

از آن پس نمیرم که من زندگان
که تخم سخن من پرآگند هام
هر آنکس که دارد هش و رای و دین
پس از مرگ بر من کند آفرین

I shall not die, these seeds I've sown will save
My name and reputation from the grave,
And men of sense and wisdom will proclaim,
When I have gone, my praises and my fame

(Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, transl. by Dick Davis)



Benefactress

Bita Daryabari

Bita Daryabari embodies the spirit of humanist philanthropy. She received her Bachelor in Computer Science then Master's degree in Telecommunication Management at Golden Gate University in California. Upon graduation, she joined GammaLink, Inc., one of the early pioneers in the field of telecommunications. She later moved to MCI Communications where, more than once, she received distinguished awards and recognition for her work. On a personal level, Ms. Daryabari has had a long-standing passion for increasing knowledge of her native Iranian culture, as well as improving the lives of people from Iran and beyond. She has started Pars Equality Center, a community foundation in 2010 to support the full integration of people of Persian (Iranian) origin in the United States, including refugees, asylees, immigrants and the American-born; and to advocate for their perspectives in American society. She works to create a more just and compassionate community in which Iranians of all cultures and beliefs can participate.

Her work in her field of expertise has always been accompanied by her interest in the world of ideas and literature; particularly, the poetry and prose of her native Iran. In 2008, she created the Bita Daryabari Endowment in Persian Letters at Stanford University, enabling the university to not only hire visiting and full-time professors of Persian literature, but also providing the necessary funds for the Iranian Studies Program to organize conferences, teach more courses in Persian language for all levels of proficiency, and offer the annual Bita Award in Persian Letters. Her International charitable work, primarily focused through the Unique Zan Foundation (established in 2007) is not limited to Iran and its literature, or Asia and its women. Ms. Daryabari is working with a number of charitable organizations, including The Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), founded by Sakeena Yacoobi, an internationally known women's human rights activist. Their latest collaboration includes the building of an all-girls school in Kabul. In her next project, Ms. Daryabari is enabling the training of Afghan women by providing micro-financing through organizations such as AIL and Creating Hope International.

In 2008, Ms. Daryabari joined forces with Relief International and the Skoll Foundation, to build a women's center in West Bank Palestinian Territory. Other philanthropic endeavors include: collaboration with Moms Against Poverty (MAP) educating and empowering girls at Shaheed Shojaie Orphanage in south of Tehran, Iran; donation to the British Museum and Iran Heritage Foundation for the Shah Abbas Exhibition; funding Iranian Artists through Venice Biennale to display their work for the first time after 30 years of solitude in 2009; and contributions to the UCSF Mission Bay Neuroscience Research Building, which opened in 2012; Bita Daryabari Scholarship Program For Women of Middle East in Business and Law at Golden Gate University since 2012; grant to UC Davis for Iranian Studies; Bita Daryabari Endowment in Shahnama Project and Centre at Cambridge, England. The Shahnama endowment occurs just as the Cyrus Cylinder is making its way around the United States for the first time in history. Daryabari co-sponsored the San Francisco exhibition of the Cyrus Cylinder at the Asian Arts Museum of San Francisco. Ms. Daryabari also serves as a Visionary Circle Member of the X-Prize Foundation.



About the Centre

The Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies

The formation of the Shahnama Centre has been made possible by the benefaction of Bita Daryabari, whose generous endowment to Pembroke in July 2013 ensures the College's long-term commitment to Persian Studies and research on the culture and history of Iran. The Centre currently occupies an office at 1 Fitzwilliam Street, on the corner of Trumpington Street and right opposite the imposing portico of the Fitzwilliam Museum. The cost of running the office in the previous two years has been supported by grants from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Sir Isaac Newton Trust, and the Iran Heritage Foundation. This splendid location gives the Centre a window on the world and attracts many passers-by.

One Fitzwilliam Street houses a growing library of books and materials related to the study of Persian manuscript painting and the arts of the book, especially regarding the Shahnama. The library is currently (May 2014) being catalogued and will soon be made accessible online. The Centre aims to become a base for visiting researchers in the field of Persian culture, supplementing and supporting the resources and activities of the Department of Middle Eastern Studies in the University.

The immediate priorities for the Centre include developing its website (currently at <http://persian.pem.cam.ac.uk/>), providing a base for the newly-appointed Fari Sayeed Fellow in Islamic Art at Pembroke, hosting lectures, organising conferences, and supporting academic publications. It also aims to engage in outreach activities, such as concerts of Persian music and most particularly exhibitions of Persian art. Its main task, however, is to manage and expand its research projects.

For further information contact Dr Firuza Abdullaeva, Head of the Shahnama Centre (fia21@cam.ac.uk) and follow the Centre on Facebook

Opposite: *Girl with Qalyan*, Iran, Qajar, end of the 19th century
Copyright © Olga Davidson Collection

Research Projects



Cambridge Shahnama Project

The core research programme of the Shahnama Centre is the Shahnama Project, founded by Professor Charles Melville in 1999 with a five-year grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board and a second, three-year award in 2006 from the renamed Arts and Humanities Research Council. The Shahnama Project has developed an online database of illustrated manuscripts of the Shahnama or Book of Kings, the famous epic poem by the 11th-century author, Firdausi. The database (currently at <http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk>) makes accessible thousands of paintings of scenes from the Shahnama in hundreds of manuscripts dating from the 14th to the 19th century, organised according to where the manuscripts are now found, or by the subject of the painting.

The Project has organised several international conferences on the Shahnama and published three volumes of conference papers to date. Two more are currently in preparation. In addition, it underpinned the exhibition of Shahnama manuscripts in its millennium year, 2010, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, as well as ancillary shows connected with the Shahnama, especially the work of contemporary artists who continue to draw inspiration from the poem. This sub-project is called Shahnama in the contemporary literature and art of Iran and Central Asia. Since the formation of the Shahnama Centre in 2013, it has organised two small exhibitions in a series entitled "Shahnama Forever", the first on the occasion of the performance of the ballet "Zahhak" by Dr Hussein Hadisi in October 2013 and the second on the occasion of the inauguration of the Centre, in May 2014, called "Time forward", both curated by Veronica Shimanovskaya with Dr Abdullaeva.

The Shahnama Project has welcomed several students of Persian art history from outside Cambridge in the last two years, as well as interns working on the database, cataloguing the library, and setting up the facebook site. Its first priority is now to refresh the website and introduce several new features (including the text and translations of the pages displayed), while work continues on the recording of illustrated manuscripts throughout the world as they become known. We also hope to develop the educational potential of the site and the use of authentic Shahnama images for digital games and animations. In addition, the Project intends to launch a series of publications of collections of Shahnama manuscripts in different places, and to continue the series of conference publications.

For further information about the research project and how to support it, please contact Professor Charles Melville (cpm1000@cam.ac.uk) and Dr Firuza Abdullaeva (fia21@cam.ac.uk).

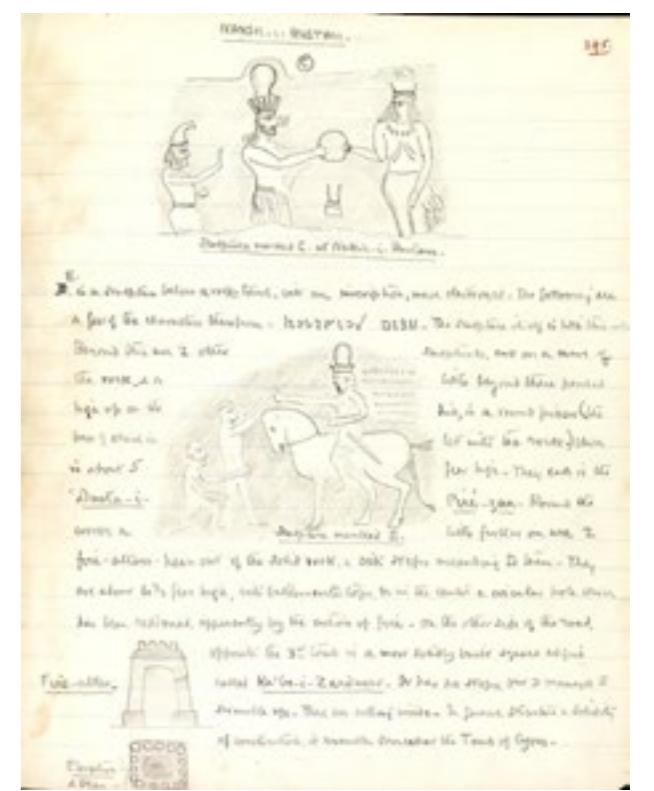
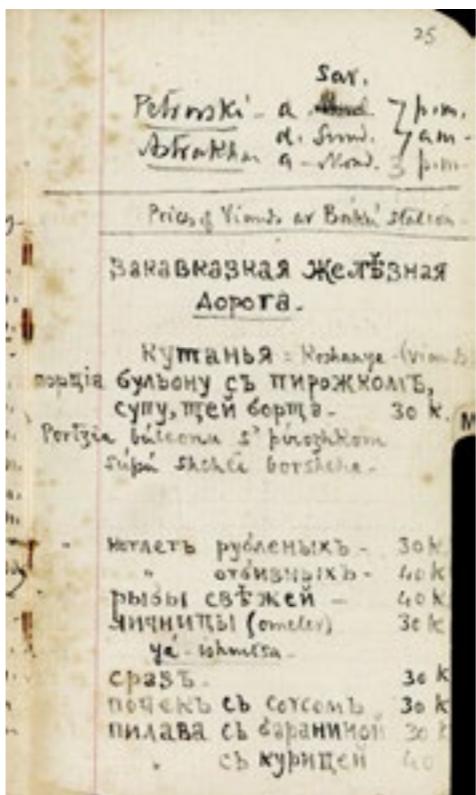
Memento mori in the Shahnama: Rustam talks philosophically to the knight Gudarz and other Iranian generals about the inevitability of death
Attributed to 'Abd al-'Aziz. Shah Tahmasp Shahnama by Firdausi, f. 266v, Tabriz, ca. 1525-30 Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran, Iran
Colours, ink, silver and gold on paper, 24.4 x 25.5 cm



The Browne archive project

The Shahnama Centre is also engaged in other research projects that promote the study of Persian in Cambridge and are of particular relevance to Pembroke's own traditions of scholarship in this field. The original diaries of Professor E.G. Browne's A Year amongst the Persians have recently been digitised by the College Library and on the initiative of the College Librarian Pat Aske, and it is intended to make other parts of his archive, owned by the College, accessible online (see page 49 for more information)

Opposite: Charles Haslewood Shannon. *Portrait of E.G. Browne*, ca. 1912, oil on canvas, 101 x 84 cm (detail) © Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge
Below: Pages from E.G. Browne's diaries © Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge



Literature, Art, Diplomacy and Empire: Khosrau Mirza's Mission to St Petersburg in 1829



This is an international project (with colleagues in Iran, Russia, Georgia, UK and USA), dedicated to retrieving the primary (archival and museum) as well as newly published materials related to the most successful diplomatic mission led by sixteen-year old Khosrau Mirza (1813-1875). The seventh son of the Crown prince 'Abbas Mirza travelled from Tehran to St Petersburg after the Tehran massacre of the Russian embassy, including its head, Russian minister plenipotentiary A.S. Gribodov (1790-1829) on 30 January 1829.

