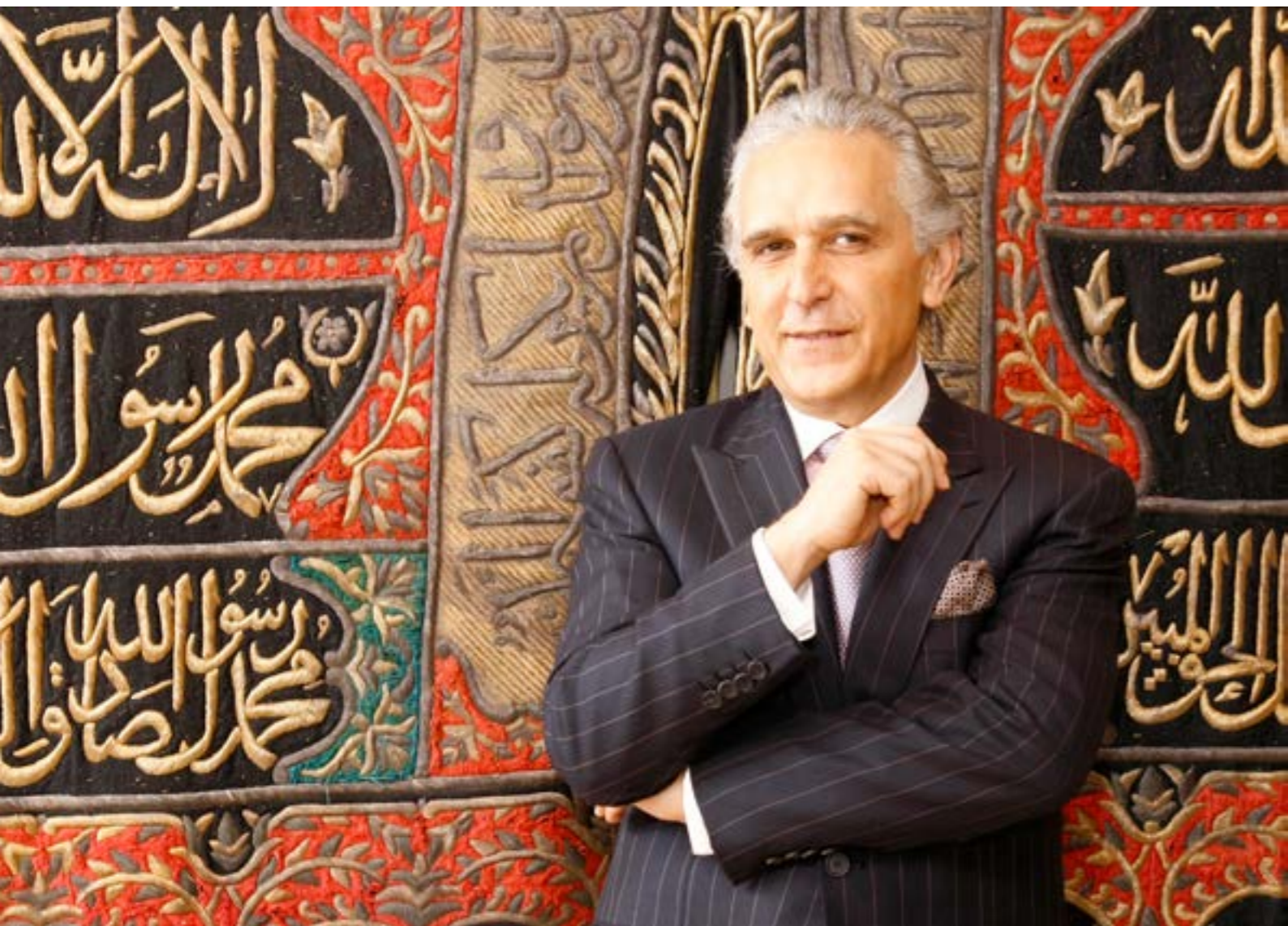


ROSTAM RETURNS:

Shahnameh in the 21st Century
Selected works from The Farjam Collection



THE
FARJAM
FOUNDATION



The Farjam Foundation

The Farjam Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization. Engaging and fostering a cross-cultural dialog, inspired through art and culture, is an integral part of the Foundation's purpose and mission. The Foundation's private art collection, The Farjam Collection, accentuates the core of the Foundation's work, featuring Islamic and pre-Islamic, Contemporary Middle Eastern, as well as Modern and Contemporary Art.

Embarking on a timeless journey through the history of art, the Collection embodies a fusion of cultures and traditions between East and West. The Islamic section encompasses the entire history of Islam, assimilating an array of objects produced from Andalusia to Mughal Indian territories. The assortment of treasures include: Islamic manuscripts, miniatures and illustrated books on science, mathematics and poetry, as well as finely decorated metalwork, lacquer, glasswork, tiles, glazed pottery, woodwork, textiles, coins, jewellery, and fine carpets.

