



# Iranian director Mokri wins Busan festival's Vision Asia Award

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian filmmaker Shahram Mokri clinched the Vision Asia Award at the Busan International Film Festival for his surreal drama 'Black Rabbit, White Rabbit,' marking the movie's international debut. The prize, carrying a cash grant of \$7,300 funded by India's National Film Development Corporation, was handed out at the festival's closing night. Jurors praised the work for its "visual creativity" and distinctive narrative that

blends mystery with a fractured sense of reality.

Co-written by Mokri and screenwriter Nasim Ahmadpour, the feature follows a woman who, after a car accident, discovers her surroundings have been altered in unsettling ways. The film was shot in Tajikistan with a cast drawn from both Iran and the Central Asian republic, including Babak Karimi and Hasti Mohammadi.

Produced by Negar Eskandarfard, the picture will head next to Britain for its European premiere at the BFI London Film Festival in early October, extending its festival circuit only weeks after debuting in Busan, which ran from Sept 17 to 26.

Mokri, known for experimental narratives in Iranian cinema, said the recognition underlined how stories from the region could "resonate widely" when framed with fresh techniques. He has previously screened at Venice and other European festivals.

The Busan event, regarded as Asia's most influential film showcase, draws filmmakers and distributors scouting new titles across the continent.



## Archaeologists uncover Parthian-Sassanid settlement in Iran's NE



ics with underglaze incisions, turquoise-glazed fragments, and painted pottery.

These artifacts confirm the site's significance as a major settlement during the Parthian and Sassanid periods. The presence of these materials also suggests that the site may have been a center for pottery production and trade.

The Imam Morshed site is situated in the Atrak River valley, an area historically known for its strategic importance and cultural exchanges. The settlement's extensive size and the diversity of artifacts uncovered underscore its role as a significant urban center in the region's ancient history. Given the site's continuous use over several centuries, it offers valuable insights into the socio-economic and cultural developments of the region. Plans are underway to establish part of the site as an open-air museum, aiming to promote public awareness and appreciation of Iran's rich archaeological heritage.

Morshed, spans approximately 50 hectares and comprises numerous mounds and archaeological layers.

Surface surveys revealed a high concentration of pottery fragments, indicating extensive human activity. Subsequent excavations identified the earliest habitation layers dating back to the Parthian period, with continuous occupation extending into the Seljuk era.

Notable finds include kiln-fired pottery characteristic of the Parthian era, such as glazed ceram-

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A significant archaeological site, believed to be the largest Parthian-Sassanid settlement in north-eastern Iran, was uncovered near the town of Faruj in North Khorasan Province.

The discovery was made during archaeological surveys for the Imam Morshed site, led by Iranian archaeologist Meysam Labbaf-Khaniki and a team from the University of Turin, ISNA reported.

The site, known locally as Imam

## Iranian artisans bag top prizes at Uzbekistan handicrafts festival

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Iranian artisans Zahra Aslani and Karim Shirdareh Haghighi took home top awards at the third Kokand International Crafts Festival and the second International Festival of Handicrafts in the Uzbek ceramics hub of Rishtan.

Aslani, a potter from the north-western Iranian city of Ardabil, was named the festival's "most skilled woman ceramist", while Haghighi, a tile painter from Fars Province in southern Iran, secured second place among the world's leading craftsmen, IRNA reported.

Both were recognized at the biennial gathering that ran from September 18 to 20 and drew delegates from more than 70 countries.

The Rishtan festival, regarded as one of the world's foremost handicrafts events, is staged alongside the World Potters' Congress in the centuries-old Uzbek town known for its ceramics. This year's edition brought together over 250 international participants and some 400 local artisans, according to the organizers.

Aslani, attending the festival for the second time on an official invitation from Uzbekistan's Ministry of Culture, received a \$1,500



award. Haghighi was handed a \$1,000 prize for his painted tile work. Both artists described their recognition as a chance to showcase Iran's "authentic traditions" on the global stage.

Recent projects have ranged from registering lands around Persepolis, the Achaemenid capital, to restoring the ancient Gorgan Wall and staging folk festivals in the Caspian province of Golestan.

Majid Salimi, head of handicrafts in Fars Province, said the success of Iranian artists in Uzbekistan "demonstrates their potential" and could open more doors for traditional crafts. "This platform gives us the chance to present our heritage to a wider audience," he said.

## Persian miniature art on display in Russia

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Iran's Center for Visual Arts opened a week-long program September 26 in St. Petersburg and Moscow, bringing master miniaturist Hossein Esmati to Russia for a series of workshops, exhibitions and talks on the country's centuries-old tradition of manuscript painting. The project, dubbed 'Iranian Miniature Week', is organized jointly by Tehran's Ibn Sina Foundation, National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and Moscow's Tikhon's Orthodox University of the Humanities in Moscow, Mehr New Agency reported. The events run from Sep-

tember 26 to 29 in St. Petersburg and continue in the Russian capital from October 1 to 3.

At the heart of the program is Hossein Esmati, a leading contemporary painter in the delicate craft of miniature art. His original works are being displayed alongside interactive masterclasses designed to give Russian audiences an insight into the "secrets and subtleties" of a discipline rooted in Persian manuscripts and courtly traditions.

Beyond the studio sessions, the program features scholarly lectures on the history and cultural standing of Iranian miniature, together with screenings of art documentaries.

Organizers say the aim is to provide both an edu-



cational platform and an encounter with what one academic called "a living heritage."

The National Library of Russia, one of Europe's largest, is hosting three days of exhibitions and classes on September 26,

28 and 29.

The Moscow leg will follow at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Moscow's Tikhon's Orthodox University of the Humanities from October 1 to 3.

## World Tourism Day ...

With its unparalleled diversity of climates, rich cultural heritage, unique natural attractions, and a tradition of warm hospitality, Iran offers vast potential for tourism development. The cultural expressions of our diverse ethnic groups, ancient traditions, local and national festivals, and vibrant artistic events provide valuable opportunities to present the depth of Iranian identity while reinforcing social solidarity. Strengthening domestic tourism around these cultural resources not only stimulates economic growth but also nurtures social vitality, hope, and national cohesion. In line with these principles, the ministry is

pursuing its programs through three key priorities:

- Advancing green and sustainable tourism – protecting natural resources and safeguarding our national heritage.  
- Expanding smart tourism -using new technologies to enhance travel experiences and improve efficiency.  
-Empowering local communities – leveraging festivals and cultural events to enable meaningful participation in both domestic and international tourism development.  
The realization of these goals calls for synergy and cooperation among all actors—government bodies, the private sector, civil society organizations, academic

institutions, and, above all, active citizen engagement. By joining hands, we can shape a bright future for tourism in Iran: A future in which this ancient land once again stands as an inspiring destination for the world, and as a symbol of peace, friendship, sustainability, and transformation.

On the occasion of World Tourism Day, I extend my sincere appreciation to all those working tirelessly in this field. I invite every stakeholder to contribute, with shared determination, to advancing "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation," and to play their part in building a greener, more dynamic, and more hopeful tomorrow for our nation.