

Next Stage of Persian Carpet's Evolutionary Cycle



LONDON (Dispatches) -- Born in South Africa, Edward Wakefield has always been focused on the big picture of fashion trends, hype and the encompassing culture.

The young entrepreneur started reselling Yeezys in high school, progressed to working at Palace Skateboards in London, and these days travels across the Silk Road with his latest venture, Crayon Artel.

Inspired by the history imbued within the millions of wool and silk knots of a Persian carpet, Wakefield and his small team, based in Iran, Turkey, Australia and the UK, incorporate contemporary design from the art, photography, and academic worlds into bespoke, one-of-a-kind creations.

"Crayon Artel's carpets are completely and authentically Persian, and as far as we can tell we have no competitors within this field," said Wakefield.

"We are thinking outside the 2,500-year-old framework of Persian craftsmanship. It's incredibly hard to manufacture carpets in Iran, given the sanctions and political and economic instability. A lot of people end up making their carpets in India because it's cheaper and there are fewer restrictions, but with the costs to culture and craftsmanship."

A luxurious narrative, one of modern technology, art old and new, and a deep reverence for the crafts of yesteryear affords clients an unheard-of exclusivity. Crayon Artel uses the same knotting technique as the Pazyryk carpet, the oldest discovered, as the foundation of its all-inclusive offering.

"The client's individuality is completely considered. Each and every knot is intentionally placed to reflect their vision and sense of self,"

said Wakefield.

Crayon Artel's team is hands-on throughout the process of translating the artwork, and sourcing the naturally dyed, premium materials, ensuring the design is accurately articulated. Viewing the carpets as a piece of history and part of the enduring legacy, as well as a means to express one's unique personality or brand, gives the start-up its cutting-edge in the field of bespoke home art.

"This is the next stage of the Persian carpet's evolutionary cycle. 'Traditional' art is often limited to the wall and viewed with the same physical perspective by each person, but when art is on the floor it must make sense as an artwork and as a piece of design used and viewed in multiple different ways," said Wakefield.

Details, which are digitally rendered to reflect the client's wishes, or sourced from artists or the notable archive of licensing rights Crayon Artel has acquired, are woven through the fingertips of craftspeople who possess the skill passed down from generation to generation.

"A lot of the work we do is closely linked with digital art, and the model of NFTs, which plays into our ethos of juxtaposing the past and the future, bringing them together in the present," Wakefield said.

"Our carpets are unique, down to the very knot. We allow a previously inaccessible luxury to be realized in a true reflection of our contemporary culture. The crafting technique is incredibly beautiful and truly human, and very grounding."

"In an age where everything is digital, or mass produced and ephemeral, our Persian carpet is created, almost in protest to this, as artworks that will literally still be around 100 years from now."

Registration for National Holy Qur'an Competition Extended

TEHRAN -- Iran's Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization has extended the deadline for registration for the country's 47th National Holy Qur'an Competition.

Hamid Majidimehr, head of the organization's Quranic Affairs Center, told IQNA that the registration deadline has been extended by ten days to June 18.

He said the registration process has been facilitated for those willing to compete in the Qur'anic event this year.

It will take them less than a minute to sign up for the competition via the organization's website, the official stated.

According to Majidimehr, the first stage of the contest will be held at the city level from June 29 to July 30.

Then there will be the provincial stage, scheduled for July 31 to August 8, he noted.

This year's competition will be held in commemoration of the "Martyrs of Service", namely Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian, and several others who lost their lives in a helicopter crash in northwestern Iran on May 19, Majidimehr said.



The Islamic Republic of Iran's National Qur'an Competition is annually held by the Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization with the participation of top Qur'an activists from across the country.

It is aimed at discovering Qur'anic talents and promoting Quranic activities in society.

The top winners of the competition will represent Iran in the international Qur'an competitions across the world.

Group Brings Ancient Persian Love Triangle to Life



The relief sculpture at Bi-Sotoon.

TORONTO (Dispatches) -- Who would have thought that Array Music Space, the downtown Boho-chic home of Toronto's new music, could magically turn into an ancient Persian mythical mountain?

