stereotypes, while encouraging viewers to confront these narratives and support greater visibility for nonbinary and LGBTQI+ people as well as other marginalized communities. “I am dedicated to using my art to explore issues related to intersectionality and minority rights, and I aim to inspire positive change and encourage viewers to challenge harmful attitudes and promote equality and justice for all,” notes Babatunde.

The Judges Panel was particularly compelled by Babatunde’s bravery and commitment to make visible the difficult experiences of discrimination, marginalization and stigmatization facing LGBTQI+ communities in the African region, especially in a context where discriminatory bans on LGBTQI+ rights are on the rise in many countries across the continent. Their digital art series *Silenced Eyes* sheds light on the struggles faced by the LGBTQI+ community in West Africa, notably in Nigeria, in a particularly thought-provoking and visually appealing manner. The Judges Panel highlighted the intrinsic power of Babatunde’s artwork that depicts how various forms of oppression can intersect to aggravate discrimination and marginalization facing minority communities, through aesthetically explicit representations that can speak to many, including those who may not be familiar with the topic. For instance, in their piece entitled “Bloodied Eyes and Stained Hands: The Violent Reality for LGBTQI+ Africans”, the artist uses bloodied handprints and eyes over a rainbow color flag to create a striking visual metaphor of the violence and discrimination inflicted upon the LGBTQI+ community, while the map of Africa serves as a reminder of the widespread nature of this human rights issue.


“

The art created by this non-binary African artist beautifully navigates the complex intersections of racism, Islamophobia and LGBTQIA+ identities. Through their art and bravery, they challenge societal gender norms and offer a platform for dialogue and reflection, inviting us to examine our preconceptions and foster inclusivity during a time when deaths due to criminalization of this marginalised community have reached a high record in the African continent.

– Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo, Judges, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”

 @babatundetribe

 @1002arts



The Words

Lagos, Nigeria, 2023

Digital Drawing and Acrylic, 11,8x15,7" (top), 9,8x23,6" (bottom)

"The Words serves as a reminder of the immense power of storytelling, the exchange of knowledge across generations, and the profound connections that can be forged through sharing experiences. Its purpose is to encourage viewers, including myself, to reflect on our own relationships and to embrace the wisdom passed down from the past, while nurturing the curiosity and potential of future generations. By acknowledging the strength of our words and the stories we tell, we can foster collective efforts to combat and eradicate detrimental attitudes such as homophobia, racism, misogyny, and work towards building a more inclusive and compassionate world where understanding and acceptance prevail."



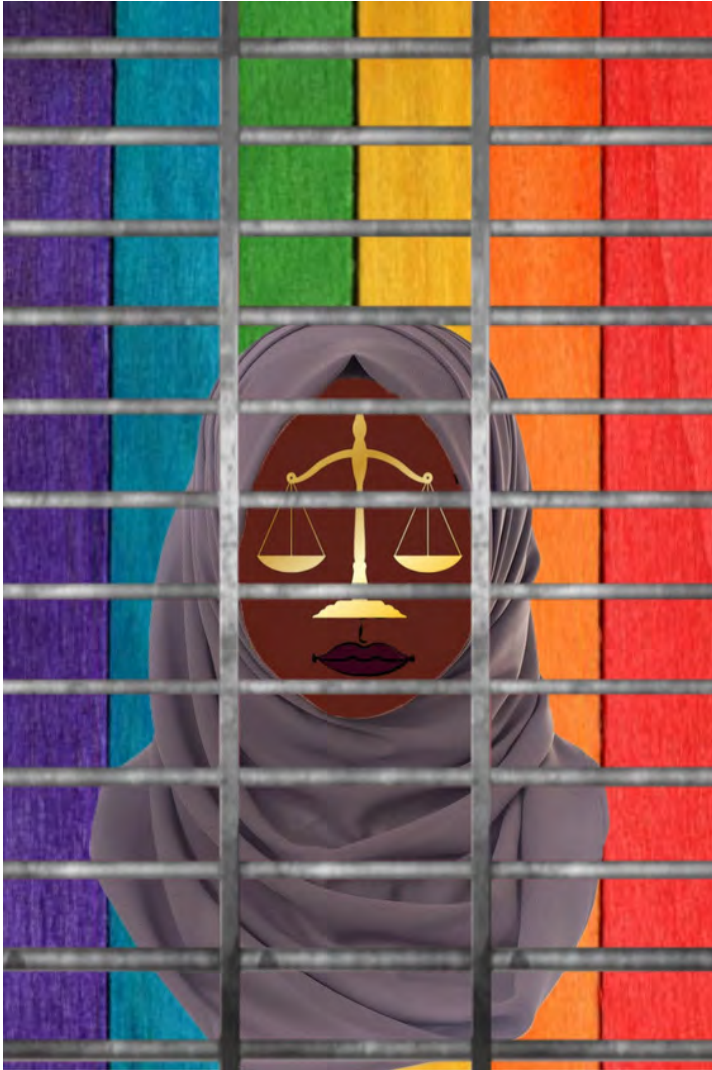
Sisters
Lagos, Nigeria, 2023
Digital Drawing and Acrylic, 12x12"



Unseen Reflections, "Silenced Eyes" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2022

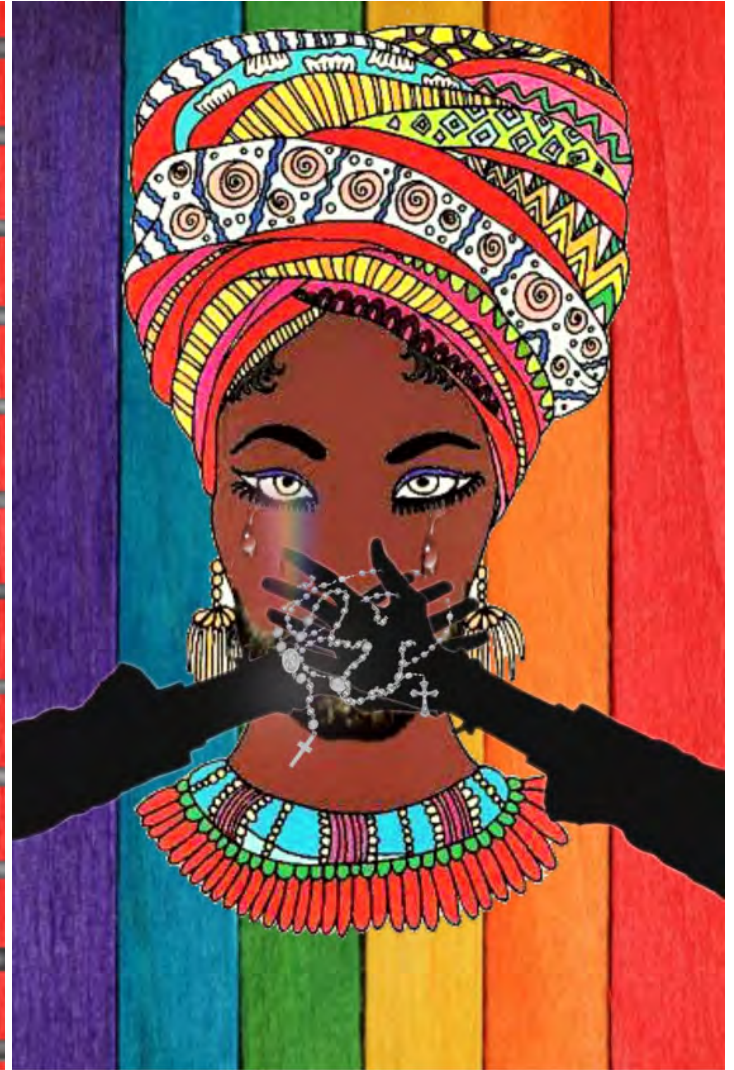
Digital art, 12x7,5"



Blinded Justice, "Silenced Eyes" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2022

Digital art, 12x7,5"



Silenced by Faith, "Silenced Eyes" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2022

Digital art, 12x7,5"



Silenced Spectrum, "Silenced Eyes" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2022

Digital art, 12x7,5"



Bloodied Eyes and Stained Hands, "Silenced Eyes" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2022

Digital art, 12x7,5"



***Boneless*, "Lalakukula" series**

Lagos, Nigeria, 2023

Digital art, 24x28"

