

## Iranian Memorizer Receives Advanced Certification for Qur'an Reading



TEHRAN -- Shoja Zuweidat, an internationally recognized Qur'an memorizer, has become the first Iranian to receive the advanced certification for the Ten Major Qur'anic Readings (Qira'at 'Ashr Kubra).

Speaking to IQNA, Zuweidat explained that while he previously received a foundational certification (Ijazah Sughra) from Sheikh Muhammed Fahmi Asfour through Iran's Supreme Qur'an Council, the more advanced certification was unavailable in Iran.

To pursue the Ijazah Kubra, Zuweidat turned to neighboring Iraq, where Sheikh Saleh Abdullah al-Rashed, a prominent scholar in Qur'anic readings, resides in Basra.

"I began studying under Sheikh al-Rashed, who holds certifications for both Ijazah

Sughra and Ijazah Kubra," Zuweidat said, adding that his prior experience expedited the process.

On November 18, Zuweidat was officially awarded the certification in a ceremony held at the Iraq Scholars Association in Basra. The event was attended by prominent figures, including Iraq's Sunni Scholars Association leader, the head of the Sunni Endowment Office in southern Iraq, and representatives from Iran's consulate in Basra.

The certification includes a chain of transmission linking back to renowned qaris, such as Sheikh Mahmoud Khalil al-Hussary of Egypt.

"I hope this achievement enables me to serve the Quran more effectively," Zuweidat said.

# X Suspends Account of Leader's Official Website

TEHRAN -- The X social media platform has suspended the account of the official website of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

The platform, formerly known as Twitter, suspended the account on Wednesday, with a brief statement appearing on the page that said, "X suspends accounts that violate the X Rules."

It did not specify what the alleged violation was. This is not the first time the U.S.-based company has targeted the Leader's accounts.

Late in October, X suspended a Hebrew-language account of Khamenei.ir a day after it was launched. The account was later restored.

Later, the platform also imposed a one-day ban on the Azeri-language account of the website publishing content on behalf of Ayatollah Khamenei.

The account had attracted more than 43,000 followers, mostly from Muslims based in Azerbaijan.

Profile information for khamenei\_ir:

- 7,982 Posts
- 4.9M Followers
- 27 Following

Profile name: Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei

Bio: حضرت آیت الله حاج سیدعلی حسینی خامنه‌ای؛ رهبر انقلاب اسلامی

Website: farsi.khamenei.ir/

See Translation

## Lineup of Fajr Festival Policy Council Unveiled



TEHRAN -- Secretary of Iran's Cinema Organization Raed Faridzadeh has officially announced the board of the policy council members for the

43rd Fajr International Film Festival (FIFF). The newly appointed members include Muhammad Mehdi Heidar-

ian, Seyyed Muhammad Beheshti, Hussein Entezami, Farhad Tohidi, Alireza Shoja-Nouri, Muhammad Mehdi Askarpour, Alireza Tabesh, Manouchehr Mohammadi, and Manouchehr Shahsavari.

In the official statement, Faridzadeh emphasized the importance of leveraging the expertise and experience of the council members to ensure the success of the festival.

"In recognition of your invaluable expertise and experience in the field of cinema, and with the aim of ensuring the successful organization of the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival, you are hereby appointed as a member of its policy council. I extend my sincere gratitude for your willingness to collaborate in this significant en-

deavor," his letter to the members reads.

"I trust that, with reliance on God Almighty and by drawing upon your profound knowledge and experience, you will excel in planning and guiding the festival. Your efforts will play a vital role in upholding the noble values of the Islamic Republic of Iran and advancing the cultural strategy of the fourteenth government."

The upcoming edition of the festival is scheduled to take place from January 31 to February 10.

The Fajr International Film Festival is a cornerstone of Iran's cultural calendar, celebrating cinematic achievements while showing the nation's cultural and artistic vision to both local and international audiences.

## Persian Art as Pinnacle on Display in London



Brass peacock, c1870, Iran.

LONDON (FT) -- What could be more quintessentially English than William Morris's interior designs? The sumptuous repeating patterns created by the chief founder of Britain's 19th-century Arts and Crafts movement — popularized in his day by Morris & Co's wallpapers and furnishing fabrics — have become global signifiers of an innately British style, copiously reproduced since his work exited copyright in the 1960s.

