Report

Iran Heritage Foundation
2008 in Review

Academic Grants
Publications
Conferences
Schools and Community
Shah Abbas Exhibition
Iran: 30 Years On
New Voices at the Barbican Centre
Iran Heritage Foundation is the leading supporter of Iranian studies in the UK. It promotes academic research through grants, scholarships and publications. In association with museums and leading institutions, the IHF organises exhibitions and convenes conferences on the history and contemporary culture of Iran.
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The summer of 2008 saw the opening of our joint activity with Asia House in London, 30 Years of Solidarity. This exhibition ran for three months and showed the works of various women photo/cinematographers based in Iran.

In the autumn of 2008 audiences were able to enjoy Iranian theatre in London. The season opened at the Barbican with great critical acclaim and included plays by Iran-based artists in sold-out performances. Throughout the year various other contemporary art shows were sponsored by the Foundation, the success of which has now warranted the creation of a permanent contemporary arts group at IHF.

During the year, the teaching of the Persian language took centre stage and our ongoing support for the Rustam School will hopefully be complemented by new Persian studies at other schools. As well, the Trustees reaffirmed their annual contribution to the Encyclopedia Iranica programme at Columbia University. Colloquium, Flowers of Persian Song and Poetry is another exciting initiative. This outstanding series was broadcast on Iran Radio from 1956 through to 1973 and now, thanks to a British Library grant, has been collected and digitized by the American scholar, Jane Lewisham, and will be made available online with comprehensive notes and research tools.

The year will also be remembered for IHF’s extraordinary support for the British Museum in its themed exhibitions on three great emperors. Shah `Abbas: the Re-Making of Iran, at the British Museum. In 2008 we also formed our Advisory Board, chaired by Lord Cowie. Grey Gowers, formerly Minister for the Arts and Chairman of Sotheby’s and the Arts Council, brings scholarship and experience to IHF. The team is complemented with Maryam Alaghband, Lady Teresa Clarke, Sir John Boyd and Lord Lamont. I join all our stakeholders in extending a warm welcome.

In accepting this interim position I hoped that, together, we would be able to make a difference. I am now able to report that a number of important milestones have been met and IHF moves forward with much stronger, with sound foundations for the future. The year under review was marked by a number of successful initiatives. These include the adoption of a new and modernized Constitution and the establishment of various committees concerned with governance and management. A Nominations Committee has been set up to vet senior appointments and a Finance Committee to prepare and monitor budgets on a rolling basis. The Academic Committee was strengthened by the addition of new members. Its remit may now be extended to the supervision of the IHF Fellowships at various academic institutions – currently Oxford, Cambridge and St Andrews universities, as well as SOAS. The remit for the Events Committee was also extended to new activities over and above the Norouz Gala. The Persian New Year function at Grosvenor House has exceeded best expectations year after year, which is entirely due to the remarkable effort of the volunteer ladies of the Norouz Committee.

The year under review was another successful year of growth in funding and programme support for Iran Heritage Foundation. A significant portion of our funds comprise of multi-year contributions by members of our Board of Trustees and a select number of corporations and institutions. We are grateful for the support received from Bank Julius Baer, Targetfollow Group, and Balli Group PLC. As always, our overhead costs were covered by donations from the Trustees, enabling us to apply all other incoming funds directly to programme support.

Our revenue in 2008 grew 26% compared to 2007. This significant achievement was primarily driven by a record-breaking Norouz Gala auction which pays for half of our commitment in 2009 and 2010 to our exhibition, Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran, at the British Museum.

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The reception for opening and private viewing of the Shah 'Abbas exhibition was attended by more than 400 invited guests in the magnificent, high vaulted room crammed with treasures, appropriately entitled the Enlightenment Gallery, next to the reading room where the exhibition is being staged. Flanked by huge marble statues of Apollo and Discophores, curator Dr Sheila Canby indeed enlightened the assembled crowd, explaining how the pieces for the exhibition were chosen and their importance in linking the past with the present.

Shah `Abbas: the Remaking of Iran is the result of a unique collaboration between the British Museum and the National Museum of Iran. Not only did the National Museum of Iran coordinate the loans from seven Iranian museums, but its curators and conservators also shared their expertise and knowledge of Safavid history and art. About one third of the loans to the exhibition come from Iranian museums and many have never before left Iran. 'The British Museum is privileged to be able to exhibit such treasures which exemplify one of the high points of Iranian cultural history,' said Dr Canby.

The guests were truly enthralled by the exhibition, a unique collection, sympathetically presented in low-level lighting for the protection of the valuable works, painstakingly selected and installed by the museum. Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum expressed appreciation for the involvement of the Iran Heritage Foundation in this milestone exhibition. 'It was during the Shah 'Abbas reign that Persia fully entered European consciousness, as trade, diplomacy and military expansion multiplied the contacts between Isfahan and the capital cities of Europe. Ever since, it has been of the greatest importance to Europeans to study and understand the history and culture of Iran. This exhibition will, we hope, contribute to that process.

My colleagues and I are grateful to the Iran Heritage Foundation and its Chairman Vahid Alaghband for its generous support of the exhibition, the latest in a long series of joint projects with the British Museum to present Iranian culture to the widest public in London. Dr Sheila Canby also paid tribute to the IHF’s support. ‘The major source of funding has come from the Iran Heritage Foundation, an organisation that has assiduously promoted the culture of Iran in the United Kingdom and beyond. The IHF’s desire to educate a broad public about Iranian culture has made the job of organising this exhibition easier and more pleasurable than it would have been otherwise.’

Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran highlights the accomplishments of the reign of Shah 'Abbas who ruled Persia until 1629, ushering in a golden age for arts and culture, and opening the country to European trade. He was one of the great rulers of his age and, during whose reign, Iranian power reached dazzling heights. His territories stretched from the Tigris in present-day Iraq, to the Indus in Pakistan and north into modern Georgia and Azerbaijan. Shah 'Abbas was a stabilising force. He is credited with unifying a culturally and politically splintered country by creating a new sense of nationhood.

‘He created a multi-faith society in touch with the rest of the world. That’s why, now, he is someone really worth thinking about,’ says Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum.

The exhibition graphically illustrates Shah 'Abbas’ prowess in trade: silks, spices and porcelain arrived at the Isfahan bazaar from China and India, traders came from England and Holland with gold and silver. Shah 'Abbas struck deals with the East India Company in the early 17th century and appointed an adventuring Englishman – Robert Sherley – as a sort of foreign secretary. By the late 16th Century, much of the world was aware of Shah 'Abbas’ influence on trade.

Shah Abbas revitalised the state religion of Shi'a Islam which is still practised today – and imposed Persians as a unifying language throughout the land. Isfahan was a multi-cultural and multi-faith city and remains so today. With its mosques and palaces, many built by Shah Abbas, it is
considered one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Objects in the exhibition, many of which have not been seen outside Iran – alongside loans from Europe and the US – include exquisite Qurans, mosque lamps, luxurious gold-ground carpets, beautiful Chinese porcelains, illuminated manuscripts, watercolour paintings, metalwork and gorgious silks, objects similar to those Shah Abbas gave to important religious sites across Iran.

The famous calligrapher Ali Riza Abbasi was a key figure throughout Shah Abbas' reign and examples of his work are a major feature of the exhibition. One of the most talented of all Iranian painters, Ali Riza Abbasi flourished at the court of Shah Abbas. Shah Abbas died in 1628 at the age of 70 in Mazanderan. His tomb is in Kashan, in the Shrine of Habib ibn-Musa. This city lay on the route from Isfahan to the former capital of Qazvin, and had a beautiful garden laid out there, the Bagh-e-Fin, which exists to this day. Sheila Canby, curator of the exhibition says, "Shah Abbas was restless, decisive, ruthless and gorgeous silks, objects similar to those Shah Abbas intended for a personal album, it testifies both to the piety is not always cloaked in fundamentalism."

Neville Hawcock, Financial Times

The World of Shah Abbas

A symposium covering the period of Shah Abbas, from various points of view. Thanks to recently discovered historical texts, international scholars reassess Shah Abbas' place in history, as well as considering the art of Iran in this period and its impact on the arts in Turkey and India. The economic, religious and legal aspects of his reign will also be discussed to provide a well-rounded view of his achievements and legacy.

The Sophy's Englishman: Robert Sherley and his Persian Odyssey

Independent scholar Edward Faridany retells the extraordinary tale of Robert Sherley, who arrived at the court of Shah Abbas in 1598 at the age of 18. Part loyal servant, part self-publicist, he stayed eight years, married a Circassian and began a lifetime's service as Shah Abbas' roving ambassador.

The Persian Garden: an image of Paradise

By the late 16th century, gardens had become centres for enjoyment and relaxation, expressions of a ruler's power and prestige, with little spiritual meaning. Garden historian Penelope Hobhouse uncovers how Shah Abbas and his successors used the grid system to create gardens of great beauty.

British Museum/The Guardian Public Forum

Jon Snow, writer and broadcaster will chair a high-profile panel for a broader discussion of contemporary issues relating to Iran, with an introductory talk by Neil MacGregor, Director of the British Museum.

Persepolis

Based on Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novel, and winner of the highly regarded Jury Prize at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. Persepolis tells the story of a young girl's coming of age, against the backdrop of the Iranian revolution.
In 2005 Vali Mahlouji returned to Iran to research the active Iranian contemporary art scene. Over two years he interviewed writers, directors, choreographers and artists and the directors of the Dramatic Arts Centre and the Tehran Museum Of Contemporary Art in depth. By focusing on contemporary Iranian art and the cultural scene, in effect he put together an ‘art map of Iran’.

“In 2008 I was Associate Producer and Curator for ‘Iran: New Voices’, a two-week season in collaboration with the Barbican Centre. I approached IHF and then the Barbican and both put their weight behind my project. This was the first project evolving out of an intense research and development process conducted over two years. The show was a composite presentation, which involved a season of live theatre performances and screenings in video art, panel discussions and a symposium on performance art in Iran involving both Barbican Theatre and Barbican Film.

The objectives behind the idea were two-fold. Firstly, the exposure for Iran, and addressing British and European publics to fill a gap in relation to contemporary Iranian reality. The Barbican show was important since it presented (for the first time) seasons of live performance and video art as new genres of expression from Iran. It was also important to collaborate and expand on the Barbican’s broader interests in Iran since its 2001 show on contemporary Iranian art. The season was to open the doors to these art forms and cement interest among British audiences and encourage the Barbican’s commitment to producing future, and hopefully regular seasons.

The second objective was an internal analysis. It was a type of experiment on a critical approach to general Iranian culture. The aim was to expose internal movements, conflicts and developments within modern and contemporary Iranian culture. I chose a conceptual approach working with artists from inside and outside Iran, across generations. It was an attempt to promote critical discourse, to examine perspectives across a spectrum and allow dialogue between Iranian artists that hasn’t really existed until now.

The theatre section comprised of three examples of experimental works and a symposium which brought together experts and practitioners in three areas:

1. Traditional forms (Ritual and Folklore): This looked at aspects of traditional performance forms as well as raising the debate about whether these can be modernised in a contemporary, international context.
2. The Modern movement of 1970s Iran and avant-garde innovations. This session looked at the flourishing of new Iranian theatre in the 70s and its place within the international experimental and avant-garde movements, as well as influences and modern uses and influences from traditional aesthetics.
3. Contemporary practice in Iran: This session discussed some aspects of the contemporary scene in Iran and its dialogue with audiences inside Iran and abroad.

