

Studio Pooya Aryanpour and Maryam Majd Art Projects (MMAAP) in collaboration with Dastan Gallery announce “Gone with the Wind”, the debut exhibition of a large-scale installation project by Pooya Aryanpour, curated by Maryam Majd. Hosted at Kahrizak Sugar Factory, an early twentieth-century plant that has been abandoned for decades, the exhibition will open on May 2022 6, and will continue through June 2022 10.

Initiated in 2017, “Gone with the Wind” has been long in the making, becoming one of the most unique exhibitions to be held in Tehran. The project consists of three components that together aim to create an environment of exploration, sensory experience, illusion and contemplation. These three components include “Hanging in the Wind”, an enormous installation of mirror-work sculptures, “Outlived Entity”, a large metal sculpture, and a selection of the artist’s drawings and sources of inspiration, showing his thought process and creative path.

According to exhibition curator Maryam Majd, “the combination of these components, both visually and conceptually, hints at something that has disappeared in the space. The beautiful, yet lost, wave of a suspended object that directly makes references to us and our lives (“Hanging in the Wind”), along with the strictly-material being that denotes an inner conflict (“Outlived Entity”), together make an aesthetic allusion to an incomplete, contradictory, and unstable situation experienced by the people living at a particular period in this geography, constantly feeling the entirety of all historical setbacks in their being.”

Initially, work on “Gone with the Wind” started upon Pooya’s studies of flags, especially black flags used at the times of religious ceremonies and martyrdom commemorations. Such flags are extremely commonplace in Iran and widely raised in public and private areas at times of the numerous year-round Shia ceremonies, events commemorating Iran-Iraq war, the 1979 revolution, and other occasions by administrative offices, armed forces, government-sponsored organizations and militia, and religious groups.

Having started a series of mirror-work sculptures in mid2000-s as an extension of his paintings and drawings, Pooya took his inspirations and shaped them into three-dimensional forms. His personalized approach and technique in creating immersive mirror-work sculptures which have been perfected and matured through years of meticulous study and experimentation, served as a unique means of expression for blending the work into the setting of the derelict sugar factory as well as resembling a witness shining light, observing and overlooking the coming and going of the viewer.

Infusing the studies, sketches, and initial ideas into his mirror-work practice, Pooya has created a colossal structure itself made out of twenty-seven large mirror-work sculptures that integrate with each other. “Hanging in the Wind” imposes itself upon the viewer, looming over them from the almost twelve-meter-high ceiling, and from every side. Much like the black flags raised around Iran, the intricate mirror-work is done using mostly-darker tones. The installation presents an actual sensory experience of the object, its presence and the plays of light and reflections created by its miniature mirror pieces.

Another component of “Gone with the Wind” is a large nine-by-two-meter metal sculptures that both resembles the shape of a pre-modern human-made weapon or torture device, as well as the bone structure or vertebral column of a large mammal. With sharp teeth and edges, the self-standing iron structure titled “Outlived Entity”, is composed of four components and its partially-oxidized surfaces have been left unpolished, presenting a very physical experience. In contrast to the mirror-work structure that looms over the viewer, this metal piece lies within touching distance.

A collection of preliminary drawings and sketches for “Gone with the Wind”, together with clippings,

photographs, and notes that Pooya Aryanpour has gathered over the years as a “conceptual and mental map” showing his inspirations and paths of imagination, are displayed as part of the debut exhibition of “Gone with the Wind” at Kahrizak Sugar Factory. He believes “a unique artwork can have several different sources of inspiration. In my work, many forms, visual elements, themes, or subject matters, have been shaped by visual, literary, or intellectual resources. Since very early in my practice, I have been used to collecting these clippings and displaying them in my studio space, as if I have always wanted them in my close proximity so that I may never forget those stories.”

Kahrizak Sugar Factory, the century-old sugar processing plant in Tehran’s southern district of Kahrizak which hosts the exhibition, itself integrates into both the project’s initial inspiration and conceptual approach. The plant, its history, abandonment, and current dilapidated state perfectly symbolize the ephemerality of ‘the Iranian experience’, especially since late nineteenth century.

Each component of this project, like pieces of the puzzle, come together to reflect an autobiographical image of the artist. As an artist whose life and career have been thoroughly shaped by the Iranian Revolution, war, distinctive shifts in the socio-political spheres as well as the complete transformation of public and private life, the hopes and dreams of his generation have been simultaneously, and often paradoxically, flourishing and under threat. Consequently, a unique aspect of this project as well as the processes and practices leading to it, have been a deliberate sense of isolation, independence in thought and execution, and looking at the studio as an autonomous space, all of which empowering, rather than limiting, the artist and the scope of the project. “Gone with the Wind” hints not only at loss and the temporary nature of life in an ever-changing setting, it alludes to a benumbed observation of this process, lacking will, power, or control over the course of events and change itself, while insistently seeking finesse and elegance, as well as scale and impact.

Pooya Aryanpour (b. 1971, Tehran, Iran) is an artist, arts instructor, and university lecturer based in Tehran, Iran. While he is best known for his artistic practice and impact on Iran’s contemporary art scene, he is also a curator and artistic consultant.

