



GALLERY

Mohammad Hassanzadeh

b. 1979 Gachsaran, Iran

Mohammad Hassanzadeh's work, rooted in the unique geological and historical narrative of Gachsaran—a city deeply shaped by the oil industry—where he lives and works, presents an intimate dialogue with a landscape shaped through cycles of change, extraction and reclamation. His meticulous charcoal drawings reveal the layered histories of colonial intervention, industrial exploitation and personal introspection, engaging with the complex interplay between permanence and impermanence as is evident in his “Oil: Height of Depth” collection, which was exhibited at Argo Factory—Tehran’s first independent contemporary art museum. His work explores the intersection of history, politics and nature, drawing from natural science methodologies such as observation, empiricism and experimentation. His artistic practice examines the environmental and socio-political consequences of industrialization, particularly oil extraction, through a combination of drawing, printing, photography and found objects.

His works on paper—executed in ink, charcoal and crude oil—reflect the geological and historical layers of his surroundings. Juxtaposing crude oil with the ephemeral nature of charcoal establishes a dialogue between deep geological time and human intervention.

This material contrast underscores the tension between permanence and impermanence, a theme echoed in his hyper-detailed renderings of landscapes that have undergone immense physical and economic shifts. Through close-up, highly detailed depictions, he explores what remains and what disappears, drawing attention to the land as a palimpsest of exploitation and endurance.

In addition to his works on paper, his photography serves as a form of documentation, capturing tools and artifacts related to oil extraction. These images and objects construct a visual narrative of labor, transformation and environmental degradation.

Through this multidisciplinary approach, Hassanzadeh re-examines his context, merging his physical and mental experience with the landscape that surrounds him.





Education

2009 BA, Graphic Design, Tehran University, Tehran, Iran

2001 AA, Traditional Arts, Isfahan, Iran

Solo Exhibitions

2024 "Metal Seed", O Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2021 "Natural Trophies", O Gallery, Tehran, Iran

2021 "Oil: Height of Depth", Argo Factory, Tehran, Iran

2017 "X-ist", Ag Galerie, Tehran, Iran

Group Exhibitions

2025 NADA Curated: "As It Unfolds", an online exhibition organized by curator Fitsum Shebeshe

2018 "Small Image, Large Reflection", Ag Galerie, Tehran, Iran

2017 "Small Image, Large Reflection", Ag Galerie, Tehran, Iran

Art Fairs

2025 The Armory Show, represented by O Gallery, NY, USA

2018 UNSEEN Art Fair, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

2017 This Art Fair, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Three Views on an Oil-Rich Geography

Height of Depth
Natural Trophies
Metal Seed



“Oil: Height of Depth”

Without a doubt oil is one of the things that has affected almost every interaction that human beings have with the world around them, from economics and politics, to climate change and life in general. The discovery of oil in the southwestern parts of Iran resulted in an oil-based geography that led to the creation of artificial spaces. These artificial spaces in turn led to the development of small urban settings that had a significant effect on their context and environment, challenging many of the existing conditions of the local people of these oil-based geographies. The artificial spaces, which included structures for oil exploration and production, as well as new living environments such as small towns and neighborhoods, created certain divisions that reflected a type of classification and separation. In addition to its deep effects on human society—including the lives of local workers—this form of classification also caused significant changes in the environment; changes that were sometimes strongly resisted by nature because they were intrinsically different from the natural surroundings.

The main idea behind this project is rooted in these confrontations and transformations in Iran's southwest: historic/geographic configurations that have remained within human and natural environments that forcefully resisted change, and where traces of this resistance appear in different areas like unhealed wounds. This art project reveals what could be considered the intersection of art, science, and technological advancements. As such the artist's media includes a wide range of materials, including natural elements. The project is a combination of history, politics, and nature, expressed through the medium of art. It includes art works that are inspired by techniques used in the natural sciences—including observation, experience, and experiment—that result in the discovery and creation of a type of aesthetics. The artist has used different media to organize his ideas, including photography, drawing, and print. The end result is two separate projects; “Colonial Neighborhoods”, and “Oil: Collision of Times”.

– Colonial Neighborhoods

These images show a direct and immediate portrait of an oil-rich area in southwestern Iran—Gachsaran. This is an area where climate and the quality of the soil continue to play a major role in the lives of its inhabitants. Gachsaran is an area where the Zagros mountain range ends and the expansive fields of Khouzestan begin. The area is one of Iran's peripheral oil-extraction sites, and has undergone various changes over the years. More accurately, oil extraction, and its surrounding industries and urban centers, led to significant transformations in this peripheral area that initially affected the climate, and later had deep impacts on the lives of the inhabitants of this area. The transformations and changes that were brought about with the appearance of modernity in southwestern Iran, led to phenomena like settlements, space/place divisions, and long hours of work. By redefining nature (design and construction of neighborhoods) British architects ignored the relationship between natural landscapes, climate, and the lives of local people, and instead tried to create an inconsistent connection with the nature of their own homeland. This senseless connection resulted in transformations that forever changed the social and physical landscape of these places.