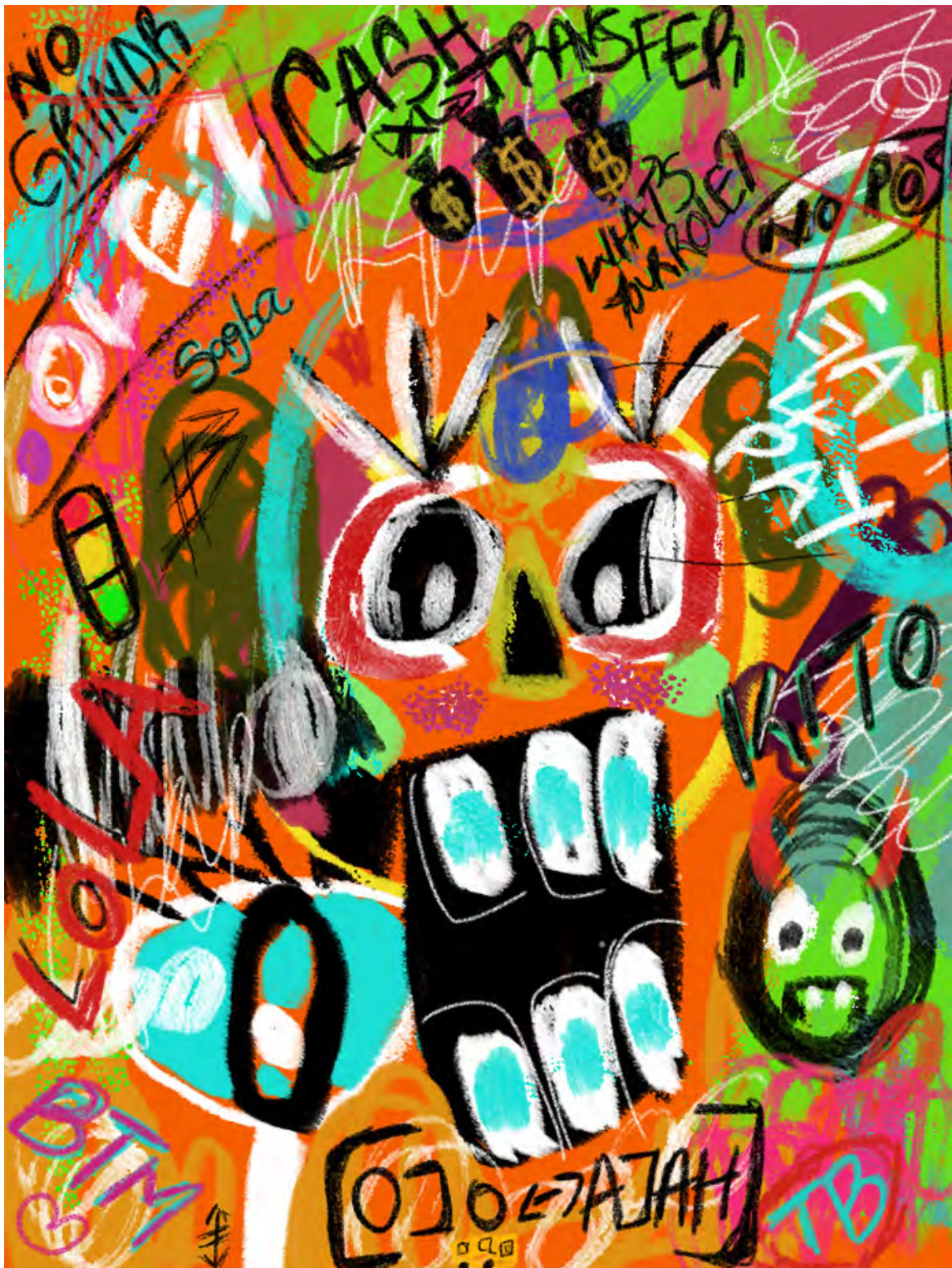
"The 'Lalakukula' series is a chorus of narratives, a tapestry capturing the spectrum of human emotions and the power of collective expression. In particular, *Boneless* stands as a political statement, an embodiment of a society wearied by broken promises and unmet expectations."



Emi lo'kan, "Lalakukula" series

Lagos, Nigeria, 2023

Digital art, 24x28"




16'Kobiti, "Lalakukula" series
Lagos, Nigeria, 2023
Digital art, 24x28"



Karthoum Dembele

A twenty-one-year-old French Muslim artist of Malian origin, Karthoum Dembele (b. 2002) started analog photography almost three years ago when she joined the *Hijabeuses*, a civil society organization defending Muslim women's right to wear the veil in official soccer competitions in France. "As a Muslim woman who wears the veil and has been playing soccer for over eight years, my artistic work aligns with my position as communication manager of the *Hijabeuses*. Within this organization, we do everything we can to defend our rights, so that no woman is forced to choose between access to sports and dignity," she writes. In 2021, Dembele joined Analog Sport, a French civil society organization training young individuals from the suburb of Paris to be the next generation of sports photographers. Through this project, she was trained in analog photography, and received some equipment and opportunities to collaborate with professional structures, including the French Football League, Nanterre Basketball, and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Currently a student in communication and marketing, Dembele uses her non-digital camera to portray Muslim women wearing a veil and playing sports. "Soccer started out as a passion for me, but it also turned into a pretext for defending my rights. Photography is one of the tools I use to show the world that we are as radiant and determined as ever to contribute, in our own small way, to ensuring a better world where every individual can fully enjoy all their rights," says Dembele. Her artwork has been exhibited as part of various campaigns, including the "#WomenMatter" with Dysturb media and "Nanterre Basket 92" at La Défense Arena in France.

The Judges Panel was not only compelled by Dembele's talent as a photographer, but also by her commitment to shed light on the struggles of Muslim women in a male-dominated sport like soccer in a context where islamophobia is rising throughout Europe, including in the world of sports. "Karthoum's work is a powerful and thought-provoking exploration of the challenges that marginalized women face, who yearn to be acknowledged by society as part of a predominantly male realm, shedding light on the need for gender parity, solidarity and religious tolerance. The deliberation of this intersectional dimension echoes the essentiality for more diversity in sports," notes Judge Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo. The Judges panel was particularly moved by the artist's dedication, resilience and creativity to rise up as a young Muslim woman and to portray the struggles for dignity and rights by Muslim female sports players in France, at the intersection of women's rights and religious minorities' rights. "Who can tell a story better than those who are directly affected? My photos reflect the perception of a young, Black, Muslim woman who wears the veil and is searching for herself in a world that closes all doors to her," says Dembele. The Judges Panel was struck by the technique the photographer uses with her camera lens focusing on the faces, emotions and bodies of women players at different moments of the soccer game as a way to make them visible, in a context where they are often under-represented or even excluded from the pitch for choosing to wear a veil. "Photographing these young women is a form of activism and an awareness-raising tool to tell the story of complete strangers who have come together to defend their rights as women, as sportswomen, as Muslims and simply as human beings," explains Dembele.

 @__dmlk__

“

Using photography, Dembele evokes, in a simple and yet striking way the resilience and courage of these young women who are committed to pursue their passion for sport despite the intersectional discrimination they face daily as young French Muslim women who have chosen to wear a veil.

- Carine Ayélé Durand, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”



Nous voulons jouer ! [We want to play!]

Puteaux, France, April 2022

Analog photography



Numero 11

Puteaux, France, April 2022

Analog photography

"Film photo of the first *Hijabeuses'* soccer jersey. This jersey is symbolic of the campaign led by the *Hijabeuses*, but first and foremost for the players themselves. This jersey is abandoned on the pitch because the players are on the bench. It's time to bring the jersey back to life."



The rules

Puteaux, France, April 2022

Analog photography

"Pitch reserved for authorized persons and official matches," says the sign.



Foune
Puteaux, France, April 2022
Analog photography



Yusra
Puteaux, France, April 2022
Analog photography



Expression des corps [Body expression]

Puteaux, France, April 2022

Analog photography

"Soccer is, quite simply, the expression of our bodies, a game with our legs and where talent is more important than anything else."



Mon équipe [My team]
Puteaux, France, April 2022
Analog photography



Voile homologué [Approved Headscarf]

Puteaux, France, April 2022

Analog photography



Mama
Puteaux, France, April 2022
Analog photography



Entrainement [training session]
Paris, France, September 2022
Analog photography



Shafika & Yusra
Paris, France, September 2022
Analog photography



Aluízio de Azevedo Silva Júnior

A multidisciplinary Brazilian artist living in the city of Tangará da Serra located in the State of Mato Grosso, Aluízio de Azevedo Silva Júnior (b. 1999) belongs to the Romani-Kalé minority and self-identifies as LGBTQI+. Silva uses scriptwriting, filmmaking, poetry and visual arts to shed light on, fight against and resist the intersectionality of racism, antigypsyism and LGBT-phobia in Brazil. "I seek to dismantle stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination and hate speech that exist within the Brazilian social imaginary, both about Romani communities and LGBTQI+ people, in the same way as I seek to create new and better imaginaries about LGBTQI+ people together with Roma communities, which are also traversed by racism and patriarchal oppression," Silva writes. The union of Roma and LGBTQI+ art with activism was consolidated throughout Silva's university scholarship in journalism, environmental education and Roma mythologies, as well as filmmaking.

While Romani communities in Brazil have been confronted with widespread invisibility, including in the public discourse, the Judges Panel highlighted the social impact of Silva's pluridisciplinary artwork to raise awareness of the structural discrimination, marginalization and antigypsyism facing Romani communities in Latin America. The brave commitment of the artist was also applauded as, in addition to writing and directing films focusing on Romani women, the youth and LGBTQI+, Silva has pursued a doctoral thesis with Roma communities in Brazil, Portugal and France, using filmmaking as a methodology to advance decolonial work engaging Romani communities and the overall society. The techniques used by the artist were also considered distinctive by the Judges Panel that admired the echoes of Silva's artwork with traditional artistic techniques used by other minorities and Indigenous peoples in the region, including dots and circular shapes.

 Aluízio De Azevedo Júnior

 @aluiziodeazevedo

 @aluiziodeazevedo

“

In a vibrant and insightful way, Aluízio raises the issue of LGBTQI+phobia among the Roma community in Brazil, while pursuing to promote the social inclusion of the Roma people more broadly among the Brazilian society. The way of addressing stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination both within and outside the Roma community is full of originality, creativity, and dynamism.

- Carine Ayélé Durand, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”



***Diva e as Calins de Mato Grosso* [Diva and the Calins of Mato Grosso] series**
Mato Grosso, Brazil, 2022

"The series *Diva e as Calins de Mato Grosso* ('Diva and the Calins [Romani women] of Mato Grosso') portrays the knowledge and traditions of Romani women of the Kalon ethnic group, focusing on the story of the healer, Maria Divina Cabral, "Diva". The series also focuses on the story of four Romani women who stand out for their leadership in preserving cultural aspects of the Romani universe: social worker Terezinha (episode 2), Nilva Rodrigues (episode 3), Irandi Rodrigues (episode 4) and Nerana Rodrigues (episode 5). The series touches on the past, such as nomadic life; the modes of organization in the cities today; and the cultural and identity traits that they intend to preserve in the future."

 Watch episode 1



 Watch episode 2





Photos: Karen Ferreira, Calin Multimedia Exhibition.