As convener, what was important was to create contact and discourse between pre- and post-revolution Iran. New Voices was a wonderful opportunity for the Barbican to “update” its strong artistic relationship with Iran, to see and hear new drama, to explore new film and video art, and to debate the issues. The two drama companies we presented were in sharply contrasted styles, both were richly textured and inventive.

The opportunities to explore the links between politics, religion and society in an international artistic context were right at the core of our mission to increase mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue.
in an attempt to make sense of our heritage, innovations and future direction especially in more experimental genres. Participants came from different artistic and historical sensibilities and created a very passionate, entertaining and enthusiastic debate full of humour and wit in creating links between periods of modern and recent movements in performance and in assessing the culture of performance in Iran. The event was sold out a long time prior to the day itself. Experts had traveled from Europe and the US to be in the audience.

‘The public found the day informative and the panelists found the event challenging as well as a first necessary step in beginning to bridge gaps and examine the state of things from a fresh and unbiased viewpoint. British academic and intellectual input was highly valued and included within the structures of the day. This also successfully opened up the possibility that the debates were close to universal concerns and reached far beyond a local Iranian sphere.

‘The video art screenings were opened and closed by two important and famous artists: Shirin Neshat and Abbas Kiarostami. Eight other artists also presented works. About half live and work in Iran or partly in Iran while others mainly started their careers abroad. About half of the artists were present to debate their aesthetics and approach to work. It was the first time there was a possibility to debate and critique works in public. This sparked interesting debates about the nature of being global or local, exotic or authentic, all of which are healthy, although sometimes inconclusive. The events were almost entirely sold out which was unprecedented and unexpected as many of the names were still unknown to the UK public.

‘On the whole, apart from critical discourse, the events exposed the works of these individual artists to a UK audience – about 85 per cent of which comprised British viewers. It was important for me that the events break out of a ghetto and reach a wider general London audience and this was certainly achieved.’

Vali Mahlouji
Curator/Associate Producer, Iran: New Voices – Barbican Centre
25 Nov – 7 Dec 2008

The events were sponsored by Balli Group plc, Bank Julius Baer, British Council, Magic of Persia, Targetfollow and Visiting Arts

Theatre events
Quartet: A Journey North by the Mehr Theatre Company. Representing the modern movement of 1970s Iran. Writer and director Amir Reza Koohestani and film-maker Mahryn Sadin delivered political, documentary-style theatre. Based upon real-life cases from Iran, four witnesses are questioned about the murder of four people.

Dandelus & Varrus: A traditional treatment by the Mungo Theatre Company. This was the company’s UK debut, written and directed by Artistic Director Homayun Ghanizadeh, whose approach to theatre encompassed playful sets and a highly energetic, comic acting style.

Power of a Cliche: A monologue by Haleh Ansari examining contemporary practice in Iran. Using her personal experience of living in England and Iran, the writer and photographer’s monologue questions the cliche of being a woman, Iranian and from a western media perspective.

Symposium
Performance in Iranian culture: One-day symposium examining contemporary Iranian theatre through its indigenous forms and traditions, the impact of Europe and the upheaval of Islamic Revolution. Speakers included Professor Peter Chelkowski, Arby Ovanessian Susan Taslimi and Shohreh Aghdashloo.

Video and film events
Focus: Shirin Neshat. UK premieres from Iran’s leading artist Shirin Neshat who took the audience through her sketch book and discussed her new works and the intersection of art and cinema in her work. She presented three video works: Zarin, Faezeh and Munis from the series, Women without Men, and clips from her new feature film by the same name. Neshat’s The Last Word and Tooba – video installations examining Iranian identity and the power of art to challenge repression were also shown.

Abbas Kiarostami: A presentation of two of celebrated director Abbas Kiarostami’s most poetic works; the UK premiere of his documentary on the power of landscape, Roads of Kiarostami, 2006, and his classic tribute to Japanese director Yasujirō Ozu, Five, 2003.
I think the real spirit of contemporary art in Iran has been mostly determined by the traumatic events of the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, 1980-88. Art was a way to exorcise all the evils witnessed during the war and the Revolution. After World War II, there was a similar outburst of art, literature and philosophy in Europe. Such are the thoughts of curator Faryar Javaherian, who assembled this remarkable exhibition that brought together fascinating works by some of Iran’s most talented and extraordinary women artists. Through photography and film it focused on the feelings of anxiety, isolation and the sense of loss that Iranian society, and women artists in particular, have experienced in the last 30 years, living in Iran.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the exhibition is the sense of humour with which the artists tackle their problems, addressing major issues such as Islamic paternalism, loss of identity, isolation from the rest of the world, the Iranian Revolution and the devastating eight-year war.

The exhibition of photography is as varied in subject and style as it is in the number of artists involved: portraiture, sport, abstracts observation and human form, in both traditional and modern styles. The photography was supported by a lively programme of lectures, film screenings and panel discussions. As part of the exhibition, the film Old Man of Hara by Mahvash Sheikholeslami, 2001, was shown in the gallery.

‘Thirty years of solitude is a gathering of women artists, from Iran, mostly under the age of 30, who have lived, or are still living and working in Iran, and who have been in one way or another traumatized by the country’s history,’ explains Faryar Javaherian. ‘Some of the young ones express their anger at the reality of their lives. They are a new generation of film makers and photographers who have received university training in their fields and are truly professional. Here we have thirty artists who have come together, not to give us a better understanding of Iranian society or politics, but as single voices which have reached such a degree of perfection that we can feel their souls lifting from the films or the prints, crying out from 30 years of existential aloneness.