With a direct, thoughtful and deliberate gaze, these images depict the area six decades later (the artist's place of birth and where he lives currently). The natural landscapes that were well known by the locals and each had their own particular name, were replaced by straight geometric lines and transformed into new spaces clearly marked by fencing and signage. The images clearly narrate the fate of this inconsistent, deteriorating combination.



Untitled from the *Colonial Neighborhood* Series
Digital print on Epson hot press natural paper
16x24 cm
Unique edition
2018



Untitled from the *Colonial Neighborhood* Series
Digital print on Epson hot press natural paper
16x24 cm
Unique edition
2018



Untitled from the *Colonial Neighborhood* Series
Digital print on Epson hot press natural paper
16x24 cm
Unique edition
2016

– Oil: Collision of Times

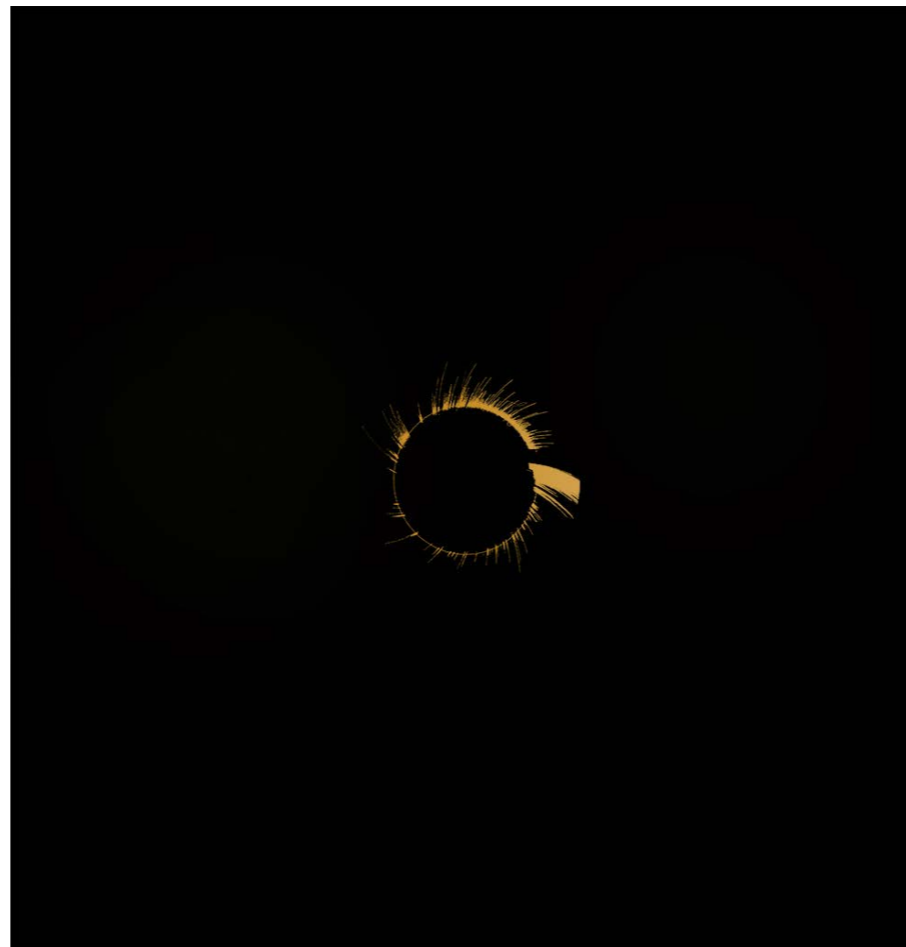
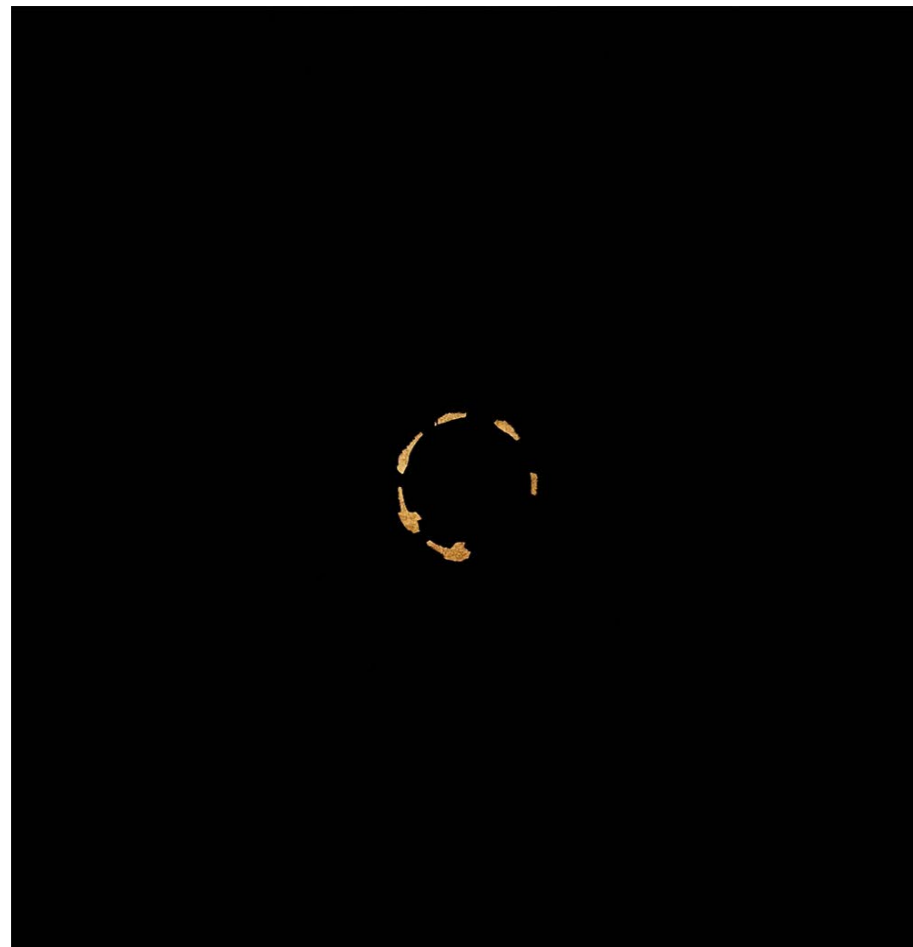
The works in this section are based on the concept of time in its modern sense and definition as it applies to the development of oil. In other words, as a prehistoric material, oil defies the linear modern definition of time, and by distorting this linear concept, it presents itself as a “Collision of Times”.