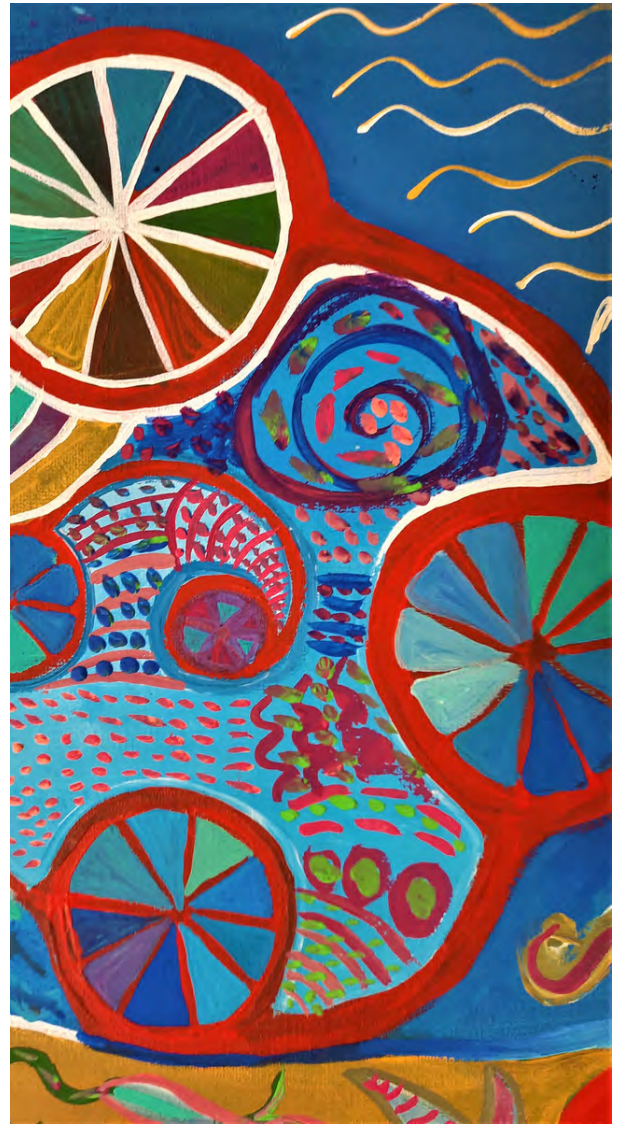


Revisited Romani Flag

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2017

Acrylic on canvas, 23,6x15,7"

"Through the multiplication of the wheel of the Romani flag into seven wheels displayed as a spiral, I am telling the world how old our cultures and traditions are. For 7000 years, we have been resisting in peace, without waging war. Each wheel is a millennium of change and transformation, leading to the cultural and social enrichment of the Roma peoples. The rainbows of the fourth and fifth wheels expose the diversity of sex and gender, as a possibility for the existence of being and life. Even though we are always traveling the planet and sometimes cross arid deserts, we know the importance of plants and animals, stars and seeds for our journey on earth."





Tarot Cup Tree

Brasília, Brazil, 2012

Acrylic on canvas, 46,8x31,2"



Totem of myself, a Romani LGBTQI+ person

Brasília, Brazil, 2012

Acrylic on canvas, 31,2x23,4"

"In the arid desert of homophobia and transphobia, combined with the exclusion and violence triggered by racism and antigypsyism, my full self flourishes against all exclusions, stereotyped and prejudiced imaginaries. A totem of myself as multiple and diverse, but one and above all strong and vibrant, colorful and powerful. My headdress is rainbow-colored, with tones to soothe and heal pain and suffering."



LGBTQI+ Romani pearl chest
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2018
Acrylic on canvas, 31,2x23,4"



Príncipe Espadarte
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 39x39"



Tufan Chakma

Belonging to the Chakma community, Tufan Chakma (b. 1996) is a visual artist who lives in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region, located in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. The artist's work depicts the dire human rights challenges facing the Chakma and other communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region as a result of the spread of uncontrolled mass tourism, the forced eviction from their lands, the exploitation of the environment and natural resources, and human-conducted activities, like the construction of large-scale dams. "I create artworks about many elements of our history and traditions which are all about to be lost and many of us in the new generation are in dark," writes Chakma, in a context where communal land ownership represents a vital element of the life pattern of the Chakma communities. Despite the signature of Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord in 1997, UN human rights mechanisms have reported that the level of implementation of the Accord has been insufficient, particularly with respect to the resolution of land disputes in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. Communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts continue to be targeted regularly, typically over land disputes to grab communal land in the name of development projects, tourism, and eco-forestry activities led by national and international companies.

The Judges Panel found particularly compelling Chakma's creation of visually explicit pieces of art that he shares publicly on social media to expose the interplay between minority belonging, the negative impacts of climate change and environmental destruction, and the erasure of cultural identities. In a context where environmental injustice is concerning and disproportionately affects minority communities in many countries around the world, the Judges Panel commended Chakma's focus on his community's identity, culture, history and intergenerational transmission, as well as his profound reflections on the darkness of ongoing trends that may aggravate in the future, if issues such as land eviction and uncontrolled environmental destruction are left unaddressed. "As an artist, I feel responsible to share all these stories that are getting lost generation by generation which is so unexpected and threatening for our existence in this world," says Tufan Chakma.

 @Tufan's Artbin

“ Tufan Chakma's ability to merge their unique perspective on the intersections of capitalism, cultural erasure and climate change triggers, with artistic brilliance is a truly inspiring and personal way to address the situation his marginalized community find themselves in. The artwork is a clear reminder of the need for urgent action to prevent irreversible damage.

- Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”



Stop the Land Grabbers

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022

Digital art, 31x23"

"In 2020, there were several reports of eviction of local Garo communities at Madhupur under Tangail District, although they had been living there for ages and growing crops. Destroying their traditional land, the Forest Department was planning to establish a tourist attraction by creating a lake on the Garo people's land in Madhupur forest. This is the land of their ancestors who have lived there for ages. Their existence is on their land. Their soul is mixed in the soil of this land."

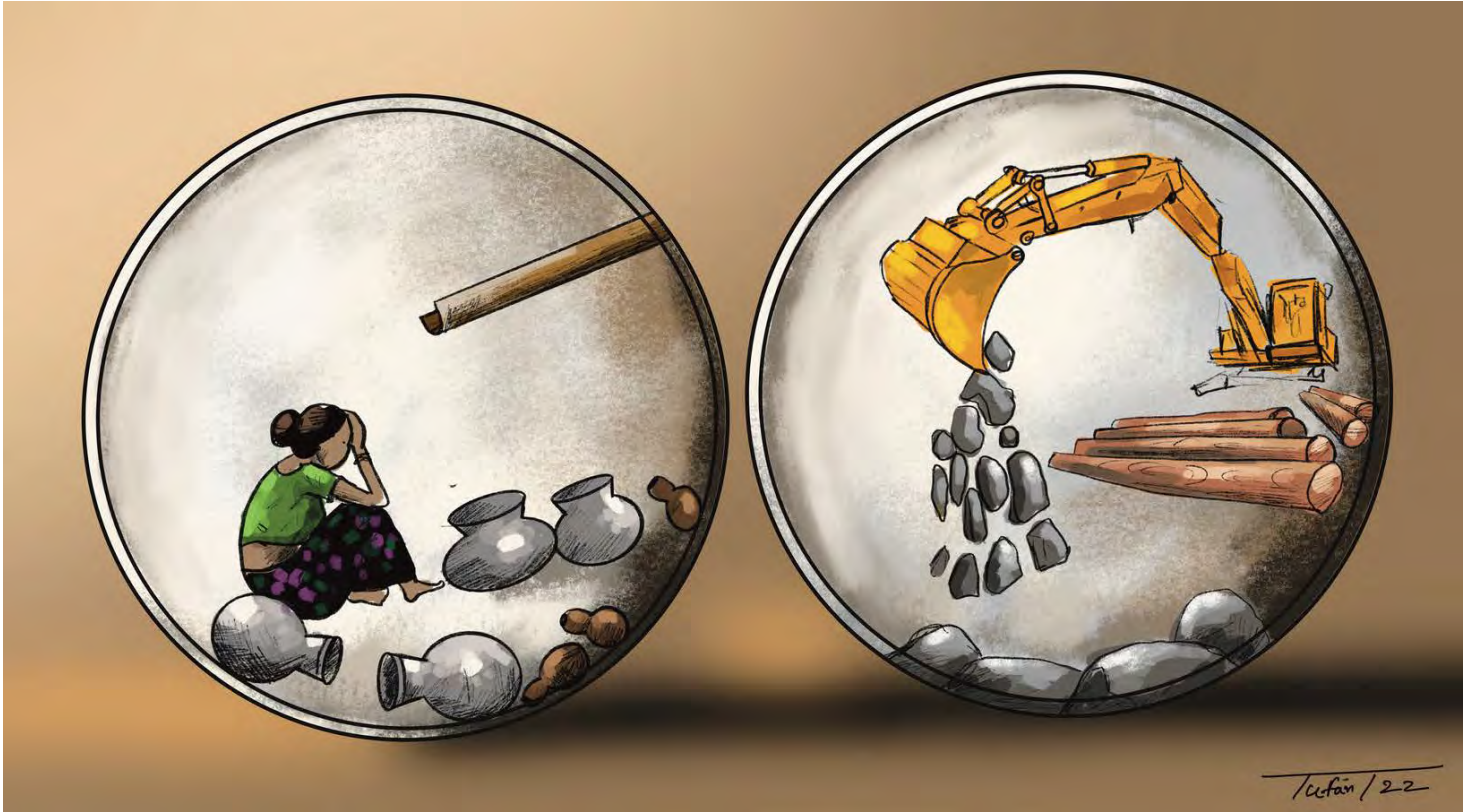


Flower or fire?

