

Writing Pictures: Contemporary Middle Eastern Art (Part II)



LONDON -- A few blocks away, at the British Museum, Porter's show dives deeper into one of the forms touched on by Issa: the artist's book, a medium that arose in the 20th century and became hugely influential in the Middle East. These take various forms, from hand-drawn unique works to books produced in limited editions, those made in lithographs or etched and even sculptural renditions.

Porter divides her show of more than 40 books into five key themes: the mixing of traditions, poetry, conflict, histories and Arabian Nights. The last carefully examines not only how artists were inspired by that famous book, but on how the stars and the night sky have been used to guide migrants both literally and figuratively.

Iranian artist Ala Ebtekar, for example, has made a deep-blue book pierced with stars by exposing pages featuring Isaac Asimov's short story Nightfall — treated with light-reactive chemicals — to the night sky, which acts both as a memory of the past and as a means to capture the present.

The portability and fragility of the books, which could be folded up and packed away, provide a reminder of the ubiquity of conflict, migration and exile throughout the region in the 20th century.

The Iraqi artist Mahmoud Obaidi created small suitcases in which he placed his scrapbooks, in the poignantly titled Compact Home 7 (2015). Muhammad Omar Khalil,

from Sudan, responds in a series of minute etchings to Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North, a novel that chronicles the loss and displacement of trying to exist in two worlds at once. In his tight, careful script and illustrations, Khalil summons Salih's portrayal of the heroic self-control of men estranged from their surroundings.

The show is a delight, despite the fact artists' books can be notoriously difficult to exhibit in a public setting. Designed for perusal, they often feel cut off behind the vitrines' panes of glass, with text too small for the audience to read, and the intimacy of the artists' hand-done illustrations and writing seen only at a distance.

However, the British Museum has chosen to reproduce many of the poems, which allows the books' unique equality between the visual and written to come to the fore. The show includes the full text, for example, of Mahmoud Darwish's The Damascene Collar of the Dove, through which the Syrian artist Issam Kourbaj responds to his country's war — a work and poem worth the trip to the museum alone.

"For me, the magical thing is the interaction between the text and the image," says Porter, who admits a personal fascination with the medium. "Every artist talks about how their work is not just an illustration of the poem. The artists are working with poets, coming up together with ideas on how to make these books."

Courtesy: The National

Iranian Animation to Participate in Cleveland Festival



TEHRAN -- Iran's animated short film 'It's a Gray, Gray World!' has been set to participate in the Cleveland International Film Festival (CIFF), an Oscar-qualifying festival, in the U.S.

The Iranian Youth Cinema Society reported that 'It's a Gray, Gray World!' will be screened at the 47th edition of the American event, iFilm reported.

Directed by Sayyed Mohsen Pourmohseni Shakib, the film is about a colorful young man who lives in a completely gray world.

"He is forced to change his color in order to live in that society, but his real identity scares people as it has been accidentally revealed by a playful boy," the film's synopsis reads.

The Cleveland International Film Festival is "a leader in helping the world discover the power of the film arts to educate, entertain, and celebrate an inclusive human experience", the website of the event reads.

The 47th edition of the CIFF will take place on March 22-April 1.

Azarpendar Named President of TISFF Festival

TEHRAN -- Mehdi Azarpendar has been appointed as president of the 40th edition of the Tehran International Short Film Festival (TISFF), an Academy Award-qualifying festival in Iran.

He is the CEO and head of the board of directors of the Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS).

The Tehran International Short Film Festival, organized by the IYCS, is one of the oldest short film festivals not only in Iran, but also in the region, according website of the event.

The festival is a member of the International Short Film Conference (ISFC).

In 2021, the TISFF was inscribed on the list of the Oscar-qualifying film festivals.

The 40th edition of the Tehran International Short Film Festival will take place on October 19-24.

The Dust of Colonialism: Eurocentrism in Art Music (Part II)

By: Reza Vali*

Exportation and Internationalization of European-Style Music Education

Throughout Europe, the conservatory system is the primary method of teaching music. This system's roots stretch back to the French Revolution and the establishment of the National Conservatory of Music in Paris. In this system, the best musicians and composers are selected through strict entrance exams and educated under a highly disciplined system that includes the teaching of solfège, music dictation, figured bass, harmony, counterpoint, etc. During the 19th century, the conservatory system evolved and spread to all European countries, and it has since continued to proliferate almost all over the world.

This has created several noteworthy problems. First, the cultures of the world, including those of China, India, Iran, East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, already have indigenous methods of teaching music that have evolved within those cultures and are pedagogically linked to the music of those cultures. Many of these music education systems are simply not compatible with the European conservatory system and are being erased.

Second, during the transfer of the European conservatory system to other countries, this highly disciplined system has been corrupted and many of its rules



have been relaxed and "watered down." In many countries, the entrance exam is no longer very difficult (or there are no entrance exams), and regular conservatory courses have either been changed or eliminated. The result is that every year a large group of music students graduate from conservatories in non-European countries without a deep understanding of European art music and not knowing the music of their own cultures.

In many countries, students attending conservatory learn European music by default due to a historically Eurocentric presupposition of the dominance of European music. A better, more pluralistic route would be to ask the student what sort of music they wish to study and to

teach this in parallel with other musical languages. Of course, with the advancement of technology, students can now communicate with professors and experts in various styles and cultures of music via the internet. In this way, conservatory-style teaching could be used to teach European music, and the music of other cultures could be taught according to the musical traditions of those cultures.

