

15 Finalists Shortlisted for Artist of Year Title



TEHRAN -- The selection committee for the Islamic Revolutionary Artist of the Year has announced the 15 finalists for the Iranian calendar year of 1403 which ended on March 20.

These figures have been recognized for their impactful contributions across various fields of art, reflecting the values and spirit of the Islamic Revolution.

Listed in alphabetical order, they are as follows:

Seyyed-Ehsan Baqeri (Photographer): Honored for his powerful staged photography, including the acclaimed piece 'The Heirs', which captures the resilience of the Palestinian people.

Hussein Parsaee (Theater Director): Recognized for his large-scale production 'The Battle of Rostam and Sohrab', blending deep national themes with exceptional stagecraft.

Kheirollah Taqianipour (Film & Theater Director): Celebrated for his film 'The Heart of Raqqa', portraying the dramatic presence of resistance fighters in the battle against extremist groups.

Golestan Jafarian (Author): Acknowledged for her book 'Autumn Has Come', which was highlighted by Ayatollah Seyyed-Ali Khamenei and reprinted 135 times due to high public demand.

Muhammad Hamzehzadeh (Author): Recognized for his book series 'Tales of Delestan and Golestan', continuing Iran's rich storytelling tradition and connecting with readers.

Muhammad-Reza Doust-Muhammadi (Graphic Artist): Honored for his portraits of martyred resistance commanders and his active mentorship of young artists in the field of resistance art.

Vahhab Ramzi (Photographer): Commended for his photo exhibition 'Keys Older than Israel', which offered a new perspective and drew strong interest from the art community.

Mahboubeh-Sadat Razavinia (Author): Celebrated for her acclaimed

book 'Ayda', which opened new narrative pathways in borderless resistance literature.

Muhammad Rasouli (Poet): Recognized for his timely poetry during the Al-Aqsa Storm operation, bringing verse into the heart of critical moments on the resistance front.

Milad Erfanpour (Poet): Praised for his impactful poetic responses to major events of the past year and for mentoring emerging poets to elevate the quality of contemporary verse.

Reza Keshavarz Haddad (Film Director): Honored for directing 'Kianoush's Garden', a film that revived the nostalgic essence of youth cinema through powerful literary adaptation.

Sajjad Mehregan (Film Director): Celebrated for the hit television series 'Mr. Judge', which brought a fresh narrative approach to the screen and became the most-watched series of 2024.

Seyyed Muhammad-Reza Miri (Painter & Graphic Artist): Acknowledged for his painting 'Nasrallah's Dream' and his broad contributions to the visual arts promoting resistance culture.

Muhammad-Hussein Niroumand (Cartoonist): Recognized for his anti-Zionist artworks and his efforts in mentoring the next generation of political cartoonists.

Karen Homayounfar (Composer): Honored for his album 'Seyyed al-Ummah', a musical tribute to martyr Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, now considered an enduring anthem of the resistance.

Following a review of each candidate's work and achievements, five finalists will be shortlisted in upcoming selection sessions.

The ultimate winner will be chosen through consultations with experts and elites in revolutionary art and announced at the closing ceremony of Islamic Revolutionary Art Week to be held on April 16.

Latest From Television Productions in Iran



TEHRAN -- A new drama series titled 'Operation Acre' is set to portray the story of a Palestinian brother and sister torn apart during a Zionist invasion.

The project, which aims to capture the human cost of the conflict, will unfold over ten episodes.

It is written by Masoud Muhammad-Hussein and produced by Mordeza Shabani.

A new television project titled 'The Hidden Book' will delve into the life of Ayatollah Marashi Najafi, a revered figure in contemporary Shia scholarship.

The series is currently in the very early stages of pre-production.

The script is being developed by Seyyed-Ali Reza Hassani, with Muhammad Masoud attached as producer.

Given the subject's historical and cultural importance, the series is expected to be a significant addition to religious and biographical drama on

Iranian television.

Mehdi Naqavian, head of Simafilm, has confirmed that the second season of the series 'Touba' is currently in development.

Speaking about broader changes in Iranian television programming, Naqavian noted a major shift in focus from quantity to quality.

"In the previous year, our concern was increasing the volume of TV series to meet broadcasting standards," he said. "But by the end of 2023 and throughout 2024, we've resolved the quantity issue."

He emphasized that with a full broadcasting schedule, more attention can now be given to script quality and genre diversity.

Naqavian also hinted at more thoughtful scheduling and content variety, with upcoming sequels like 'Mahyar Ayyar 2' and 'Touba 2' being produced with greater care and creative input.

Iranian Universities Open Arms to Gaza Academics, Students

TEHRAN -- Minister of Science, Research and Technology Tehran Hussein Simaei Saraf says Iran will embrace Palestinian academics and students in its universities since Israel has destroyed academic centers in the besieged Gaza Strip.

"We will gladly and proudly welcome any Palestinian professor or student who wishes to join the faculty or pursue their studies at Iranian universities," he told a pro-Palestine rally at the University of Tehran.

Since the onset of the war on October 7, 2023, Israeli airstrikes have obliterated Gaza's entire university infrastructure.

Notable institutions such as the Islamic University of Gaza, Al-Azhar University, Al-Quds Open University, Al-Israa University, and Al-Aqsa University have been reduced to rubble.

