

Qatar Museum Revives Safavid Fashion Splendor (Part I)



DOHA (Stirworld) -- Qatar Museum is a pre-eminent institution for art and culture in Qatar, and consists of a vast network of museums, heritage sites, and programs. The network is currently hosting an exhibition titled, Fashioning an Empire: Textiles from Safavid Iran till April 2024. The show consists of a selection of extraordinary textiles from the museum's collection and will be on view at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) in Doha, striving to highlight the importance of silk in the vibrant social, economic, and artistic life of the Safavid Empire in Iran in the 17th century.

Fashioning an Empire: Textiles from Safavid Iran is a curatorial project initially conceived by and presented at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, Washington DC, United States, from December 2021 to May 2022. The exhibition borrowed many of the showcased objects from MIA, as part of Qatar Creates. Planned under the direction of MIA curator Nicoletta Fazio, this edition of Fashioning an Empire in Doha has expanded the artifacts showcased in the original exhibition organized by the Smithsonian. While the exhibition at the Smithsonian was organized with a limited number of objects, this current iteration features more than a hundred works, from the MIA and Qatar Museums' permanent collections. The exhibition also features objects on loan from the Qatar National Library which includes a wide selection of artifacts, among them 20 precious brocade silk textiles and 12 carpets from the Safavid period. A set of four full-length portraits, which provide a glimpse into the diverse population that characterized the Safavid imperial capital, Isfahan, are also presented. MIA curator Tara Desjardins supervised an additional section in the new exhibition to engage with local textile artists to create garments inspired by the exquisite textiles showcased in the exhibition.

The exhibition is divided into four interconnected sections. It begins by narrating a geographical and historical context in which the empire's ruler, Shah Abbas I, monopolized the silk export and state-funded the textile industry. Focusing on the city of Isfahan, the second part explores the wonders of the prosperous Safavid capital and the empire's commerce point. The third part looks into social art and practices of self-representation in Safavid society by showcasing remarkable examples of fashion, and historical textiles with contemporary illustrations and paintings. The fourth section bridges the past with the

present, displaying a selection of specially commissioned pieces, garments, and handbags by Qatar-based designers inspired by Safavid textiles from MIA's collection.

The Safavids took control of Iran after Islam came to the country in 656 AD. They are the first ethnically Persian, Farsi-speaking house that established an absolute monarchy divided from the Islamic Caliphate that ruled over most of the lost Sasanian lands 900 years after the fall of the last Persian Zoroastrian empire.

The Safavids then proceeded to establish Shia Islam in Iran as the national religion. This is their other similarity to the Sasanians, as they too were a religious dynasty, but a Zoroastrian one. Historians believe that the Safavid's ancestors were not originally Shia but converted to this path to establish a unique religious and national identity in order to distinguish Iran from Sunnis and oppose the rival Ottoman empire and neighboring Arab lands. It was with this newly curated national identity and pride that Shah Abbas I managed to fight off the Portuguese invasion which sought to colonize the southern islands of the Persian Gulf. This monarch centralized the trades and state-funded the industries while he gave various trade monopolies to foreign Christian governments, envoys or communities, thus crippling Iranian traders. This led to high quantities of exports from Iran carried out by European and Armenian traders and significantly low imports; the result of which was the empire remaining unexposed to the new discoveries and innovations of the West and gradually falling behind.

At the heart of this was the silk industry. As a region historically on the Silk Road, by the 17th century, Iran was a hub for silk production and magnificent textiles. After the settlement of the wealthy Armenian merchants in Isfahan, the trade routes for silk were almost completely in their control, while British ships also exported the silk from Hormuz Island in the south. Despite the reluctance to import, western art practices unsurprisingly found their way to Iran and revolutionized traditional miniature paintings. The two full-length oil portraits showcased in this exhibition are an authentic example of how Western art methods and composition were embraced by the Iranian artists and elite. By exploring the two paintings much can be discovered about the Abbas I era, and the politics of fashion.

TUMS Grants Scholarship to Palestinian Students

TEHRAN -- Head of Iran's Tehran University of Medical Science (TUMS) Hussein Ghana'ati has approved to grant "Dr. Iyad Shaqura's scholarship" to two Palestinian students.

The university has condemned Israeli atrocities in Gaza, calling on the international community and all free people of the world to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians and support their right to justice, liberation, and peace.

The scholarships will be granted in memory of Dr. Shaqura's two children who have been martyred in Israeli airstrikes.

Dr. Shaqura has graduated with a PhD in health management from the Tehran University of Medical Sciences.



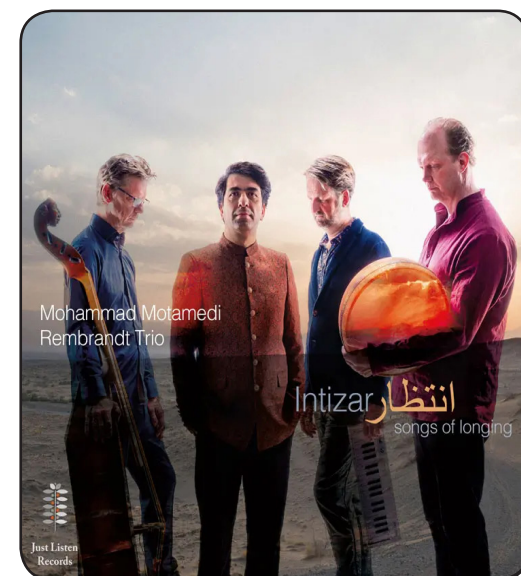
Rembrandt Trio, Iranian Vocalist Release 'Intizar'

AMSTERDAM (Dispatches) -- The Rembrandt Trio, renowned for their adventurous musical explorations, have released their third album, Intizar, in collaboration with Iranian vocalist Muhammad Motamedi via Just Listen Records.

The album seamlessly combines Persian classical music with contemporary interpretations, all framed by improvisation. The collaboration creates a captivating fusion of musical languages, bridging cultures through the universal language of music.

Intizar features Motamedi's remarkable improvisational talent, drawing from Persian poetry, and presents a diverse mix of traditional and contemporary pieces skillfully combined with the Rembrandt Trio masterful instrumental performances.

Recorded in the acoustically exquisite Amsterdam 'Orgelpark,' the album is a testament to the finely crafted fusion of Persian and Western musical traditions. It is a captivating, fantastic recording with its rich blend of cultures and the art of improvisation.



Over a Dozen Relics Discovered in Hamadan



TEHRAN -- An official at Hamadan's Department General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts has announced the discovery of 17 ancient relics in the western Iranian province that date back to the 1st millennium B.C.

Javad Khodamoradi commander of the security unit of the department said the relics were found by a person who owns a garden in the area by accident.

According to Khodamoradi, the ancient relics include 7 earthenware dishes and 3 bronze dishes which are not broken and 7 other earthenware dishes that are broken.

He added that the pieces date back 3,000 years. He noted that most of the dishes have no adornments.

Khodamoradi further thanked the citizen who handed over the ancient relics to authorities.

Prominent Foreign Policy Expert Passes Away

TEHRAN -- Prominent Iranian foreign policy expert Davoud Hermidas Bavand has died at the age of 90.

Born in Tehran in 1934, Bavand completed his high school education at Firoz Bahram. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in law and political sciences from Tehran University in 1957 and later obtained a doctorate degree in international relations in the United States.

Bavand was highly respected in his field and provided advisory consultations to Iran's ministry of foreign affairs. In addition to his advisory role, he also taught classes at universities in Tehran.

Picture of the Day



The Bazoft nomadic school in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province provides education to local students.

Photo by IRNA