Oil is the remnant of historic microorganisms that after millions of years have turned into a black liquid that can burn in the blink of an eye and leave a deep impact upon our future. Looking at its great impact and the transformations it causes both in our natural and human realms, leads us to define the phenomenon of oil as a “Collision of Times”:

“The Time Before”, “Colonial Time”, “The Time After”

The Time Before: Height of Depth

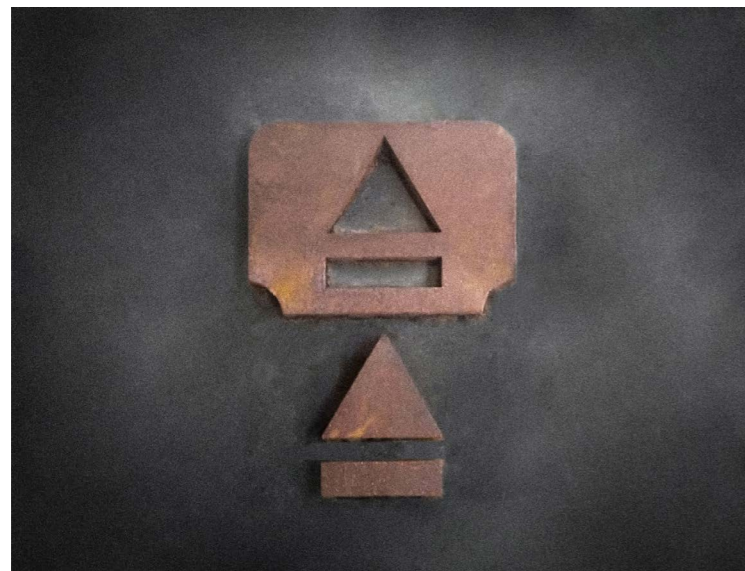
Circular graphs used to measure the pressure and temperature in oil pipes are used in the pieces in this section. The graphs scientifically display the fluid and three-dimensional information about pressure and temperature in oil pipes as flat, two-dimensional images. The lines can be considered a continuation of the linear, modern concept of time and the conquest of nature by human beings through the recording of information. As a prehistoric material, oil defies the modern, linear definition of time. In this section the attempt has been to move beyond inductive reasoning (from parts to whole), and to return the two-dimensional, flat world depicted in the graphs to their original form. In the first step the lines in the graphs that represent time/place relations in their scientific and modern sense are eliminated, and the lines trapped in the circular geometry are set free, turning into sunrays floating in space. In the second step, by focusing on the sun and the fact that oil is the result of millions of years of sunrays radiating upon the earth, the material of oil is used to depict floating suns.