Bi-Sotoon (also known by a variety of different spellings and several different pronunciations) is an archaeological and UNESCO world heritage site in the province of Kermanshah in western Iran. The main monument is a bas-relief commissioned by Darius the Great in 521 BC, portraying the Persian king's ascent to the throne. This is surrounded by a 1200-line multilingual inscription in a mixture of ancient languages, telling stories of his battles and struggles.

At Array Music Space, the inscription is projected onto a large screen at the back of the stage and set to music in a pseudo-antique style by U.S.-based composer, Mojgan Misaghi, and featuring powerful baritone Alex Dobson as Darius, becomes the gateway to the heart of the ancient love story.

A true labor of love and multicultural teamwork, 'Echoes of Bi-Sotoon' is a 75-minute, nine-scene, multi-composer collaborative piece for seven solo voices, piano, electronics and tambour (a lute-like folk stringed instrument), presented by the 'Cultureland' Opera Collective.

Sewn together lovingly and convincingly by Afarin Mansouri, the collective's artistic director and founder, following a jury selection of compositions, and expertly supported by Cheryl Duval from the piano, Echoes is above all about the timelessness of love, as depicted through two symbolic figures separated by millennia: the mythical bird, Simorgh, color-

fully portrayed by baritone Alexander Hajeck, and the Little Black Fish, a more contemporary symbol of truth-seeking derived from Samad Behranghi's award-winning eponymous children's book. In this touching first scene, Taline Yeremian's delicate voice as the fish sits perfectly against Hajeck's warm resonance, underpinned by lapidary piano chords from Spanish-based composer, Negin Zomorodi.

Simorgh and Blackfish become our companions and narrators as they retell the love triangle between Khosrow (a King of the Sassanid period), Shirin (probably

an Armenian princess), and Farhad (only known as a sculpture). The story appears in many Persian sources, but it is the version depicted in the 12th century Nizami Ganjavi's epic poem, Khosrow and Shirin, that is most commonly known and is referred to in this work.

Each composer contributes one scene to the narrative. Canadian composer Rachel McFarlane gives voice to King Khosrow (sung by Alexander Cappellazzo), in a melodically rich aria of jealousy and rivalry, as, aware of Farhad's love for Shirin, Khosrow tries to deter him by imposing the impossible task of carving a way through the mountain in return for the beloved's hand.

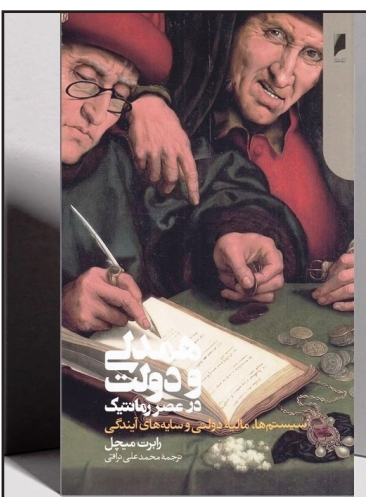
The story is then retold in Argavan Niroumand's piece, first through the eyes of Shirin (beautiful ringing tone from Kathryn Rose Johnston) as she comments on the lovers' rivalry and then as a conversation between Khosrow and Farhad, the latter featuring the warm, rich bass of Gabriel Sanchez-Ortega. Sung in Persian (with astonishingly accurate pronunciation from all the singers), the music here contains a more overt reference to Persian mode-

based (Dastgah) system. Sanchez-Ortega then portrays Farhad as determined and hard at work, in Canada-based Sina Fallah's energetically dramatic composition. Shirin's visit to Farhad is a love duet by Nasim Nabavi, set against the image of a starry night.

Fallah's second contribution depicts the tragic end ('Shakespearean' in effect, although Ganjavi lived long before Shakespeare!). When confronted with Farhad's bravery, Khosrow then deceives him by falsely informing him of Shirin's death. Lost in despair, Farhad then throws himself to his death (in a simple yet effective bit of stagecraft). His blood (in legends his axe) grows into a pomegranate tree with healing powers.

In Echoes, the pomegranate wood is then used to construct a tambour, seamlessly leading the narrative to the show's highlight and its most transcendent moment. Robert Simms' tambour solo improvisation against the backdrop of images of blood-colored pomegranate seeds was not only hypnotically transfixing but also the perfect musical depiction of the symbolism of the pomegranate in Persian (and Central Asian) culture.

