

# Minister: Iran has long-term plan to repatriate ancient artifacts



## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, revealed a long-term plan to repatriate ancient artifacts to the country, emphasizing their commitment to the plan. According to ILNA, Zarghami addressed the issue of

returning other ancient artifacts, such as the Sasanian bas-relief, to Iran. "We have a long-term plan in this regard, and it is not a mere project; it's a process," stated the minister. Zarghami lamented that many valuable Iranian artifacts are currently located in other countries due to various historical reasons.

He pointed out that during the pre-Islamic Republic era, particularly in the Pahlavi era, these countries claimed to have legally acquired and documented these artifacts after taking them out of Iran. When asked whether ancient artifacts could be legally removed from the country, Zarghami re-

plied, "Yes, they claim that these items were acquired through a contractual agreement, and they possess documents. However, we can pursue those cases which we can prove were smuggled, such as the Sasanian soldier's relief, which was a smuggling case that occurred in the 1980s, and we could re-

patriate it." The minister stressed that while some actions may have been deemed legal during the pre-revolution era, they do not recognize the legality of the transactions and commercial activities by individuals and dealers, and they are actively taking legal measures to reclaim these artifacts.

## 'Still Streaming' exhibition underway

The 'Still Streaming' exhibition, a retrospective of the reflection of the Ashura movement in contemporary visual arts, opened at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art on July 19, coinciding with the beginning of the lunar month of Muharram.

The exhibition is featuring 80 artworks by 35 artists, including pieces from the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art's collection and artworks from the art community. Art enthusiasts can visit the exhibition until September 13.

'Still Streaming' is a research-oriented event that presents this collection for observation and examination, free from any prejudice, to provide a platform for reinterpretation and contemplation.

## Iran's Qorbani to stage concerts globally

After a series of successful concerts, titled 'Sing with Me,' in Tehran and other cities across Iran, Alireza Qorbani, the renowned Iranian vocalist, is set to embark on an international tour to Canada, Australia, and Europe in November of this year, Mehr News Agency reported.

In a note regarding his upcoming concerts, Qorbani stated: "It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve our dear compatriots in Canada following the concert tour in Iran."

The concerts in Canada are scheduled to take place in the first two weeks of November 2023. The Vancouver concert will be held at the Orpheum Theatre on November 5, and the Toronto concert will take place at the Meridian Hall on November 11, delighting audiences with Ghorbani's mesmerizing vocals.

Ticket sales for these concerts will begin on July 23, through the designated websites.

Further details about other concerts on this tour in Canada, Australia, and Europe will be announced soon.

## 17th Tehran Auction grosses over \$4m

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Tehran Auction, the renowned platform for Modern and Contemporary Iranian art, held its 17th auction at the Azadi Hotel in Tehran on July 21. This prestigious event featured an impressive collection of artworks that attracted art enthusiasts and collectors from around the world.

The auction proved to be a remarkable success, achieving a total sale of 4,224,200, further establishing itself as a vital contributor to the country's thriving art market. The economic art event once again fulfilled its mission

of bringing prosperity to Iran's art industry, showcasing the immense talent and creativity of Iranian artists to a global audience. According to IRNA, the three-day event, dedicated to "Modern and Contemporary Art," took place from July 28 to July 30 at the Parsian Azadi Hotel.

On July 28 and 29, a captivating exhibition of artworks from renowned artists, including Aydin Aghdashloo, Houshang Pezeshknia, Monir Farmanfarman, Farideh Lashai, Sohrab Sepehri, Mohammad Ehsaei, Nasrollah Afjei, Hossein Zenderoudi, Sirak Melkonian,

and many others, delighted the art enthusiasts in attendance.

A total of 110 pieces, comprising 97 paintings, 9 sculptures, and 4 photographs, were presented by a diverse group of 100 artists, including 79 male and 21 female creators. The selection represented a rich tapestry of styles, techniques, and artistic visions, reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of Iran's contemporary art scene.

Notably, the top record-breaking sale of this auction belonged to Sohrab Sepehri's 'Untitled' piece, which sold for an astonishing 21 billion and 300 mil-

lion Iranian rials (\$426,000), setting a new benchmark for Iranian art auctions. Another 'untitled' piece by Sepehri went under the hammer and was sold \$248,000.

Among the notable sales was an artwork titled 'Untitled,' a pastel and mixed media on cardboard by Hossein Pezeshknia, making it the oldest piece to be auctioned during this edition.

Additionally, two 'Untitled' works by the late Sohrab Sepehri fetched a combined total of 33 billion Iranian rials, while another 'Untitled' piece by Koorosh Shishegaran achieved an impressive

17 billion rials (\$340,000).

Another masterpiece, a calligraphy painting titled 'Andam' by Hossein Zenderoudi, reached the impressive price of 13 billion rials (\$224,000).

The auction was skillfully conducted by Hossein Pakdel, who kept the excitement alive with his auctioneering expertise. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as enthusiastic bidders competed for the most coveted works in this impressive art collection. The 16th auction in Tehran sold \$2.44 million with 120 works.

The success of the 17th Tehran Auction not only



solidifies its position as a premier platform for promoting Iranian art but also serves as a testament to the enduring appeal of Modern and Contemporary Iranian art on the global stage. With its unwavering com-

mitment to fostering the country's artistic legacy, Tehran Auction continues to support and elevate Iranian artists, contributing to their recognition and success in the international art community.

## Swedish works banned in Iranian festivals over Qur'an burning



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The head of the Cinema Organization of Iran (COI) announced in response to the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden that, henceforth, Swedish film productions will not be accepted in various Iranian festivals.

Mohammad Khazaei pointed out that Islamophobia and offensive behaviors towards the beliefs of Muslims are suspicious actions by some Western communities, Mehr news agency reported.

He added that certain communities in the West are al-

ways attempting to conceal their colonial attitudes behind the mask of "freedom of expression" by belittling, undermining, and provoking antagonism towards the values of other religions, especially Islam.

He emphasized that the ugly phenomenon of Islamophobia and Western hostility towards Islam has once again surfaced, regretfully noting that instead of engaging in dialogue for better understanding and sharing religious commonalities, the West has always resorted to destructive, threatening, isolating, antagonizing actions, and

promoting religious hatred. This flawed approach has led to the unfortunate reaction of honorable and freedom-seeking Muslims worldwide.

The head of COI also highlighted "the presence of global Zionism's manipulative hands in such incidents, stating that such actions and behavior cannot be assessed as isolated acts of global Zionism but should be considered as part of the premeditated puzzle designed by Zionists to incite religious wars."

Khazaei denounced Sweden's hostile and illogical approach, which disregards

diplomacy and international law. He stated that while condemning such behaviors, the COI will abstain from accepting products from Sweden in various Iranian festivals until the Swedish government changes its approach.

He stressed that this decision is the quickest response to demonstrate solidarity with the global community against such desecrations. Our priority is undoubtedly focused on producing cultural works and elucidating the rational aspects of religion, taking into account the rich Islamic heritage and the teachings

of the Prophet's Household (Ahl al-Bayt) to engage in discussions and dialogues with religions, even with those who show disrespect. This response will be conveyed through the production of content in all realms of cinema, including feature films, shorts, documentaries, and animations.

Khazaei concluded that the desecration of the Holy Qur'an is not a mere political event, but rather an insult to every Muslim worldwide. It is imperative that the artistic and cinematic community of Iran and the world react strongly against such an act.