Yet a show at the William Morris Gallery, his childhood home in Walthamstow, northeast London, which houses the largest collection of his work, shines light on a sometimes obscured inspiration. William Morris & Art from the Islamic World is the first exhibition to trace the profound influence of Iranian, Turkish and Syrian arts on the geometrically precise designs of the feted English poet, artist and radical socialist. Exploring their importance in his life and work, the show hints at wider exchanges between Victorian Britain and the Islamic world,

while raising enduring questions about originality, imitation and appropriation.

The gallery's director, Hadrian Garrard, believes Morris's Islamic world sources are not sufficiently acknowledged. "For us," he tells me, "it matters in a community where 20 percent of residents identify as Muslim," as well as being "important to rethink what we mean by Britishness and Englishness." A corner of the permanent collection already touches on the subject. But, he adds, "we're threading it into the rehang" planned for the public gallery's 75th anniversary next year, which will also bring an exhibition on the spread of his designs, Morris Mania.

Morris (1834-1896) was less explicit about his Islamic sources than artist friends such as William De Morgan (whose "Lion Rampant" tile panel of 1888-98 appears in an upstairs room). Yet their influence can be inferred from his lectures, his work steering acquisitions for the South Kensington Museum (later renamed the V&A) and from what he owned. "Once you put them side by side, you can't not see it," Garrard says.

Even with its muted browns, the staggered blooms in Morris's machine-woven carpet "Tulip and Lily" (1875) mirror the alternating red and blue tulip heads of a 17th-century Ottoman quilt fragment he owned. The composition of his block-printed wallpaper "Wild Tulip" (1884), in white on salmon pink, unmistakably echoes the blue, green and red profusion of carnations and tulips on a 17th-century plate from Iznik, Turkey, also in his collection. Turkish wild tulips were

smaller than the Dutch cultivars of tulip mania, appearing budlike in his delicate design.

Such objects from Morris's cherished personal collection are reunited here for the first time since his death — from his house-museums in England, and public collections such as the V&A and Birmingham Museums Trust. They range from illustrated volumes of the Iranian epic poem the Shahnameh and the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (from which Morris read to his family) to three gorgeous 16th-century Ottoman-Syrian vine trellis tiles in indigo, turquoise and green.

Though Morris never ventured east of Italy, he began to collect west Asian art in his thirties from dealers and auctions, studying fragments to discern technique. He was "not a collector, but a magpie", the show's lead curator, Rowan Bain, tells me. He trawled everything that caught his eye, from tourist tat to masterpieces. All 60 works on show were owned or made by Morris or his daughter, May, an embroidery artist who travelled to Egypt and Morocco, and became one of her father's first curators.

Morris, along with John Ruskin and Augustus Pugin, was part of a 19th-century backlash against the industrial revolution's machine-age mass production. His life-long pursuit of a "beautiful house" entailed vegetal and floral designs, often with fauna, in which "nature was tamed into well-ordered patterns for the home," Bain writes in the accompanying book *Tulips & Peacocks*. As the architect Shahed Saleem notes in the book, an "English aesthetic fantasy" idealized the Islamic world for its premodern



Jacket from Iran (1800-60).

links between artist, craft and nature.

It was a time when Oriental artifacts were in demand, often in immersive, designed interiors (Leighton House in London's Holland Park being a rare survivor today, and one Morris is assumed to have visited). Photographs of Kelmscott House, Morris's Thameside home in Hammersmith, west London, show a 17th-century Safavid red-ground "Vase" carpet from Kerman in Iran rising up the dining room wall and ceiling like a canopy. "Eastern rugs were not made to

be trod on with hobnailed boots," Morris told puzzled visitors, while May described the carpeted "Eastern Wall", with its twin metalwork peacocks, as having "more than a touch of the Thousand and One Nights".

The c1870 Iranian peacocks in brass and turquoise are in the show, along with Morris's 17th-century Iranian lampstand with cheetahs and gazelles, and a 19th-century Iranian Qajar steel casket with gilt decoration. His "Flower Garden" (1879), suggesting the "beauties of inlaid metal".

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## Picture of the Day



Heyran Pass on the road connecting Astara and Ardabil, northwest Iran.

Photo by Mehr News