

Iran keen on boosting cultural ties with Russia

IRNA – The head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) of Iran said that the country is willing to widen cultural and scientific cooperation with Russia at the international and regional levels. Mohammad-Mehdi Imanipour, who is now in Moscow, made the remarks during his meeting with the head of Russia's Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States Affairs, Evgeny Primakov, IRNA reported. Imanipour expressed hope that the exchange of cultural delegations between Iran and Russia would prepare the grounds for implementation of mutual agreements.

He added that the Iranian government underlines the importance of development of ties with neighbors, adding that relations with Russia are fortunately at a high level.

Iran's Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali and Iran's Cultural Attaché in Russia Massoud Ahmadvand were also present at the meeting where the ambassador elaborated on bilateral cooperation and called on Iranian students studying in Russia to act as a bridge to promote Tehran-Moscow ties.

Over 300 filmmakers to attend Iran's resistance festival

Forty countries and more than 300 foreign filmmakers are set to take part in the 17th edition of Resistance International Film Festival (RIFF) in Iran, organizers said.

The 17th edition of the biennial festival of RIFF will take place on March 3-8 in the southern city of Bandar Abbas, IRNA wrote.

The upcoming edition of the event will be held on a warship in the Persian Gulf.

Jalal Ghafari, the director of the 17th edition of the event, said "We suggested to hold the festival in an important location such as on the deck of Shahid Soleimani warship to deliver an important message to the world".

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Evolution of miniature painting in Iran



EXCLUSIVE

Miniature painting is a unique and intricate form of art that has been practiced in Iran for centuries. In the modern era, this art form has seen resurgence in popularity, as artists continue to explore its potential for creating stunning, detailed works of art. In this article, we will take a closer look at the tradition of miniature painting in Iran and how it has evolved in recent times.

Although its origins can be difficult to trace, many consider 'Arzhang,' the illustrated book of prophet Mani (founder of Manichaeism and himself an artist) from the third century CE, during the Sassanid Empire, as the foundation of Persian schools of painting.

However, in the 13th century, when the Mongols invaded Persia, it led to a blending of Mongol and Persian artistic styles. These

influences can be seen in the intricate patterns, calligraphy, and stylized forms that are characteristic of Iranian miniature painting. Over the centuries, the art form has been used to depict a wide range of subjects, from historical events and religious scenes to portraits, landscapes, and animals.

Aside from the capitals in each period, certain regions and cities also witnessed and welcomed the appearance of different schools of painting, some of the best-known of them being Tabriz, Shiraz, and Herat.

Although each school had its own characteristics which would make it distinct from the others, such as the choice of color palette or the proportions of human figures, they all shared some similar stylistic characteristics such as the depiction of faces from the three-quarter view, absence of perspectival depth, and the use of various angles in picturing the elements within a single painting.

In the modern era, Iranian artists have continued to explore the potential of miniature painting

as a form of contemporary art. While some artists remain faithful to traditional techniques and styles of miniature painting, others have experimented with new materials and techniques to create works that are more abstract or conceptual in nature. Some have even combined miniature painting with other forms of art, such as sculpture, installation, or digital media, to create truly unique works of art.

Furthermore, Persian miniature paintings have experienced various influences from the Chinese and, later in the 18th and 19th centuries, from European paintings. Nevertheless, it has always managed to keep its Persian identity and essence.

One of the best-known Persian miniature artists of all time is Kamaledin Behzad (c. 1450-1535). As an orphan, he was trained by the skilled miniature painter, Mirak Naqqash, but soon developed his own unique style which would mark an apogee in Persian painting. Under the skilled and delicate brush of Behzad, Persian painting found life and movement, lost much of its

stiffness and formality, and was injected with a degree of realism and drama. Behzad shifted the subject of the paintings towards everyday life and created almost genre-like paintings in which figures moved freely. Having the patronage of four different rulers from the late 15th century into the early 16th century, in the Safavid era, he not only directed the royal libraries and ateliers, but also had a great number of students and followers who imitated his style.

Another artist who has made significant contributions to the modern Iranian miniature painting scene is Hossein Behzad (1894-1968), who has been instrumental in reviving interest in traditional techniques and styles. Behzad has been a pioneer in the use of natural pigments and has created works that showcase the beauty and subtlety of traditional miniature painting. His works often depict scenes from Persian mythology, Islamic history, and the natural world, and he is known for his meticulous attention to detail and his mastery of calligraphy.

In recent years, Iranian miniature painting has gained recognition on the international art scene, with exhibitions and collections showcasing the works of Iranian artists. This recognition has helped raise awareness of the rich history and cultural heritage of Iranian art, and has provided a platform for Iranian artists to showcase their works on the global stage.

In conclusion, miniature painting has a rich history and tradition in Iran, and in recent years it has experienced a revival in popularity among contemporary artists.

As such, Iranian miniature painting is a testament to the enduring power and adaptability of art, and a reminder of the importance of preserving cultural traditions for future generations. Persian miniature paintings have maintained their charm and appeal and with their many unique characteristics, these paintings have been a source of inspiration for not only contemporary Persian artists, but also Western artists including Henri Matisse (1869-1954).

Rare pre-Islamic artefacts discovered in southern Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's Heritage Commission has announced the discovery of pre-Islamic artefacts at Al-Ukhlood archaeological site in the southern region of Najran — one of the country's oldest inhabited regions, on the border with Yemen.

The find includes three ancient rings, which are equal in size and feature butterfly-shaped motifs on top. Archaeologists also dug up a bronze bull's head, which was cherished as a symbol of strength and fertility among the pre-Islamic kingdoms of southern Arabia, such as the Sabeans, Ma'inids and Qatabanids, thenationalnews.com reported.

There are several inscriptions, including a large granite stone detailing the life of a resident named Wahb Ail bin Maaqen, who is described as watering the gardens of his house and a nearby palace. At 48cm high and 2.3 meters long, it is the largest inscription of its kind found in the region.

The Heritage Commission team also unearthed several pottery jars of various sizes and shapes, alongside a rare sample of Attic pottery dating back to the third century BC.

Working with international experts, a group of Saudi archaeologists examined the findings, which have helped

to demystify the chronological development of Al-Ukhlood over the past 2,000 years. It has also clarified Najran's role in the transmission of culture and civilisation going back to the pre-Christian era.

Dating back 4,000 years, Najran historically served as a caravan stop for travelers passing through the southern Arabian Peninsula. Al-Ukhlood, which is mentioned in the Quran, is believed to be the oldest part of the city. As an oasis, it was a vital pit stop on the frankincense and myrrh routes, and was briefly held by the Roman prefect of Egypt Gallus around 25 BC, during his

unsuccessful campaign to conquer Yemen.

Recent efforts are focused on the north-eastern part of the site, between a fort and a mosque — where archaeologists have been closely studying the site's residential architecture.

From the foundations, which still remain, it appears that the residents laid out their homes along a central corridor, with small and medium-sized rooms running alongside. Some houses also include stores, filled with metalware, pottery with wavy edges, stone incense burners and inscriptions on the walls.