This 'Redemption' mission, consisting apart from the Qajar Prince of experienced diplomats and high ranking politicians, was of extreme importance not only for Persia and Russia, but for all participants in the Great Game, determining its future direction. As such it generated several contemporary records in Persia and Europe, including scrupulous information about the situation at Persian, European and Ottoman courts and the Eastern military fronts.

The mission arrived at the Russian court at the peak of its glittering splendour and imperial might, due to the magnificent military successes in the East and West as witnessed by the victories over Napoleon (1812), the Ottomans (1806-12 and 1828-9) and the Qajars (the treaties of Golestan in 1813 and Torkmanchay in 1828). Two Russian cosmopolitan monarchs, Peter I and Catherine II, who almost single-handedly turned a backward country into a mighty super power due mainly to their reforms of the government and army, became models for 19th-century Iranian reformers, while British imperial policy, in many cases equally reckless as that of the Russians, acquired an established reputation of being "behind all evils of the world". The euphoric diplomatic and political success of Khosrow Mirza, who had all the potential to become a Persian Peter the Great had, however, a depressingly disastrous finale both for him and for his country.

The project is supported by a grant from the British Institute of Persian Studies to conduct research in the archives in Georgia and Iran, and to organise a workshop at Ohio State University, Mershon Center for International Security Studies.

Opposite: K.K. Gampeln. *Portrait of Prince Khusrau Mirza*, St Petersburg, 1829
© State Hermitage Museum



Cultural icons as means of national identity building

The project 'Cultural icons as means of national identity building in post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus: Case of Tajikistan and Georgia' is based on the materials related to the artistic genres, originating in Europe, like opera, ballet, cinema and 3D visual art, but which were brought to non-Russian countries that happened to be part of the Soviet Union during their Sovietisation and Russification. This process is characterised by the main mantra of Soviet identity building, coined by Stalin in 1931, based on the merging of two qualities: "national in shape, socialist in contents". This was successfully achieved due to the scientifically identified cultural icons of national heritage, as reflected in traditional arts and their 'recycling' for the new ideology.

The two case studies of Tajikistan and Georgia have very different cultural backgrounds and contemporary milieux; however, they have a lot in common which permits a serious comparative analysis: their historically shared culture with Persia (in the case of Tajikistan - being considered a cradle of Iranian civilisation; in the case of Georgia - starting with the Safavid period, and especially during the Qajar era when Tiflis became the Russian capital in the Caucasus); their shared Sovietised and Russified cultural identity; and the difficulties of the de-Russification process during the post-Soviet period.

Field work to recover missing data related to the Georgian part is supported by a grant from the British Institute of Persian Studies.

Opposite: *Rudaki and Pushkin*. Detail of the mural in the entrance hall of the Tajik National University, Dushanbe © photograph F. Abdullaeva, 2011



The idea of Iran-Turan

The idea of Iran-Turan in Iran and Central Asia has been the focus of attention of an international group of scholars for the last several years, which enabled us to organise our first workshop "Cultural Encounters across Central Asia" in Leiden (28-29 September 2012). It was a joint effort of Leiden University (Asian Modernities and Traditions), Cambridge University, and the British Institute of Persian Studies (<http://www.hum.leidenuniv.nl/nieuws-1/workshop-cultural-encounter.html>) .

The following aspects were discussed:

- 1.Historical and geographical aspects of the idea of Iran-Turan.
- 2.Iran-Turan in literature, mythology, folklore, art & architecture, music, opera, ballet, theatre, cinema and pop culture.
- 3.Iran-Turan: historical encounters and perspectives (pan-Turkism; pan-Iranism; cultural and political Sovietisation/Russification/de-Islamisation, post Soviet and post-colonial re-Islamisation; new national cultural and political heroes in the post-Soviet era).
- 4.Iran-Turan in Europe and Russia (European encounters with Turan and Central Asia; the Great Game; Asiatisation of Russian capitals; multiculturalism; European and Russian scholarship on the region; Russian Orientalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus).
- 5.Iran and Turan in India (historical and literary sources, artistic influences).

A special international conference pursuing similar themes and focusing on the topics of Orientalist art, "Orientiality: Cultural Orientalism and Mentality" was organised at Pembroke College, Cambridge (17-18 May 2013) jointly with Qatar's Orientalist Museum (<http://www.cornucopia.net/events/orientality/>).

The second Iran-Turan workshop is under the preparation and is to be held in Cambridge in 2014 and the second Orientality conference to take place in London in 2015.

Opposite: Reza Shah and Mustafa Kemal during Reza Shah's visit to Turkey in June 1934



Illustrating cross-culturalism in Persian literature and art

This project is dedicated to a phenomenon, which can be identified as wandering iconography of wandering stories (visual intertextuality), whereby the literary images and their visual representation are borrowed, exchanged, influenced and emulated in different cultural traditions over the centuries, creating a unified image with many variations. Such iconography would be a result of a semantic merge, both literary and visual, of several genres, including interchange of secular and religious subjects. Classical examples of such an East-West universal phenomenon are a story of a flying king who in different traditions had different names (Semitic Nimrud, Iranian Kay Kavus, Hellenistic Alexander, Islamic Iskandar), or a story about a noble woman tragically falling in love with her slave/step-son (Biblical Wife of Potiphar, Iranian Sudaba, Hellenistic Phaedra, Qur'anic Zulaykha).

Persian literature, starting from its classical period, is characterised by a heavy use of *tazmin* ('emulation') when prominent poets feel themselves almost obliged to contribute with their own interpretation of a famous story to the multidimensional image of its protagonists. Thus an ancient romance of the Sasanian king Bahram V (Gur) and his slave girl received radically contradictory renditions by several masters, among whom are Firdausi, Nizami, Jami and Amir Khurasani Dihlavi whose aim was 'to improve' the version(s) of their predecessor(s). There are whole cycles of such narratives, which come from folklore, go through serious literary and philosophic metamorphoses due to secular, mainly court, as well as Sufi poetry, and return back to popular tradition, enriched with multifaceted reinterpretations of well-known images. Narratives of Iskandar or Zulaykha quite often overflow the border between Persian and Arabic, or Turkic literatures: Nava'i's version of Iskandar's change of personality is one of the most brilliant examples of this process.

During the centuries not only famous literateurs, literati and ordinary scribes responsible for producing more 'updated' versions of well-known literary works, but also artists illustrating such masterpieces, participated in their re-interpretation and adaptation to their individual taste, or to the fashion of the day. Sometimes the discrepancies between the text and its illustration could occur not due to the painters' deliberate intention to 'improve' their predecessor's style and ideas, but to the confusion caused in different cases by various factors: the similarities of the stories, emulating each other; already established and recycled iconographical clichés; and neglect of the text being illustrated.

Opposite: *Potiphar's wife seducing Siyavush*, digital collage ©Veronica Shimanovskaya and Firuza Melville

The origins of the debate genre in New Persian literature

The genre of debate has its most ancient examples surviving from the Sumerian period, when they demonstrate already their very mature and sophisticated state. Due to its universal nature it is present in almost all literary cultures, especially of folk origin, betraying its link with prehistoric social divisions and rivalry, as between nomadic and urban, cattle breeding and agricultural populations, and different ethnic and religious groups.

Despite being known in Persian tradition since its Middle Persian period (due to the unique *tenzona* of the Goat and the Assyrian Tree) it did not get any distinct representation in classical literature except some occasional pieces, the most important of which belong to Asadi Tusi.

Two studies have been published by Dr Abdullaeva as part of this project: one concentrating on a codicological case study of the most enigmatic unique *munazara* by Asadi Tusi from the Bodleian Library, including the attempt to reconstruct historical facts on the basis of the whole complex of legends around this poet and his works ('The Bodleian manuscript of Asadi Tusi's debate between an Arab and a Persian: its place in the transition from ancient debate to classical panegyric', Iran, XLVII, 2009, pp. 69-95); and second on the history of the genre in general and its role in Classical Persian literature ('The origins of the *munazara* genre in New Persian literature', *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian poetry*, ed. A. A. Seyed-Gohrab, Leiden-Boston: 2012, pp. 249-73). They reveal the significance of this genre as a bridge between pre-Islamic Iranian literary debate and the New Persian *qasida*, which followed the canons of Classical Arabic poetry. It is planned to summarise the results, considering additional material in a new publication, coming soon.

Opposite: Bowl with the ancient representation of the Goat and the Palm Tree with the animation effect. Tepe Sialk, c.4400 - 4200 BC © Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran





Event Programme

Old Library, Pembroke College

2.30 - 3.00 pm: Welcome remarks

Sir Richard Dearlove, Master of Pembroke, Bita Daryabari, Prof. Charles Melville

3.00 - 4.30 pm: Presentations

Dr Olga Davidson

'Why do the prose prefaces of the Shahnama matter?'

