

Art gallery spreads floral cheer

Flower-inspired artworks bring some cheer in stressful times

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“Almost every culture around the world has some kind of ritual to celebrate the promise of spring, and flowers are an important part of the celebrations...” FERREYDOUN AVE ★ Artist



While museums around the world are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they are posting images of flower-themed artworks from their collections to convey calm, healing and positivity as part of the #MuseumMomentofZen trending on Twitter.

Museums are also expressing solidarity with each other by exchanging bouquets of floral art on social media. The latest exhibition at Total Arts, *Flower Power: A New Day*, also hopes to spread some cheer during these stressful times through artworks inspired by flowers. Curated by well-known Iranian artist, writer, and curator Fereydoun Ave and Dubai-based Iranian artist Shaqayeq Arabi, the show brings together a variety of works by artists with diverse practices that explore the many connotations of flowers in art, culture, philosophy and politics.

“Almost every culture around the world has some kind of ritual to celebrate the promise of spring, and flowers are an important part of the celebrations, symbolising the end of dark winters and new beginnings,” Ave said.

“Throughout the history of art, artists have used flowers in their work to signify beauty, ephemerality, love, peace and hope. In the 1960s and 70s, young people used the term Flower Power to describe the passive resistance of the hippie movement. And today museums are sharing images of paintings of flowers to spread positivity. Our show looks at all these aspects. It is about soft power and resistance as well as the Sufi concept of the power of love, which is the subtext of all life and understanding. We chose this theme to celebrate Nourouz,

the Iranian New Year that marks the arrival of spring, and we hope these flowers will bring some happiness to our viewers,” Ave added.

HIPPIE MOVEMENT

The show features flower-themed paintings, prints, mixed media works and installations by Andy Warhol, Cy Twombly, Alessandro Twombly, Jean-Claude Carriere, Mikhalis Makraoulakis, Reza Derakshani, Parvaneh Etemadi, Ali Golestaneh and many other artists including Ave and Arabi. It also includes a soundscape by Bijan Hazrat and the film Taking Off made in 1968 by Milos Forman and Jean-Claude Carriere on the hippie movement in New York.

The two filmmakers immersed themselves in the Flower Power movement, befriending key figures such as Janis Joplin, learning the hippie slang and filming young hippies as they protested against the Vietnam War and sang about their dreams of peace and love for the world.

In an essay about the film, Carriere says, “A strange hope was there, right under our eyes. Would it lift and transform the planet? Very rapidly, all was abandoned. The war in Vietnam continued. Joplin and other stars died of drug overdoses. Flowers withered; old habits rapidly returned. Ours was the only film based on this ephemeral power, on this insane hope and flowery dream of young Americans that was rapidly dashed.” Perhaps the film has a message for us about how to use the lessons learnt during this pandemic for positive change.

The exhibition, which was supposed to run at Total Arts at the Courtyard until April 30 can be viewed at <https://www.totalarts.gallery> and @totalarts_courtyard on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/totalarts_courtyard).