



Quiet master of Iran's silver screen Nasser Taghvai dies at 84

Arts & Culture Desk

Nasser Taghvai, the celebrated Iranian filmmaker, writer and photographer whose works chronicled the poetry and solitude of ordinary lives, died in Tehran on October 14. He was 84.

His death, confirmed by his wife, the actress Marzieh Vafamehr, followed years of declining health that had kept him away from film sets. "He loved plants—let us plant a tree in his memory," she wrote in a poignant note on Facebook. "He loved light—let us add our candle to his."

Born in 1941 in the oil city of Abadan, Taghvai belonged to the generation that defined Iranian cinema before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. A graduate of literature who turned to film almost by accident, he began as a short-story writer before discovering, as he later put it, "how the camera could think."

His early works 'Tranquility in the Presence of Others' (1969) and 'Sadegh the Kurd' (1972) challenged the complacent realism of Iranian cinema, bringing psychological nuance and narrative density rarely seen at the time. But it was his 1976 television serial 'My Uncle

Napoleon'—an adaptation of Iraj Pezeshkzad's satirical novel—that secured his place in Iran's cultural memory. Its tender absurdism and social irony remain embedded in the collective consciousness of several generations.

Filmmaker Rasul Sadr Ameli described Taghvai as a filmmaker whose anthropological insight set him apart, "The difference between Taghvai and others was the deep human understanding he had of his society."

His 'Captain Khorshid' (1987), a transposition of Hemingway's 'To Have and Have Not' to the Persian Gulf, became a classic—winning the Bronze Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival. Its disciplined realism and layered ethics made the film a portrait of resilience and honor.

Taghvai followed with 'O Iran' (1990), a political allegory of loyalty and resistance, and 'Unruled Paper' (2002), an intimate study of middle-class isolation that critics now see as ahead of its time. "He made three noble and honest films after the Revolution," Sadr Ameli said.

In his later years, Taghvai withdrew from public life, writing essays and taking photographs of southern Iran's landscapes—his lifelong

muse. "He began with authority and ended with grace," Sadr Ameli recalled. "But when he needed companionship most, he was left alone." Despite his silence, his influence deepened. To younger generations of directors, he represented integrity itself—a man who refused to rush films, or compromise his craft for fashion or favor.

Tributes poured in from across Iran's cultural spectrum.

The Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, called him "a lasting figure in the history of Iranian cinema," saying Taghvai "saw cinema not as entertainment but as the language of thought itself."

From the Head of the Cinema Organization, Raed Faridzadeh, "He was an architect of narrative and meaning, a man who built his worlds between light and silence."

The Managing Director of the Farsi Cinema Foundation, Hamed Jafari, praised him as "a visionary auteur who redefined the soul of Iranian storytelling."

The House of Cinema called him "the compass of decency in an era of noise," while the Museum of Cinema described him as "a genius whose lens turned poetry into permanence."

The Iranian Youth Cinema Society and the Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) both mourned "a teacher who turned detail into destiny."

A flood of emotion also surged through Iran's artistic community. Actors Parviz Parastui, Reza Kianian, Shahram Mokri, Shabnam Moghaddami, and Hamed Behdad were among dozens who took to social media to share their shock and grief.

Behdad, in a haunting reflection posted the morning after Taghvai's death, wrote, "Last night I thought about the death of Nasser Taghvai. I don't know why. I wondered what it would be like when his spirit left his body."

"...Today, I woke to the news that he is gone—on the same date that Dariussh Mehrjui was killed last year. Are we all connected? He was our captain. The sea remembers him." Taghvai's passing, one year after the murder of Mehrjui, has been widely seen as the end of an era—the last of Iran's early modernist filmmakers.

He is survived by his wife, Marzieh Vafamehr, and a generation of artists who learned from his restraint. As one critic wrote, "He filmed the invisible, and taught us to see."



Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art to establish permanent exhibition hall

TMoCA ranks among world's top 10 modern art collections



By Sadeq Dehqan
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INTERVIEW

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA) is set to establish a permanent exhibition hall dedicated to displaying some of its most celebrated and valuable works, the museum's director announced, calling the initiative a milestone in the institution's decades-long mission to make its treasures more accessible to the public. Speaking to Iran Daily, Reza Dabiri-Nejad, director of TMoCA, said the permanent display would allow visitors to engage more consistently with highlights from the museum's vast and acclaimed collection. He described the project as "a long-awaited step toward greater visibility for one of the richest and most prestigious modern art collections in the

Middle East."

"The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, thanks to the depth and diversity of its holdings, is ranked among the ten most important modern art collections in the world," Dabiri-Nejad said. "It was one of the pioneers of modernist art in West Asia — long before the concept of a modern art museum had gained traction in much of the region."