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022

Digital art, 20x24"

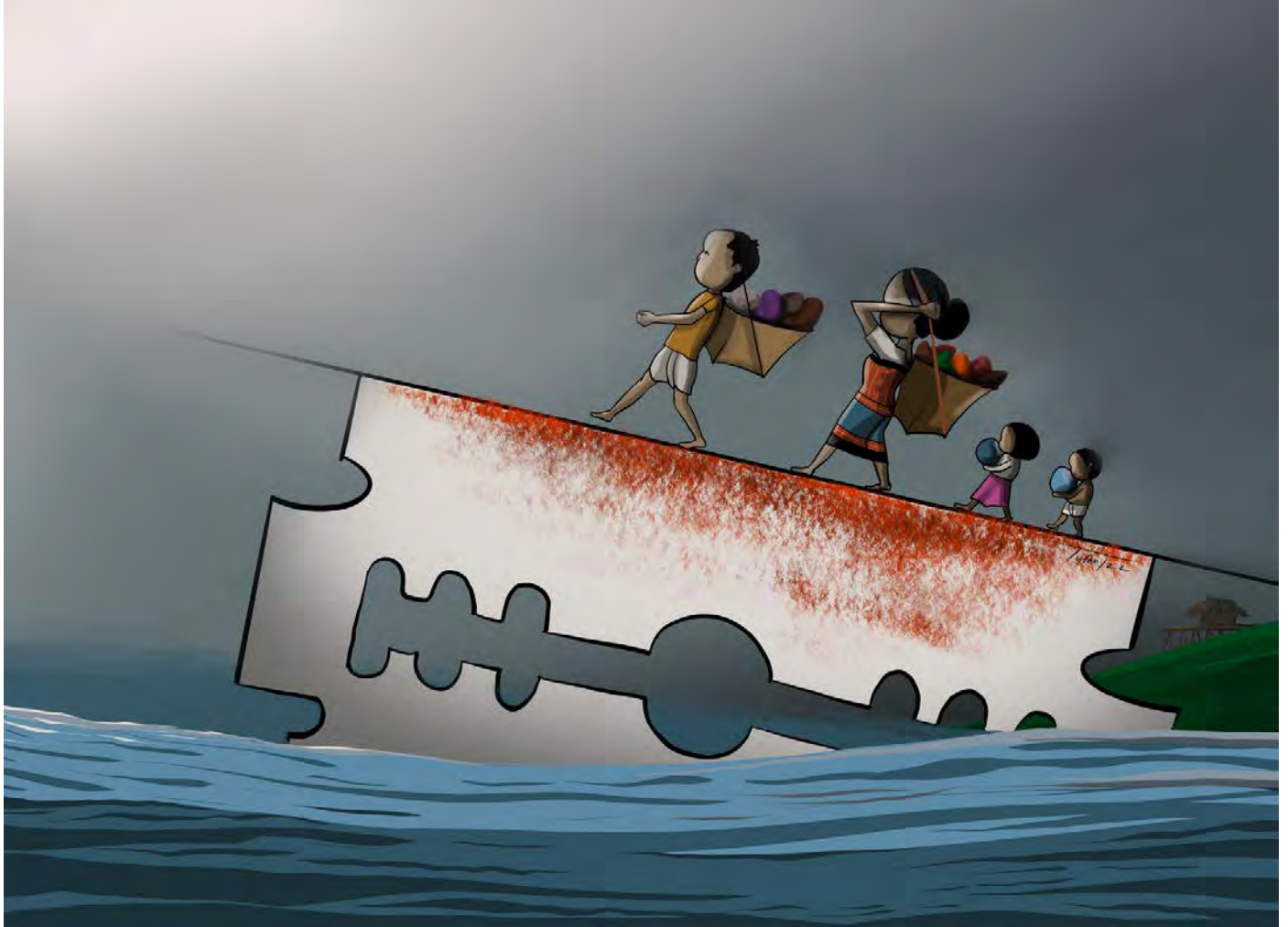
"The Plung is one of the musical instruments played by the Mro indigenous community living in Chittagong Hill Tracts. In Mro language, the word 'plung' means flute. This Plung is not an ordinary flute: it has a strong melodious tune that has been used in happy times as well as during protests. Recently, hundreds of Plungs joined the protest against the construction of a luxury tourist resort in the Bandarban district of the Chittagong Hills Tracts and the eviction of Mro families from their own land."



Flip of the Coin

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022

Digital art, 60x31"



Uncertainty of Existence

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022
Digital art, 57x41"



Unexpected future

Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022
Digital art, 20x24"



Poison

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022

Digital art, 24x17"



Burnt
Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022
Digital art, 56x68"



Red

Bandarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh, 2022
Digital art, 45x62"





Andrew Wong

Born and raised in Hong Kong in a family practicing traditional Chinese culture, Andrew Wong (b. 1979) is a visual artist who currently lives in the United States. He uses arts to address the complexities of identity, cultural assimilation, and social disparities facing minority communities. Through artistic expression, Wong aims to challenge stereotypes, empower marginalized communities, and find a genuine sense of belonging in his adopted home, including through an innovative technique that he calls “lifting”. “My paper artwork seeks to expose the intricate web of intersectionality and the resulting challenges faced by marginalized communities,” Wong writes, “these pieces of paper are standing on edge above the canvas. Light, shadow, color, and space interplay with one another to produce an image that appears to be elevated off of the canvas. Lifting the subject matter off of the confines of the canvas into a new plane of perception, symbolically ‘lifting’ those under-represented cultures in America.”

The Judges Panel was impressed by the originality of Wong’s artwork, especially the technique of “lifting” and the use of colorful pieces of paper that celebrate cultural heritage through a unique medium and creative approach. The Judges Panel highlighted the power of his art to depict the complexity and diversity of the cultural practices and traditions of minorities, in a notably poetic and beautiful manner that can foster empathy, understanding, and solidarity among viewers. “I have grappled with a complex sense of origin and identity, not fully aligning myself with British or Chinese identities due to Hong Kong’s unique status. I strive to depict the stories and struggles of marginalized communities with sensitivity, authenticity, and respect. By giving visibility to their experiences, my ultimate goal is to inspire positive change, break down barriers, and contribute to a world where every individual’s rights and humanity are respected and valued, regardless of their intersecting identities,” the artist explains.

 @10past9

 www.10past9.com

 @10past9

“ Andrew’s art goes beyond the canvas, touching hearts and minds as he elevates underrepresented American cultures to new perspectives. Using intricate paper art, he tells stories of intersectionality and the struggles of marginalized groups. Playing with light, shadow, color, and space, his work symbolizes ‘lifting’ these stories. With empathy, Andrew’s art celebrates culture, fosters understanding, and stands as a testament to every person’s worth. It inspires positive change and unity in our diverse world.

– Abdullah, Judge, International
Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”



The Ballet Dancer

New Jersey, United States, 2023

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 30x40"



Chinoiserie

New Jersey, United States, 2022
Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 16x20"



The Opera Singer

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 24x30"

"This art piece captures the essence of a traditional opera singer, a revered art form deeply rooted in Chinese culture. Amidst a world where this ancient practice often goes unnoticed by the younger generation, I sought to reinvigorate it with vibrant colors and innovative techniques. The distinctive banana earring serves as a poignant metaphor for my own journey as an American Chinese. It represents the delicate balance between the Western upbringing and my Asian appearance, a dichotomy that echoes the complexity of cultural identity. Just as the opera singer's performance resonates with emotion and tradition, *The Opera Singer* beckons viewers to explore and appreciate the rich tapestry of Chinese artistic heritage in an entirely new light."



The Emperor

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 24x30"



Kikuyu

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 24x30"



Suri

New Jersey, United States, 2022
Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 22x28"



Kathakali

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 16x20"



Theyyam

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 16x20"

"This art piece pays homage to the captivating ritual art form of Theyyam, an integral part of North Kerala's cultural tapestry. Rooted in dance, mime, and music, Theyyam breathes life into the ancient stories that shape the rich heritage of our state. With origins steeped in the beliefs of ancestral worship and heroism among tribal communities, Theyyam takes us on a journey into the realm of spirituality and tradition. Amidst the mesmerizing dance and intricate movements, the heart of this art form lies in the striking face paintings that adorn the performers."



Escaping Hair

New Jersey, United States, 2022

Acrylic and paper card stock on canvas, 16x20"

"This art piece is a heartfelt response to the tragic circumstances that inspired by the passing of Mahsa Amini. As someone who is from Hong Kong, I feel a deep resonance with the ongoing political struggles in Iran and a profound empathy for the people who contend with the weight of an overpowering government. *Escaping Hair* captures a poignant moment, portraying an Iranian girl adorned in a hijab. Amidst the backdrop of a traditional Islamic mosque, a few strands of her hair gently flutter across her face, yearning to break free from the confines of the cloth. This piece delves into the intricate interplay of religion, tradition, and politics that the hijab represents. It serves as a solemn reminder of the complexity that lies within this cultural symbol, and the individuality and aspirations that often go unnoticed."



Elahe Zivardar

An Iranian artist, architectural designer, journalist, and documentary filmmaker, Elahe Zivardar (b. 1985) currently lives in Arizona, United States, where she obtained refugee status in 2019. After fleeing Iran, Zivardar was detained on the remote island of the Republic of Nauru for attempting to seek asylum in Australia from 2013 to 2019 with approximately 1200 other people. During her detention in the tiny Pacific island of the Republic of Nauru, she was highly active in taking photos and videos to document the difficult treatment, human rights situation and dire conditions endured by people seeking asylum and detained offshore. During her detention, she began painting the *Border-Industrial Complex*, a series of paintings which depicts the stories and resistance of refugees held in the offshore detention center in Nauru. One of the paintings of the series, "Concealed Borders", has been published as the cover artwork for the special issue of *Southerly 79.2: Writing Through Fences – Archipelago of Letters*, devoted entirely to the work of past and present refugees in detention centres in South East Asia, Micronesia and Melanesia in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and across mainland Australia. An artist using diverse techniques including painting, photography and documentary filmmaking, Zivardar seeks to expose and raise awareness on how refugee, stateless and migrant minorities are treated throughout the migration process, especially at borders. In addition to her artwork, she is active as an advisor to international refugee rights campaigns and organizations in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Judges Panel was impressed by the remarkable commitment of the artist to explore minority issues from an intersectionality perspective. Zivardar has dedicated herself to shed light on the denial of rights and discrimination facing minority asylum seekers and migrants. The Judges Panel highlighted the strong impact that Zivardar's thought-provoking paintings can have in societies where migrants, in particular women and children, face multiple and aggravated forms of discrimination on the migration roads and at the borders. For instance, her painting entitled "Nameless" (2017) depicts the consequences of border control policies and detention for pregnant female migrants, in a context where migrant women – particularly those with irregular migration status – face heightened risks of human rights violations, including violations of their reproductive rights or sexual and gender-based violence at the hands of smugglers, traffickers, border officials as well as other state actors. "Abortions are illegal in Nauru and the Australian Government only permits refugee women to be transferred to Australia for an abortion after five months into a woman's pregnancy. These women were trying to reach freedom, and the price was that their babies will be forever nameless," Zivardar writes about this painting.