'Sympathy and State in Romantic Era' Published in Persian



TEHRAN -- 'Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of Futurity' (2007) by American expert Robert Mitchell has been published in Persian.

The book has been translated into Persian by Muhammad-Ali Narghi and Tehran-based Donya-ye Eghtesad Press has released it in 354 pages.

It explores a fascinating connection between two seemingly unrelated Romantic-era discourses, outlining the extent to which eighteenth and early nineteenth century theories of sympathy were generated by crises of state finance.

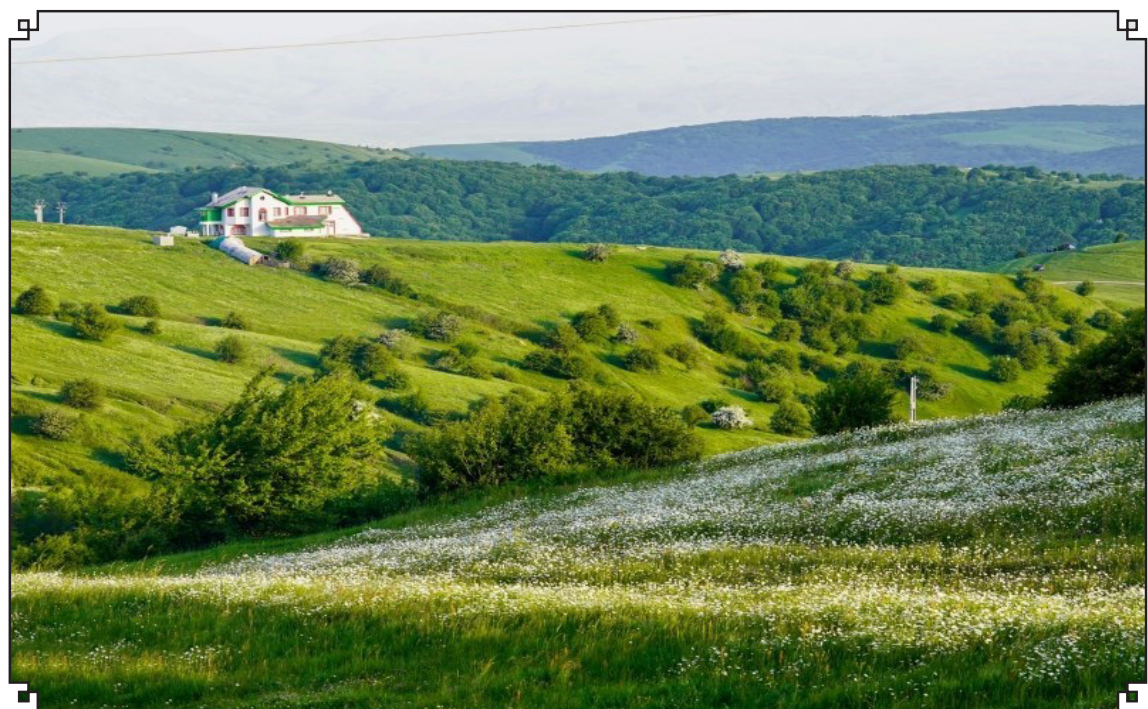
Through readings of authors such as David Hume, Adam Smith, William Wordsworth, and P.B. Shelley, 'Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era' establishes the ways in which crises of state finance encouraged the development of theories of sympathy capable of accounting for both the fact of "social systems" as well as the modes of emotional communication by means of which such systems bound citizens to one another.

Employing a methodology that draws on the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann, Michel Serres, and Giovanni Arrighi, as well as Gilles Deleuze's theories of time and affect, the book argues that eighteenth and early nineteenth century philosophies of sympathy emerged as responses to financial crises.

Individual chapters focus on specific texts by David Hume, Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ann Yearsley William Wordsworth, and P.B. Shelley, but Mitchell also draws on periodicals, pamphlets, and parliamentary hearings to make the argument that Romantic era theories of sympathy developed new discourses about social systems intended both to explain, as well as contain, the often disruptive effects of state finance and speculation.

Robert Mitchell is an assistant professor of English at Duke University, USA.

Picture of the Day



Every year in the spring, the blossoming of chamomile flowers in the Fandogloo forest plain in Ardabil attracts many tourists traveling from across Iran.

Photo by Tasnim