Maryam Alaghband, Chair of Events for The Foundation said, ‘Iranian women are the country’s best-kept secret and its most potent agent for change. This exhibition and film series provided a unique insight into their lives, challenges and success stories.’

Curator: Faryar Javaherian
Organised in association with Asia House and in collaboration with New Hall, Cambridge University
Sponsored by Bank Julius Baer, Targetfollow and Xerxes Fine Arts
Associated seminar: How can we be Iranian women, and artists?

This seminar was chaired by Venetia Porter curator of Middle Eastern Art at the British Museum. She studied Arabic and Islamic art at Oxford University and obtained her PhD on the medieval history and architecture of the Yemen from the University of Durham.

Subjects covered included: Gender and Exile in Post-Revolutionary Iranian Art, by Shiva Balaghi, New York University and University of Michigan; The Blooming of Iranian Women Artists by Goli Taraghi, Iranian novelist; How the destiny of Iran has influenced the work of women artists by Faryar Javaherian, architect, film-maker and curator of the exhibition.
This exhibition of photojournalist Kaveh Golestan’s black and white photography looked at the period from 1979 to the late 1990s, beginning with his iconic studies of Tehran’s dissidents. On the frontline of the Islamic Revolution, Golestan’s photographs not only capture the major political upheavals, but are also an insightful portrayal of a people and society in rapid transition. In April 2003, while on an assignment for the BBC, he stepped on a landmine and died in Kifri, northern Iraq, aged 52.

His work on display at the LSE presented powerful images of people in conflict. ‘His main point was people,’ says Golestan’s widow Hengameh. ‘Golestan’s work and life were a “cry for justice to his country and the world at large, and for him there was nothing more important than recording the truth of his country, with all its faults and glory.’

Organised in association with the Kaveh Golestan Foundation and the London School of Economics. Curator: Hengameh Golestan
Sponsored by: Bank Julius Baer, the London School of Economics, the Kaveh Golestan Foundation and Nicky Hoddle.

The Formulaic Nature of Appearances
Priska C Juschka Fine Art, New York, February 2009

Nicky Hoddle’s large-scale paintings use visual narrative to lead the viewer through a world full of strange and exotic creatures.

Cogito Ergo Sum
Xeres Fine Arts, London, January 2009

Hossein Khoosrojerdi’s work has been widely exhibited to critical acclaim. In 2001 he won the Grand Prize of the Sharjah Biennial.

Black & Red & White
Xeres Fine Arts, London, January 2009

Mehdi Saeed draws upon his own expertise with Arabic and Iranian scripts (above) to establish a personal approach to the aesthetics of calligraphy in contemporary art.

A Night in Tehran
Bristol, London, Manchester, February 2009

Three New Documentaries by young Iranian filmmakers
My City Pizza by Ala Mohseni, Of Men and Motorcycles by Shahriar Siarsi and Behind the Wheel by Sahar Salahshoori.

Who’s Afraid of Vis and Ramin, and why?
Professor Dick Davis
SOAS, London, November 2008

Professor Dick Davis, Professor of Persian and Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Ohio State University, presented on the 11th century poet Fakhraddin Gorganii’s work, Vis and Ramin. The work is recognized as one of the most fascinating and extraordinary love narratives of all medieval literature.

POETRY
Farzaneh Khojandi
SOAS, London, October 2008

Iranian women Voices Pari Maleki – Mahsa Vahdat
Codaogu Hall, London, February 2009

Pari Maleki and Mahsa Vahdat work to safeguard Persian traditional music although public performances by women-vocalists are partly banned in modern-day Iran. Pari Maleki (left) the Khyona Musical Ensemble and Mahsa Vahdat is professor of the maqam traditions that have forged classical Persian music.

Organised by Bar-Ax in association with Iran Heritage Foundation and in collaboration with The Pleasance and the Iran Heritage Foundation.

PLAYS
Plastic
Mehrdad Seyf
Pleasance Under Grand, Edinburgh, August 2008

‘You’re a man and you want to become a woman? The Islamic Republic of Iran can help. Plastic is a stylish 15 minutes that explores the creation of gender identity and how the law supports desire, in a dynamic and stylish piece of contemporary theatre with a tightly choreographed company, innovative film and sound, and a team of architectural and theatre design specialists. It’s good to discover a piece of theatre that makes a political point without ever being mundane,’ said Andrew Dickson, in The Guardian.

Organised by 30 Bird Productions, in association with The Pleasance and the Iran Heritage Foundation.

MUSIC
Iranian Women Voices Pari Maleki – Mahsa Vahdat
Codaogu Hall, London, February 2009

Pari Maleki and Mahsa Vahdat work to safeguard Persian traditional music although public performances by women-vocalists are partly banned in modern-day Iran. Pari Maleki (left) the Khyona Musical Ensemble and Mahsa Vahdat is professor of the maqam traditions that have forged classical Persian music.

Organised by Bar-Ax in association with Iran Heritage Foundation.

Events
Fellowships

Fellowships were in granted in 2008 to the following universities and institutions

University of St Andrews
The Department benefiting from the Foundation’s support is its social anthropology where research explores and compares the different ways peoples live throughout areas in the world. During June, 2008, the department, hosted a conference, film series and photographic exhibition on visual representations of Iran in ethnographic and documentary films and visual media.

British Museum
The Department of the Middle East covers the ancient and contemporary civilisations and cultures of the Middle East from the Neolithic period until the present. The curators and staff are all involved with research in one form or another. This varies from excavations and fieldwork studying, investigating and cataloguing the extensive collection of Middle Eastern material at the Museum. The new fellow has yet to be selected.