 <https://www.shakibaproductions.com/>

“

Elahe Zivardar in her style gives construct within abstraction in ways that appear to parallel the obscure bureaucratic policies that render normal human lives insufferable.

– Zahra Hassan Marwan, Judge, International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2023

”

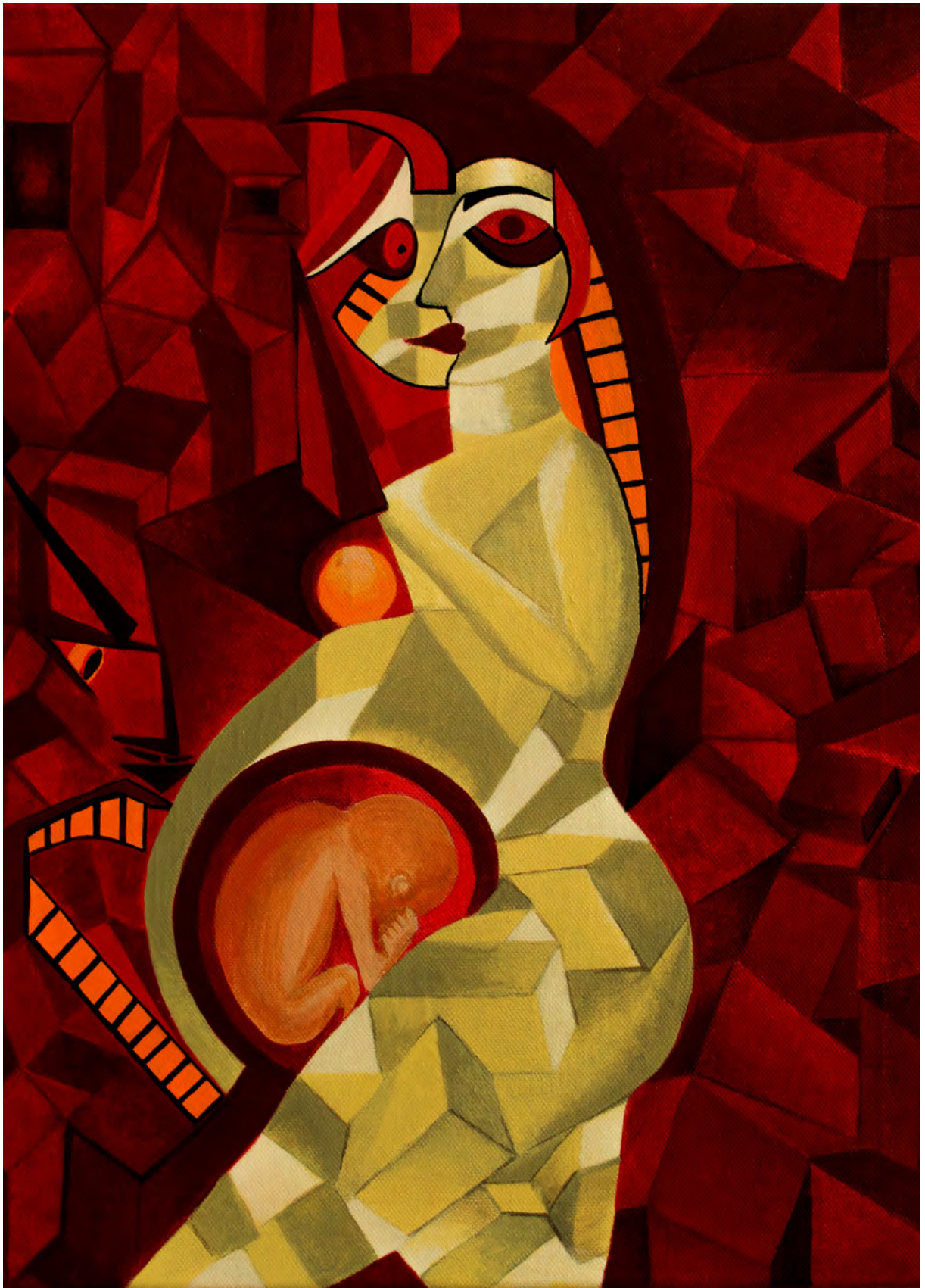


19th of July, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (01)

Republic of Nauru, 2017

Acrylic on canvas, 16x20"

"I painted 19th of July to tell my own story about trying to seek asylum in Australia. Instead of finding safety, I was faced with the 19 July 2013 policy which stripped me of hope and left me in limbo: I was told 'You will never make Australia home.'"



Nameless, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (02)
Republic of Nauru, 2017
Acrylic on canvas, 16x20"



***Judgment*, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (03)**

Republic of Nauru, 2018

Acrylic on canvas, 16x20"



Purple Pain, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (04)

Republic of Nauru, 2019

Acrylic on canvas, 24x30"



***Concealed Borders*, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (05)**

United States, 2020

Acrylic on canvas, 48x36"

"*Concealed Borders* represents my experience as a journalist and a detainee in the Australian offshore detention center in the island of the Republic of Nauru (2013-2019). The painting depicts real stories that I witnessed and heard from the imprisoned children whom I interviewed on the island. It was for a campaign called Kids Off Nauru in November 2019, which helped to end the detention of over 150 refugee children and their families. Some of the children were born there and spent their whole lives in detention. Seeing these desperate children and listening to their heartbreaking words gave me terrible nightmares and deeply influenced my art. *Concealed Borders* is a visual depiction of my nightmares during that time. Each profile on the canvas is inspired by a real person.

For instance, on the top right there is a little Iraqi girl whom I interviewed. She was 12 years old at the time and had been in an accident with a motorcycle. In front of her face there is a coffin; it is behind the fence and belongs to a young Kurdish Iranian man, Fariborz, a 26-year-old former medical student who died in Nauru in an extremely mysterious way. After his death, his uncle, who is an Australian citizen, was trying to bring his corpse to Australia and organize the funeral. But the government did not allow it and kept his corpse in a coffin at the detention center for almost a month. Everyone, including the children, was able to see the coffin. Fariborz was there with his mother and little brother and all the smaller children knew him and were friends of his little brother. During my conversation with the Iraqi girl, she said: 'I am begging my family to go back to Iraq. I know it's too dangerous and we will die, but at least we will have graves. I do not want to die, and they keep me in a coffin here like Fariborz. He doesn't have a grave'."



Amethyst, "Border-Industrial Complex" series (06)
United States, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 36x48"

**CELEBRATING HUMAN RIGHTS
THROUGH ARTS:**

**75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL
DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

This year, the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists is part of **Human Rights 75**, a year-long initiative led by UN Human Rights (OHCHR) to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The main goals of Human Rights 75 focus on universality, progress and engagement with States and relevant actors under the leadership of UN Human Rights, together with its partners. The initiative will culminate in a high-level event in December 2023 during which global pledges and ideas for a vision for the future of human rights will be announced.

Adopted in the aftermath of World War II on 10 December 1948, the UDHR recognizes that governance oriented toward **promoting, protecting and fulfilling human rights is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace around the globe**. One of the world's most ground-breaking commitments, the UDHR represents a set of common values and universal, indivisible and inalienable rights, recognizing the equal dignity and worth of every person. The UDHR stands as a global blueprint for international, national, and local laws and policies and constitutes a bedrock of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the 75 years since the proclamation of the UDHR, **human rights have advanced worldwide and shown their potential as the catalyst to progress in various areas**, including access to education, employment, fair pay, voting rights, healthcare, free speech, privacy, and mutual respect, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, or any discriminatory ground. The adoption of the UDHR has also paved the way for the development of other international conventions, declarations and initiatives. In the area of minority rights, for instance, the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities sets essential standards to protect the rights of minorities and offers guidance to States as they seek to manage diversity, ensure non-discrimination and advance equality.

Yet, **progress does not mean the fight for rights and equality ever ends**. Although the thirty articles of the UDHR have been realized by many, they are to date beyond the reach of many people and communities around the globe, including national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. In 2023, the world still faces ongoing and new challenges, deadly conflicts and violence, deepening inequalities, rising racism, xenophobia and hate speech, climate change and environmental destruction that threaten the rights of many, in particular those who are the most marginalized, such as minorities and other groups facing racial and other bias-based discrimination. Given such challenges and the global backlash against human rights, the UDHR is more relevant than ever as it provides guideposts to **advance collective actions to leave no one behind**.

This year's edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists aligns with such goals, through an emphasis on intersectional forms of discrimination and the role that artists, especially minority artists, play in shedding light on pressing human rights issues such as intersectional forms of discrimination.



For more information on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The 75th Anniversary of the UDHR is an opportunity to **rejuvenate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to inspire movements for a more equal and inclusive world of benefit to everyone, without any form of discrimination, including compounded and intersectional discrimination.** The journey to commemorate the UDHR, strengthen a movement for a better world and stand up for human rights aims at:

- 1 Promoting universality** to honour diversity, strengths, and achievements of the many communities striving to address today's global challenges. It reminds us that human rights are non-negotiable and we reclaim it as a foundation on which to find solutions to our common challenges.
- 2 Forging the future** to harness the potential of latest breakthroughs through all means, including technology, and anticipate the challenges that will benefit from their application.
- 3 Supporting engagement** to work with Member States and all the relevant actors to build a positive force for change with trust in the human rights architecture, faith in its promise, and resources to apply the tools that are necessary to ensure rights are upheld.



ARTICLE 1

ALL HUMAN BEINGS
ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL
IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**A free & equal
world is possible!**



ONGOING THREATS TO ARTISTIC FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

The UN system, including international human rights mechanisms and UN agencies, has increasingly engaged with **artists as promoters of human rights and cultural diversity**, including in their own communities, and sought to open spaces for dialogue with artists on contemporary human rights-related themes.