The Modern and Contemporary Middle-Eastern section of the Collection is the foremost of its kind, comprising of iconic works by the modern masters of the region. From established to emerging to cutting edge, the artists featured mirror the rich, dynamic Middle-Eastern art scene.

The Modern and Contemporary section of the Collection include major pieces from the Impressionist, Expressionist, Modern, Pop, Minimalist and Conceptual art movements. Its expanding range of works embrace internationally recognized Modern and Contemporary masters such as, Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Joan Miro, Fernand Leger, Alberto Giacometti, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Anselm Kiefer, Anish Kapoor and Gerhard Richter.

The Farjam Foundation participates with local universities and international institutions to encourage and develop a cultural understanding through education and artistic dialogue. The Foundation hosts tours and specialized programmes for young scholars and universities. Its initiatives enhance a broader understanding of global differences through a curriculum of artistic programmes, promoting tolerance between nations.

Since its inception, The Foundation has collaborated in a variety of meaningful projects with renowned organizations, working alongside the United Nation's World Food Program, the Dubai Cares Foundation, The Prince of Wales Charity Trust and other international charitable institutions. The Farjam Foundation is a patron of The Prince's School of Traditional Arts and underwrites the post of Farjam Curator of Islamic Arts at the British Museum. Its principal objective is to connect the world through cultural, intellectual, and educational experiences.

All exhibitions and programmes are free, non-political and open to the public. The Farjam Foundation's flagship DIFC space houses a series of alternating thematic exhibitions to showcase the Collection and related educational programmes to the public.

ROSTAM RETURNS:

Shahnameh
in the
21st Century

I. Introduction

II. Shahnameh

III. Siamak Filizadeh

IV. Artefacts



Rostam Returns: Shahnameh in the 21st Century

The Shahnameh - The Book of Kings - an 11th century Persian epic poem written by Ferdowsi (932-1020) was the source of inspiration for Siamak Filizadeh's (b. 1970) *Rostam II - The Return* series which is at the center of this exhibition. Filizadeh has appropriated Rostam; the main character of the Shahnameh. Carrying this poem into the 21st Century, Filizadeh transforms the great Persian mythical hero into an overly muscled, tattooed, bazooka-shooting character riding a hybrid, super-charged mechanized beast. He gives the Shahnameh a big post-modern wink by commencing his catalogue with a 5-line disclaimer denying its influence and then rewriting the synopsis of the story.

Contrasting these contemporary pieces, The Farjam Foundation will showcase the source of inspiration for Filizadeh's work; 14th-20th century miniatures. By combining ancient and contemporary culture, the exhibition hopes to bring alive the Shahnameh story, which is of great importance to the Persian heritage. Further, these Shahnameh miniatures carry a large historical significance as they depict combat gear and arms such as rifles, knives and swords. It is the addition of similar original artefacts from The Farjam Collection that completes this exhibition.

This exhibition reflects the strength and depth of The Farjam Collection. The presentation of these works with the Shahnameh as a red thread throughout the exhibition, not only shows the audience a glimpse of the valuable Persian heritage but also gives a well-rounded taste of this splendid collection.



SHAHNAMEH

A Leaf from a Shahnameh (Detail)
16th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
25.5 x 17.5 cm

Shahnameh

The Shahnameh, also known as the Book of Kings, is a Persian epic poem, written by the famous Persian poet Abdul-Qasim Ferdowsi (932-1020). Ferdowsi completed the poem in 1010 CE, after more than 30 years of work and writing more than 50 thousand rhyming couplets. The poem narrates the history of the ancient kings of Iran, from the mythical beginnings to the Arab conquest in 651 A.D. The Shahnameh was dedicated to the Ghaznavid ruler Mahmud of Ghazna, who had succeeded in gaining power over eastern Iran and modern-day Afghanistan by the end of the tenth century. In the eyes of the poet, this king appeared as the long-awaited ruler who could end dynastic strife and reunify the region.

The poem revives pre-Islamic traditions, folklore, and oral literature. Kings and heroes are engaged in battles against foreign monstrous enemies and supernatural creatures that threaten their lives and the survival of their reigns. At the same time, the poem meditates on more profound human experiences and narrates the moral struggles, romantic interludes, and deaths of its many protagonists. All kings who ruled Iran, both local and foreign, continued to commission the production of new copies of the epic, which were often lavishly illustrated and illuminated. By appropriating this cultural treasure and assimilating its ideas and values, many foreign rulers also used it as an ideological tool, one that allowed them to establish their legitimate succession to the kings of the past.