Founded in 1977, TMoCA is widely regarded as the crown jewel of Iran's cultural institutions and a cornerstone of its artistic heritage. The museum houses thousands of works by both Iranian and international masters, and its striking architecture — blending modernist design with traditional Persian elements — has made it a landmark in central Tehran. Over the decades, it has served as both a showcase of

Iran's artistic modernity and a bridge to global art movements.

The museum chief said approximately 4,000 works — including paintings, sculptures, photographs, and prints — are currently preserved in the museum's storage facilities.

"Roughly one-third of the collection consists of international works, with the remainder created by Iranian artists," he said. "Since the museum is fundamentally collection-based, most of these works are safeguarded in the vaults and are brought out periodically for curated, thematic exhibitions."

He explained that temporary and seasonal exhibitions are typically mounted every two to three months under different curatorial titles and artistic concepts. However, he added, the forthcoming permanent exhibition space will ensure that a core selection of the museum's most iconic and acclaimed works will always be available to the public. "Visitors will no longer have to wait for a special occasion to see the treasures that define this museum," he noted.

The museum's new plan also aligns with efforts to expand and enrich its collection, a process that

has continued steadily over the past several decades.

"We are determined to strengthen our collection both in volume and in depth," Dabiri-Nejad said. "We aim to assemble a more comprehensive body of work that reflects the evolution of modern and contemporary art — not only in Iran but across the world. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art should be able to tell a fuller story about global modernism and its intersections with Iranian creativity."

He further highlighted the museum's dual role as both a national institution and an internationally recognized cultural hub. "The museum's significance lies not only in its place within Iran's artistic landscape but also in its international standing."

He said "As a mother institution for modern art in Iran, TMoCA serves as a vital platform for cultural exchange, dialogue, and diplomacy. By engaging with its counterparts abroad, it can foster closer artistic cooperation and strengthen Iran's role in global cultural conversations."

According to Iran Daily, the gallery possesses one of the most extensive and valuable collections of

modern art outside Europe and North America. The museum's holdings encompass major movements such as Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and Photorealism, reflecting the breadth of artistic experimentation that shaped the twentieth century.

Many of the works in the collection are regarded as masterpieces of exceptional artistic and historical worth. Among them are significant pieces by Paul Gauguin, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Pablo Picasso, René Magritte, Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol, Sol LeWitt, and Alberto Giacometti. These works, long preserved within the museum's storerooms, are expected to feature prominently in the permanent exhibition once it is established.

For art historians, curators, and visitors alike, the move marks a turning point in TMoCA's engagement with the public. By offering a consistent display of its core collection, the museum not only reaffirms its role as a custodian of global modernism but also enhances its capacity to act as an active player in Iran's evolving landscape of cultural diplomacy.

Minister calls cultural diplomacy 'bridge between hearts' as Tehran, Beijing revive Silk Road legacy

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Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri said on October 14 that cultural diplomacy must serve as "a bridge between hearts" in deepening ties between Iran and China.

His message was read by Ebrahim Zarei, head of Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, at the opening ceremony of the Silk Gift exhibition in Tehran, IRNA reported.

The minister's remarks come as Tehran and Beijing increasingly lean on cultural engagement to complement their growing economic and political cooperation under a long-term strategic partnership. Analysts say Iran's emphasis on shared civilizational roots with China reflects an effort to project soft power and revive its historic role as a crossroads of the ancient Silk Road. Salehi-Amiri called cultural diplomacy "a strategic pillar" for national progress, describing Iran and China as "two great Asian civilizations" bound by centuries of trade and religious exchange. He pointed to ancient Zoroastrian and Manichaean traditions as formative links between the two, saying those cultural and spiritual interactions once "shaped and stabilized" political and commercial relations across Asia.

"Such a legacy should not be confined to history books," the minister wrote. "It must evolve into a living connection that binds the identities and aspirations of our peoples today."

He urged that current relations move beyond a transactional economic framework and embrace the shared cultural and civilizational heritage that "illuminates today's interactions." Salehi-Amiri underscored the need for rigorous academic research to better map the intertwined cultural roots of Iran and China. A clearer scientific understanding of this common heritage, he argued, could "offer a brighter image of our shared ancient identity in art and culture" and inspire a "renewed sense of civilizational belonging."

He also noted that historical exchanges of faith and craftsmanship—from religious missions to ceramic and metalwork trades along the Silk Road—remain visible in archaeological sites across the two nations. These remnants, he said, provide fertile ground for joint research between Iranian and Chinese universities and cultural institutes. The minister described heritage as "a civilizational gateway" for building broader relations and hailed the "Gifts of the Silk Road" exhibition, organized by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, as a practical example of purposeful cultural diplomacy.

He revealed that the ministry's next initiative will focus on the maritime heritage of Iran and China, exploring ancient seafaring technologies and artistic traditions. Salehi-Amiri expressed hope that sustained cultural collaboration would "pave the way for more Chinese visitors to the ancient land of Iran."