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One year on from Mahsa Amini's death, protest art marks the streets

By Gareth Harris

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THE SOUND OF
صدای یک عمل
A REVOLUTIONARY ACT
انقلابی از روی
SKIPPING
الگوریتم شما
YOUR ALGORITHM
رد می شود

Public art works by four artists go on show in Edinburgh, Paris and Dublin as part of a campaign marking the death of Mahsa Amini in Iran on 16 September last year. Posters by four artists—Koushna Navabi, Anahita Razmi, Abbas Zahedi and Hadi Falapishi—focusing on the “Woman Life Freedom” movement highlight the “battle for basic human rights against the Islamic Republic of Iran”, a project statement says.

The project is initiated by a UK-based organisation called Artists for Woman Life Freedom, which was founded by Navabi. “Artists for Woman Life Freedom builds on the work of grassroots activists whose protest art has painted countless streets around the world with defiance since 2022,” the statement adds.

Amini died in an Iranian hospital after being detained by the regime’s morality police for allegedly not complying with the country’s hijab regulations. Her death sparked ongoing mass protests in Tehran and cities across Iran as well as protests across the globe. The ensuing government crackdown led to the deaths of more than 500 protestors according to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

London-based Navabi's "wry use of 'feminine techniques explore the interplay between the personal and the socio-political", says Artists for Woman Life Freedom in an Instagram post. Her image depicts a uterus superimposed on an Iranian heritage site. Zahedi's work is emblazoned with the text, "This poster has more rights than most women living on this planet—how?" Razmi's work displays the text "The Sound of a Revolutionary Act Skipping Your Algorithm" in English and Farsi.

"As an artist, I believe that aligning the Iranian women's rights movement with the universal human rights cause against the oppression of all women globally is vital." Zahedi tells The Art Newspaper. He adds, "Art transcends borders, just as the struggle for equality does. Iranian women's challenges are a poignant reflection of broader patterns of female oppression worldwide."

The initiative launches 16 September with two concurrent events commemorating the death of Amini. The Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris will host a day of "art, activism and reflection" including talks and screenings by artists including Navabi and the Iranian filmmaker Mina Keshavarz. The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh will screen films by Keshavarz and the film director Pegah Ahangarani, followed by a night march through the city. In October, the Hepworth Wakefield will host an event in support of the movement.

Meanwhile, a new anthology *Woman Life Freedom: Voices and Art from the Women's Protests in Iran* has been published by Saqi Books. Edited by Malu Halasa, the publication extols "the power of art, writing and body politics", a statement says. "This moving collection offers a clear understanding of why Iranian women are protesting for freedom and their rights," says Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian national who spent six years in jail in Iran before being released last year.