Prof. Touraj Daryaee

'To know Sasanian history & culture through the Persian epic'

Dr Sussan Babaie

'Shahnama and visual evocations of a present: from Shah Tahmasb to Shirin Neshat'

Dr Firuza Abdullaeva

'Cambridge exhibition series "Shahnama Forever: 002"'

4.30 - 5.00 pm Tea

Nihon Room, Pembroke College

5.00 - 6.30 pm 'Shahnama: Time Forward' Exhibition

Opposite: Fathollah Qullar Aghassi, *Kay Khusrav receives his knights before Tus' military operation against Furud*, oil painting on canvas, 260 x 170 cm (detail) © Olga Davidson Collection

Speakers

Dr Olga Davidson

In various manuscripts of Firdausi's Shahnama, the text of the actual poetry is preceded by a text containing one of various prose prefaces, which served to contextualize (1) the poet Firdausi himself and (2) the poetry in its historicized setting - which is not to say that such a setting needs to be truly "historical." There are four main textual traditions preserving these prose prefaces, and I will concentrate on two of these four.

In these traditions, the poet Firdausi was contextualized through the narration of his life and times, with a focus on a basic question: how could it happen that this one man, known by his poetic name Firdausi, came to compose such a monumental poem about the sum total of Iranian civilization, visualized as a Book of Kings? The different versions of the "Life of Firdausi," as reflected in the different prefaces and as supplemented by still other versions as reflected in other prose works, can be analyzed as representing a traditional Iranian literary form in its own right - a prose tradition complementing the poetic tradition that culminated in the Shahnama of Firdausi. Moreover, despite their prosaic exterior, these "Life of Firdausi" narratives can be analyzed as poetic agenda. In other words, the prose prefaces explain the system of poetry that they introduce. To study the prose prefaces, then, is to understand better the poetry of the Shahnama itself. That is why they matter.

Olga M. Davidson earned her Ph.D. in 1983 from Princeton University in Near Eastern Studies. She is on the faculty of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations, Boston University, where she has served as Research Fellow since 2009. From 1992 to 1997, she was Chair of the Concentration in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis University. Since 1999, she has been Chair of the Board, Ilex Foundation. She is the author of many publications, among which her two books *Poet and Hero in the Persian Book of Kings* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1994; 2nd ed. Mazda Press: Los Angeles, CA, 2006; 3rd ed. distributed by Harvard University Press, 2013) and *Comparative Literature and Classical Persian Poetry*, Bibliotheca Iranica: Intellectual Traditions Series (Mazda Press: Los Angeles, CA, 2000; 2nd ed. distributed by Harvard University Press, 2013), have been translated into Persian and distributed in Iran.

Prof. Touraj Daryaee

This essay explores how the Xwaday-namag/Shahnama contributed to the cultural understanding of rulers and rivals in late antique Iran. The dialogue and posturing of the late Sasanian rulers and those of the early Islamic kingdoms demonstrates that they were using the epic tradition as a blueprint on how to behave and act.

Touraj Daryaee is the Howard C. Baskerville Professor in the History of Iran and the Persianate World and the Associate Director of the Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California, Irvine. His most recent publication is the editing of the *Oxford History of Iran*, OUP, 2012.

Speakers

Dr Sussan Babaie

The heroes, villains, kings and queens of the Shahnama have animated in eloquent Persian an extraordinarily resilient visual imagination of peoples from a vast region and across an astonishingly wide temporal arc. This talk highlights some of those brilliant moments: from the 13th-century ceramic beaker with its film-like frames depicting the story of Bijan; to the small, densely patterned and emotionally charged scene of Gayumars holding court, painted by Sultan Muhammad for his patron Shah Tahmasb the Safavid (1530s); to 19th-century coffee-house paintings of Rustam; to the nearly-life-size photographs of contemporary heroes and villains of Shirin Neshat's 'Book of Kings'. The thread, it will be suggested, is the fixity of the Shahnama-the-word and the flexibility of the Shahnama-the-image, making the acts of picturing and seeing as instrumental to the preservation of the text as to the reconstitution of a revered past, however imaginary, for a present, be it of Shah Tahmasb or Shirin Neshat.

Sussan Babaie joined the Courtauld Institute of Art in 2013 to take up a newly established post teaching on the arts of Iran and Islam. Born in Iran, Sussan attended the University of Tehran's Faculty of Fine Arts until the revolution of 1979 when she moved to the USA to study for a Master's degree in Italian Renaissance and American Arts, followed by a PhD at the Institute of Fine Arts, NYU, where she focused on the arts of Islam. She has many years of experience teaching in America, at Smith College and the University of Michigan, and as a Visiting Professor at the Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Ludwig Maximilian University, in Munich. Her research and teaching concern questions of imperialism and artistic patronage in Persianate West, Central and South Asia, where high culture derived from the literary corpus of the Persian language. Most recently, her research has been supported by grants from the United States National Endowment for the Humanities, the Fulbright (for research in Egypt and Syria) and the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.

Dr Firuza Abdullaeva

Dr Firuza Abdullaeva is a graduate (BA, MA hons.) of the Iranian Philology Department, Faculty of Oriental Studies, St Petersburg University, where she received her PhD in Iranian philology, Art and Islamic Studies in 1989. She was an Associate Professor at the University of St Petersburg when she joined the Cambridge Shahnama Project in 2002 after a term at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton) and a term at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) as a Fulbright Professor. From 2005 until 2010 she was Lecturer in Persian Literature at the University of Oxford and Fellow and Keeper of the Firdousi Library of Wadham College. From 2010 Dr Abdullaeva was the Iran Heritage Foundation Research Associate on the Cambridge Shahnama Project and Academic Associate at Pembroke, Cambridge. Since September 2013 she is the Head of the Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies. Her publications reflect her research interests in Classical Persian literature, Medieval and contemporary Persian art, Russian-Iranian diplomatic encounters, cultural Orientalism in Iran, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Inaugural Gifts



Shahriar Shahnama

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama, Iran, 17th century.
page 27.1 x 16.5 cm , text box 21.3 x 12.2 cm

This manuscript, lacking its colophon, can nevertheless be dated to the 17th century, for its characteristic Safavid-period features; it is assigned to the year 1620. It contains 32 miniature paintings, generally in reasonable condition, though often quite abraded and revealing some retouching; they show how the illustration of the text has developed since the Mongol and Timurid periods displayed elsewhere in the exhibition. The paintings regularly break out of the text and picture frame, and employ a variety of different stepped formats. The volume has suffered from water damage and many paintings have lost pigment to the facing pages. Many folios have been remargined or replaced; the volume has also been trimmed to fit into the new covers provided, of typical 19th-century lacquer work and floral design: the inside covers of the papier maché binding are both decorated with two important scenes from the Shahnama: Rustam kills Suhrab and Rustam kills Isfandiyar.

The manuscript is a very generous gift to our newly established Centre. It was donated by Ali Akbar Javad, a private collector who migrated to US in 1975 and resides in Washington DC. On his initiative the manuscript is called Shahriar Shahnama in memory of his late brother Dr. Shahriar Javad, who was a pioneer in the field of Operation Research in US Logistics. He passed away on 2 March 2014.

The manuscript comes through the Nadeau auctioneers from the estate of a lady called Elizabeth, who was known under several surnames (Robertson, Miller, Weicker and Fondaras) as a result of her three marriages. She died on 29 August 2012 at the age of 96. In honour of all three husbands she established scholarships which are in great demand. She was born as Elizabeth Temple Robertson in Boston on 18 March 1916. After the death of her first husband, Charles E. Miller, she moved to Paris, where she stayed for 10 years. In France, she married Theodore Weicker Jr., of the Squibb pharmaceutical family, and the father and the grandfather of two Connecticut Governors, Lowell M. Palmer Weicker Sr. (whose ex libris can be found on the flyleaf of the manuscript) and Lowell Palmer Weicker Jr., who also served as Senator and Republican candidate for presidency in 1980. When Elizabeth and her second husband returned to the United States she became a well-known socialite, organising generous parties in their house in the East End of Long Island. The most famous was her annual Bastille Ball. As a great propagandist of French culture in America, she was appointed chevalier of the French Legion d'Honneur in 1989, officier in 2002 and commandeur of the Legion d'Honneur in 2009. It is not obvious which member of the Weicker family acquired the manuscript and when they did so. What is known is that it was acquired through the Quarich Auction House in London around 1901 as it was featured in their catalogue for 1901.

Opposite: Firdausi presenting the Shahnama to Sultan Mahmud. Firdausi, Shahriar Shahnama © Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies, Pembroke College, Cambridge



Kay Kavus ascending into the sky

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama, Iran, 17th century, 16.3 x 12.8 cm

The painting 'Kay Kavus ascending the sky' illustrates the episode from the Shahnama when the legendary Persian king Kay Kavus from the Kayanid dynasty, was tempted by the Devil to fly to the heavens and discover the secrets of the universe. This episode was one of the most popular among medieval artists illustrating the Shahnama. The story of royal flight using the same flying machine with the hungry eagles as its engine is one of the most ancient and universal in many cultural traditions, cf. Sumerian Gilgamesh, Hellenistic Alexander the Great, Avestan Kavi Usan, or Semitic Nimrud and often, especially in the Western literature (Romance of Alexander) paired with the exploration of the ocean's abyss. This universality of the wandering story produced a shared iconography, which sometimes is called visual intertextuality.

The painting here, which depicts Kay Kavus armed with a bow and arrow encountering an angel, illustrates an episode that does not actually exist in Firdausi's Shahnama. However, the rebellious king flying to the sky is mentioned in other literary works and theosophic treatises, like the commentaries on the Qur'an and Lives of the Prophets under the name of the evil Nimrud, who decided to kill the God of Ibrahim after his miraculous survival from being thrown into the fire, and the disaster of Nimrud's project of the Tower of Babylon.

Opposite: King Kay Kavus ascending into the sky and encountering the angel with the fish (detail) Shahriar Shahnama © Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies, Pembroke College, Cambridge



Sergey Feofanov

Firdausi flying on the Simurgh

Octagonal star-shaped tile, coated in a white glaze painted in light terracotta and lustre, gilded; fritware mould, 70 x 70 cm. Moscow, 2014

Sergey Feofanov graduated from the Russian University of Theatre Arts (GITIS) in 1974 where he studied Theatre Arts and Stage Design. For more than ten years he worked as a senior stage and graphic designer for the editorial board at the Central Channel of the National Russian Television (programmes for children). Since the 1990s he worked as a stage designer at children's theatres in Russia and abroad. He was also the design director of the Opening ceremony of the Goodwill Games and the National Days of Russia in India. He is the author of dozens of animated filmstrips.