The University College of Applied Sciences and the University of Palestine have also suffered complete destruction. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Education, Israeli attacks have resulted in the deaths of at least 4,327 students and 231 teachers and administrators, with 94 university professors among the casualties.

"It has been decades that the child-killing and criminal regime has been violating all human rights regulations and that all awakened institutions and nations have been condemning the regime; however, it goes on with its crimes," Simaei said.

"The continuation of these crimes despite widespread condemnation shows that human rights mechanisms are not efficient," he noted.

The minister said killing children and committing genocide are the "least crimes" committed by the Israeli regime.

"These crimes have hurt the feelings of humankind, and maybe it is for the first time that university students



Students participate in a pro-Palestine rally outside in the University of Tehran.

in the U.S. and Europe rally voluntarily against this oppression every week."

The wave of anger and hatred towards Israel has become global, with academics also showing their support for Palestine, he said.

The minister hit out at the U.S. for a widespread crackdown on pro-Palestinian activists, which has involved the expulsion of some students.

"This is done by a country that claims to champion

free speech; however, it is restricting the least rights of students," he said.

Simaei said Israel has no legitimacy in the public opinion of the world as a government, even if it becomes a member of the United Nations for a hundred times.

"However, the Palestinian people are still a nation despite being oppressed and displaced in the past eight decades, and they will gain victory against the enemy's war machine," he added.

Glazed Iranian Ceramics Found on Mozambique Coast

ROME (Phys.org) -- A recent study by Dr. Ignacio Montero-Ruiz and his colleagues examined the provenance of ancient copper artifacts discovered on the island of Ibo off Mozambique's coast. The study, published in *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa*, provides new insights into the role small coastal villages played in the early development of the Indian Ocean trade.

For much of the Swahili trade history, the role of northern Mozambique has been considered marginal.

However, in 2016, a test pit dug on the island of Ibo revealed various artifacts linking the area to the wider Swahili trade, including Persian Gulf or Iranian glazed ceramics, a fragment of a soft-stone ware possibly from Iran or Oman, and glass beads traded from India and Central Asia.

Among the finds were also three bronze coins, a chain, and metal fragments. The metal objects were subject to elemental analysis by X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and lead isotope analysis.

The elemental analysis revealed that the coins had a unique elemental composition unlike any other known Swahili coins.

The Ibo coins were made up of an unusually high tin-lead ratio and, unlike Swahili coins, contained no arsenic. The researchers proposed that this may indicate a shift in the source of copper (needed to make bronze) for Swahili coins during the 11th and 12th centuries.

Lead isotope analysis was conducted on two of the coins and a fragment of the coin to determine the geological origin of the copper.

Using a specialized mass spectrometer, the researchers compared the isotope signatures with sources across Africa and Eurasia.

The results showed that none of the metals had originated in the Islamic world, as their alloy composition did not match. Neither were they recycled metal.

Instead, the researchers hypothesized that the most likely source of the copper was the Copperbelt region in Congo-Kinshasa (possibly the Shinkolobwe mine).

This would make the copper used to create the Ibo artifacts the most distant source of copper to date.

While the poor condition of the coins and the fact that the researchers could not claim they belonged to a Swahili mintage made linking them to any particular place difficult, the researchers were able to establish a link between the Ibo coins and coins struck in Kilwa.

The Quirimbas Archipelago, which is part of Ibo, was part of the gold trade network that connected Kilwa to areas in



Coin found at Ibo, Mozambique's coast.

Limpopo (South Africa) and the Zambezi, located in the Middle Limpopo Valley.

The Middle Limpopo Valley was a significant political entity that controlled long-distance trade in gold and ivory. Within it were several polities, including Mapela (ca. 1055-1450 AD), Mapungubwe (ca. 1220-1300 AD), and Great Zimbabwe (ca. 1300-1450 AD).

This long history of trade between the southern areas of Africa and the Swahili coast helped introduce gold, tin, bronze, and brass metallurgy into these southern

areas around the second millennium.

This trade connection between Ibo and the polities in the Middle Limpopo Valley has been demonstrated through the analysis of a gold bead also excavated at Ibo, says Prof. Maria Ruiz-Galvez Pierno, one of the researchers on the study.

"According to the provenance analysis, this gold came either from Great Zimbabwe or South Africa, since it isn't easy to distinguish, based on trace elements composition, between the gold ores of the Greenstone Belts and those of the Witwa-

tersrand Basin."

While much of the ore, including copper and bronze, used in these polities was mined locally in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, some came from the Copperbelt in the Congo-Kinshasa.

The research team proposes that the copper used in the Ibo coins and artifacts likely originated from the Congo region before being redirected eastward to the coast through the Middle Limpopo Valley, suggesting that they followed a similar route to the gold trade network.

"Taking into account that Sofala was considered the outlet for the Zimbabwean gold, we considered the Limpopo River, connected to Sofala, as the most probable route [of copper]," said Prof. Ruiz-Galvez Pierno.

While the evidence isn't conclusive, the study opens the possibility that copper mining districts in Congo-Kinshasa were linked to Swahili-oriented trade routes.

Copper, along with other valuable materials, may have been traded through the Quirimbas before entering into the wider Swahili trade network, highlighting the important role small local villages may have played in the early development of the Indian Ocean trade route system.

Picture of the Day



The miniature mountains of Nehbandan in South Khorasan are also called Martian Mountains because of their unusual shape and landscape.

Photo by ISNA