

Sculpture of Persian Poet Unveiled in Tehran



The largest bronze statue of Tehran representing prominent Persian people Sa'adi was unveiled on Monday.

TEHRAN -- A sculpture of Iran's 13th century poet Sa'adi Shirazi has been unveiled in Tehran in the presence of Iran's Culture Minister, Muhammad Mehdi Esmaili and chairman of the City Council of Tehran Mehdi Chamran.

Poems by Sa'adi, known in Iran as the master of speech, have survived the test of time as many generations, both in Iran and around the world, have enjoyed reading his poems.

The first day of the Iranian calendar month of Ordibehesht falling on April 21 has been

named the National Day of Sa'adi to commemorate him.

Saadi's books are Bustan (The Orchard) completed in 1257 and Gulistan (The Flower Garden) in 1258.

"One of the distinguished features of Persian poetry is the production of epistemic and spiritual capital, which is crystallized in the peaks of Persian poetry and the wise and enlightening poems of prominent poets such as Ferdowsi, Nizami, Rumi, Sa'adi and Hafez," Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said last month.

Man Arrested for Arson Fires in Minneapolis Mosques

MINNEAPOLIS (Middle East Eye) -- A man has been arrested in connection with two arson fires in two mosques in the U.S. city of Minneapolis that occurred last week, as well as the targeting of Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's office.

Jackie Rahm Little, a 36-year-old man, was arrested and faces state and federal arson charges. According to prosecutors, Little had also allegedly targeted the local district office of Omar, a Muslim congresswoman in Minnesota.

According to the federal complaint, Little's mother told investigators he had "extensively harassed a Muslim female" in the past and "has had a fascination with fire from a young age". She said she suspected him in "several unreported arson events", CBS News reported.

"We welcome the arrest of the arson suspect and express gratitude to law enforcement for their swift action. This arrest brings some relief to our community, which has been on edge for the past week," said Jaylani Hussein, the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Minnesota chapter, which has organized a campaign to raise funds to help rebuild one of the mosques.

"We hope to learn more about the suspect's motivations and any potential accomplices who may have incited these attacks on our houses of worship."

In late December, Omar's office received messages from an email address that belonged to Little, federal investigators said. The emails allegedly included a photo of a man urinating on a Qur'an in a toilet. It also included an image of an ear with blood.

On January 5, Little allegedly went to Omar's office in Minneapolis and spray-painted "500" outside the office door. According to the FBI's Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which investigated the case, the "meaning of the '500' text is unclear".

A few minutes later, a fire erupted in the bathroom of the mosque. The next day, a fire broke out on the third floor of Masjid al-Rahma, which is just three minutes away from the other mosque.

A volunteer security guard and three mosque employees helped evacuate the building, including the 40 children who were in a child care centre that rents space in the building, The Star Tribune reported.

There was substantial damage done to both places of worship but there were no injuries, reports showed.

According to court records, Little was charged with arson at least once before in Minnesota in 2021, when he allegedly set a gas can on fire on top of a car.

Last month, MEE spoke with staff members working in Omar's office about what it is like to deal with the consistent stream of threats and attacks they receive on a daily basis.

The threats have created a difficult environment, as staff members dealing with the threats are in a constant state of worry. And dedicating significant resources to dealing with the threats makes it more difficult to fulfill their legislative duties.

"Sadly, reporting these threats, corresponding with Capitol Police and other law enforcement, and communicating with prosecutors is an all too frequent occurrence and a part of my regular - sometimes daily - duties," said Connor McNutt, Omar's chief of staff.

"That's not to mention the staff who answer phones throughout the day and have to listen to routinely violent rhetoric or death threats against the Congresswoman."

Iran Marks Teachers' Day

TEHRAN -- Iran on Tuesday marked Teachers' Day which commemorates the assassination of prominent scholar, philosopher and lecturer Ayatollah Morteza Motahari on May 1, 1979.

With a very high command of Islamic teachings, Ayatollah Motahari played an important role in enlightening enthusiasts, especially teachers and academics.

He was one of the main axes of coordination among ulema and university professors. He is regarded as a very knowledgeable expert of Islam and a powerful philosopher who was aware of the conditions of the time.

Ayatollah Motahari has written a number of books with the aim of enlightening the youth, the most significant of which, "Dastan-e Rastan", was awarded by UNESCO in 1965.



He served as the head of the Department of Theology and Islamic Teachings at University of Tehran. At the time of his assassination, he was the president of the Constitutional Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a member of the

Revolutionary Council.

The idea of celebrating Teachers' Day took root in many countries during the 19th century; however, unlike many other International Days in most cases, the day is marked on various dates for differ-

ent nations by celebrating a local educator or an important milestone in education. Many countries celebrate World Teachers' Day, established by UNESCO in 1994, on October 5 as their Teachers' Day.

Teachers' Day is a special day to pay tribute to teachers and appreciate their efforts which include celebrations to honor them for their special contributions to educating the younger generation.

As in many parts of the world, teaching is sacred in Iran and the young and old sustain undying respect for those who strove so hard to increase their knowledge, honoring them with a small gift or flowers on the day.

Special ceremonies are held on Teachers' Day in schools, educational institutions, and universities across the country.