Throughout the world, **the arts have constituted vivid platforms for engaging with society and exposing threats to human rights**, dignity, justice, and peace, but also for shedding light and starting meaningful conversation on pressing issues, such as violence, discrimination, hate speech, statelessness, stigmatization and marginalization of some communities based on discriminatory grounds. In many contexts, the arts have also been innovative and powerful venues for civil society to come together, dismantle negative discourses, overcome trauma, heal from past human rights abuses, or reflect on positive social change.

International human rights instruments and mechanisms have interpreted links between the arts, artists and human rights law as both related to the right to freedom of opinion and expression as well as to cultural rights. Considered a core human right, the right to freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed under article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The right to freedom of expression, in particular, “include[s] freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”. Furthermore, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes in article 15 the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, which implies that all persons have the right to participate in, access to and contribute to cultural life, on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Where actions against minority artists are concerned, the international human rights law ban on discrimination – the only right set out in all nine core human rights treaties – is implicated.

A key international document in the area of minority rights, the **1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities** also recognizes the specific rights of minorities to enjoy their own culture and to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic, and public life. International human rights law thus establishes that minority individuals and groups have both the right to manifest their own specific identity and minority belonging through arts, and to participate in the cultural life without any form of discrimination. Furthermore, in general comment no. 21, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR Committee) stated that the protection of cultural rights is incomplete without the protection of cultural diversity, and recalled that specific attention must be paid to the protection of the rights of minorities in relation with cultural diversity. In particular, the CESCR Committee highlighted that the right of everyone to take part in cultural life as guaranteed under article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entails “the obligation of States parties to recognize, respect and protect minority cultures as an essential component of the identity of the States themselves. Consequently, minorities have the right to their cultural diversity, traditions, customs, religion, forms of education, languages, communication media (press, radio, television, Internet) and other manifestations of their cultural identity and membership.”

However, **UN human rights mechanisms have observed a rise in restrictions on artistic freedom often targeting certain groups specifically, including minorities.** In 2021, the civil society organization Freemuse documented at least 1,251 acts of violation of artistic freedom worldwide, including artists being killed, jailed, brought to trial, attacked, and subjected to other forms of persecution in one hundred and three countries as well as in the online space. In his 2020 annual report on artistic freedom of expression, then-UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye characterized these threats as including “the censorship that denies communities access to cultural or religious art, the blasphemy laws that interfere with creative consideration of questions of conscience and belief, the targeting of political cartoonists and cultural activists, the denial of space for theatrical events and the arbitrary arrest of playwrights and actors and directors, the assaults of LGBTQI persons challenging legal restrictions on gender identity”.

While observing growing threats by States and non-state actors facing artistic voices throughout the world, **UN Human rights mechanisms have encouraged States to “critically review their legislation and practices imposing restrictions on the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity”, in light of their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to artistic freedom of expression and cultural rights** (A/HRC/23/34, p. 1). In general comment no. 21, the CESCR Committee recalled that ensuring artistic freedom and cultural rights requires both abstention and positive actions. In particular, States have the obligation to refrain from interfering with the exercise of cultural practices and with access to cultural goods and services to respect the freedom indispensable for creative activity; as well as to adopt positive action measures to achieve the full realization of cultural rights, including by “ensuring preconditions for participation, facilitation and promotion of cultural life, and access to and preservation of cultural goods”.

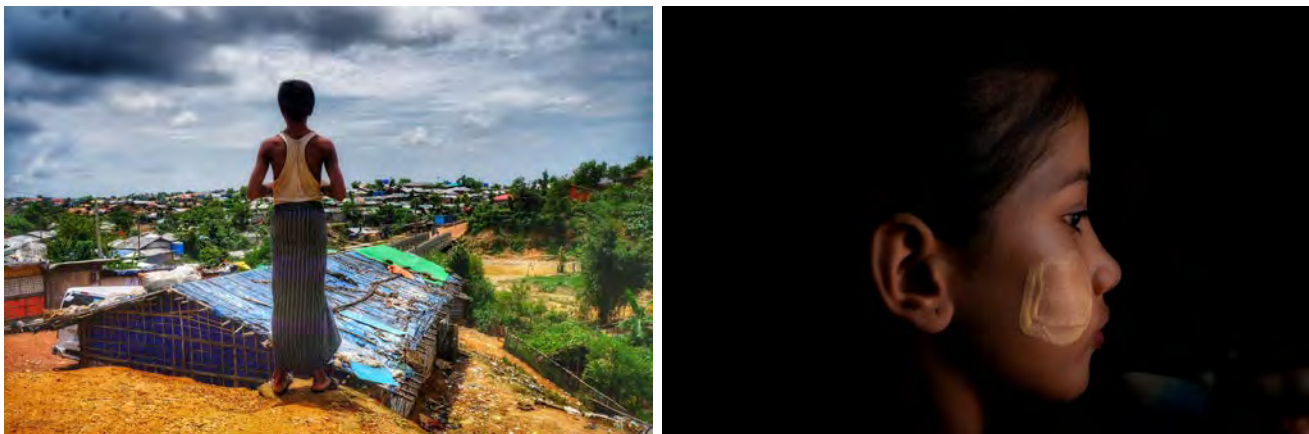


To consult *The State of Artistic Freedom 2023* report by Freemuse →



AMPLIFYING THE VOICE OF MINORITY ARTISTS AROUND THE WORLD

Throughout the world, artists belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities have used artistic and creative tools to promote and defend human rights, including minority rights, and cultural diversity. Recognizing the role of artists as **human rights defenders**, then-UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights Karima Bennoune observed that “[c]ultural rights defenders are also important in upholding the cultural rights of members of minorities as guaranteed by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. Ensuring an inclusive cultural space with adequate protection for cultural rights defenders is central to respect for diversity” (A/HRC/43/50, para. 17).



Photos taken by Abdullah, one of the award-winners of the 2022 International Art Contest and member of the Judges panel of the 2023 International Art Contest. A Rohingya photographer born stateless in Myanmar and currently living in Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh, Abdullah’s photos chronicle the daily experiences, everyday struggles, and embodied stories of Rohingya refugees

Of particular longstanding concern is the repression of minority artists who may be deprived from equally enjoying artistic freedom and cultural rights. UN human rights mechanisms and civil society organizations have observed that the activities of some minority artists have exposed them to a wide range of threats from a multitude of actors who attempt to silence, sideline or actively persecute them. Then-UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression David Kaye has noted that threats to artistic freedom are particularly vivid in contexts with “marked intolerance towards groups that have been historically discriminated against and are in vulnerable situations” (A/HRC/44/49/Add.2, para. 22).

In his 2015 annual report, then-UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Michel Forst noted that **individuals and organizations working to defend and protect the rights of minorities “endure a series of threats and violations of their rights**, sometimes relayed by the media in a context marked by an abundance of ultranationalist rhetoric stigmatizing certain communities and minority groups. These defenders are also labelled as traitors when they support certain groups or communities, such as the Roma people or indigenous peoples” (Doc. A/70/217, para. 71).

In particular, **minority artists have been confronted with a large range of threats both by States and non-state actors**, notably when “they represent the liberating gift of the human imagination and give voices to thoughts, ideas, debate and critique, disseminated to a wide audience”, when they are “seen as challenging dominant cultural or religious arguments or symbols when those are used as instruments of domination or discrimination”, or when they “challenge cultural norms or attitudes”, such as sexuality or reproduction, or “narrow conceptions of ‘family’ or ‘tradition’”(A/HRC/43/50, para. 52). The threats, harmful stereotypes and negative discourse affecting minority artists is often emotionally devastating both for minority artists, their family and colleagues, and may also facilitate other human rights abuses.

Additionally, minority artists have been confronted with the **rise of racism, xenophobia, hate speech, scapegoating and scaremongering, including on social media platforms**. The rights of artists belonging to minorities may also be threatened by discriminatory laws or policies, including hate speech laws or blasphemy laws, notably when such laws are used to muzzle dissenting voices and silence minorities, as a way to reinforce dominant, exclusionary, nationalistic or extremist ideologies.

United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the UN Special Rapporteurs in the field of cultural rights, have recommended the UN system to **promote the work of and seek direct engagement with artists as human rights defenders**. Since the first edition on the theme of statelessness, the International Art Contest for Minority Artists has aimed to open spaces of dialogue with and amplify the voice of minority artists, to showcase the beauty, diversity and richness of their artistic and creative practices, and to celebrate the power of minority artists to speak out on issues affecting their communities in different parts of the world.

In 2022, the first edition of the International Art Contest on the theme of statelessness showcased the work of artists who have exposed and addressed the disproportionate effects of statelessness for minority individuals and communities. In 2023, the International Art Contest focuses on intersectionality, a theme of particular relevance to many minority artists who may face intersectional forms of discrimination on various grounds beyond their identity as members of minority groups, including related to their caste, descent or inherited status, health, disability, migratory status, socioeconomic status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, among others.



To consult Exhibition catalogue of the 2022 International Art Contest



INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY ?

In September 2022, the UN Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities published a **Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities** that aims to support those involved in efforts to end discrimination, inequality and exclusion in applying an intersectionality perspective. The Note seeks to encourage an intersectionality perspective in the context of policy development, programming and project implementation as a means of strengthening the UN system's efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and strengthen the protection of minorities. It shows that **an intersectionality perspective helps to advance a human-rights-based approach to ensure that no one is left behind**. In addition to explaining the concept of intersectionality and its grounding in international human rights law, the Note offers practical recommendations for applying an intersectionality perspective.



Intersectionality has its origins in the work of racial and social justice advocates involved in the civil rights movement of the 1950s-60s and beyond, including Black feminist activists and scholars. First coined by Black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé W. Crenshaw in the late 1980s, intersectionality can be defined as **a concept and a theoretical framework that facilitate comprehension of the ways in which social identities overlap and create compounding experiences of discrimination** and concurrent forms of oppression based on the intersection of two or more grounds, such as gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, descent or inherited status, age, class, disability or health status, or any other grounds. Intersectional discrimination takes place when discrimination occurs based on a combination of grounds that interact with each other in a way that produces distinct and specific discrimination. As such, intersectionality establishes that each category, such as “women” or “minorities”, embodies diversity and no group of individuals can be characterized as homogenous. An increasing number of scholars and practitioners have advanced the study of discrimination by viewing it through the prism of intersectionality and expanding its application to a wide range of areas, such as public services, employment, housing, education, healthcare and access to justice.