Feofanov has been working in different genres and techniques: from monumental painting, portrait, drawing/caricature and graphic design to sculpture. In 1990 he was elected a member of the Moscow Union of Artists. Since 1975, Feofanov has participated in many international exhibitions and art fairs in Russia, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Belgium, Luxembourg, China, India and the UK.

Feofanov's interest in Persian mythology started several years ago; however, this interest became so strong that he has produced a whole series dedicated to the Shahnama. Most of his artworks from this series were exhibited at his solo show at the Russian Academy of Fine Arts in Moscow (December 2013-April 2014), entitled "The Flight of the Simurgh".

It is a pleasure to receive the tile depicting Firdausi flying on the Simurgh, which Sergey Feofanov made specially as a present to commemorate the opening of the Shahnama Centre at Pembroke. The idea was inspired by the 13th-century Ilkhanid lustre tiles that were produced in large quantities and varieties of styles for the impressive architectural complex in Takht-i Sulayman. Many of those rectangular and star-shaped tiles used as wall decoration bore images and verses from the Shahnama. The simurghs (phoenixes) and dragons were the most popular characters among them, as a reflection of the Perso-Chinese cultural merge mediated by the Mongol rulers for whom the complex was built. The popularity of the Shahnama themes as a common element of the design can be interpreted as a sign of the Persian cultural revival as Firdausi and his poem from its composition in the 11th century has always been considered a symbol of Iranianness and cultural identity.

Major solo exhibitions:

2013: 'Flight of Simurgh', Russian Academy of Fine Arts, Moscow 2010: 'Phoenix' Gallery, Moscow, 2000: Russian Centre of Culture and Science, Helsinki

Oposite: *Firdausi flying on the Simurgh* (detail) © Sergey Feofanov
© Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies, Pembroke College, Cambridge

Manuscripts & artefacts



An Ilkhanid lustre tile

An Ilkhanid lustre tile with a verse from the Shahnama by Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi
Iran, 1270-80s, C.43-1924, 29.2 x 30 x 1.8 cm, 2.7 kg, Fitzwilliam Museum

This tile, attributed to the end of the 13th century (1265-82), does not seem to have originated from the Takht-i Sulayman complex as its upper border has not been registered on any of the known tiles from this site. So it could originate either from a different palace, or it was made using a different mould. Cpt Hugh Calverley gave it on loan to the Fitzwilliam in June 1919. In December 1924 Mrs E.L. Calverley presented it to the Museum. Major-General Edmond Leveson (1864-1940) was married to Sybil Maitland Salvyn and they had five children. It was their eldest son Hugh Salvyn (b. 1894 in Canada) who offered the artefacts to the Fitzwilliam. Hugh Calverley during his military career participated in several Eastern campaigns of WWI, including the battles of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli in 1915, and Egypt and Palestine in 1916. This could be the reason why he developed such an interest in Islamic ceramics. Hugh graduated from Trinity College, Toronto in 1916 and immediately afterwards joined his father on the Gallipoli front. It is most likely that he acquired the tiles, especially the Iznik ones, during his stay in Turkey.

Inscription on the tile

The tile contains second part of the second misra' of the bayt with the following incipit:

Glorious Faridun was not an angel
He was not made of aloe-wood mixed with amber

فریدون فرخ فرشته نبود
به عود و به عنبر سرشه نبود

And the first part of the first misra' of the next bayt:

Be just and generous, and you will be [like] Faridun.
He achieved good fortune by justice and generosity

به داد و دهش یافت آن تیکویی
تو داد و دهش گن فریدون توبی

Thus the actual text on the tile is as follows:

"...was not made/ by justice and generosity..."

رسنه نبود به داد و دهش

These two bayts are present in standard editions of the Firdausi's Shahnama, at the end of the chapter describing Faridun capturing Zahhak and bringing him to Mount Damavand. There are several tiles known of such kind (tri-lobed arch and decoration on upper frieze). One of them with very similar dimensions (29.8 cm x 30.5 cm) is now at the Victoria & Albert Museum (No 544-1900, former Myers Collection).

Opposite: Ilkhanid lustre tile (detail) © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge



The 14th-century Shahnama

Two detached folia

These two detached folia come from a manuscript known as the Cama Shahnama, due to the fact that when last recorded, the parent manuscript was in the K.R. Cama Institute in Mumbai (Bombay). So far as we are aware, it is no longer there, which makes these pages the sole known witness of the manuscript.

The pages are heavily damaged round the margins, confirming its likely Indian provenance. From the colour scheme and free style of painting, the page layout, marginal rulings and most particularly, the calligraphy and text headings, it is clear that this is typical example of manuscript production, probably in Shiraz, in the first third of the 14th century. It therefore joins a small group of early Shahnamas that confirm the great interest in the text of Firdausi's epic in the period of Mongol domination in Iran (1258-1353).

The two pages on display depict scenes from both the 'legendary' and the 'historical' sections of the epic.

The execution scene illustrates the story of Bahman, son of the famous Iranian prince Isfandiyar. One of the most powerful episodes in the Shahnama is the fateful confrontation between Rustam, the dominant hero of the epic and Isfandiyar, sent on a doomed mission to the Helmand region to bring Rustam in chains to court. The unavoidable clash leaves Rustam victorious, but his days are numbered. After his death, Bahman invades Sistan seeking revenge on Rustam's family and here, we see the execution of Rustam's son, Faramarz. He is seen hanging upside down and being shot with arrows, a common form of execution in the Mongol period. Page dimensions: 29.5 x 19.4 cm.

The enthronement scene (shown here) illustrates the accession of the Sasanian Shah Hurmuzd, son and heir of the famous Khusrau Anushirvan (the Chosroe), who reigned AD 579-590. On his accession he, like all earlier monarchs, gave a coronation address in which he promised to rule with justice; however, he quickly started to eliminate Anushirvan's former entourage of faithful courtiers and nobles and his bloodthirsty reign ended in his being blinded and deposed. Hurmuzd is seen here with a stern face, seated on the throne and surrounded by his courtiers. The passage above the painting speaks of the glory of the season and the bounty of nature: an ironic counterpoint to the reign about to follow. The red background is characteristic of Shahnama illustrations of the 1330s; the use of gold gives a lavish touch to the ceremony. Page dimensions: 28.4 x 18.5 cm.

Opposite: *Hurmuz enthroned* (detail) © Collection of the late Dr Mehdi Gharavi, on temporary loan to Pembroke College



The 'Simorgh' Shahnama

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama

Shiraz, c. 1440-1450, 489 fols., 27 illustrations, 25 x 15 cm

This bound codex of the epic has been called the Simorgh Shahnama, after the mythical bird whose image is found in one of the paintings. The volume contains about 54,000 verses, that is, rather a long version of the poem, incorporating one or two interpolations. The manuscript contains several illuminations in addition to the paintings.

It has been kindly loaned for the exhibition by the family of Dr Mehdi Gharavi, who was born in Natanz, Iran, in 1922. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Tehran, part of which involved research in Copenhagen under Dr. Jes Asmussen in 1961-63. Dr. Gharavi was posted as Deputy Cultural Attaché of Iran in India from 1969 to 1975, first living in Delhi and then Mumbai, where he was concurrently appointed Head of the Iran Culture House. He subsequently held the position of Director of the Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies and retired shortly after the 1979 Revolution. He pursued his academic interests in Iran, and remained an active member of the Academy of Literature and Persian Language. He acquired the Simorgh Shahnama and the four loose folios for his private collection at the time of his sojourn in the Subcontinent.

The text opens with the earliest version of the prose Preface, the so-called Abu Mansur version. Although the final page containing the colophon is missing, the manuscript can be dated confidently to the middle years of the 15th century, that is about 100 years after the 'Cama' Shahnama, on the basis of the calligraphy – written in an early form of the nasta'liq script – and the iconography of the paintings, even though in most cases, these have been retouched or completely repainted in India, unfortunately by painters of very modest ability. This is particularly obvious in the faces, an area where flaking of the original pigments is quite a common problem. In one or two of the paintings, the simple design and plain colours give a strong flavour of the original Timurid work, probably carried out in Shiraz and following models established by the celebrated Ibrahim-Sultan manuscript of c. 1425.

This is particularly clear in the picture displayed here, which shows the gruesome scene of the execution of King Afrasiyab, the ruler of Turan and the legendary enemy of Iran, bringing to an end the long cycle of war and invasion that dominates the core of the legendary part of the Shahnama. His head is cut off by the Iranian Shah, Kay Khusrav, who soon afterwards renounced the throne and mysteriously disappeared into occultation. Only a king could execute a fellow ruler. The bare hillside, the small group of onlookers on the horizon, and the placement of the few protagonists, are all characteristic of mid-15th-century compositions. Even though the painting has been heavily retouched, the original design and muted colour scheme remains clear.

Opposite: Execution of Afrasiyab (detail) © Collection of the late Dr Gharavi, on temporary loan to Pembroke College



Kay Kavus ascending into the sky

Kay Kavus ascending into the sky folio from a manuscript of the Shahnama by Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Qazvin, ca. 1570s, gouache on paper, 13.2 x 13.7 cm
Fatema Soudavar Farmanfarmaian Collection

This miniature painting, a fine example of book art, used to belong to a high quality manuscript, which was most likely produced in a royal atelier. The court quality of execution and the features betraying its attribution to the Safavid period suggest that it could have been produced in Qazvin when it was the capital during the reign of Shah Tahmasp (1524 – 1576). It is Tahmasp who is credited with the revival of the fine arts, of which particularly calligraphy, book painting, and book binding, apart from large-scale city planning and architecture, flourished.

Compared with the illustration of the same episode in the Shahriar Shahnama (p.25) the iconography of the Soudavar painting is more traditional, closer to the text of Firdausi's Shahnama: Kay Kavus holds the bow and arrow in his hands but there is no angel with the fish.

Despite quite a drastic cut on the top of the painting, which slightly damages the perfect balance of the composition, it seems quite unlikely that the original painting did have the angel in the right upper corner at whom the king might have been looking. The king in regal red robe, ultramarine blue undershirt with gold embroidery and typical Safavid crown with two elegant feather aigrettes is cosily seated inside a deep throne with high borders. This quite unusual construction reminds one more of a basket used by the early European air balloon travellers rather than the more common throne depicted in earlier manuscripts.