The Time Before: Height of Depth
Digital print on glossy paper, Crude oil
100x100 cm
Unique edition
2021

Taken from the Abadan Oil Museum (technical school)

"The triangle/rectangle work piece was a rectangle made of metal that had an empty triangle shape in the middle. The trainee had to file a metallic piece into a triangle shape so that it exactly fit inside the empty shape within the rectangular frame. When he was done the frame would be held up against a light source and if any light passed through the trainee would fail the exam."



Colonial Time: The Alphabet of Defeat

Laser cutting on metal

Thirty-two pieces

132x58x115 cm

2021



Installation View, Argo Factory, Tehran 2021

The Time After: After the End

There are numerous reports where workers in the oil industry have complained of the unbearable heat and prevalence of camelthorns in the fields in this area. What is worth consideration in these reports is the great contrast between the natural environment under control of the Oil Company and the virgin fields outside its control where the only plant that can survive is camelthorn. The presence of the British not only transformed the existing social structure, but also led to a new version of nature. British Petroleum hired many gardeners from the Kew Gardens to design gardens in the residential areas as well as landscaped parks. These gardeners planted local trees from India, Bengal, and other regions and were constantly trying to create green spaces that would separate the inside world from the outside world.

The central idea behind this section of the project is based on the change of nature after the discovery of oil. The artist has tried to show how some plants, such as camelthorn, will change the landscape in this region after the area runs out of oil. Camelthorn, which is considered an invasive species, can rapidly grow and survive in this climate. This piece, which is created by pressing oil-covered camelthorn against fabric, makes one think about how nature can take back its territory.



Camel Thorn (*Alhagi graecorum*) grows in the deserts of Iran. The plant commonly found in Iran is short and has a dense covering of thorns. The roots of this plant are deep, strong, and wide, sometimes even breaking through concrete and asphalt. Camel Thorn is a resilient plant and can withstand harsh environments.



The Time After: After the End

Ecoprint on cotton cleaning cloth with crude oil

107x80 cm

Unique edition

2021

“Natural Trophies”

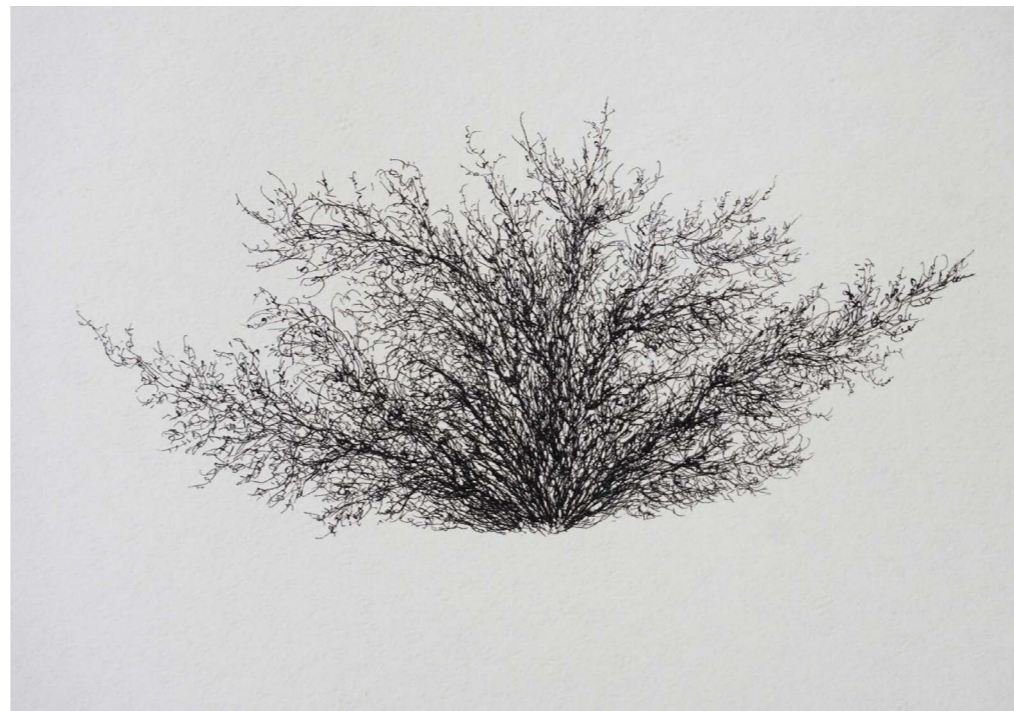
The main idea of this project is a combination of history, politics and nature. in other words, exploring how the interaction of these two concepts (history - nature) can reveal no concepts of the past and reconstruct the undiscovered ways of the nature. this project consist of two sections. two separete sctions that express a single concept in parallel:

- Surface Layers

This part of the exhibition is trying to make up for the past by going back to the roots, by staring at the layers of the surface in the climate that surrounds the oil geographies and by looking at the wild resilient plants of Southern nature and the mountains and hills that are their permanent home.



