



Iran's female director Sadegh Asadi to judge at int'l animation festival in France

Arts & Culture Desk

Shiva Sadegh Asadi, an Iranian animator and director, has been appointed as a judge for the official competition of short films at the 49th edition of the Annecy International Animation Festival, set to take place from June 8 to 14, in France. Sadegh Asadi will be part of an illustrious panel, which includes Academy Award-win-

ning filmmaker Andrew Ruhemann from the UK and renowned American animator, writer, and director Chris Sanders, a two-time Academy Award nominee, IRNA reported. Together, they will evaluate and select the best animated short films from this year's official competition. Sadegh Asadi's body of work, known for its profound exploration of human emotions and

inner worlds, has garnered attention at some of the most prestigious film and animation festivals worldwide. She has previously directed animated shorts such as 'Kitten,' 'Grandfather,' and 'Crab' for the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA). Also, her upcoming project, 'The Patternless Garment,' is currently in production under the same

institute's banner. Sadegh Asadi's other notable works include 'Yal o Koopal,' 'Spot,' and 'Aquatic,' which have been featured and awarded at international festivals such as Annecy, Animafest Zagreb, Hiroshima in Japan, and the DOK Leipzig in Germany. An accomplished painter as well as an animator, Sadegh Asadi holds a Master's degree in Animation Directing from



the University of Art in Tehran. Her creative focus spans themes of dreams, dark fan-

tasies, femininity, and family dynamics, both in her artwork and her films.

Iran grapples with aging population as growth rate slips to 0.6%



Social Desk

Iran's population is aging at an accelerating pace, with its growth rate slipping to just 0.6%, according to

Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi, Secretary of the National Population Headquarters. Speaking at a joint session with the Ministry of Education on Monday, Dastjerdi warned that the country is "moving rapidly toward population decline and aging," IRNA reported. Dastjerdi emphasized that the education system plays a central role in shaping future generations and has a key part to play in advancing the nation's pro-natalist policies. "Fortunately, strong steps have already been taken within the Ministry of Education in line with the Youthful Population Law," she said.

Iran currently has a youthful demographic under its wing—more than 24 million boys and girls between the ages of 1 and 20 are enrolled across kindergartens and high schools nationwide. "This is a golden window for nurturing growth and development," Dastjerdi noted. She stressed that if educators help get the message across about the importance of family and population policies, the long-term impact could be substantial. Dastjerdi stressed the urgency of the demographic challenge. "While the global population is still rising, two-thirds of the world now live in

countries with fertility rates below replacement level," she said. In Iran, approximately 10.4% of the population is over the age of 60, and demographic projections show a steady downward trend. With fertility and birth rates falling, concerns are mounting over the socio-economic strains an aging society might bring. To counteract the declining birth rate, Dastjerdi pointed to several key strategies under consideration, including expanding childcare facilities, offering longer parental leave, and introducing more flexible work arrangements for women. "Support-

ive policies must catch up with the challenges at hand," she said. Education Minister Alireza Kazemi, also present at the meeting, stressed the importance of future-oriented planning. "Alongside cultural and promotional efforts, we must remove the roadblocks to childbearing and support young families with real incentives," he said. Among the proposed measures are marriage facilitation programs and financial incentives for childbearing—initiatives that officials hope will turn the tide before the country's demographic clock runs out.

Legacy of Ghobad Shiva

Artist who gave voice to Iranian graphic design

By Saeideh Ehsani Rad
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Ghobad Shiva, born on January 24, 1941, in Hamedan, Iran, is widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Iranian graphic design. With a career spanning decades, Shiva is celebrated not just for his artistic excellence but for championing a uniquely Iranian voice in the global design landscape. Known as the first to truly introduce "Iranian Graphic Design" to the world, his legacy continues to resonate in the work of his students and admirers.

A childhood rooted in art

Shiva's artistic inclinations emerged early. His father was a lover of poetry and mysticism and a skilled tar player. His older brother worked at the American hospital

in Hamedan and would bring home Christmas cards from his American colleagues. These cards, with their illustrations and festive designs, sparked young Ghobad's fascination with visual art. By high school, he was already creating paper crafts and drawing designs inspired by those cards—one of which impressed his teacher and marked the beginning of his journey in visual communication. He graduated with a degree in painting from the University of Tehran in 1966, studying under renowned artists such as Ali Mohammad Heydarian, Mahmoud Javadipour, Hooshang Seyhoun, and Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam. Later, he pursued a master's degree in graphic design at Pratt Institute in New York, which he completed in 1980. There, he studied with leading figures in design such as Milton Glaser, Herb Lubalin, and Ivan Chermayeff, sharpening his skills and broadening his perspective.