The earliest depictions of the cage-like construction of the royal flying machine belong to the story about the evil Babylonian king Nimrud in the early Persian manuscripts (14th century). This iconography was more common for depicting Alexander the Great ascending the sky in early mediaeval French or German manuscripts. Notably, in Persian manuscript tradition already from the 15th century, Kay Kavus' flying apparatus would be depicted more like an ordinary flat throne (*takht*), or later as a chair with high back carried up by four eagles tied to the poles installed on four corners of the throne. The reason why the eagles would want to strive up in the sky and carry the heavy throne with them was their burning hunger and their desire to reach the pieces of meat attached on top of the poles.

This important element of the narrative (meat as stimulus for the eagles) is absent from the Soudavar painting. The artist was obviously more preoccupied with the beauty of composition and the luxurious palette than with the logic and the details of the story, which as one can see, was not uncommon among the illustrators of Persian literary texts. Kay Kavus' face was damaged by some orthodox reader who shared quite a common attitude about this legendary ruler, who although he never lost his *farr* (divine charisma) was often treated as not absolutely virtuous. His rather heretical desire to reveal the celestial secrets was one of the main reasons for this.

The Ali Sattaripour Shahnama

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama

Shiraz, 1 Ramadan 1048/6 January 1639, 504 fols., 47 illustrations, 38 x 22.3 cm

This handsome copy of the Shahnama also dates from the 17th century, as recorded in the detailed colophon, which notes the completion of the text (of Part II of the epic) by the scribe Muhammad Qasim son of Ghiyath al-Din Ustadi. It was probably produced in the Safavid capital, Isfahan. It is immediately clear from the dimensions of the volume, the quality of the calligraphy and of the painting, that this is a finer copy than the other Safavid manuscript on display (see p. 25). The manuscript is not, however, complete, but appears to be made up of several different sections rebound together, with several missing elements. This is partly clear from the very different pagination of the folios visible on some pages.

The picture (on folio 141 recto) illustrates a relatively popular scene, the fight between the hero Rustam and the cannibal Kafur – which is more normally depicted as a siege of Kafur's castle. The painting does, however, accurately represent the text, the verse immediately before the image saying that Rustam (son of Zal) brought his mace down on Kafur's head, smashing all together his head, his shield and his shoulder.

One particularly charming feature of the painting is the indifference of the nobleman and his page depicted at the top of the tower, who pay no attention to the scene. The pagoda in which they sit is very delicately painted. The characters in the foreground register their surprise at the action by the characteristic gesture of chewing their forefingers in astonishment.

Opposite: *Rustam fights Kafur* (detail) © Dr Ali Sattaripour © Christie's Images Limited



Muraqqa'

Iran, early Qajar, beginning of the 19th century, Br. Or. 4, 51 fols., 51 illustrations, 25 x 11 cm. Cambridge University Library

Muraqqa'-style books became the preferred format among the collectors at court and in the bazaar by the late 16th century throughout the whole Islamic world, particularly in the Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman Empires. Usually such albums would contain miniature paintings and calligraphic specimens, specially produced, or 'recycled', hence the quite diverse contents of the final manuscript. Their popularity was also due to their relatively low cost compared with full scale illustrated manuscripts. Another attractive feature of the *muraqqa'* ('patchwork') was that they could be compiled, 'patched' over the generations without any damage to their structure.

The UL *muraqqa'* is quite unusual in style: all its 51 paintings could be identified as illustrations of various episodes in the *Shahnama* by Firdausi, although not necessarily in the order of the original narrative. It seems that two artists were responsible for producing its illustrations. The first one executed the first sixteen pictures (ff. 1r-9r) with simple frames of floral design in oxidised gold. His Rustam wears his traditional outfit (tiger skin jacket and snow-leopard helmet), he is good at depicting faces, landscapes and cats. The second painter pays more attention to the frames, decorated with birds and flowers, rather than to the requirements of Rustam's dress code.

The illustrations have no text around them. That is why identification of some scenes that do not follow a well-established iconography is not a very straightforward task. Some images have titles written on the margins; however, it is not certain whether or not they were added later by one of the owners of the book who attempted to do the attributions, which are sometimes questionable. Some such suggested titles (f. 10r) were trimmed off when the book was rebound, most likely in Europe, probably before E.G. Browne acquired it (the manuscript arrived in the University Library collection from Browne's heirs in 1936). However, several scenes are easily recognisable due to the painter's willingness to follow the story closely enough. In the 'Murder of Iraj' (f. 6r), Tur is holding a gold stool with which, according to Firdausi, he killed his younger brother Iraj, causing the main Iran-Turan collision of the *Shahnama*. Similarly instantly identifiable is the depiction of the murder of Siyavush, reproduced here, who was executed in a very ritual manner: his throat was cut over a gold dish, so that not a drop of his blood would reach the earth, which would have caused his revival. The traditional depiction of this scene betrays the influence of the ancient cult of Siyavush, god of reviving nature, originated in the Soghdian oasis.

Opposite: Execution of Siyavush (detail) © By permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library



Corpus Christi Shahnama

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama, Corpus Or. 202
Shiraz, 15 Rabi' II 1053/2 July 1643, 338 fols., 12 illustrations, 37 x 23 cm
Parker Library, Corpus Christi College

This copy of the Shahnama, which is only the second volume of the original manuscript, deserves a special study. The text differs considerably from the standard editions of E.E. Bertels, J. Khaleghi-Motlagh and S.M. Dabir-Siyaqi. It appears that the manuscript illustrations are from the same atelier as Dorn 333 in the National Library of Russia, which was executed in Mashhad for Shah 'Abbas II in 1651 and contains 192 paintings. It was brought to St. Petersburg as a diplomatic gift by Khusrau Mirza as a contribution after the murder of Griboedov in 1829 (see p. 11).

There were obviously at least two artists or groups of artists who were working on the production of this copy. One was responsible for most of the paintings and can be identified as Afzal al-Husaini; two others, on ff. 324v and 329r, are by a different artist, possibly Rizayi musavvir ('the artist'). Both were working together as a part of a bigger team on the St. Petersburg manuscript.

The text used in both copies may be the same and display similar departures from the normal. The manuscript has a detailed colophon with the date of completion on 2 July 1643 and the name of the calligrapher Hajji Muhammad b. Nur al-Din Muhammad Dashti Bayazi, which suggests the possibility of its production in Khurasan. However, Isfahan or Shiraz (according to Sheila Canby) are not excluded as the possible place of production.

The painting displayed illustrates the episode 'Bahram Chubina kills Kut the Roman' (f. 284r), which reflects events that could be inspired by the real historical battles between the Sasanians and the Romans. The personality of Bahram Chubin compared with many champions in the Shahnama can be traced back to a real historical figure, Bahram VI Chubin, who was a chief commander under Hurmuzd IV, the Sasanian king of Iran, in 590-91 (see p. 35).

Opposite: *Bahram Chubina kills Kut the Roman* (detail) © Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge





Shahnama ms from Ancient India and Iran Trust

Abu'l-Qasim Firdausi, Shahnama, PERS 2.01 BD

Samarqand, 23 Dhul'Qa'da 1012/22 April 1604, 485 fols., 27 illustrations, 33.5 x 20.5 cm
Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge

The manuscript was completed on 22 April 1604 in Samarqand by Adina katib-i Bukhari. In 1857 it apparently belonged to the Imperial Library of the Mughals in Delhi. Subsequently it was sold by Quaritch to Henry White for 30 guineas and is now part of Sir Harold Bailey's collection at The Ancient India and Iran Trust. It is a complete copy with 27 paintings and the earliest, "Abu Mansuri" preface. Two similar copies, by the same scribe, are known that originate from Samarqand.

Many of the miniatures of this manuscript belong to the Rustam cycle. Most of the 27 illustrations are half page; only one on fol. 3 has a full page miniature. The scenes are frequently depicted in a most idiosyncratic way, with the main point of the story at that moment overlooked by the painter.

The illustration here depicts Bizhan, who has been just taken out of the pit, talking to Rustam. It is an extremely rare illustration of this scene, and quite realistic: Bizhan, like the image of the love-crazed Majnun, has long hair and a beard; he is still in chains, thin and exhausted. The standard iconography of this episode usually presents Bizhan sitting in the pit while Manizha lowers a chicken down to him through the hole, or Rustam moving the rock from the entrance, or Bizhan being pulled out of the pit while Manizha watches.

The story represents a rare remnant of the ancient Parthian folk story about the love of the Turanian princess Manizha for the Iranian knight Bizhan, with a happy ending unusual in Persian poetry. The story tells that once Manizha, the daughter of the Turanian king Afrasiyab, was picnicking in the plain air in the meadows near where Bizhan happened to hunt wild boars. Having seen him she immediately fell in love and asked her nurse to bring him to her tent. After some time Bizhan prepared to leave and go home. However, Manizha was determined to keep her lover and added some potion to his wine. Unconscious, he was brought into her palace in town where he was eventually discovered by her father's chamberlain. Having avoided execution on the spot, Bizhan was put into a pit while Manizha, kicked out of the palace, had to collect alms to feed her beloved. In the end Rustam arrived from Iran disguised as a merchant and rescued Bizhan from his ordeal and reunited the lovers.