Untitled from the *Surface Layers I* series
Ink and crude oil on paper
15x10 cm each
2020 - 2021



Untitled from the *Surface Layers II* series
Ink and crude oil on paper
14x20 cm
2020 - 2021

- Colonial Trophies

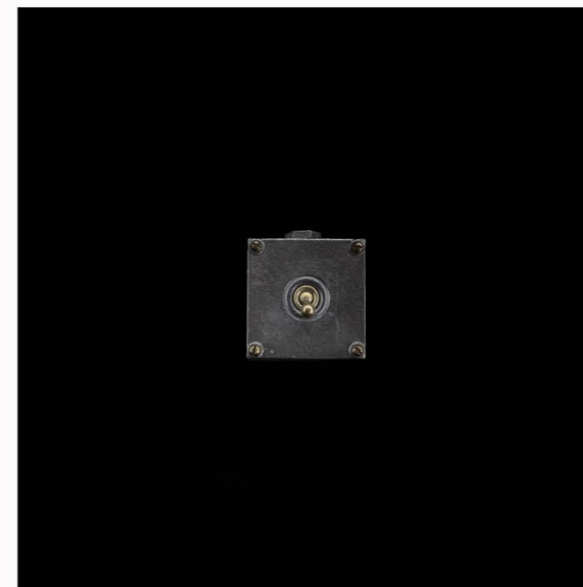
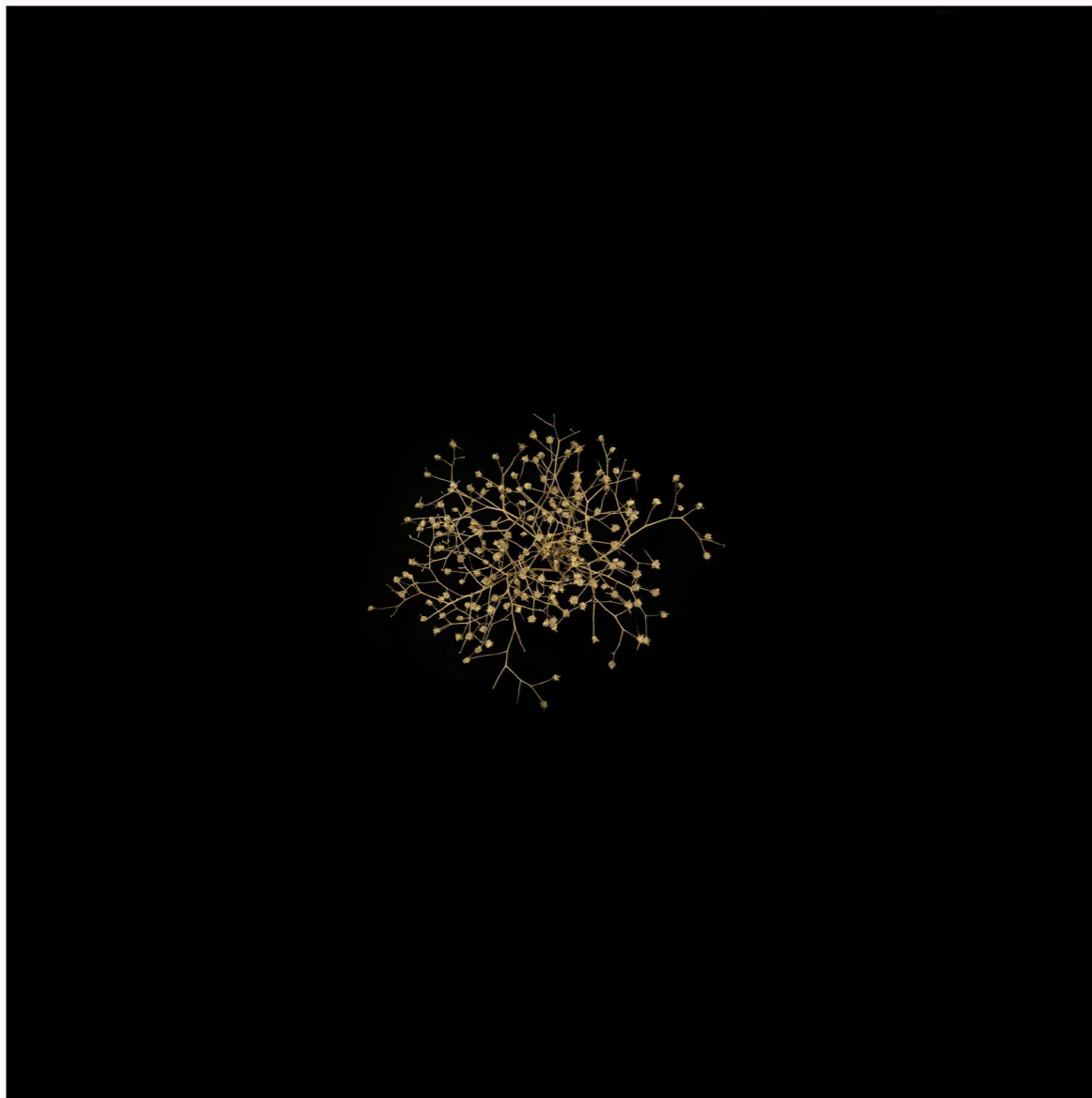
Past Control: Natural Trophies

