

Museums are valuable treasures left by our ancestors



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EXCLUSIVE



National Museum of Iran
Iranationalmuseum.ir

International Museum Day is day of global celebration that takes place annually on May 18. The purpose of this day is to expand scientific and cultural cooperation and convergence among museums around the world.

Museums are places that exhibit part of a country's cultural and historical heritage, which has been passed down from generation to generation. One who enters a museum can imagine the past for a few moments and get acquainted with the evolution process of human societies.

Museums are highly attractive for a large number of art and history lovers across the globe; they are among the most frequented tourist destinations, thus the greater the number of

museums in a city, the longer the stay of travelers.

The word 'museum' has classical origins. In its Greek form, *mouseion*, it means 'seat of the Muses'.

A museum is a building in which a collection of interesting and valuable artifacts or scientific, historical and natural objects left over from the past are kept, studied, and exhibited.

Museums, which are essential in fostering social cohesion, serve as a link between the past and present. They are the accessible treasures that help enhance our awareness about the massive efforts taken by human beings throughout history to survive, overcome nature and meet human needs. It goes without saying that their attempts have



Carpet Museum
irangard.com

been very instrumental in the evolution of human civilizations. Moreover, museums play a significant role in strengthening the national, religious and historical roots of a nation. Educating the young generation about what have happened in their homeland across the ages is a prerequisite for the long-term survival of



Museum of Contemporary Art
wikipedia.org

the cultural and historical heritages of a nation. Known as an instrumental platform for cultural dissemination, museums carry multiple functions including collection, protection, research and education. Thanks to the rapid changes being brought by technology, the concept of a museum has changed in many ways

today; they are no longer merely small structures displaying historical and cultural objects. Some believe that museums should enhance one's engagement with communities to address social issues. They claim that museums have the ability to inspire and connect people from all walks of life.

Museums have significant economic functions as well. Today, a large number of people travel to various destinations to visit museums, thus a comprehensive plan should be devised for museums so that they could compete with other tourist attractions. According to some historical evidence, the first official and royal museum of Iran was established by Nassereddin Shah Qajar (1831-1896 CE) in a hall at Golestan

Palace, located between Shams-ol-Emareh (Edifice of the Sun) and the northeastern part of the garden.

Over 700 museums are presently operating across Iran. However, considering Iran's rich culture and ancient civilization, this is not a significant number.

Known as the "City of Museums," Tehran is home to many famous museums including the National Museum of Iran, the Carpet Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Jewelry Museum, and the Glassware and Ceramic Museum.

The National Museum of Iran was established in 1916 and exhibits more than 300,000 historical relics, including a large number of treasures left from the ancient Persian Empire.

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689 CE), a dealer in precious stones and luxury goods and an emissary of the French king, is one of many Europeans who described the robes worn in seventeenth-century Isfahan in great detail: "The king was clad in a silk streaked with gold: His cloak was a gold-ground with flowers of silk and silver. His Girdle was very rich..."

This extravagant taste was not the preserve of the Safavid rulers alone, but was shared with their courtiers and with the urban elite. The French explorer Jean Chardin, who visited Persia in the 1670s, noted the great pleasure he took in watching the crowds of people in public places all decked out in their finery of gold, splendour and bright colours. He also remarked on the large proportion of their income that the better-heeled members of urban society spent on their clothes. The enthusiasm of travelers for Persian robes, for their

Sleeveless overgarment of silk brocade with floral pattern

forms, colours, motifs and materials was also expressed in their wish to don similar clothes themselves. At the Safavid court it was customary for the ruler to distribute honorary robes to those attending official events. As a high-ranking European emissary, Tavernier also received such a robe. Perhaps this is precisely the one he is wearing in the portrait painted by Nicolas de Largilliere.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries it was customary to wear several layers of garments over one another.

A long robe was worn over ankle-length trousers and a shirt and over this another short-sleeved or sleeveless overgarment like a kind of waistcoat. These articles of clothing were

made of different materials and exhibited a variety of patterns, colours and textures, resulting in attractive contrasts. The uppermost and hence most visible garments were particularly sumptuously and elaborately worked, while the inner garments were made of plain cotton. Headgear, shoes and accessories completed the wardrobe.

Whereas this system of several layers of clothing was retained until the late eighteenth century, other aspects of it changed with the tastes of the time. Until the mid-seventeenth century, flowing forms were fashionable, but these gave way in the later years of that century to more tightly fitting and tailored cuts.

In the sixteenth century, the upper garment was held to-

gether with a belt, while a sash was used for the same purpose in the seventeenth century. In addition, two different types of overgarment developed, which Chardin describes as a short, tightly fitting, sleeveless jacket, reminiscent of a waistcoat and a long-sleeved jacket. Trimming and collars made of marten, sable or fox fur or sheepskin remained popular in the seventeenth century. Men's and women's clothing was similar in terms of both cuts and motifs and apart from the headgear - turbans and caps for men, veils for women - was virtually interchangeable.

Complete garments have been pre served mainly from the seventeenth century and in the collections of European rulers, who received them as gifts.

In comparison with carpets and other textiles, relatively few articles of clothing have been preserved in their entirety. There are probably several reasons for this. First of all, because clothes were made of such precious materials and so elaborately designed, they were worn for a long time and therefore suffered a lot of wear and tear.

In some cases, they were re-tailored and continued to be used. Secondly, some articles of clothing were burned in order to extract the precious gold and silver threads.

Finally, the siege of Isfahan in 1722 and not least the introduction of European fashions and the consequent disinterest in traditional clothing in court circles should be mentioned as additional reasons.



Sleeveless overgarment, silk brocade, 18th century

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled "The Safavid Era - A Sense of Place", from a book entitled 'Five Millennia of Art And Culture', edited by Ute Franke, Ina Sarikhani Sandmann and Stefan Weber, published by Museum of Islamic Art. The photo was taken from the book.