

## Saving Iran’s Carpet Legacy From Commercial Hollowing



TEHRAN – Touraj Joleh, a scholar and expert in Iranian carpets, sounds an alarm over a quiet but profound crisis: the unraveling of the cultural identity embedded in one of Iran’s most cherished art forms.

Once a symbol not merely of exquisite craftsmanship but of a deep and storied cultural heritage, the Iranian carpet now finds itself ensnared in a troubling paradox. The threat isn’t solely from foreign imitators—India and Pakistan have long woven carpets bearing Iranian designs—but from a far more insidious source: within Iran itself.

Tracing the migration of carpet designs back to the Safavid era, Joleh notes that Iranian artisans historically carried their craft across borders, planting the seeds of Persian patterns in distant lands.

This diffusion, while complex, was part of an organic cultural exchange. Today, however, the dynamic has shifted. Carpets sold under the storied names of Tabriz, Isfahan, or Naein are increasingly fabricated far from their places of origin. Sometimes woven on Tehran’s periphery, these works often retain only the label, not the lineage or authentic spirit.

The market, Joleh explains, has grown increasingly detached from the historical and artistic realities of these carpets. Buyers yearn not just for beauty but authenticity—a connection to place and tradition. Yet that connection is eroding.

Without clear standards or oversight, the industry risks transforming into a hollow commercial enterprise, where names are borrowed and identities forged, but genuine heritage is lost.

Joleh calls for urgent intervention: institutional oversight to protect authenticity, and a cultural commitment to educate consumers.

More than ever, the media must assume its role in safeguarding and celebrating this intricate art form, offering more than cursory nods during festivals or national days. The preservation of Iranian carpets is not merely about economics; it is about cultural memory, pride, and continuity.

As Joleh poignantly reflects, the question looms: what legacy will today’s carpets leave for future generations? Without decisive action, the intricate patterns may endure, but the identity that gives them meaning may vanish.

## ‘Cold Palette’ Explores Silence in Contemporary Iranian Art

TEHRAN -- From August 1 to August 7, Tehran’s Kevin Art Gallery will host Cold Palette, a group exhibition curated by Sadeqh Farhadian and Erfan Nahali, offering a nuanced meditation on the evocative power of cool tones in Iranian contemporary painting.

This carefully assembled show gathers a diverse selection of artists whose work channels the muted, introspective emotional landscapes often conjured by blues, greens, grays, and other chilled hues. These colors, Farhadian and Nahali suggest, carry a quiet resonance—evoking silence, contemplation, and a subdued affect that stands in contrast to the often vibrant palette of Iranian art.

Cold Palette brings together works by Bahar Arbabi, Maryam Asadi, Parisa Rahmani, Tarahom Salmani, Mani Gholami, Sadeqh Farhadian himself, Arzoo Ma’re-

favi, Fafa Mohammadi, Alireza Mirzarezaei, Mahsa Najafi, Kimia Nourian, and Erfan Nahali.

The exhibition’s ambition is to present an interdisciplinary, multi-style engagement with cool colors, revealing how these tonal choices intersect with varied approaches to subject matter, technique, and style.

Under the stewardship of gallery director Kevin Aliar, the show unfolds as an invitation to reconsider the often overlooked emotional and aesthetic potential of cooler palettes in visual art today. Open to the public, Cold Palette offers both a quiet respite and a fresh perspective within Tehran’s vibrant art scene.

Visitors can experience the exhibition from 4 to 8 p.m. on Fridays, and from 3 to 7 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, at Kevin Art Gallery, located at No. 24, Sināi Alley, Pasian Street, Zafaraniyeh.

# Tehran’s Theatres Shine Bright in Busy Summer Season

TEHRAN -- Tehran’s theatrical pulse is strong, with the latest numbers from the city’s premier stages—Theatre City, Honar Hall, and Sanglaj Playhouse—showing an impressive turnout of over 14,000 audience members by the end of July 2025.

At Theatre City’s Main Hall, Ali Shams’ powerful production Bar Zamin Mizanesh (Knocked to the Ground) has captured the attention of more than 5,200 theatre lovers across 18 performances, grossing nearly 1.9 billion rials. Its intimate setting and thought-provoking themes continue to draw full houses.

The more experimental Chaharsou Hall saw Hussein Asadi’s Kohteh deliver 9 shows to a packed house of 742, while Qashqai Hall juggled two contrasting works: Dariush Ra’yat’s Pelakani be Sooye Behesht (Stair-



way to Heaven), which pulled in over 1,100 viewers, and Khosrow Khorshidi’s Dastan-e Baghvahsh (The Story of the Zoo), offering a more intimate experience with 429 attendees.

Meanwhile, Sayeh Hall welcomed fresh energy with Macbeth Nihilism and Cafe Mac Adam, both running brief but impactful 3-show runs, proving there’s appetite for new voices in Tehran’s theatre ecosystem.

Theatre City’s workshop space featured Barf Zamin Ra Garm Mikonad (Snow Warms the Earth), a modest but resonant piece that connected with 300 dedicated viewers over 16 nights.

Honar Hall’s Jadoo-ye Rooz-e Tavalod (Birthday Magic) enchanted audiences with 39 performances, pulling in over 5,400 patrons, while Sanglaj Playhouse’s Rooz-e Vaghieh (The Incident Day) staged 17 shows to a loyal crowd of 371.

## Badarak Ceremony Draws Thousands to UNESCO-Listed Qara Kelisa



TEHRAN -- The 71st iteration of the Badarak (Holy Communion) ceremony unfolded with profound reverence

and unity at the ancient Qara Kelisa (St. Thaddeus Monastery) in Chalderan, West Azerbaijan Province.

The sacred gathering, held from August 1 to 3, drew over 4,000 Armenian pilgrims from Iran and around the world, including Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, and Canada.