Following the idea of exploration and conquest, as well as to preserve the greatness of the empire in the distant future, from the late seventeenth century onwards, the British began collecting plants and trees. The plan covered a wide area, including the three continents of Asia, Africa and Oceania. These plants and trees were planted in The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and kept in its vast archives.

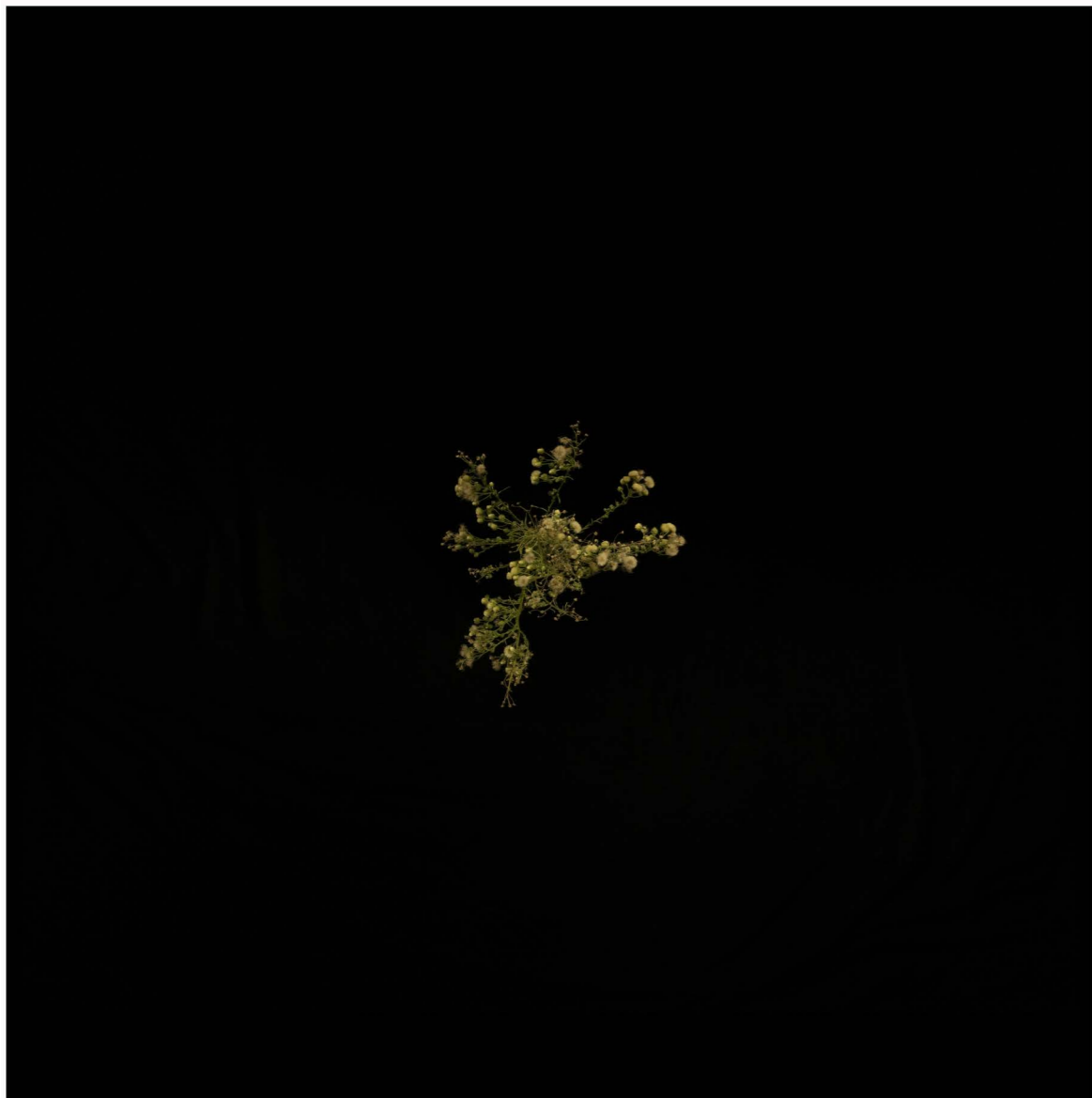
From the nineteenth century onwards, the lands of these colonies or quasi-colonies (Southern regions of Iran) were like accessible laboratories for technical and scientific specialists. They sought to direct nature - in their own interpretation - from an early chaos to a kind of rational order (archive) and to regulate the confusing variety of nature before them. With this (archival) view, nature was expanded in an endless classification so that these scientists (botanists) could classify them and most importantly, give a huge arsenal of species to the more scientific world ahead. An arsenal as a gift that originated from the modern mindset of exploration and conquest. But from our point of view today, this nature is understood as historical; the nature that is inextricably linked to history and politics (archive-power). The images in this section are against collection, classification and archiving.