Encyclopædia Iranica
The Encyclopædia Iranica is a Columbia University project and is published by the Center of Iranian Studies. It is a historic undertaking, the most extensive compendium ever conceived on the past and present culture of the people who speak an Iranian language and their contribution to the broader history of human civilisation. The project was conceived in 1974 and began at Columbia University in 1992. Twenty five to 30 volumes are planned, of which to have been published to date. To ensure the completion of this monumental work, the Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation was established in 1985. Every aspect of Iranian life, culture and the country will be documented: biographies of notable Iranians, descriptions of all Iranian cities and monuments, commerce and finance, religion, literature, the natural world, music and folklore, philosophy and mysticism, calligraphy and architecture, no aspect of Iranian culture is neglected. The Iran Heritage Foundation has been a consistent supporter of the Encyclopædia Iranica Foundation, since its inception.

ACADEMIC GRANTS

Publications
The Foundation has supported important publications covering a wide spectrum of topics centered on the history and culture of Iran. The Persian language in History was jointly researched and written by Professor Mauro Maggi, below, from the London Institute, Naples, and Dr Paola Orsatti. A bilingual catalogue at Persepolis, a re-interpretation of the site, and its unknown religious and ritual functions was written by Dr Shahrizel Riazi. For his considerable efforts the book was awarded the best dissertation on a theme of Iranian Studies, by the Foundation for Iranian Studies. Dr Riazmi, the awarding committee said, ‘has made an exceptional contribution to the field of Iranian Studies’.

Persepolis was also the subject of Dr Ali Moussavi’s publication, Discovery of Persepolis, Archeological explorations at the ruins of Parsukh. The Matenadaran in Yerevan, Armenia, is one of the richest depositories of Iranian manuscripts of Yerevan Matenadaran, is self explanatory. As part of his ongoing studies into western Central Asia, Professor David Harris, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, published, Publication of fieldwork investigating the beginning of settled village life in North-east Iran, South Turkmenistan and North Afghanistan.

Research and travel
To enable events and research to take place, grants have been awarded by the Foundation to the following individuals:

- Janet Alexanian from the University of California for researching the concept of the Iranian nation as part of the Irvine project.
- Laetitia Bitt PhD student, from SOAS, for travel for presentation of a paper at the Seventh Biennial conference of the ISS (International Society for Iranian Studies) in Toronto.
- Dr Stephanie Cionini of the University of Norwich for a research trip for intensive language tuition to build on existing Russian language skills.
- Dr Wouter Henkelman, College de France, Paris received a grant to present a synoptic edition of all four versions of the Bisotun inscriptions as well as the Bisotun iconography.

Seminars and other activities
Dr Christine van Ruymbreke, above, University of Cambridge in association with the University of Leiden, Holland, will convene a conference titled, Omar Khayyam and Edward Fitzgerald, to be held during 2009.

Professor Matthew W. Stolper, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago received a grant for work concerning the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project.

Dr Stephanie Cronin of the University of California in association with the L’Orientale University, Naples, Above, Dr Christine van Ruymbreke, University of Cambridge with Professor Matthew W. Stolper, Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, below, Mauro Maggi, from the Oriental Institute, Naples, Above, Dr Christine van Ruymbreke, University of Cambridge. Below, Professor Matthew W. Stolper, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago with the institute’s bull, found in the excavations at Persepolis, 1930-39. It was found in many fragments and restored by the Oriental Institute.

The Persian Language in History
Publication of a conference titled, Omar Khayyam and Edward Fitzgerald, to be held during 2009. Professor Matthew W. Stolper, Oriental Institute, University of Chicago received a grant for work concerning the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project.

Top: St Andrews University Centre, The Middle East Centre. Below: Exeter Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies.
**Takhti and the Zurkhaneh**

The British Museum, February 2009.

Study session on Takhti, the famous Iranian wrestler and the Zurkhaneh, the traditional gymnasium where wrestling and other sports are practised. Artist Khosrow Hassanzadeh also spoke of his work.

**Iran: Food and Culture**


Iranian food and cookery are framed by the history and geography of the country as well as having a position in the culture and politics of the region. Presented by Sami Zabada, Eminent Professor of Politics and Sociology at Birkbeck College, London and Research Associate of the London Middle East Institute, School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

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**Populism and its malcontents**


An overview of the political developments that have affected the Islamic Republic over the last 30 years with particular emphasis on changes since the accession of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the Presidency in 2005. Ali Ansari, Professor in Iranian Studies, University of Edinburgh and convened by Dr Christian Lange and Songul Meric, both from the University of Edinburgh.

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**Spaces and Visions**


International three-day symposium organised by The Historians of Islamic Art Association exploring the diverse lyrical and visual culture of the Islamic world, ranging from archaeology to cinema studies.

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**The Seljuqs: Islam revitalized?**

University of Edinburgh, September 2008.

International symposium organised to investigate The Seljuqs, who ruled Persia and large regions of the Islamic world in the 11th-13th centuries. Scholars from both Europe and the Middle East assessed the state of Seljuk studies, advanced knowledge in the field, and discussed future avenues of research and direction. Organised by the Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Edinburgh and convened by Dr Christian Lange and Songul Meric, both from the University of Edinburgh.

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**The Cinema of Rakhshan Bani-Etemad**

University of St. Andrews, Scotland, June 2008.

Four-day multi-event programme of conference, film season and photographic exhibition aiming to interpret and theorese visual representations of Iran in ethnographic, documentary and feature films, as well as other visual art forms. Organised in collaboration with and at University of St. Andrews.

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**Visual Representations of Iran**

University of St. Andrews, Scotland, June 2008.