Opposite: *Bizhan rescued from the pit by Rustam* (detail) © Ancient India and Iran Trust, Cambridge

Browne's Diaries



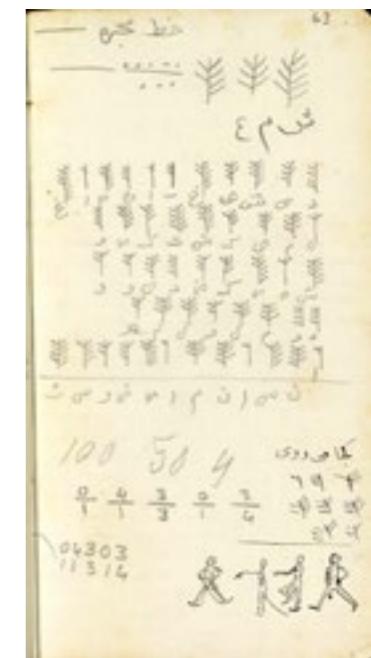
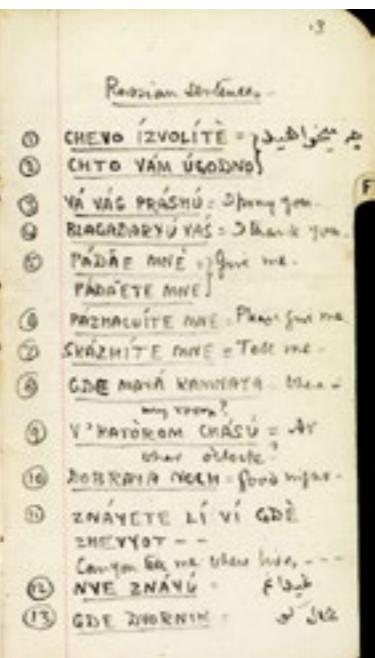
These are the first two volumes of E.G. Browne's diaries of his journey to Persia in 1887-1888, covering his itinerary through Russia and the Caucasus, and his arrival in Iran. The diaries are the basis for his celebrated book, *A year amongst the Persians* (published in 1893 and frequently reprinted). Browne made this journey before taking up his Fellowship in Pembroke, where he later went on to become the Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic. Although he devoted the remains of his life to the study of Persian literature and history, it is a remarkable fact that he never again visited Iran before he died in 1926.

Volume 2 is open at page 13, which shows Browne's efforts to learn Russian and an equivalent vocabulary in Persian. Elsewhere, p. 63, there is an example of Browne's fascination with secret codes and ciphers. Neither of these pages is reflected in the published Year. Many pages of the Diaries are adorned with his pencil drawings.

All five volumes of the Diaries have been scanned thanks to the generous support of Mr Bahman Irvani and it is intended to follow this with making more of Browne's papers from the Pembroke archives available online in digital form.

Opposite: E.G. Browne in Persian dress, Cambridge, end of the 1880s

Below: Pages from E.G. Browne's diaries © Library of Pembroke College, Cambridge



Artists

Shirin Adl

Kay Kavus ascending into the sky

Mixed media and digital collage. Oxford, 2010

Shirin Adl was born in the UK, but was brought up in Iran. She studied illustration at Loughborough University, going on to win the Hallmark M&S Talented Designer Award. She was Booktrust's official illustrator for Childrens' Book Week in 2010.

Her books for Frances Lincoln include *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*; *Pea Boy: Stories from Iran* with Elizabeth Laird, *Ramadan Moon* with Na'ima B. Robert, *Let's Celebrate: Festival Poems from around the World* and *Let's Play: Poems about Sports and Games from around the World* with Debjani Chatterjee, and *The Book of Dreams*, which she wrote and illustrated herself. Shirin lives in Oxford.

Adl's collage is a very original interpretation of the story. Kay Kavus' flying machine does not consist of a throne where he is seated, nor is he concentrating on the scenery around him, trying to see divine creatures to shoot. The bow and arrows are completely absent. Instead he is holding a cup with pleasant liquid in his hand while a teapot, a glass decanter with wine and a vase with attractive looking fruits are placed next to him! The throne, described by Firdausi as being made of real aloe wood decorated with pure gold, is replaced by an amazingly comfortable rectangular sofa with lots of soft cushions, where the king is lying on his back and enjoying himself. He is watching the poor birds struggling to pull his sofa up in the air, trying to reach the pieces of meat, while they don't have even one each to fly for: their number is reduced from four to two. Indeed, there is no need for having four: they will never reach them! The meat is steaming: either it has been freshly cooked, or most likely it is boiling, being exposed in the sun.

This piece is of extreme interest, as after eight hundred years of being depicted in various manuscripts according to a well-established rather conventional iconography, it represents a different contemporary aesthetic, engagingly stylised for children living in the 21st century. What is even more important is that the particular details depicted in the collage reflect some fresh and logical thinking about the story, not slavishly following the cliches established over the past centuries.

Opposite: King Kay Kavus ascending into the sky © Shirin Adl





Fathollah Qullar Aghassi

Kay Khusrau receives his knights before Tus' military operation against Furud

oil on canvas, 260 x 170 cm. Teheran, 1970s

Coffeehouses in Iran seemed to have been established by Shah Tahmasp under the influence of the Ottoman tradition. Drinking coffee was replaced by tea in the late 19th century but the term *qahvakhana* continued to be used interchangeably with *chaykhana*, where not only tea and coffee would be served but also soft drinks, as well as arak, opium, or water pipe (*qalyan*). Since the 16th century the status of coffee houses changed many times from the centres of male intellectual life, with the special attraction of pretty boys serving as waiters, to the places of gathering of déclassé contingents, and back.

As special entertainment there would be performances of local or traveling storytellers reciting various passages from the *Shahnama* and other literary epics, or love stories, like episodes from *Yusuf and Zulaykha*, as well as recitations of religious texts, especially during the period of the mourning month Muharram. This genre of public entertainment is a brilliant result of the natural merging of pre-Islamic Iranian traditions (particularly, Central Asian Sug-i Siyavakhsh and Sistani Rustam cycles) with the Shi'i version of Islam, reflecting the idea of martyrdom as a main feature of the Iranian mentality. The tragedy of the death of such innocent characters as Siyavush, Suhrab (*Shahnamakhani*) as well as Hasan and Husain (*ta'ziya*) was the focus of such performances. The coffeehouse painting tradition goes back to the only equipment or prop the performer would usually have: *parda*, or curtain where all the main personages of his narrative would be depicted. Later these images would be painted on the walls of the coffeehouses. Executed in the naive style catering for the popular taste of the audience, in many cases they followed the patterns of standard iconography established by professional book illustrators, often working at the royal ateliers. Davidson's 'Reception at the court of Kay Khusrau' was painted and signed by Fathollah Qullar Aghassi whose father Husain Qullar Aghassi (b. 1902) was one of the founders of the new wave of 'monumental' style coffeehouse painting. Husain Qullar Aghassi in his turn learnt painting from his father who was decorating pottery, mainly with scenes from the *Shahnama*.

The painting seems to depict a crucial episode before the tragic death of Furud, the king's step-brother, who was attacked by Tus in his castle. The scene is not among the most popular among the miniature painters; however, it is wonderfully representative: Aghassi not only 'portrays' more or less all Iranian legendary chivalry mentioned in the *Shahnama*, but indicates each of them by name, including Rustam, his father Zal and king Kay Khusrau, who is depicted as a handsome youth, maybe like one of the popular coffeehouse boys who had their circle of wealthy worshippers attracting flocks of customers. The young king turns towards Rustam, seeking his support against Tus, who is depicted as the only one opposing the others, including the King.

Opposite: *Kay Khusrau receives his knights* (detail) © Fathollah Qullar Aghassi © Olga Davidson Collection, Boston



Fereydoun Ave

Radioactive Rostam

Inkjet print on canvas, 100 x 65 cm. Tehran, 2010

Fereydoun Ave was born in 1945 in Tehran and educated in a boarding school in England and in the United States, where he studied applied art, theatre and film. Now he divides his time between Tehran, Paris, and sometimes Dubai and London, where he has been involved in the Magic of Persia contemporary art prize, inspiring and supporting a new generation of Iranian artists, among whom is the founder of Iranian contemporary pop, Farhad Moshiri. In 1984 he established Tehran's first alternative art space on 13 Vanak Street.

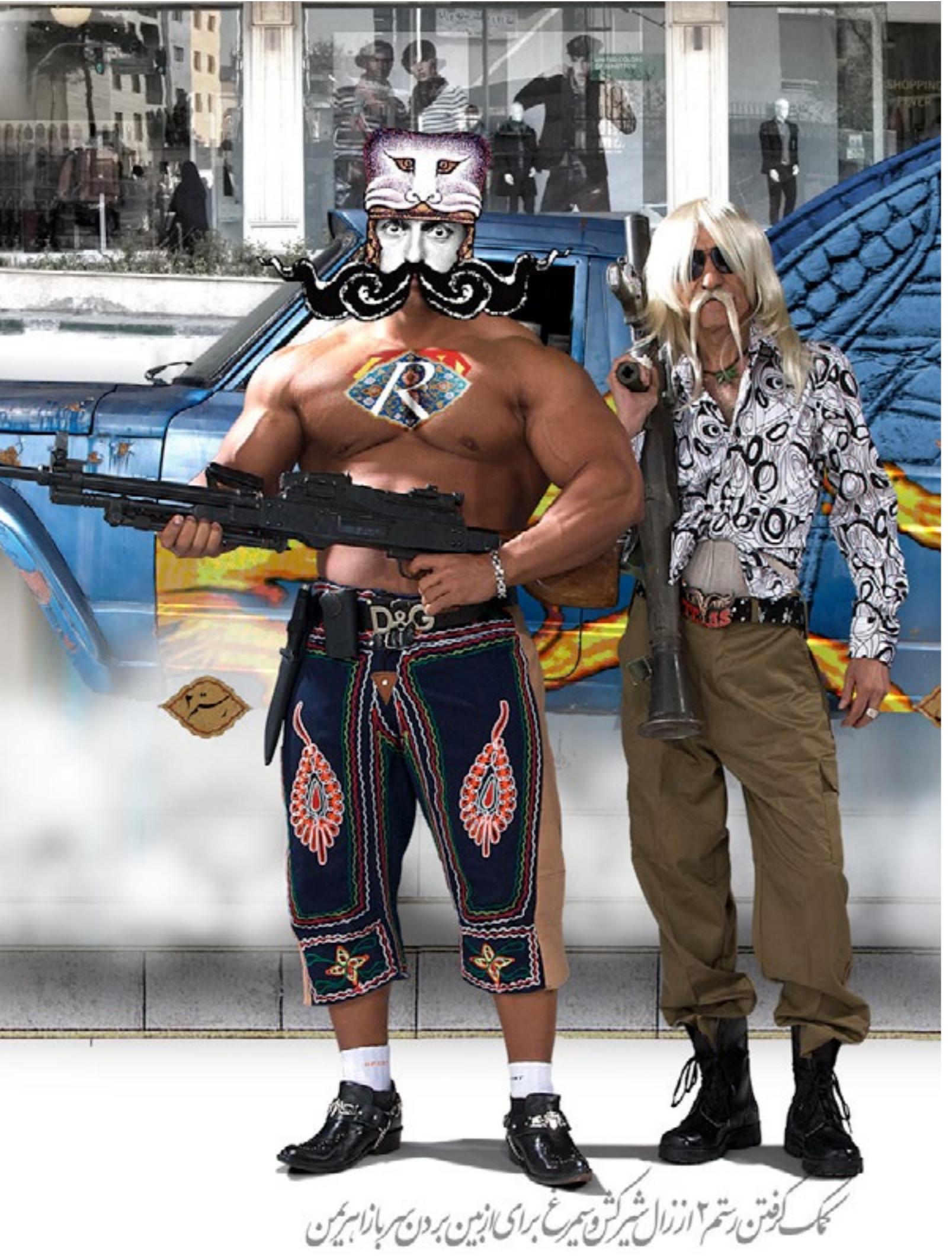
His Rostam series which he started to work on in the late 1990s ("Rostam in Late Summer", 1998–2000) and resumed in 2009 ("Rostam in the Dead of Winter") are created as mixed-media collages. According to his own words he uses the "champion of champions", i.e. the national cult figure of Rustam, to 'locate the position of masculinity in the Iranian cultural context'. By doing this he is exploring 'the macho-mystic' nature of this hero, and generally 'the mystical side to chivalry in Iranian culture', trying to combine traditionally negative connotation of machismo and its mystic dimension, which he treats as positive.

