

BROKEN  
PROMISES,  
FORBIDDEN  
DREAMS

**AN EXHIBITION  
OF CONTEMPORARY  
IRANIAN ART**

OCTOBER 2007



**ART** Royal Hospital  
Chelsea, SW3  
**LONDON**



## IRAN HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The Iran Heritage Foundation was founded in 1995 to help promote and preserve the culture, language and heritage of Iran.

The Foundation partners with museums and institutions of learning to support academic endeavours, organises exhibitions and conferences, and provides grants and fellowships in the field of Iranian studies.

Our public programmes have included "Art and Life – The New Iranian Cinema," a film festival at the National Film Theatre, where more than 50 Iranian films were screened; "Iranian Contemporary Art," the first ever exhibition of its type outside Iran, at the Barbican Centre; "Abbas Kiarostami: Visions of an Artist," the largest retrospective ever organised on an Iranian artist, at more than ten venues in London; and "Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Iran," a blockbuster exhibition at the British Museum.

"Broken Promises, Forbidden Dreams," an exhibition of contemporary Iranian art at Art London 2007, brings together a collection of over 100 paintings from some 30 Iranian artists, mostly living in Iran. These works express the environment of paradox, frustration and hope in which contemporary Iranian art thrives today.

"Broken Promises, Forbidden Dreams" is sponsored by the Koli Collection.



## BROKEN PROMISES, FORBIDDEN DREAMS

Hardly a day goes by without Iran being mentioned in the Western press. However, rarely does this coverage refer to the artistic heritage of the country and, perhaps with the exception of Iranian cinema, even less rarely to its contemporary art. Yet Iran currently has one of the most vibrant and productive art scenes in the Middle East. The Tehran Museum of Modern Art is flourishing and commercial galleries in the capital and elsewhere in the country regularly hold exhibitions of paintings, drawings, photography and sculpture.

In recent months, there has been an explosion of interest, led by the International auction houses, who are holding sales of Contemporary Middle Eastern art in Dubai, London and Paris. Western commercial galleries and dealers, realising the merit of these artists are rapidly following suit and this current ground-breaking exhibition at Art London, organised by the Iran Heritage Foundation, seeks to reinforce this exciting trend.

But why now this interest in Contemporary Iranian art? Born of a long visual and cultural tradition stretching back to pre-Islamic times, today's generation of Iranian artists, some of whom have Western training, are seeking to deconstruct, reconstruct and integrate formulaic and empiric rhetoric into new models of artistic expression. Where once calligraphy was the preserve of court artists and Qur'anic scribes, contemporary artists such as Golnaz Fathi and Farhad Moshiri have appropriated these symbols, at once depriving them of their textual meaning and cadence, and transforming them instead into a fully choreographed and rhythmic dance across the page. Photography, introduced into Iran in the 19th Century under Qajar patronage, forms the basis of collages in the work of Samira Alikhanzadeh, oozing with nostalgia, and at the same time laced with both melancholic and humorous connotations of the human condition. And such sentiments are graphically repeated in the several further images in the show.

It is perhaps this dichotomy of old and new, the strange and yet so utterly familiar which attracts a Western audience. Each work in this exhibition, whilst unmistakably betraying its traditional Iranian origins, simultaneously offers a fresh, raw and inspirational perspective on the world of its creators.

Janet Rady

September 2007



## Samira Alikhanzadeh

Born: Tehran - 1967

### Education:

1998 MFA Painting from Tehran Azad University, Art and Architecture School

### Solo Exhibitions:

2005 Golestan Gallery, Tehran

2004 Golestan Gallery, Tehran

2001 Golestan Gallery, Tehran

1999 Golestan Gallery, Tehran

30 Group exhibitions - 1990 - 2007







collage on board, 100 x 100 cm, 2004