

Iran, Kazakhstan agree on joint museum exhibitions

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran and Kazakhstan agreed to host joint exhibitions and establish a shared digital database for cultural exchange. The agreements were reached during a meeting between Jebrael Nokandeh, Director of the National Museum of Iran, and his Kazakh counterpart, Berik Abdygaliuly, in Tehran on April 10. The two nations plan to organize an exhibition of Iranian artifacts in Astana in 2025 and a showcase of Kazakh treasures in Tehran in 2026, IRNA reported. Nokandeh highlighted the shared cultural heritage of the two nations and referred to the memorandum of understanding between their museums. He expressed Iran's readiness to expand cultural cooperation and inter-museum ties. Among his proposals was the organization of joint exhibitions and the creation of a shared dig-

ital database to facilitate the exchange of cultural data and artifacts, the report said. Abdygaliuly also emphasized the importance of implementing the terms of the memorandum and pointed out that the shared heritage between Iran and Kazakhstan—spanning various historical periods, including the Scythian, Islamic, and particularly the Timurid era—provided strong foundations for further collaboration. He proposed hosting an exhibition of Iran's National Museum artifacts in Kazakhstan in the current year and an exhibition of Kazakhstan's National Museum collections in Iran in 2026. "Cultural diplomacy thrives through such collaborations," Nokandeh said, emphasizing the potential of museums to bridge civilizations. Abdygaliuly noted that these initiatives would underscore the rich heritage

connecting Iran and Kazakhstan. In a separate development, Iran's Deputy Minister for Handicrafts and Traditional Arts, Maryam Jalali, met with Kazakh Ambassador Ontalap Onalbayev to discuss economic and artistic partnerships. Jalali proposed a consortium to explore mutual heritage and promote handicrafts, suggesting that Iranian artisans could incorporate Kazakh cultural symbols into their works. Plans also include a sister-city agreement between Shahr-e Kord and Taraz to enhance felt production collaboration. Jalali highlighted the role of women in preserving cultural heritage and proposed empowering nomadic women through handicraft projects. Additionally, a statue of Omar Khayyam by Iranian woodcarvers is planned for installation in Taraz, symbolizing the cultural collaboration between the two nations.



● IRNA

Imagination meets technique in photography



By Saeideh Ehsani Rad
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Photography combines imagination and technique. Recently, Abolqasem Khoshro gained recognition in the photography community by being named one of the top 10 conceptual minimalist photographers in the 2024 35AWARDS. He competed against over 10,000 photographers from 131 countries and more than 42,000 submissions, with one of his works featured among the top 350 photos. The 35AWARDS is an international competition established in 2015, aiming to showcase the best works annually across 10 categories. Since 2017, it highlights influential photographers based on their three best works. Winners receive certificates, cash prizes, and publication in an annual album, offering international exposure and networking opportunities. Khoshro discussed his achievement and artistic endeavors in an interview with Iran Daily reporter. The full text of the interview follows.

IRAN DAILY: How did your interest in painting and entering the field of photography develop?

KHOSHRO: From a young age, I was drawn to painting and traditional coffeehouse murals. I continued painting throughout high school and later pursued mathematics in college, followed by mechanical engineering. I also took architecture courses and eventually

and transitioned from analog. My last analog photography period coincided with the liberation of Khorramshahr, where I worked with the late Golestan, Mohammad Farnood, and Deqati. From Golestan, I learned the importance of capturing moments without hesitation.

Do you edit your digital photos?

In documentary photography, editing is not allowed. However, in conceptual minimalism, editing is entirely permissible, and any alterations are noted for the judges. Using others' photos is not permitted.

Is your style in photography minimalist?

In addition to architectural and street photography, I also work in minimalism. In this competition, I focused on conceptual minimalism.

How did you develop this minimalist mindset with a philosophical perspective?