His works are in the possession of such important museums in the world as The British Museum; La Caisse des Dépôt et Consignation, Paris; Contemporary Art Museum, Tehran; and the Centre Georges Pompidou Collection. The most recent acquisition of his 'Rostam in the Dead of Winter' was made by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in February 2014.

'Radioactive Rostam' is a classical piece of Ave's macho-mystic series, bringing together sublimely masculine, traditional wrestling in the style of *zurkhana* and roses, tender and passionate in colour and energy, which are associated with both beauty, blood and violence.

His Rustam is an Iranian pahlavan (champion, *zurkhana* wrestler) depicted at the end of time, imagined to be the result of an apocalyptic nuclear explosion, when he transmutes into a multi-armed Shiva figure, symbolising both the beauty of the divine and ugliness of human aggression.

Opposite: *Radioactive Rostam* (detail) © Fereydoun Ave
Courtesy Janet Rady Fine Art



Siamack Filizadeh

Rostam II and Zaal join forces

Edition 4/5, Medium photography and digital print on canvas, 84 x 120 cm. Tehran, 2009

Siamack Filizadeh was born in 1970 in Tehran and studied graphic design at Tehran Azad University. He works in different fields of design and visual arts. His art works have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in many countries. His full series "Rostam II. Return" of sixteen prints of digitally constructed images juxtaposing photography, illustration and graphic design, was recently acquired by Los Angeles County Museum (2011).

Filizadeh's Rostam II is an extraordinary exposition of his wit, sense of humour and love for his country. Laughing at overwhelming consumerism, and traditional Qajar-style kitsch 'enhanced' by the popular culture of today's Tehran, he demonstrates deep sympathy, respect and exceptional knowledge of the mediaeval iconography of the Shahnama episodes. Filizadeh is using the images and the characters from the Shahnama as authentically Iranian features of the most recognisable symbols of national identity, equating the idea of the Shahnama with the idea of Iran, testing them by our contemporary world. Rustam is an absurd blend of the uniform of a *zurkhana* wrestler and the classical iconography of Rustam in manuscripts, i.e. a fixed, emotionless mask and the cliche'd symbols of American pop-culture, claiming that "any resemblance with the names and characters of Ferdawi's Shahnameh, is entirely coincidental!"

Filizadeh offers his own Shahnama narrative: the birth of albino Zal, according to Firdausi, was considered such a bad omen that his father ordered the baby to be left on the mountainside, where he was picked up by his 'Godmother', the Simurgh. According to Filizadeh's post-modern version, when Zal was born his mother was petrified that this could be treated as yet another machination of the British.

The print depicts Zal with a rifle in his arms and long white hair, like a grown up hippy, and a marihuana medallion. The truck Simurgh is ready to take the two heroes for a fight with *gharbzadegi*-style (western-struck) consumerism, which is symbolised by the shop Benetton - the only Western fashion brand allowed to operate in the Iranian domestic market.

It is notable that after such a joyful project, his current solo exhibition in the Tehran Aaran Gallery, is dedicated to a macabre narrative about Nasir al-Din Shah, who gets assassinated every fifty years in a different way, and resurrects as a reminiscence of the ancient, pre-Islamic cult of Siyavush, which merged with the idea of Shi'i martyrdom, a persistent feature of the Iranian mentality.

Opposite: *Rostam II and Zaal join forces* (detail) © Siamack Filizadeh © Farah Asemi



Conley Harris

Evening Angel

40 x 50 cm, oil on canvas. Boston, 2008

Conley Harris has started to paint as a teenager. The core of his painting is that of landscape whether pursuing observational, descriptive imagery or turning to more complex and intuitive approaches. A second body of paintings addresses his long interest in Persian and Indian manuscript and miniature painting and drawing. In this group he borrows, restates and rearranges iconic aspects found in Mughal and Persian art. Sometimes as inspiration he turns to subjects found in his collection of historical Indian drawings acquired from dealers in London and New York City. Increasingly, photography is entering his painting work around the subject of nature mort, addressing his witness to time among various landscape elements in plants and water gardens. Paintings in public collections include the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; DeCordova Museum, Lincoln MA.

Boston MA 1988 to present

Independent artist (painting)

University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

Professor of Painting and Drawing 1970-88

Boston University, School of Fine Arts, Boston MA

Visiting Artist 1967-69

University of Wisconsin, Madison (USA)

Master of Fine Art 1967

University of Kansas, Lawrence (USA)

Bachelor of Fine Arts Drawing and Painting 1965

Exhibitions:

Paintings have been exhibited across the US including five solo exhibitions in New York City, NY and San Francisco, CA and numerous solo exhibitions in Boston MA plus a solo exhibition in London UK. In 2009-10 a solo exhibition, "Glorious Beasts", Museum of Fine Arts Boston, referencing a selection of Safavid miniatures and manuscript sheets in the museum collections. Painting journeys have included eight work and travel periods across India, most recently as a Resident Artist at the Sanskriti Foundation located near New Delhi. Travels and exhibitions also include Japan over six journeys plus numerous painting trips to Gloucestershire UK.

Opposite: *Evening Angel* (detail) © Conley Harris

Farah Ossouli

Love and Death from "Shahnameh" Series (The Destiny of Shahnameh Women)
Gouache on cardboard, 110 x 75 cm. Tehran, 2007

Farah Ossouli, was born in Zanjan, Iran in 1953 and studied painting and graphic design at the Girls School of Fine Arts and Tehran University. She is currently based in Tehran. Her works have been acquired by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art (Tehran), Koran Museum (Tehran), Devi Art Foundation (New Delhi), Bank of Pasargad (Tehran), Imam Ali Religious Arts Museum (Tehran), Tropen Museum (Amsterdam), and Ludwig Museum (Koblenz). Ossouli's interpretation of Firdausi's masculinely sober story is very romantic and feminine. According to the original narrative, the greatest champion of all times and nations, Rustam, who even in his own time became the legend and the symbol of Iranianness, fell asleep in the meadows after yet another heroic deed and did not notice how his famous stallion Rakhsh was stolen. In complete despair, he went on foot until he found himself outside the gates of the castle of Samangan. Although it was already in Turan its lord welcomed him and offered him hospitality. The king's daughter Tahmina, having heard about the fame of Rustam, could not neglect the opportunity to spend a night with such a celebrity and came to his bedroom in the middle of the night offering herself as the mother of their child.

Firdausi's Rustam is not a romantic figure, his personality even has a hint of misogyny. His other encounter with a woman ended up by him cutting her in half as she turned out to be a witch. Seeing Rustam's reluctance to fulfil her wish, despite all Tahmina's beauty and pedigree, she promises to find his horse. Only after this Rustam agrees. As promised, Tahmina delivers the horse next day and Rustam leaves her for good; they never see each other again. Ossouli's visual version is more multidimensional and overwhelmingly lyrical. Both Rustam and Tahmina, young and beautiful, are driven to each other by sudden passion and love. Blossoms behind the loving couple symbolise the conception of their son. The composition is divided into four symmetric parts to show the sad rhythm of the four seasons with the Tree of Life in the centre, with love and death juxtaposed. The top and the bottom scenes are mirrored in semantics and composition: Tahmina, conceiving the new life in the upper picture is replaced by her dead son. The constant in this cyclic narrative is Rustam, who gives birth to his son at the beginning of the story and kills him at the end. On both sides of the painting there are two spectators of the drama which started so beautifully and ended so tragically. The feminine angel and the masculine demon, according to Ossouli, are the personifications of the ancient Zoroastrian chief divinities Ahura Mazda and Angra Manyu, bringing good and evil to humankind. This time evil is triumphant, with the blood on his sword, but it is up to the humans to choose the right path, avoiding wrong decisions.

Opposite: *Love and Death* (detail) © Farah Ossouli
Courtesy Azita Bina





Artemis Akchoti Shahbazi

Wooden Book of Persian Kings

Oil on wood. Boston, 2013

Artemis Akchoti Shahbazi is an Iranian-born Swiss artist, residing in the United States. She is a graduate of the University of Geneva (1997) and of Boston University (2004) who investigates history and culture through portraiture. Artemis' work is in private collections in the US, in European countries and in Switzerland.

Artemis was invited as an artistic consultant by Dr. Elaheh Kheyrandish at Harvard University, Department of the History of Science, Harvard College Winter session: "Early Science and Craft: When Astrology Was Part of Astronomy. A Multimedia Presentation and Workshop", January, 2014; as a guest speaker by Dr. Lisa L. Moore and Dr. Luz Marilis Lopez at Boston University, School of Social Work, "Exploring Culture Through Narrative", where she was asked to talk about Iran, exile and her discovery of Iran's history and culture through portraiture, March 2014.