Defining Iranian graphic design

When Shiva began his professional career, the prevailing influences in Iranian graphic design were largely foreign—especially Polish. However, Shiva envisioned a uniquely Iranian graphic language. His groundbreaking use of Persian calligraphy—particularly Nasta'liq and Shekasteh scripts—in modern graphic compositions began with the poster for the Fifth Shiraz Arts Festival. The design drew immediate international attention and was even included in museum collections across the US and Europe. Despite facing resistance at home

from some within the art community, Shiva remained committed to this vision. His exhibitions abroad, especially in the US, played a significant role in introducing Iranian graphic aesthetics to the world. During one show at Pratt Institute, he enhanced the viewer's understanding by displaying slides from the book 'Persia, Bridge of Turquoise' by Roloff Beny, linking his posters to architectural and cultural motifs from Iran. The exhibition gained so much traction that NASA representatives visited and recorded his voice to include in a capsule of Earth's cultural artifacts, intended for extraterrestrial listeners.

Innovation, teaching

Upon returning to Iran, Shiva became a professor at IRIB University, where he mentored generations of designers. He also established some of the most influential design studios in the country. His graphic design atelier, associated with Tamassha magazine and later Soroush publishing, was one of the largest and most respected studios in Iran, rivaled only by Franklin Publishing. Shiva was a founding member of the Iranian Graphic Designers Society and designed its logo—a hand poised in mid-creation—a lasting emblem of the profession. Alongside his colleagues like Morteza Momayez and Aydin Aghdashloo, Shiva helped usher in the modern era of Iranian graphic design, transforming everything from book covers to movie posters. His works bridged traditional Persian visual culture with contemporary design principles, creating a new, localized aesthetic that was both

globally relevant and deeply rooted in heritage.

A living archive

During a recent Nowruz visit in spring 2025, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, paid tribute to Shiva, who now battles Alzheimer's and lives away from the public eye. The visit was a moment of reflection on his contributions and the importance of preserving his legacy. Niknam Hosseini-Pour, head of the ministry's public relations department, recalled earlier meetings with Shiva, including one during the COVID-19 pandemic when they arranged for the transfer of Shiva's works, tools, and personal design desk to Iran's National Library and Archives. These artifacts are now preserved as part of Iran's cultural heritage, although only a fraction has been publicly exhibited. Many believe a dedicated national graphic design museum is long overdue.

Teacher's legacy

As a teacher, Shiva was generous with his knowledge. According to his wife, he never kept his insights to himself. He trained countless students—many of whom are now leaders in the field. Shiva's intellectual and emotional investment in his students is perhaps his most lasting legacy. Though he lost his only son, Farshid, in recent years, the minister referred to his artworks and students as his "spiritual children," carrying his legacy forward both in Iran and abroad.

Designer's philosophy

Shiva's colleague, graphic designer



Ebrahim Haghighi, emphasized that Shiva belonged to a generation of artists who approached each project with deep care and thought. In an era when the design process was more time-consuming and labor-intensive, Shiva would spend days sketching, testing ideas, and fine-tuning every element—never rushing a piece until it was fully realized. One of his most iconic posters was for a theater production by Ali Rafiei about Amir Kabir, photographed by Bahman Jalali. It's now considered a masterpiece in Iranian graphic history. His work, Haghighi noted, transcended tools. Whether created with pencil, brush, or computer, the essence of Shiva's designs lay in the thought and creativity behind them. A good student, he said, learns from the mind of the artist, not just the medium.

Artistic language, national identity

Designer Hossein Norouzi described Shiva's approach as deeply nationalistic but also academically informed. Shiva fused elements of classical Persian

art—miniature painting, reliefs, and ceramics—with contemporary Western design techniques. His posters often reflect the intricate compositions and color palettes of traditional Persian art, reinterpreted through his unique visual language. He was especially known for his masterful integration of Persian script into modern design—transforming letters into expressive, fluid forms. Norouzi emphasized that Shiva's work is not merely a reassembly of old motifs, but an original synthesis of cultural memory and modernity. His art invites viewers to a visual poetry steeped in Iranian identity yet rendered through global design principles.

A legend etched in design

From the bustling streets of Tehran to the halls of Western museums, Ghobad Shiva's influence is undeniable. In 2007, the Encyclopedia Britannica featured him as a leading graphic designer from Asia, highlighting his poster celebrating Sa'adi. The Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI) has recognized him as one of the top 12 graphic designers in the world.