Four-day multi-event programme of conference, film season and photographic exhibition aiming to interpret and theorese visual representations of Iran in ethnographic, documentary and feature films, as well as other visual art forms. Organised in collaboration with and at University of St. Andrews.
The glorious Norouz Gala, 2008 (1387) was a spectacular event, held on the 15 March, at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London’s Mayfair. And, besides being a fitting event for all ages to celebrate the first day of spring and the New Year, the Gala raised a record-breaking income that went towards the funding of the Shah Abbas exhibition at the British Museum. The festival of Norouz represents an important and major part of the Iranian people’s rich culture.

The Great Room was sumptuously decorated with magnificent flower arrangements on each table and the Haft Seen festival table containing the seven items beginning with the letter S that symbolize the triumph of good over evil:

- **Sabzeh** (wheat or barley) = rebirth
- **Sir** (garlic) = healing
- **Samanu** (sweet) = wealth
- **Senjed** (dried fruit) = love
- **Sib** (apples) = beauty and health
- **Somaq** (berries) = sunrise
- **Serkeh** (vinegar) = wisdom and patience

The guests were served traditional Norouz dishes, including Sabzi Polo Mahi – rice with four green herbs and fish.

For some, especially the younger guests, the highlight was the appearance of acclaimed European Persian singer, Arash, from Sweden. Appearing at the IHF Norouz Gala for the second year, his blend of funky sounds with its traditional roots wowed the audience, especially as he performed tracks from his new album, Donya, in London for the first time.

The art auction, featuring works by Shirin Neshat, Nasser Ovissi, Parviz Tanavoli, Mohammad Ehsai, and Golnaz Fathi was a popular addition and raised a record amount thanks to the high quality of the work. All the money raised went towards funding the landmark British Museum exhibition, Shah Abbas, which runs from February until June 2009.
On a warm summer’s evening in June, more than 150 Friends and Patrons of the Iranian Heritage Foundation gathered in the delightful Dartmouth House in Central London for an evening of cultural enlightenment and entertainment.

Dartmouth House is an important heritage building, one of the most notable properties in London’s Mayfair. Its magnificent interior includes Grand marble fireplaces, Louis Quatorze walnut panelling, and a fine French marble Grand Staircase. Following cocktails in the courtyard, the guests listened to introductions by IHF directors, Vahid Alaghband and Farad Azima.

British Museum director Neil MacGregor, spoke eloquently of the ‘Shah ‘Abbâs: The remaking of Iran exhibition and the importance of the strong ties the Foundation has built with the museum.

Guests were also treated to an animated film by Jila Peacock inspired by the work of the poet Hafez. Tongue of the Hidden, directed by David Anderson, was based on a hand-printed book by Jila Peacock that contains ten love poems from the collected works, or Divan of Hafez, the fourteenth-century Persian metaphysical poet from Shiraz. The Persian text of each poem has been designed in the shape of an animal mentioned by Hafez in the text, and set alongside a modern English translation by the artist herself. The film received an enthusiastic reception from the audience.

Guests were also entertained by traditional Iranian music played on the santour by Vida Edalat accompanied by musicians playing the daf, one of the most ancient frame drums, the tombak and the ney. 
Schools & community

Since 1995, when the Foundation was first formed, it has played a significant part in providing support to schools and community organisations that take an active role in the promotion and teaching of Iranian languages, culture and education.

Rustam Iranian school

The school’s bold mission statement is, ‘To nurture our children by providing in-depth knowledge of the Persian language and rich literature while preserving the Iranian culture’. Established in 1981 in London, its main aim is providing Persian language courses for second generation Iranians in the UK. The school provides courses for children from the age of five. It is managed by a team of up to 50 professional teachers and administrators and is unique among all schools due to the facilities it is providing for the pupils and their parents.

On Saturdays, pupils get the chance to learn skills of reading, writing and oral interaction in Farsi. Included in the programme are many aspects of Persian literature and poetry with related grammar points. All of Rustam’s teaching is age-related and leads to A-level in Persian.

Library of Iranian studies

Opened in 1991 in west London, the library has over 30,000 cultural and political books and other publications for public use. Although, in the main, these are Persian and other Iranian language publications, the library has also a growing collection of foreign language books and publications on Iran. Currently over 500 people use the library every month. The library’s archives contain a wealth of political and cultural publications.

Kanoon Iran

The Kanoon Iran is a community organisation established in London in 1982. It has an active schedule of lectures and other educational programmes on the history and culture of Iran. Its audience is predominantly the Iranian community in London. It also offers Persian language classes for children from the age of six.

The Future Generation Committee is responsible for organising programmes and events for the younger generation, both for pre-university students as well as young professionals. Its latest initiative, working hand-in-hand with the Academic Committee, is an ambitious educational programme to integrate the study of Ancient Persia in secondary schools throughout the UK.

Programme coordinator Kourosh Kaghazian explains how the FGC aims to help secondary schools become more aware of the importance of ancient Persian studies:

‘In contrast to the traditional emphasis on the teaching of Greek and Latin civilisations, the GCSE and A-Level curriculums make few references to Ancient Persia as the world’s first empire. This is largely due to the lack of resources available to UK secondary school teachers and their students.

The FGC project will culminate in creating and providing the following resources to schools:

• Relevant Literature on Ancient Persia that ties into the current curriculum
• Subsidized School Trips to the British Museum’s Rahim Irvani Gallery covering the period in ancient Iran of 3000 BC – 651 AD
• Seminars held by recognized experts in the field

The project has now completed its first phase of development, with a primary focus on researching relevant courses, collaborating with leading examining bodies such as OCR, and engaging with history teachers. Work on creating a dynamic textbook has begun, and well-renowned scholars are being sought and commissioned by the project team to contribute to its content.