An intersectionality perspective exposes the complexities of structural domination and marginalization since it recognizes individual positionality as the result of many social structures that overlap. In other words, intersectionality posits that two or more grounds (e.g., ethnicity, race, gender, caste, descent or inherited status, sexual orientation, indigenous origin, migration status, age or socioeconomic status) not only intersect at the micro level of individual experience, but also reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression (e.g., sexism, racism, xenophobia, descent-based exclusion, heterosexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia) at the structural level. Intersectionality points out that existing structural frameworks, whether legal, political, institutional, socioeconomic or cultural, can perpetuate inequality in society as a whole and within some communities.

To access the Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities



RECOGNIZING DIVERSE EXPERIENCES

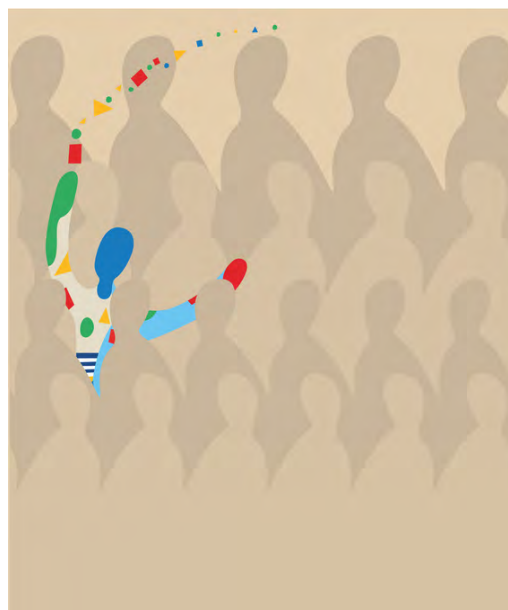
Adopting an intersectionality perspective is key to recognize that **minority communities are inherently diverse and include people and groups with singular positions, experiences and needs.** The UN system and human rights mechanisms have reported that certain segments of racial, ethnic, national, linguistic and religious minorities, Afro-descendant or Indigenous peoples face exacerbated and intersectional forms of discrimination in all areas of life. For instance, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, recognized “that the intersection of discrimination on the grounds of race and gender makes women and girls particularly vulnerable to this type of violence, which is often related to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance”. Cases of intersectional forms of discrimination are diverse and include, for instance :

- **Women and girls from ethnic, linguistic, religious or national minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and caste- or descent-based communities**, who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of discrimination, social and political exclusion, marginalization and poverty, often targeted by violence, and may face barriers in accessing their rights, including in relation with education, healthcare and employment.
- **Stateless persons belonging to racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious or national minorities and indigenous communities** face disproportionate discrimination and compounded obstacles in accessing their right to a nationality, which has negative consequences in every area of their life.
- **Persons with disabilities who belong to ethnic, linguistic, religious or national minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and caste- or descent-based communities**, face specific forms of discrimination in all aspects of their lives, including in access to public services, employment, adequate housing, education and healthcare. For instance, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, has reported that bilingual educational facilities may lack resources for deaf members of linguistic minorities.
- **Members of LGBTIQ+ communities who belong to minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and caste- or descent-based communities** often face disproportionate obstacles and discrimination in all spheres of society, in addition to social stigmatization and homophobic or transphobic hate speech. Members of LGBTIQ+ communities have described the ways in which certain social or religious rules, norms, practices or teaching promote patriarchal and heterosexual values and/or foster a permissive environment for homophobic or transphobic hate crimes. In Europe, for example, stigmatization and exclusion are worsened for LGBTIQ+ members of the Roma community; they are often exposed to multiple forms of discrimination, compounding the many challenges that Roma face in their daily lives as a result of anti-Gypsyism (Council of Europe, 2017).
- **Minorities, Indigenous Peoples, people of African descent and members of caste- or descent-based communities living in remote and rural areas** face high rates of poverty and social exclusion among. By comparison with urban-dwellers, these individuals are more likely to lack access to, among other things, justice, basic services and infrastructures such as education, healthcare, support services for victims of violence and adequate water, sanitation and electricity, as well as economic and employment opportunities.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

International human rights mechanisms, including special procedures and treaty bodies, have commonly considered intersectionality in the context of the **right to equality and non-discrimination** that is the cornerstone of contemporary international human rights law, guaranteed under a wide range of international instruments, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These instruments guarantee the exercise of human rights for all individuals, and set out non-exhaustive lists of prohibited grounds of discrimination such as race, colour, gender, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, descent, property, birth and other status. The UN human rights mechanisms have identified a range of additional grounds and have stressed that non-discrimination and equality are essential to the full exercise and enjoyment of civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights by all individuals and groups.

In addition to prohibiting discrimination on specific grounds, the international human rights framework focuses on **specific groups** such as women, children, persons with disabilities, members of national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, for instance. The existence of dedicated instruments for these groups, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or the UN Declaration on Minorities, is an acknowledgement of the distinct forms of discrimination, oppression and marginalization that they face. Some instruments contain provisions that recognize the existence of non-homogenous experiences among these groups. For instance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides specific protection for children who have been granted or are seeking refugee status (article 22) and children in situations of armed conflict (article 38); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women addresses the specific marginalization of rural women (article 14); and the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (no. 169) includes specific provisions on discrimination, including sexual harassment, against Indigenous women (articles 3 and 20).



Throughout their work and jurisprudence, UN treaty bodies have identified and emphasized numerous grounds of discrimination that can interact and intersect, including, among other things, age; albinism; birth; civil, family or career status; colour; descent; disability; economic status; ethnicity; gender expression; gender identity; genetic or other predisposition towards illness; health status; indigenous origin; language; marital status; maternity or paternity status; migrant status; minority status; national origin; nationality; place of residence; political or other opinion; pregnancy; property; race; refugee or asylum status; religion or belief; sex; sex characteristics; sexual orientation; social origin; and social situation.

UN human rights mechanisms have built on the concept of intersectionality when interpreting and monitoring international human rights instruments and issuing recommendations to States. In general recommendation no. 39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls (2022), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended States to develop policies that “should include measures to address intersectional discrimination faced by Indigenous women and girls, including persons with disabilities and those with albinism; older women; lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women; women and girls in situations of poverty; women living in rural and urban areas; forcibly displaced, refugee and migrant women inside and outside their countries; and women and girls who are widows, heads of households or orphaned owing to national and international armed conflict” (CEDAW/C/GC/39, para. 23). Similarly, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued several general comments addressing the specific situation of children with disabilities (general comment no. 9), juvenile justice (general comment no. 10) and indigenous children (general comment no. 11). In general comment no. 10, for example, the Committee notes that “street children, children belonging to racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, indigenous children, girl children, children with disabilities and children who are repeatedly in conflict with the law (recidivists)” face disproportionate discrimination in the juvenile justice system (CRC/C/GC/10, para. 6).

Other UN human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief and the Working Group on People of African Descent, have engaged with intersectionality. For instance, then-UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues Fernand de Varennes has raised concerns about the specific forms of discrimination that persons with disabilities face in all aspects of their lives, such as access to public services, employment, adequate housing, education and healthcare. He noted that bilingual educational facilities may lack resources for deaf members belonging to linguistic minorities (A/HRC/43/47/Add.1, para. 84).

Therefore, the adoption of an intersectionality perspective can help :

- * **ensuring specific attention to and action for individuals who are insufficiently protected from human rights violations**, including individuals belonging to minorities and facing racial and intersecting discrimination;
- * **increasing visibility, active participation and an equal voice for those who have long been marginalized.** An intersectionality perspective stresses that addressing discrimination is interrelated with the empowerment, participation and inclusion of individuals, including in the development, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes affecting them;
- * **recognizing that social categories are not homogenous.** Intersectionality facilitates the development of policies and programmes that recognize intra-group diversity and avoids homogenizing approaches while respecting, protecting and ensuring the exercise of human rights and responding to unaddressed needs;
- * **enhancing the availability and analysis of disaggregated data** as the basis for effective policy development and programming; and
- * **advancing transformative change by addressing the structural causes of inequality and disadvantage that are associated with intersecting forms of discrimination**, including the laws, policies and institutions, socio-cultural norms and harmful stereotypes that perpetuate and/or aggravate the exclusion of certain individuals, groups and communities.



Photos: Gabriel Adeyemo, Karthoum Dembele, Mohsen Kaboli, Abdullah, Laura Cahier.

ADDRESSING INTERSECTIONAL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

The **Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities** offers practical recommendations for the application of an intersectionality perspective in United Nations efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and protect minorities, particularly at the country level:



Application of an intersectionality perspective: getting started

1. Identify the intersectional dimensions of discrimination and minority exclusion and document the experiences of those affected by it.
 2. Practice solidarity and build empathy to enable the inclusion and full participation of all, without stigmatizing individuals or communities.
 3. Advance a holistic and structural approach in efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and protect minorities.
 4. Adopt and apply a survivor-centred approach.
-



Participation of affected individuals and communities

5. Create spaces in which the voices of individuals affected by intersectional discrimination can be heard and amplified.
 6. Take action to increase the participation of individuals affected by intersectional discrimination, oppression and marginalization.
-



Development and implementation of tailored and responsive policies and programmes in key strategic areas

7. Collect, analyse and publish disaggregated data on who is left behind in order to clarify the inequalities experienced by people affected by racial and intersectional discrimination.
 8. Support the development of responsive and tailored policies and interventions in strategic areas such as education, employment, health and criminal justice based on the needs and concerns of those affected.
 9. Support efforts to enhance the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality (AAAQ Framework) of basic infrastructure, goods and services.
 10. Apply an intersectionality perspective at all stages of programmes and projects (design, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation).
-



Development of appropriate legal and institutional frameworks

11. Support legal and institutional reforms that address structural discrimination and inequality, including by challenging the underlying social norms.
12. Advance accountability and ensure access to justice, remedy and recourses to all.
13. Support efforts to prevent, punish and eliminate hate speech and harmful stereotypes.