In some respects, learning music is syntactically similar to learning a language. Suppose you decided to study English and Persian at the same time. You wouldn't learn Persian using English grammar or vice versa; you'd learn Persian grammar for Persian and English grammar for English. Still, if you studied

these languages together, you'd also notice a series of English and Persian words that are phonetically nearly identical. For example, the Persian word "pass" is "pass" in English, and the Persian word "dokhtar" is "daughter" in English. Where do these similarities come from? Persian and English are in the same lexicon family and are both Indo-European languages. When the relationships between these languages are acknowledged, the process of learning them in parallel is better facilitated.

This learning process can hold true in music as well. I call this process Parallel Interconnected Education. In Parallel Interconnected Education, students learn two or more musical languages simultaneously, and similarities between the two musical "languages" can be used to facilitate learning. For example, suppose a student wanted to learn European music as well as Iranian music. They could learn European music using the European music tradition (the conservatory system) and Iranian music using the Iranian music tradition (the radif system) in parallel.

*This article is derived from Chapter 2 of Reza Vali's Return to the Origins, published in Nov. 2022 by The Sharmin and Bijan Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies at Princeton University, and has been edited for content and length.

Courtesy: I Care If You Listen

Dar-ol-Qur'an Plans 2,500 Recitation Circles in Ramadan

TEHRAN -- Iran's Dar-ol-Quran al-Karim Organization plans to hold 2,500 Qur'an recitation circles in the country during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

Hojat-ol-Islam Ali Taqizadeh, head of the organization, made the remark at a press conference held here on the Qur'anic programs planned for the holy month.

He said the organization and other Qur'anic bodies consider Ramadan to be the peak of their Qur'anic activities, adding that efforts will be made to hold more Qur'anic events this Ramadan, especially in the areas

of Quran interpretation and contemplating the Holy Book.

The cleric said the main focus of the Qur'anic activities in this year's Ramadan will be Surah Muhammad of the Holy Book and a campaign dubbed "Muhammad (PBUH); Prophet of Goodness".

Hojat-ol-Islam Taqizadeh said the Surah's atmosphere of spirituality and hope and the good news God gives believers in this chapter are among the reasons why it was chosen as the pivot of Qur'anic programs for this Ramadan.

The "Muhammad (PBUH); Prophet

of Goodness" will be held with the cooperation of a number of other organizations like the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, and Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization, he noted.

The campaign includes Qur'an interpretation sessions featuring the verses of the Surah, book reading contests, etc, he went on to say.

Ramadan (which is likely to start on March 23 this year) is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

It is a period of prayer, fasting, charity giving and self-accountability

ty for Muslims around the world.

The Qur'an was revealed to the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) heart in this month.

During Ramadan, Muslims fast (abstain from foods and drinks) from sunrise to sunset.

They also devote a considerable amount of time during this month to reading and contemplating the Quran.

In Iran, various Qur'anic programs, including exhibitions, Qur'anic circles, Qur'an interpretation sessions and competitions are held every year in the holy month.

Persian Book Awarded Silver Medal in China

TEHRAN -- The Persian book, 'Elements of Chinese art in Iranian painting with a consideration of Jame al-Tavarikh and Shahnameh' by Nasrin Dastan, won a silver medal in the 31st Top Art Books in China.

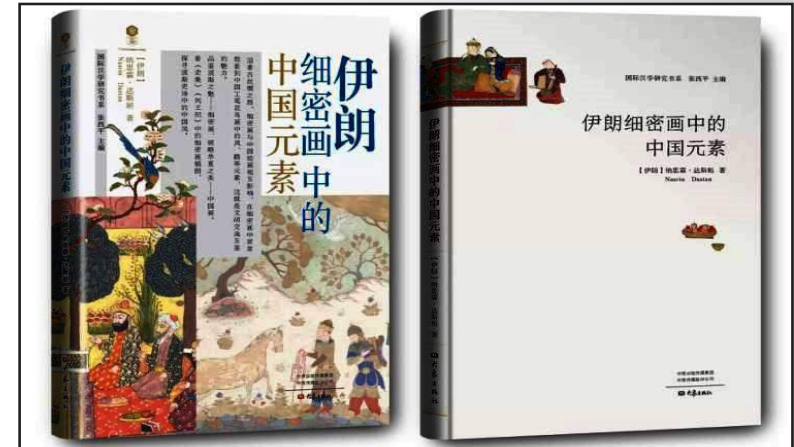
The experts committee of art book editors of the China Editorial Association annually selects and introduces art books for the "Golden Cow Cup" award in two categories of content as well as cover design and page layout, IBNA reported.

In 2022 edition of the award, art books with remarkable content were selected in the first category, which received 9 gold award books, 25 silver award books, and 51 bronze award books.

'Elements of Chinese art in Iranian painting with a consideration of Jame al-Tavarikh and Shahnameh' by Nasrin Dastan, a faculty member of the Arts Research Institute of

Iran's Academy of Arts, has been published in Chinese by Phil Publications in China.

Springer Publishing aims to translate and publish this book in English. Also, the Chinese translation of the book will be made available to those interested by Phil Publications.



Picture of the Day



The Shabisheh region in Hamidiyeh in Khuzestan province in southwest Iran grows a variety of flowers including hyacinths, sunflowers, lilies and narcissus, which mostly supply the market in Tehran.

Photo by IRNA