

Iran's Art Museum: A marvelous display of art and architecture



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Iran's Art Museum is a true marvel, housed within the breathtaking and historically significant Marmar Palace, located at the intersection of Valiasr and Imam Khomeini streets, in the heart of Tehran. This exquisite mansion, adorned with shiny green marble stones, intricate floral and animal motifs, commands attention and awe. Nestled within a splendid garden spanning three and a half hectares, the Art Museum stands as a testament to creativity, culture, and craftsmanship.

The green marbles at the entrance invite you to the story of the last hundred years of this historic building. From hall to hall, under the amazing dome of the museum, you will be amazed by the peak of architectural beauty, the splendor of muqarnas, the tilework, and the intricately patterned lattices. Iran's Art

Museum narrates the story of Iranian art, IRNA wrote. With a striking foundation spanning 2,870 square meters, this architectural gem underwent meticulous construction starting in 1925, spanning over a decade.

The external façade of the building is adorned with exquisite stone carvings reminiscent of the artistic brilliance of the Achaemenid era. Within the architectural design of the mansion, one can observe

the fusion of various styles, including the distinctive Iranian influence. Spearheading the architectural vision is Iranian-Armenian architect Leon Tadosian, accompanied by the accomplished architect Haji Akbar Kachar and talented draftsman Boris. Together, they bring their expertise to create a masterpiece. Various decorations from Iranian art such as tilework, stonemasonry, mirrorwork, and seal engraving can be seen in this building.

The monument was registered on Iran's National Heritage List in 1978.

With multiple halls on two floors, the museum displays a selection of Iranian art history from different eras. On the ground floor, three halls are dedicated to Iranian works from prehistoric times to the early Islamic era, such as engraved pottery, tools, and vessels.

In another hall, selections of outstanding Iranian and Islamic artworks in various fields are visible. To enter

the upper floor, one will pass through a corridor that is full of eye-catching and stunning decorations. In the upper floor, there are halls with displays of Iranian paintings and calligraphy, weaving art and bookbinding.

The grand entrance hall or palace showcases a unique collection of interior decorations. The walls, up to one meter high, are made of yellow and orange marble, while the ceiling is adorned with stucco and painted

with a light green tone. The marble staircase features prominent stone carving, inspired by the art of the Achaemenid and Sassanid eras, adorned with floral motifs of branches and leaves.

Above the palace stands a magnificent dome, inspired by the iconic dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan. This awe-inspiring structure is adorned with exquisite and intricate decorations, including beautifully crafted stuc-

co, vibrant seven-colored glazed tiles, and mesmerizing patterns that tell stories of their own.

The walls of the palace are beautifully adorned with paintings by the talented German artist Hermann Albert. These exquisite artworks showcase mesmerizing themes of railway lines and bustling ports, likely related to the Versek Bridge's railway station in Mazandaran Province and Kharg Island in southern Iran. Additionally, there is a captivating painting featuring the majestic architectural wonders of Persepolis and Apadana Palace in Fars Province.

In addition, on the western and eastern walls, two sculptures accompanied by the intricate carving of Hassan Taherzadeh Behzad are seen at a height of six meters. In the corner of the hallway, gypsum muqarnas with beautiful botanical patterns create an enchanting display.



Excavations at Tappeh Ghabristan and evolution of cultural periods

From 4200 BCE there is an increasing scale of political and economic organisation with greater cultural complexity with specialization of ceramic and metal artefacts. The craft goods indicate a higher degree of differentiation between settlements, which is a reflection of greater local exchange and higher economic integration. During excavations at Tappeh Ghabristan in Qazvin Plain in 1970s and 2002 several trenches were investigated, yielding three cultural periods of Early, Middle and Late Chalcolithic. Occupation at Tappeh Ghabristan, located in north-western Iran, spans 4,200 to 3,000 BCE. As at Zagheh much of the settlement is today buried under several metres of modern alluvium, and recent test trenching has established its extent as about two hectares. Convincing evidence for an early coppersmith's workshop was excavated in level II at Tappeh Ghabristan, which

can be chronologically linked, via ceramic similarities, with Sialk III 4-5 and Hesar. The copper workshop comprises a suite of two rooms, their doorway later blocked, situated amongst a complex of potters' workshops and other buildings. The larger of the two rooms has a range of features indicating copper ore processing, including two small hearths, complete and fragmented crucibles, baked bricks for supporting the crucibles over the hearths, moulds for the production of copper objects including bar ingots, a ceramic pipe used for bloomery, a large bowl containing 20 kg of copper ore in small pieces, and water storage facilities. In the 2002 excavations at Tappeh Ghabristan pieces of copper ore (raw material) were recovered in the southern part of the site, suggesting that metal workshop activity was not restricted to the central area of the site. In addition to the evi-

dence for a copper workshop, in the 1970s a range of copper objects, including daggers, axes, chisels, awls, needles, pins, and bracelets, was recovered from level III at Tappeh Ghabristan, and their similarity to artefacts from contemporary levels at Sialk and Hesar is striking. It has been suggested

that the Tappeh Ghabristan evidence can more probably be interpreted as remains of melting and casting in moulds of native copper rather than smelting of copper ore, but this reinterpretation does not account for the large quantities of copper ore found at the site, both in the 1970s and in more

recent excavations. In addition to this exceptionally vivid evidence for craft specialization in copper smelting and casting from early fourth-millennium Tappeh Ghabristan, it is clear that the production of pottery was also undertaken in an intensive and highly organised manner by the community living at the site. Indeed, given the site's relatively small area extent, and the major evidence for pottery and copper processing and production, it could be argued that the site constitutes a workers' settlement, largely devoted to specialist craft activity, although further excavations are needed to clarify this point. A so-called 'Main Building' in level II has been posited as a residence for the ruler of the settlement or a communal structure for public gatherings. During later occupation at Tappeh Ghabristan, in level IV dated to the late fourth mil-

lennium BCE, sherds of about 50 bevelled-rim bowls were found.

The possible means by which these vessels reached, or were made at, Tappeh Ghabristan are numerous, but they undeniably connect the site, however tenuously, with the world of Late Uruk Mesopotamia. In some way the interest of the lowlanders in access to nearby copper sources or rather to means of exchange with long-established local communities who controlled copper extraction, smelting, and casting may well be materialized in the form of the recovered bevelled-rim bowls. Occupation at Tappeh Ghabristan is dramatically brought to an end at around 3,000 BCE with evidence for extensive burning, including a burnt human skeleton on a floor, clay sling shots, and complete but broken pottery in situ, suggesting a violent and sudden end to settlement at the site.



Tappeh Ghabristan

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled, 'Chalcolithic Archaeology of the Qazvin Plain', from a book entitled, 'Persian Antiques Splendor', edited by T. Stollner, R. Slotta, and A. Vatandoust, published by German Mining Museum.