Future of the Past: Artificial Trophies

The second part of the project, a continuation of the first part, is reminiscent of the Western (mostly British) tradition of collecting and archiving tools among skilled local (often retired) oil workers in Southwestern Iran. A habit that has long since found its way into at least part of the small community of local Southern workers. In a sense, these tools are the remnants of the future that oil explorers promised. Collecting these tools for skilled local workers is a sign of power. Each of these tools-objects used to be part of a whole that played a significant role in the construction of an artificial or secondary nature (the construction of a modern society independent of nature). Collectors of these tools consider themselves part of the development of the industry in the distant past. However it goes without saying that these tools-objects show us a small part of the large structure that has been engaged in the engineering of society and nature in Southern Iran.



Untitled from the *Colonial Trophies* series
Diasac
Diptych
50x75 cm overall
50x50 cm left panel
25x25 cm right panel
2021



Untitled from the *Colonial Trophies* series
Diasac
Diptych
50x75 cm overall
50x50 cm left panel
25x25 cm right panel
2021

“Metal Seed”

The main idea of this project is a combination of history, politics and nature. In other words, exploring how the interaction of these two concepts (history - nature) can reveal new concepts of the past and reconstruct the undiscovered ways of the nature. This project consists of two sections. Two separate sections that express a single concept in parallel:

- Wastes
- Inside Smoke
- Imagination of Soil

Studies on the Margins of the Oil Industry

This project continues the previous environmental projects concerning oil, depth height, and natural resources. In fact, if we examine these previous environmental projects, they have been in motion from the whole to the part and vice versa. In oil: depth height, the goal was to study the genealogy and recognition of the phenomenon of oil in its relation to nature and humans. The triad of definitions in oil: depth height, formed with a focus on the margins of the oil industry in the southern regions of Iran, portrayed the historical cycle from this perspective, showing the emergence of natural history, society, the rise of colonialism, and the simultaneous arrival of modernity in Iran with the discovery of oil. The natural resources project was focused on two periods of time. The first period concentrated on the arrival of Britain in the southern regions for the discovery and extraction of oil, as well as the discovery, classification, and extraction of local plants for preservation in royal archives and large gardens. In contrast, when looking at the mechanical-technical aspects, the focus was on small labor groups (mostly retired workers from the oil company) who worked with tools and objects. In the second period of natural resources, the focus shifted to oil materials and the landscapes of resistant plants that resisted these changes in the environment. In the natural resources project, the goal was to observe the status of a situation that involved a kind of encounter, coexistence, and exchange between inner and outer forces. Both projects sought to trace the genealogy and recognition of the concept of oil in the context of colonialism (and its effects on the lives of the people and nature in the southern regions of Iran). However, after many years, and following the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran, we have encountered severe class disparities in the production and distribution of this national wealth. This has led to the exploitation that the people of the South have suffered from. The focus in the first part of the «Pey-Shoro» project (Seed of Metal) is on these class differences, the marginalization, and the ongoing poverty.



Installation View, from *Metal Seed*, O Gallery, Tehran 2024



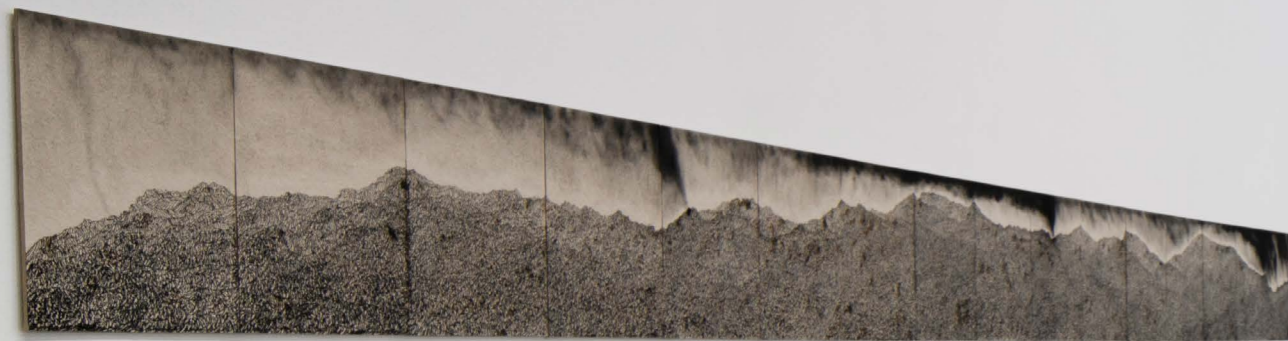
Inside the Smoke
Drawing with charcoal and crude oil on cardboard
79x116 cm
2024



