

Feature

Rich legacy of Iranian art

Iran has one of the world's richest art legacies embracing several disciplines – architecture, calligraphy and carpet weaving, painting and pottery, metal and stone work – and influencing many cultures and countries,

By Asjad Memon

Iran has a deep and rich history, one marked with political dominance and cultural prowess. Today's turmoil tends to obscure Iran's priceless heritage, influences many cultures and countries, including India. A recent visit to the Metropolitan Museum in New York City allowed me to be introduced to this extensive heritage. I provide you with a capsule course on the history of Iranian Art.

The Persian Empire

Humans have inhabited the Iranian plateau for thousands of years and the region has stood at the crossroads of both Eastern and Western civilisations that have travelled and traded along the famed Silk Road. The region includes the ancient kingdoms of Parthia, Media and Eastern Persia, all forming the heartland of "Greater Persia", which encompasses what today we know as Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The Persian Empire was one of the longest running empires in human history, spanning over 2800 years. It began with the Median Empire, which later consolidated with the Achaemenid Empire. The Empire's capital, which was at the ancient city of Persepolis, was greatly expanded under Cyrus II.

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who ruled for nearly 30 years. The Achaemenid Empire came to a close nearly five generations later, with the death of Darius III, during the conquest of Alexander the Great.



Above: Gold sheet worked, and set with turquoise grey chrysoberyl and diamonds. The necklace pictured here is attributed to the period of the Median Empire, which ruled in Iran. A few small pieces from the necklace are missing, but the two most elaborate pieces are there, making it one of the most important medieval Iranian jewelry known today.

Right: Stoneware incised and painted under transparent glaze. The site has a place of importance among the various decorative arts in Iranian architecture, in the thirteenth century, an extensive trade network opened from China to the Mediterranean, allowing goods to move more freely than in earlier centuries. This image of a warring phoenix with crested head and elaborate trailing plumage is pictured in the here exemplifies the adaptation of Chinese imagery by Persian artists in this period.

Below: Here is another example of Chinese-influenced ceramics. The two lions, the swirling fleckly clouds with their vegetal appearance, and the repeating scroll all imitate blue and white Chinese export ware.

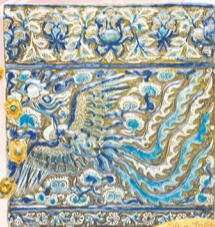
Below right: Painter Fakhruddin Shirazi created the largest mirror ever. It is made of paper mache, gilded and lacquered.



Over the next nine centuries, Persia was ruled by several dynasties, which included the Parthian Empire (247 BC to AD 226) and the Sassanid Empire (226-651). While the period of the Parthian Empire was marked by warfare, it was during this time that Ge'wan began to exert an artistic influence on Persian culture.

The Timurid Period

The Timurids were the final great dynasty to emerge from the Central Asian steppes. Timurid rulers were sympathetic to Persian culture and hired artists, architects and calligraphers who would



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Safavid Arts

Some of these rulers were also great patrons of the arts of the book, commissioning manuscripts that were copied, compiled and illustrated in

their libraries. Due to the flourishing of manuscript illumination and illustration, the Ilirist School is often regarded as the apogee of Persian painting. The Timurid period also saw great achievements in other luxury arts, such as metalwork and book carving.

In the early sixteenth century, Iran was united under the rule of the Safavid Dynasty (1501-1722), the greatest dynasty to emerge from Iran in the Islamic period. The Safavids descended from a long line of Shi'a Shakhis. Within ten years, all of Iran was brought under Safavid domination.

The most distinguished of Safavid rulers and the greatest patron of the arts was Shah Abbas. His reign was recognized as a period of military and political reform as well as of cultural growth. He encouraged trade with Europe, silk being Iran's main export. Carpet and textile imports were also significant. Through all this, the art of painting continued to flourish, with single page paintings and drawings becoming more popular than manuscript illustrations.

Qajar Period

Another dynasty to strongly focus on the arts was the Qajar Dynasty. The Qajars were a Persianized Iranian royal family of Turkic origin.

Qajar Shahs relied heavily on the arts to solidify their new position. They supported new techniques of lithography and photography, as well as innovative applications of existing forms in Iran such as miniature and oil painting. Oil painting had been introduced to Persia, but the early Qajars took this medium to new heights. They even used portraits of themselves to promote their international image, sending official portraits to England, Russia, France and other countries with whom the Qajars hoped to foster diplomatic ties. Eventually, these portraits were copied in other media such as lacquer and enamel.

Art in Iran has had a checkered history, alternating between periods of efflorescence and spells of restraint and repression. But the Persian heritage is a glorious contribution to global culture and its gratifying that despite prevailing uncertainties, the contemporary Iranian art scene gives cause for hope as the young inheritors seek to revive skills and traditions shaped over the centuries.

Asjad Memon is a graphic design professional based in New York City.

Karachi ma Natak!



By Mahabub Hishabuddin

October 13 and 14. An audience in Karachi is about to people find their way to their seats for a performance that will surely be a performance to watch.

On the 13th, Naveed Akbar, President, Karachi Symphony Orchestra (KSZO), Chiray Akbar (Chiray Akbar) from the KSZO orchestra were before all to declared well. This concludes the grandiose event of the KSZO's centenary celebration.

140 years, 30 sectors and over 23,000 employees. The Shajeeq Park Project continues to grow and strengthen.

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Because played by Farhan Memon also Tin and his girlfriends. He's a young Lahore-raised, three-time award-winning actor, writer, director and producer. He's also a young actor and producer. He's also a young actor and producer.

Tin's recent, Ali, played superbly by Usha Shafiq, has an even more, but to keep track of the cast, script and story.

Conversations arise when they visit friends from Georgetown, students from up and down the country, to talk with him, the script writer, to talk with him, the script writer, to talk with him, the script writer.

And when they think things can't get any more complicated, Tin's inevitable, Tin's inevitable, Tin's inevitable.

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