Collaboration and engagement

14. Seize opportunities for cooperation across the United Nations system, and particularly with United Nations country teams, in the collaborative, coherent application of an intersectionality perspective.
 15. Seize opportunities for cooperation with regional human rights mechanisms in applying an intersectionality perspective.
 16. Build partnerships with national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies.
 17. Engage and collaborate with representatives of communities and groups that face intersectional discrimination, violence and marginalization.
 18. Engage and collaborate with universities, research centres, civil society organizations and workers' and employers' organizations with experience and expertise in the areas of intersectionality and the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.
-



Awareness-raising, advocacy and education

19. Participate in and support advocacy and awareness-raising on human rights issues, including racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and related forms of intolerance, stereotyping and harmful cultural norms and practices.
 20. Support efforts to educate and train the relevant stakeholders in non-discrimination, intersectional discrimination and strategies for equality and inclusion.
-



Illustration: Zahra Hassan Marwan (2023)

**JUDGES PANEL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ART
CONTEST FOR MINORITY ARTISTS 2023**

The Judges Panel for the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists comprises five independent and honorary members from different countries, disciplines and horizons, who were selected for their outstanding experience, expertise and commitment in the fields of arts, cultural rights and minority rights:

- **Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo**, artist, former OHCHR Person of African Descent Fellow from Switzerland and Member of Swiss Parliament;
- **Carine Ayélé Durand**, Director of the Museum of Ethnography of Geneva (MEG);
- **Abdullah**, Rohingya photographer based in Bangladesh and award-winner of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2022;
- **Zahra Hassan Marwan**, author, illustrator and award-winner of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists 2022;
- **Alexandra Xanthaki**, United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights.

When reviewing the entrant artists and their artworks, the Judges Panel discussed various criteria, including artistic merit, elements in the artist's work giving insights on minority issues, identity and/or experience, relevance of the artist's views and work to the topic of intersectionality, creativity and innovation, effective reach and impact of more established works or perceived potential of increasing visibility of less known ones, bravery, originality in addressing difficult themes or issues, and dedication.

Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo



Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo is best known for her femme-activism, which involves using mixed media like Swiss yodel, sculpture, video and visual arts to challenge societal identity politics. Between 2014 and 2019, her short film "Not Swiss Made" about racism in Switzerland won 18 prizes globally. In 2015, she was an artist in residence at the Art Olympics Biennale - Kenyan Pavillion in Venice, Italy. Her "One Family-human blood sculptures" caused a buzz in 2017, as did her Swiss traditional folks dance intervention, which taught traditional Swiss dance to refugees and Swiss people. Brändle-Amolo has worked on a series of social-political *Feminist Salon* lounges consisting of films, discussions and performances. A former OHCHR Person of African Descent Fellow, she also started a VLOG African Descent after launching the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent in Switzerland. In 2021, she co-curated an art projection entitled *Fraumunster21*, commemorating the 50th anniversary of women's federal right to vote in Switzerland. Currently working on an opera and yodel concert for her Atelier Vivant Art residency in Thusis, Brändle-Amolo is also an elected member of the Swiss parliament for the Social Democratic Party.



Art can be a powerful tool to fight against racism, intersectional discrimination and promote minority rights when used to increase empathy and understanding. It can celebrate diversity, represent unheard voices and challenge stereotypes through sparking the conversation, educating and informing society. As a member of a minority group myself, it is empowering to be part of a platform that provides a safe space for marginalized voices to be heard, celebrated, and supported.



Carine Ayélé Durand



“ Art and artists are powerful first and foremost to raise awareness about the struggles that minorities face and their unique experiences. Art is also a bridge between people that can help promote collaborations, encounters and dialogue between individuals and organizations that may not have been able to meet otherwise. This contest opens avenues to reflect collectively on a more nuanced understanding of inequality and social justice. ”

Carine Ayélé Durant is a social anthropologist who completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge (2010) after a MPhil in Ethnology and a MA in International Negotiation at the University of Aix-en-Provence (France). She has worked for over twenty years in various curatorial and research capacities at the Musée des Confluences (Lyon, France), the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (United Kingdom), and the Nordiska Museet (Stockholm). She has curated several public exhibitions about contemporary indigenous art and political movement. After being Chief Curator at the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva (MEG), she was appointed Director of MEG on 1st July 2022. Since 1998, she has conducted long-term anthropological field research crossing the boundaries of disciplines between social anthropology, education, performance studies, and art. Concurrently with her professional activity, she explores how anthropologists cross the boundaries of their disciplines in practice. She adopts alternative literary genres such as storytelling and playwriting to “rediscover” anthropological concerns such as cultural identity, memory and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

Abdullah



“ I feel like the International Art Contest for Minority Artists is not only an art competition which is annually celebrated, but it is the voices of minority artists themselves, like me. This contest provides a platform for artists to reach audiences around the world and to gain recognition for their work. It is also an opportunity to connect with other artists from diverse communities, learn from each other, and gain inspiration. Engaging with these communities can provide valuable insights and perspectives that can enrich artistic work and contribute to more inclusive societies and diverse creative landscape. ”

Abdullah is a Rohingya artist doing photography, videography and poetry. He is a former school teacher from Maungdaw, Rakhine State in Myanmar. Forced to flee his home, he arrived in Bangladesh in early September 2017 and started working with the Rollywood Rohingya film team, making videos re-enacting Rohingya life. He has produced several photo-essays and poetry books on different topics. In 2019, his photographs were published by the Asia Times. In 2021, his work was published by Westword in “Today, Tomorrow, Forever: Being Rohingya in Australia”. His photographs have been exhibited at the Human Rights Research and Education Centre in Ottawa and the Oxford Human Rights Festival. In 2022, he and his fellow photographers have published a photo magazine on “Identity of Rohingya” with their collective photos and stories. The same year, Abdullah was among the three award-winners of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists Working on Statelessness Themes. Recently, he represented the stories of his community with his poetry in the 10th edition of Litfest in Dhaka along with two other Rohingya female artists.

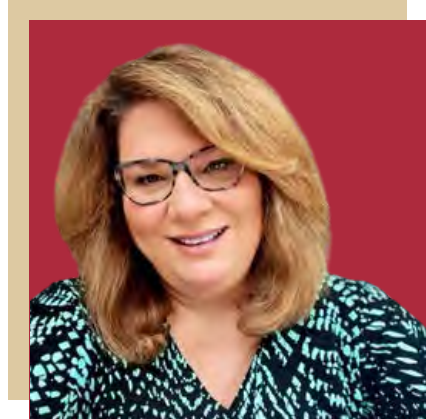
Zahra Hassan Marwan



“ People are often overlooked and overshadowed by nationalistic narratives. Sometimes, the very people who are oppressed by these narratives embody them. Art can crack these hard shells, and let the light shine through. It softens a counter-dialogue. As one of the award-winners of the 2022 contest, it was beautiful getting to speak about statelessness and show my illustrations and story related to it to people in an institution that wields power. ”

Working as a traditional artist with watercolor and ink, Zahra creates work that reflects her cultural roots in Kuwait as well as her life now in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She loves poetry and independent cinema and how quiet and mysterious the night can be. She is deeply fond of the sea. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of New Mexico in Languages and Literature, with a minor in Flamenco Dance and History as well as a minor in Philosophy. She has loved working with museums, non-profits, theater companies, cultural centers and has found making picture books to be dreamier than she had dreamed them to be! Her debut picture book, *Where Butterflies Fill the Sky*, was published by Bloomsbury Books in 2022 and was named one of the New York Times and New York Public Library Best Illustrated Children's Books and one of NPR's Best Books of 2022. In 2022, Zahra also received one of the three awards of the first edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists working on Statelessness Themes.

Alexandra Xanthaki



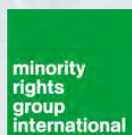
“ Art brings people together. The common feelings that art provokes unite people recognizing and celebrating their past, their experiences and their origin. Art helps achieve unity in diversity. This year's contest can show the artistic ways of addressing intersectionality. Artists have long helped us imagine a better world; now they can help us imagine a world where intersectionality works in favour not against human rights. ”

Alexandra Xanthaki was appointed United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights in October 2021. A leading expert on cultural rights, Xanthaki (LLB Athens; LLM Queens, Belfast; PhD Keele) is Professor of Law at Brunel University London, United Kingdom and the Research Director of the Brunel Law School. A prolific author on minority and indigenous rights, Xanthaki has over fifty publications varying from cultural rights of minorities and indigenous peoples to cultural diversity, cultural heritage, balancing cultural rights with other rights and interests, and multicultural aspects of international human rights law. Her work on cultural rights of non-state actors is well-known and has been cited repeatedly in international documents. Alexandra Xanthaki has worked on issues relating to human rights with NGOs and civil society. Before taking up the mandate of UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Alexandra Xanthaki has worked closely with several mandates at the United Nations and has advised several States on human rights issues. She has also taught civil servants and lawyers in several parts of the world, including Ukraine, Vietnam, South Africa and Malaysia. Alexandra Xanthaki is also well known as the founder of the awarded Athens Refugee Project, where students have volunteered since early 2016 with refugee civil society organisations.

Exhibition Catalogue

Second Edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists Working on Intersectionality Themes (2023)

In 2023, the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) and the non-governmental organizations Freemuse and Minority Rights Group International (MRG) jointly organized the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists Working on Intersectionality Themes, with the support of the City of Geneva. Part of the year-long commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights led by UN Human Rights, the Contest aims to celebrate minority artists who have exposed, explored, or addressed matters relating to intersectional forms of discrimination through their artwork, and to raise awareness on the human rights of individuals and groups belonging to minorities and facing compounded forms of discrimination. This catalogue is a collection of artworks from the eight awardees of the second edition of the International Art Contest for Minority Artists.



AVEC LE SOUTIEN
DE LA
VILLE DE GENÈVE



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