Houston Displays Islamic Art Donated by Iranian Collector

HOUSTON (Dispatches) -- Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the U.S., while Texas has the fifth largest Muslim community of any state in the country. To reflect this culture, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) recently opened six additional permanent galleries in its Art of the Islamic Worlds wing, which is now filled with hundreds of works donated by the Iranian-born collector Hussein Afshar.

The addition of six new galleries has almost doubled the square footage designated for Islamic art at MFAH. The institution now houses what its director and chair

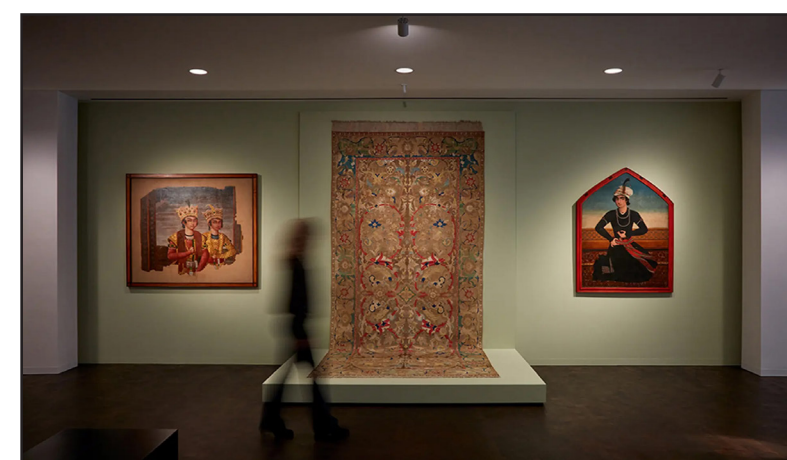
Gary Tinterow describes as "perhaps the most extensive collection of Iranian art in private hands".

The expansion arrives 15 years after the museum launched its Art of the Islamic Worlds initiative, developed in partnership with local Islamic philanthropists who wanted to see their heritage recognized and celebrated in Houston's museums.

MFAH's latest unveiling signals the culmination of a longtime push to establish the museum as a global leader in the preservation, display, research and documentation of Islamic art. Afshar's loan is the second iteration of this model—in 2012, an agreement was reached between MFAH and the al-Sabah Collection in Kuwait, which loaned hundreds of Islamic objects to the museum, many of which appear in the Islamic Worlds wing with Afshar's art and the museum's other holdings.

The galleries now present a vast selection of antiquities spanning from the seventh to the 19th centuries, including manuscripts, ceramics, inlaid metalware and textiles from countries as diverse as Morocco, Spain, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and India.

"The Islamic world is not a monolith," says Aimée Froom, the museum's curator of Art of the Islamic Worlds. "We are trying to underscore that Islamic art spans



The new Hossein Afshar Galleries for Art of the Islamic Worlds at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, opened in March, doubling the space for Islamic art.

regions as diverse as Eastern Asia to as far west as modern-day Spain."

Afshar's donation includes some unique artifacts. "Some blockbuster pieces on view include a 17th-century silk Polonaise carpet made by Persian Safavid weavers that is in fabulous condition as well as two pages from the most important copy of the 16th-century Shahnama manuscript," Froom says.

Houston has the largest Muslim population in Texas, and, accordingly, the museum's dedication to Islamic cultural heritage moves beyond the realm of aesthetics. The galleries' opening coincided with MFAH's New Beginnings festival, a free event that ushered in the spring with celebratory tra-

ditions from across Asia and the Middle East, which took place in the museum's sculpture garden.

This active approach to inclusivity has paid off. "More than 2,600 people came to the festival, which totally exceeded our expectations," Froom says. On March 2, Froom also brought the biennial Historians of Islamic Art Association symposium to MFAH, solidifying the institution's reputation as a "nexus for the study of Islamic art", Froom says.

But the museum is not just for people who are interested in Islam. "So many of the arts underlying primordial themes are universal and go beyond any notional boundaries of Islam," Froom says. "The art is relatable to humanity in general."

'Let's Make Peace' to Compete in Palm Springs Festival



TEHRAN -- Iranian animation 'Let's Make Peace' is competing at the Palm Springs Animation Festival in the U.S.

The Souch Cinema Organization production is representing Iran at the fifth edition of the event currently underway.

'Let's Make Peace' is about two neighbors who are in contact with each other. They sometimes become friends and sometimes fight with each other.

The animated piece previously bagged many awards such as the best animation award at the Animur International Animated Film Festival in Russia.

The Palm Springs Animation Festival is a global competition in animation and exhibition of the world's most talented artists in the world. Each year, awards go to 37 categories including the Best Animated Feature and the Best Animated Short in over 20 different styles of animation from 2D, 3D, Hand Drawn, Painted, Watercolor, Sand, Paper, Experimental, Stop-Motions and VFX.

The fifth edition of the festival is currently underway from April 30 – July 3, 2023.

Picture of the Day



Dariush Ahmadi Babadi is one of the nomadic teachers in Khuzestan province who reaches his students in Tange Dez, Sardasht area of Dezful every week after traveling for three hours and crossing the Ab Shur river to teach them.

Photo by ISNA