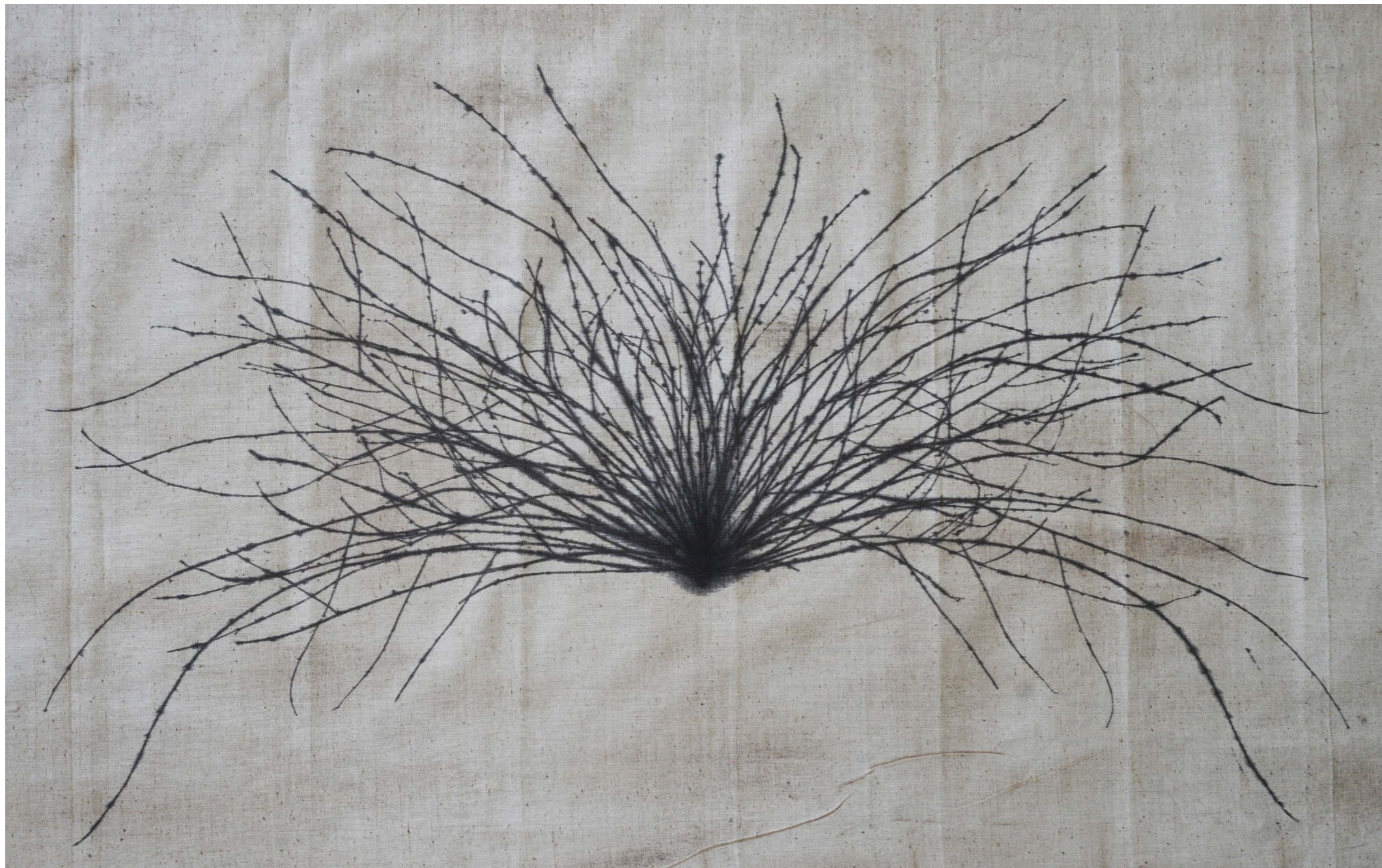
Inside the Smoke
Drawing with charcoal and crude oil on cardboard
79x116 cm
2024



Inside the Smoke
Drawing with charcoal and crude oil on cardboard
116x79 cm
2024



Installation View, from *Metal Seed*, O Gallery, Tehran 2024



Imagination of Soil
Eco print with crude oil on fabric
90x225 cm
2024



Installation View, from *Metal Seed*, O Gallery, Tehran 2024