Boston University (USA)
L.L.M. in American Law (2004)
University of Geneva (CH)
Licence en droit (1997)

About the Series

"A contemporary interpretation of Ferdousi's A King's Book of Kings" is a series that includes the first Iranian Kings from Firdausi's creation myths, alongside the last monarchs from the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties. Contrary to the narrative miniatures typically used to illustrate Firdausi's epic poem, Artemis' kings and queens are portraits, each the result of a thorough investigation of the aesthetic elements attributed to each ruler by Firdausi or, in the case of the more recent dynasties, the study of 19th-century travelogues, painted portraits and photographs. The artist tempers this approach by perusing contemporary faces of random people who bear a given ruler's name. All the portraits are symbolically non realistic, informed by poetry, prose and the artist's investigations. The emphasis is on working within the predetermined shapes and dimensions for each ruler and on how the natural place and shape of things have been manipulated to challenge the viewer's recognition of expected aesthetics, forms, colors and concepts.

Latest exhibitions:

2014: Touch Art Gallery, Cambridge, MA (USA), Cary Hall, Lexington, MA (USA)

Opposite: *Wooden Book of Persian kings* (detail) © Artemis Shahbazi



Veronica Shimanovskaya

Nostalgic Simurgh

Mixed media on canvas. London, 2014

Veronica Shimanovskaya is a St.Petersburg-born American artist, currently residing in London. She was exposed to the ancient epic of the Shahnama at an early age listening to her grandmother's magic Persian fairy tales and poetry. She was moved by the beauty and wisdom of this great literature and retained the tender feeling to this day. Her inquiry into contextual perception in art and interest in the East-West cultural interaction keeps her returning to ancient epic in general and the Shahnama in particular. Veronica is working on a series dedicated to the stories of the Shahnama. While exploring the interaction of expressive gestural painting and the highly controlled environment of illustration, she aspires to involve the viewer into active participatory experience. For example, her rendition of the *Bizhan and Manizha* story shows Bizhan's world viewed from the pit where he was imprisoned, thus putting the beholder into an immediately empathetic position. Her new painting *Nostalgic Simurgh* compresses time by showing two events simultaneously: Simurgh noticing abandoned Zal, and Simurgh carrying her feather to Zal. The scene implies Simurgh's recollection of the time when she found the boy while she was getting ready to part with him.

University of East London

Prof.Doc Fine Art 2013-present; MA Fine Art 2013

Harvard University, Cambridge

ALM (MA) Humanities/Dramatic Arts 2012

State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, St. Petersburg

Master of Architecture 1986

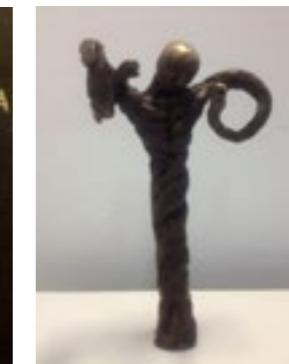
Latest exhibitions. 2014: Gallery 263 Show, Cambridge USA; No Barking aRt - Old Truman, Espacio Gallery, London, UK; 'Pravac Sila', O3ON Gallery, Belgrade, Serbia; 'ArToll Kunst Labor', Bedburg-Hau, Germany; 'Synthesis' Trinity Buoy Wharf. London, UK; 'Contexts', solo, Door & Parnik Gallery, St. Petersburg, Russia; 'Encrypt', Crypt Gallery, London, UK



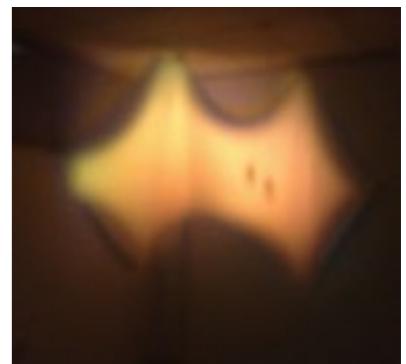
Nostalgic Simurgh. 2014. Mixed media, canvas 100x100 cm



Bizhan and Manizha 2013. Mixed media, canvas 122x140 cm



Zahhak. 2012
Bronze, ~30 cm



Golden Fleece of Barmaya
2013. Light Installation
350 x150 cm

Opposite: *Nostalgic Simurgh* (detail) © Veronica Shimanovskaya



Sama Soltani

Kiss of Rustam (Conception of Suhrab)

Gouache on paper, 90 x 50 cm. Cambridge, 2014

Sama Soltani has studied traditional Persian art at the Visual Art School (Honarha-ye Tajasomi diploma, 2004), Tehran Art University (B.A., 2012), and its relation to contemporary art at Anglia Ruskin University (M.A., 2013). During her studies she developed a strong interest in Persian medieval miniature book art; however, her passion is 20th-century Surrealism. In her current project she is trying to combine both. She has participated in art shows in London (Aga Khan University, 2012) and Cambridge (6one6 Gallery, 2013; Shahnameh Forever: Illustrating the Shahnameh in the 21st century, 2013).

Soltani's 'Kiss of Rustam (Conception of Suhrab)' is her feminist interpretation of Firdausi's masculine version of the story about the Samangan princess Tahmina and her tragic fate as a single mother, abandoned by her hero Rustam after their only night together. According to Firdausi, Tahmina had only one night of happiness, after which she was disrespected even by her son Suhrab (failed result of her concept of Suhrab), the fruit of that only happy night, for not knowing about his father. In this painting Soltani combines the technique of traditional art of arabesque illumination with feminist ideas, which she channels through the easily recognised paradigm of Klimt's absolute sexual and mental happiness.

Anglia Ruskin University (UK)

Master of Fine Art 2013

Tehran Art University (Iran)

B.A. in Painting 2012

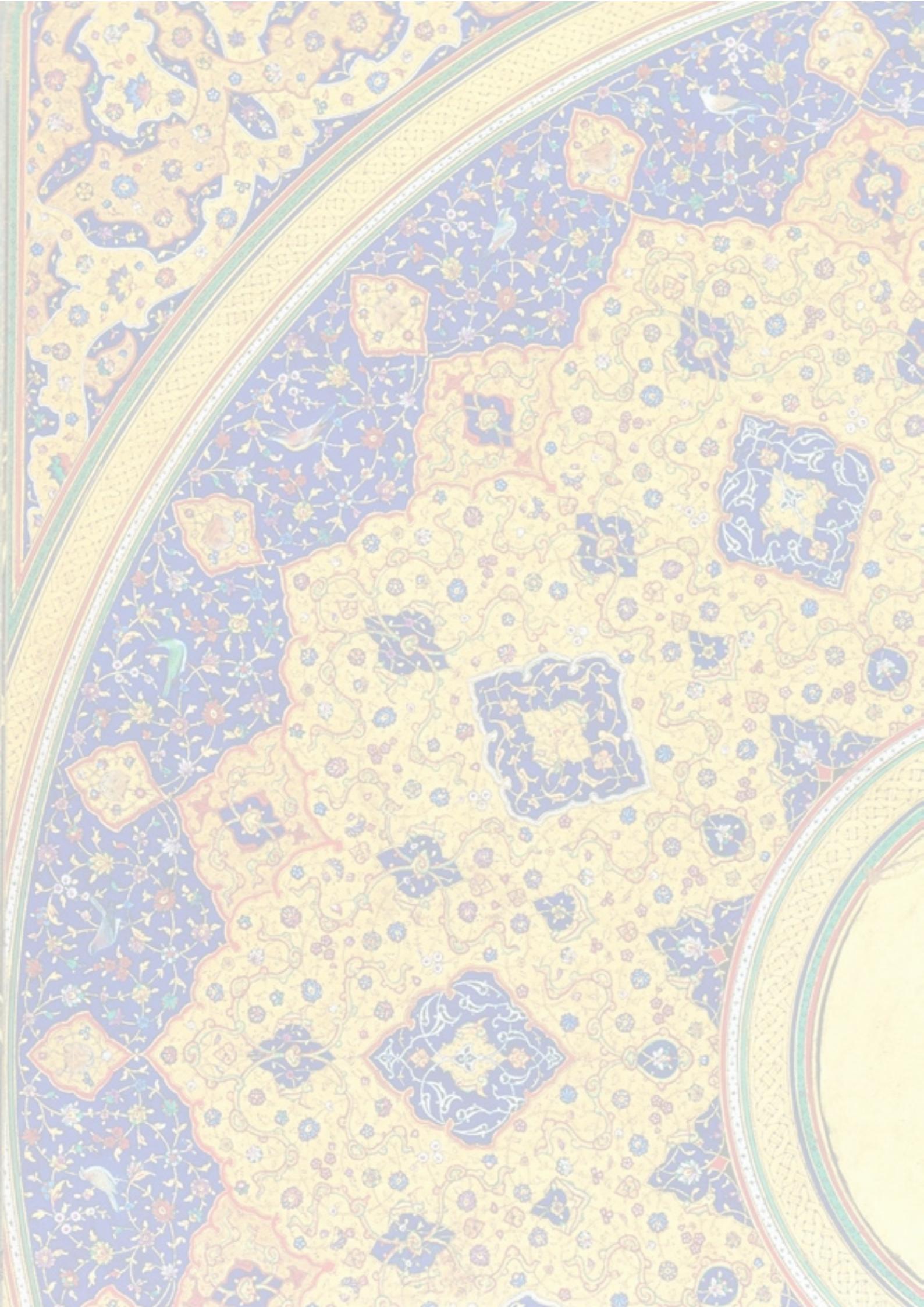
Honarha-ye Tajasomi Art School (Iran)

Diploma in Graphic Art 2004

Latest works and exhibitions:

2013: 6one6 Gallery, Cambridge; 2012: Middle East Art workshop, Agha Khan University; Illustrating the Shahnameh by Firdowsi; 2011: Winner Best Painter, Seventh Islamic Art Festival

Opposite: *Kiss of Rustam* (detail) © Sama Soltani



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Dr Yvonne Barbara Perret, an all Australian sports girl - cricket, swimming, hockey, softball, netball, rowing and dancing - came to the U.K. in the early 1940s. She studied voice at Melbourne University Conservatoire and as an Arts student was involved in theatre sets and costume design.

She is a friend and mentor of World Gifted Education for all ages. Pembroke College, Cambridge and the Open University are central to her life. A life-long interest in world myths and legends including the Dreamtime of Australia has been enhanced by an increasing knowledge of Persian literature and history.