The Secondary Schools Project is supported by the Iran Heritage Foundation’s Future Generation Committee and supervised by the Academic Committee.'
MULTI-EVENTS FESTIVALS AND PROGRAMMES

Iran: New Voices, 2008
Celebrating the Centenary of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 2006
Ancient Persia, 2005
A Abbas Kiarostami: Visions of the Artist, 2005
IFH at the State Hermitage Museum, 2004

Far Near Distance: Contemporary Positions of Iranian Artists, 2004
Iranian night at the V&A, 2004

Interments of Immortality Mystical Yearnings in Iran, 2002
Contemporary Iranian Art & Culture in London, 2001
Persian Summer in London, 2001

EXHIBITIONS & INSTALLATIONS
Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran, 2009
Mohri Sadeqi – Black & Red & White, 2009
Hossein Khoosraghi – Cogito Ergo Sum, 2009
Mehrdad Shoghi – Between the lines, 2008

Hossein Khosrojerdi – Cogito Ergo Sum, 2009
Shah ‘ Abbas: The Remaking of Iran, 2009

Exhibitions & Installations
Persian Summer in London, 2001

Contemporary Iranian Art & Culture in London, 2001
Persian Summer in London, 2001

FELLOWSHIPS
Iran Heritage Foundation Fellowship at the British Museum, since 1997

FILM & MEDIA
Iran: New Voices Focus, 2008
Abbas Kiarostami, 2008
A Night in Tehran, 2008
Night Bus, 2008
Rahkshan Banai: Eternad Film season, 2008
War in Iranian Cinema, 2007
Zinat, 2006
Discriminating Iran, 2006
Kaffir, Infidel, 2006
Persepolis Recreated, 2005
Forest Without Leaves, 2005
Taziyeh, 2005
Kiarostami Workshop Filmsama, 2005
Abbas Kiarostami Retrospective, 2005
Abbas Kiarostami: Storyteller, 2005
The Persian Garden, 2004
Tooba, 2004
The Sacred, the Absurd, 2004
Moon and the Lagoon, 2004
Art of Killing, 2004
Bat rh the Third Day, the Tenth Day, 2004
Mystic Iran, the Unseen World – A Journey to the Unexplored Depth of Iran, Land of Mystic Rituals, 2004
An Encounter with Jalal Panahi, 2003
Women: The Heart of Iranian Cinema, 2002
Logic of the Birds, 2002
Restoration of Films in the Galenst Palace Archives, 2002
Iranian women film makers, 2002
A Day with Abbas Kiarostami and Manja Akbari, 2002
Women is Iranian Cinema, 2001
Ali & Danny, 2001
Art and Life: The New Iranian Cinema, 1999
But You Speak Such Good English, 1998

PERFORMING ARTS
Iranian Women Voices, 2009
Iran: New Voices Dadalus & Icarus, 2008
Tajik and Persian poetry with Farzaneh Khojandar, 2008
Kamkari/Kudsii Enginer Ensemble, 2008
Plastic, Mehrdad Sefid, 2008
Iranian Revolution, 2006
Rumi: Unveil the Sun, 2007
Rumi Rap, 2007
Usfand Mohammad Reza Lath interprets Rumi, 2007

SHAHRAM NAZARI AND THE ENSEMBLE
Perform Passion of Rumi, 2007
Farhang Sharif and Siamack Banai in concert, 2007
Tara Kamangar in concert, 2007
Ustad Shahjahan in Concert, 2007
Iranian Underground Night, 2007
Window of Hope: Music of the Mas'udieh, 2006
BBC Symphony Orchestra Iran Week
Persepolis – Discovering the Music of Iran, 2006
The Persian Revolution, 2006
Amid the Clouds, 2005
The Music of old Tehran, 2005
Darkhast and Aayini: A Selection of works from the Advanced Santur Repertoire Composed by Master Faramarz Payvar, 2004
Fashions by Iranian Designers, 2004
Listen to the Reed-Flute, Tehrana 21, 2004
Tribute to Iran, 2004
Hafis Lshenaband, 2004
Majnoon, 2004
The Voice of Unity – Sufi Musical Traditions of Iran, 2002
Here in Landing’s – A Concert of Classical Persian Music based on the Song and Veve of Attar, 2002
The Seven Beauties, 2001
Death by Heroine, 1998

CONFERENCES
Goethe and 1001 Nights, Professor Katharina Mommersen 2008
Tajik and Persian Poetry, Farzaneh Khojandar 2008
Spaces and Visions, 2008
Every inch a King 2008
The Seljuk: Islam revitalised? 2008
Seventh Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies 2008
The Rise of the Persian Renaissance 2008
Visual Representations of Iran 2008
The Cinema of Rahkshan Banai Etemad 2008
Master classes in classical Persian music 2007
Wondrous Words, The Poetic Mastery of Jalal al-Din Rumi 2007
Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia 2007
Hafiz and the School of Love in Classical Persian Poetry 2007
The Art and Material Culture of iranian Shism 2006
Sixth Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies 2006
The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906-1911 2006
Earthian Architecture in Iran and Central Asia 2005
The World of Ashaemeh Pishan 2005
Abbas Kiarostami: Image, voice and vision 2005
Aspects of History and Culture in Pre-modern Iran 2005
Private Lives and Public Spaces in Modern Iran 2004
After Alexander – Central Asia Before Islam – Themes in the History & Archaeology of Central Asia 2004
Nizami Ganjavi – Artistic and Humanistic Aspects of the Khamse 2004
Metals and Metalworking in Islamic Iran 2004
The Study of Persian Culture in the West – Early 19th to Early 20th Century 2004
Iran and History from Below 2004
Carpet and Textiles in the Iranian World 1400-1700 2003
Sadegh Hedayat Centenary 2003
Islamic Art in the Nineteenth Century: Innovation or Eclecticism 2003
Iran and the World in the Safavid Age 2002
Farid Al Din Attar and the Persian Sufi Tradition 2002
Modern Persian Poetry 2001
Religion and Society in Qajar Iran 2000
The New Iranian Cinema 2000
Politics Representation and Identity 2000
Religion and Society in Qajar Iran 2000
Ernst Herzfeld and the Development of Near Eastern Studies 2000
Historical Cultural and Intellectual perspectives on the Left in Iran 2000
The Qajar Epoch: Arts & Architecture, 2000
Safavid Iran Art and Architecture 1998
Second Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies 1998
Third International Round Table on Safavid Iran 1998
Iran and the Emerging Global Order 1996

LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS
Takhtii and the Zirunkhah 2009
Goethe and 1001 Nights, Professor Katharina Mommersen 2008
Tajik and Persian Poetry, Farzaneh Khojandar 2008
Iran: Food and Culture, Samsul Basadi 2008
Who’s Ahead of Villain and Why?, Dick Davis 2008
Populism and its malcontents, Dr Ali Ansari 2008
Hafiz of Shiraz – The Great Poet of Love 2007
Shirin Neshat and Tanq Ali in conversation 2006
The Legacy of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran 2006
A Hundred Years of Struggle for Democracy 2006
The Ideological Crisis of Nationalism and Islam: from the Constitutional Revolution until Today 2006
Anglo Russian Relations in Iran 2006
The Mapping of Persia 2006
Ismaili Castles in Iran and Syria 2006
Can Theocracy and Democracy be Reconciled? 2006
Ayatollah Na’in’s Proposals on Islam 2006
Constitutionalism 2006
Reflections on Modern Iranian History 2006
Islamic Art in Iran, The Safavidian Heritage 2005
New Perspectives on Persopolis 2005
Persian Culture and Heritage 2005
Abbas Kiarostami and Mike Leigh in conversation 2005
The Iconography of the Dragon in Islamic Art 2004
The Many faces of Iran 2004
In the Rose Garden of the Martyrs: a Memoir of Iran 2004
Medieval Persian Painting, The Evolution of an Artistic 2003
Ester’s Children A Portrait of iranian Jews 2003
The Persian Garden 2003
A Celebration of Persian Census 2002
Ijarah 2002
The Discourse of Exile in Post-revolution Persian Prose 2001
A Brief History of Iranian Cinema 2000
Qajar Persia 1999
Ijarah Architecture 1998

Tale of Persia – Stories of Persia 2009
A Brief History of Iranian Cinema 2000
The Persian Garden 2003
Anglo-Russian Relations in Iran 2006
The Ideological Crisis of Nationalism and Islam: from the Constitutional Revolution until Today 2006
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A Celebration of Persian Census 2002
Ijarah 2002
The Discourse of Exile in Post-revolution Persian Prose 2001
A Brief History of Iranian Cinema 2000
Qajar Persia 1999
Ijarah Architecture 1998
Highlights of 2009

Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran
British Museum, 19 Feb – 14 June
Milestone exhibition focusing on the reign of Shah 'Abbas I, part of the British Museum's exhibition programme of great and influential leaders.

Azar Nafisi: Things I've Been Silent About
Asia House, London, 21 April, 2009
Author Azar Nafisi discusses her stunning story of growing up in Iran. Memories of her life set against the background of the country's political revolution.

Patterns of Perfection: 19th-century Iranian Textiles and Carpets
Victoria and Albert Museum, 21-22 April, 2009
A two-day conference focusing on 19th-century textile and carpet design, the dissemination of pattern motifs between Iran and Britain and textile and carpet manufacture in Iran. Speakers include Dr Layla Diba, Dr Irena Koshoridze, Dr Hadi Maktabi, Professor Vanessa Martin, Dr Philip Sykas and Dr Stephen Vernoit.

The Art of Isfahan through the ages
British Museum, 25 April 2009
A study session focusing on the archaeology, architecture and art of Isfahan, the most beautiful city in Iran.

The world of Shah 'Abbas
British Museum, 15 –16 May, 2009
International scholars discuss the political, social, economic, and religious policies of Shah Abbas and his impact on Iran's art and architecture.

Private View for Friends of the IHF,
British Museum, 29 April, 2009

SOAS, London, June 2009
Despite a state that discourages many forms of modern entertainment and what it deems as non-Islamic culture, the Internet, music, arts, photography and film have become potent means of communication in Iran. Two-day conference bringing together some of the best-known names in the media and contemporary arts inside Iran, together with academics to look at the cultural changes in Iranian life since 1979.

Organised by Centre for Media and Film Studies at SOAS, Iran Heritage Foundation, London Middle East Institute at SOAS

Empires and Revolutions: Iranian-Russian Encounters since 1800
SOAS, London, June 2009
A conference exploring encounters between Iranians and Russians since the early 19th century to the present day. The objective will be to widen the scholarly perspective as well as considering the current state and likely future path of Iranian-Russian relations.

Organised by Iran Heritage Foundation and London Middle East Institute at SOAS

Historiography & Iran in Comparative Perspective
University of St Andrews, St Andrews, September 2009
A conference setting out to assess the traditions of historical writing in Iran, situating them within broader trends of European historical narratives.

Organised by Institute of Iranian Studies, University of St Andrews, the IHF and the Centre for Transnational History, University of St Andrews

Left: Shah Abbas’ impact on Iran’s art and architecture, illustrated by the mosque of Shaykh Lutfallah in Isfahan, will be examined in the World of Shah ‘Abbas, in May.
Above: The study session, Art of Isfahan through the ages, will focus on Iran’s most beautiful city.