Qara Kelisa, inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, stands as a paramount monument of Christian heritage, believed to be the oldest surviving church in the world.

Erected atop the tomb of St. Thaddeus—one of the apostles of Jesus Christ and a martyr—the historic monastery embodies centuries of faith, culture, and resilience. The monastery’s spiritual significance resonates deeply with Armenians, who regard it as a beacon of faith and a symbol of their enduring connection to the land.

Archbishop Grigor Chiftchian, the Armenian Catholicos of Azerbaijan, described the Badarak ceremony as “a golden chain shining brightly in the world of Christianity.” He highlighted the vital role of Iranian authorities, especially the Governor of West Azerbaijan and the Chalderan District Governor, in safeguarding this heritage site and facilitating the three-day spiritual event.

The Badarak ceremony is a profound ritual commemorating the Last Supper of Christ, connecting the faithful with their apostolic roots. Pilgrims participate in sacred prayers, light candles, and perform ritual sacrifices as acts of devotion and thanksgiving. Families often bring their children for baptism in this historic sanctuary, believing in its blessings and spiritual protection.

## Najafi Translation Prize Honors Global Literary Voices

TEHRAN -- The City Book Cultural Center will once again honor the art of literary translation with the ninth annual Abolhassan Najafi Translation Award in February.

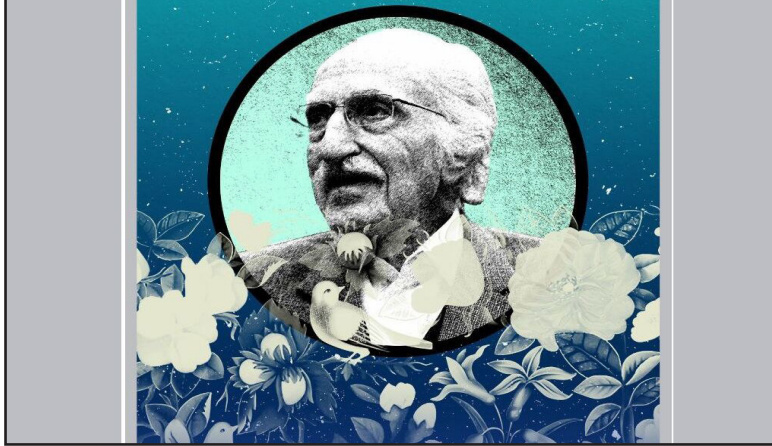
Established to commemorate the legacy of Abolhassan Najafi—one of Iran’s most revered translators and linguists—the prize celebrates the finest Persian translations of novels and short story collections published during the Iranian calendar year 1403 (March 2024–March 2025).

The award is more than a mere accolade; it is a testament to the vital role translators play in enriching Persian literature, forging bridges between cultures, and expanding the horizons of Iranian readers.

Translators and publishers interested in participating are invited to submit two copies of their works by the end of September.

A distinguished jury, led by Ali-Asghar Muhammadkhani and comprising literary figures such as Mahasti Bahraini, Zia Movahed, Hussein Masoumi-Hamadani, Abdollah Kowsari, Mousa Asvar, Omid Tabibzadeh, Abtin Golkar, and Farzaneh Dousti, will review the submissions with meticulous care.

Past winners of this prestigious award have translated an impressive range of voices—from Ivan Turgenev’s A Nest of Nobles and Joseph Roth’s Radetzky March to Guzel Yakhina’s Zuleikha Opens Her Eyes and J.M. Coetzee’s Master of Petersburg. These works reveal the depth and diversity of literary ex-



pression made accessible to Persian readers, reaffirming the power of translation as an act of cultural dialogue.

As the award approaches its ninth iteration, it stands as a quiet but profound cele-

bration of the often-invisible work behind the pages, honoring those who breathe new life into global stories and, in doing so, elevate the Persian language and its literary tradition.

## Cinema Photographers’ Festival Calls for Entries

TEHRAN -- The call for entries for the Ninth Iranian Cinema Photographers’ Festival and Competition has been officially announced, inviting cine-photographers across the nation to submit their most compelling works.

Organized by the Iranian Cinema Photographers’ Guild, this annual event honors the vital role of film photography—a visual testament and undeniable document of cinema’s unfolding narrative.

The competition seeks to elevate the technical, artistic, and experiential knowledge of participating photographers, while fostering critical dialogue around the significance of film stills within both cinematic and journalistic realms.

Eligibility is reserved for guild members and photographers authorized to work on cinema or

home-video productions, whose submissions must derive from feature films or series released between March 21, 2023, and March 19, 2025.

Entrants are required to submit sets of images: five on-set stills and three behind-the-scenes shots, presented as a cohesive body per project. There is no limit on the number of sets a photographer may enter, though the order and prioritization of images remain the creator’s discretion.

Technical specifications are precise—full-frame JPEGs at a minimum resolution of six megapixels and 300 dpi, with a width no less than 20 centimeters. Minor editing is permitted, so long as the integrity of the original image remains intact; composites and collages are strictly prohibited.

Submissions must include detailed project information—brief synopsis, year of production, producer, director, lead actors, cinematographer, production designer, costume designer, and makeup artist. Responsibility for legal and ethical compliance lies solely with the submitter. Should multiple photographers work on one project, the producer must designate a single official photographer.

The festival culminates with a coveted statuette awarded to the best photographic collection. Accepted works may be used by the organizers for exhibitions, promotional materials, publications, and catalogs, with full credit to the photographer maintained.

The submission window opens August 2 and closes September 1, 2025, with no extensions.

## Picture of the Day



Lake Urmia is on the brink of completely drying up, with a controversial highway that cuts across its former bed now standing as a stark reminder of its vanishing waters. Photo by IRNA