In minimalism, you retain only what's essential and discard the rest. This applies to lifestyle as well—eliminating unnecessary ceremonies and decorations. You can easily feel a sense of calm in minimalist spaces, akin to meditation. When it becomes conceptual, despite its simplicity, it conveys a concept, giving you the freedom to use your own photos in combinations. Of course, these details must be explained in the photo descriptions.

Did you reach this perspective in photography because of the good instructors you had in painting?

In artistic work, imagination is the initial step, whether in painting or photography. For photographers, this involves capturing, editing, and printing the image effectively. However, sanctions limit access to modern software and technology, and printing is complicated by the need for costly imported materials like high-quality paper and chemicals. Despite efforts by places like Aria Laboratory, these challenges persist. I personally manage the entire process from idea creation to editing and printing.

How has your photography approach changed from the Revolution and Iran-Iraq War to now?

I applied visual arts principles to pho-

tography, adhering to composition and aesthetic guidelines. Although I had limited experience, it was sufficient for documentary work, and I often took risks. My documentary style has remained consistent but has become more refined. Meanwhile, I've discovered new opportunities in minimalist and conceptual photography, which is a fresh direction for me.

Have your photos from the Revolution and the war been conceptually acclaimed?

I am preparing photos from the Revolution and war for release, and I plan to hold an exhibition this September. The exhibition will include fine art works with limited editions, pending the availability of materials like paper and chemicals.

My approach to photography and painting is innovative, often bold in design and composition while respecting certain rules. Simplification requires courage, and once achieved, it's about societal interpretation. My work has been well-received in specialized gatherings.

Historically, horses symbolize power, beauty, intelligence, and loyalty. Inspired by a horse named "Shamshir," I worked on a project involving horses. I consulted with Babak Mohammadi and chose a Selle Français named "Legend" and its offspring at a farm owned by my friend, Mr. Vosough, who used to manage the Iran newspaper. One black-and-white photo features a horse waiting for its master, with a shadow on the wall, capturing the agony of waiting. The play of shadows and light is depicted simply yet powerfully.

A color photo shows a white horse looking out a window, symbolizing a meaningful view of life. The crack on the wall adds depth to the story, and this photo has been well-received internationally.

Another photo explores the relationship between humans and technology, sparking curiosity and viewed extensively on photography sites. In a contest with 42,000 submissions from 131 countries, my work was among the top 10, and I was recognized as one of the top 10 minimalist conceptual photographers worldwide. The black-and-white photo was among the top 350 globally in 2024. Extensive research was conducted for this project.

How many photos did you submit to the competition?

I took three photos, all of which were among the best. I am very strict in my selections and discard many works that do not meet my standards. These photos will be published in a highly valued book and will also be exhibited in art centers around the world.

How would you evaluate the state of digital photography in Iran?

In Iran, most photographers rely on digital techniques due to the unavailability or high cost of analog methods. Sanctions prevent access to advanced software, and weak internet infrastructure hinders bypassing filters, leading to technical limitations. Universities lack structured programs for teaching digital photography, and vocational groups fail to provide adequate training due to poor foundational education. A systematic approach, such as training 50 individuals and deploying two per province to train others annually, is absent. Consequently, the digital education system in Iran is disorganized and ineffective, with quality productions often stemming from individual efforts.

What did you learn from Mr. Golestan and your painting instructors in terms of personality as an artist?

Golestan taught me how to capture moments. He'd take the first photo without using the viewfinder, relying on a wide-angle lens to frame the shot quickly. He'd move from the periphery to the center, dominating the subject. Equipped with a motor drive, he could take up to five photos per second, ensuring he never missed the decisive moment.

How did you draw inspiration from your painting instructors?

My last painting instructor, Katouzian, was strict and precise in design, with a sharp and powerful gaze that made students immediately understand their mistakes during corrections. His construction and color techniques were conveyed with a powerful yet sweet pen. I completed a gouache course and learned watercolor techniques under his guidance. Reflecting on my works from that time, I feel the strength he instilled in us, though we may not have fully appreciated it by not continuing. I wish him health and longevity.