

Alireza Rastegar – Epic Iran opening dinner speech

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Iran Heritage Foundation and actually on behalf of all Iranians and all world citizens, I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Trustees, Director, and management of the V&A for having taken this giant stride to celebrate 5,000 years of Iran’s contributions in art and culture to world civilisation.

The IHF has a significant history of partnering with institutions such as the V&A to present and promote a better understanding of Iran’s heritage, art and culture to audiences in the UK and the United States. These include our two ground-breaking exhibitions, ‘Forgotten Empire, the World of Ancient Persia’ and ‘Shah Abbas, the Remaking of Iran’ at the British Museum, the first major showcasing of ‘Iranian Contemporary Art’ at the Barbican, the ‘Tour of the Cyrus Cylinder to, amongst others, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the Smithsonian in Washington DC and, of course, the Kiarostami exhibition at the V&A.

However, this epic exhibition at the V&A is remarkable in its scale and span, and takes us on a deep journey through 5,000 years of Iranian civilization and is the first exhibition of this scale in nearly a century.

For us at the IHF, it has been a huge honour to be partnering with an institution such as the V&A to realise this epic exhibition and to have played a small part in its realisation.

I want to thank, wholeheartedly, Tristram Hunt for his leadership of this project during extremely testing times. My deep respect and gratitude to our friend, former trustee and patron, Ali Sarikhani, for his foresight and generous support of this exhibition.

I must also recognize the contributions and efforts of our former CEO and current Academic Director, Dr John Curtis, for his vision, his scholarship, and extraordinary commitment in leading the IHF’s contributions to Epic Iran. This exhibition owes much to the hard work of John’s co-curators, Tim Stanley and Ina Sandmann, and I wish to acknowledge and thank them for their leadership of this endeavour.

May this exhibition herald a new beginning for a better understanding by the public of Iran’s contributions and enable further communication and dialogue to take place.”