The Shahnameh consists of three parts. The most popular part is Part II, which starts with the birth and reign of Zaal. The main character is his son, Rostam. Rostam embodies the champion of all champions and is involved in numerous stories that are very popular in the Shahnameh. Throughout the 500 years of his life Rostam

overcomes seven heroic trials and many demons. An important story is that of Rostam and his son Sohrab. Rostam falls in love with Tahmineh and marries her. He leaves her pregnant when he needs to go on a new mission. Before he leaves, Rostam gives Tahmineh a bracelet of gems, and if they have a child she is to give it to the baby. If it is a girl the girl can wear it in her hair, if it is a boy he should wear it on his arm. Tahmineh gives birth to a boy, Sohrab. Fate has it that Sohrab and Rostam meet on the battle field and don't know each other. During the battle Rostam kills Sohrab, only to then find the bracelet and realises he has killed his own son. The theme of fathers and sons reoccurs throughout the epic. The stories in which Rostam figures are the best known and most loved narratives of the Shahnameh and are amongst most famous in Persian culture.





The most famous and luxurious of the illustrated Shahnameh is said to be *The Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp*, also known as the *Shahnama-yi Shahi*. Its pages, with outstanding measurements for an illustrated book (approximately 48 x 32 cm), are made of fine paper enriched with large gold-sprinkled borders and lavish illuminations. Accompanying the 759 folios of text, written in superb nasta'liq script, are 258 paintings of exquisite quality and artistic originality.

This project was realized at the royal atelier in Tabriz, the first capital of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), and involved two generations of the most renowned artists of the time. Among them were Sultan Muhammad, Mir Musavvir, and Aqa Mirak, who succeeded each other as directors of the project through the years. Scholars still disagree about the actual dates of execution of the manuscript. It was begun around the early 1520s, probably under Shah Isma'il (r. 1501-24), the founder of the dynasty, and carried out for at least another twenty years under Shah Tahmasp, the manuscript's dedicatee and principal sponsor.

The artistic importance of this manuscript cannot be overestimated. It is considered one of the highest achievements in the arts of the book for its superb calligraphy, painting, and illumination.

From a pictorial point of view, it also marks the synthesis of the two most important phases of the Persian tradition—the Turkman style, which

developed in Tabriz and Shiraz, and the Timurid style, associated with Herat. These two strains were absorbed into the new artistic idiom of the early Safavids. Thus, the lively treatment and bright colours of landscape and surfaces; textiles inspired by the Turkman school, coexist with the more sober palette and balanced compositional layout of the Herat school, whose impact is particularly evident in some of the later paintings.

This particular folio from the Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp is the only miniature in the book that has been signed by the artist, Mir Musavvir, and depicts Manuchehr enthroned at the beginning of his reign of a hundred and twenty years.

A Leaf from the Shah Tahmasp's Shahnameh, Manuchehr on Throne
16th Century
Iran
Gouache and gold on paper
48 x 32 cm

In this illustration Rostam is fighting a tiger with his bare hands. Rostam has one hand in the tiger's mouth and one on his neck, and is winning the fight. This scene is from the beginning of Rostam's life, as in the latter stories he is always depicted wearing a tiger coat - presumably from this tiger that he kills.

The style of this illustration is different from the majority of the pieces in this exhibition, as it is loose-hand, and the black outlines are barely there and it is brightly coloured. It comes from a later time period and the Chinese influence visible in the earlier Shahnameh versions is fading away. The faces of the main characters are also showing more emotions and expressions than earlier versions.

The landscapes are more natural in colour and more colour has been used to fill in shapes. This is because paints were becoming cheaper. Especially blue, which used to be made from lapis lazuli in the beginning, a very expensive pigment found in Afghanistan. In this version of the Shahnameh, the skies have been painted blue, in the earlier versions, blue would have been used very sparingly.



A Leaf from a Safavid Shahnameh, Rostam Fighting a Tiger
19th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
32 x 20 cm

This illustration shows the moment of rescue. Rostam, wearing his tigerhead helmet, has cast away the stone and with a rope pulls the chained Bizhan up from the depths. On the left stands Manizha, in a red robe and a white veil. Encircling the main scene, a crowd of admiring soldiers witness the rescue mission.

This illustration represents the conclusion of a tale of forbidden love between the Persian warrior Bizhan and the princess Manizha, daughter of the Turanian King Afrasiyab. Bizhan falls in love with Manizheh. When Afrasiyab learns of the affair, he arrests Bizhan and imprisons him in a dark pit covered by a heavy stone. Eventually, Bizhan is saved by Rostam, who was the only one strong enough to remove the stone from the mouth of the pit.

The illustration has a very clean layout, framed by a bright blue and golden outline. Judging by

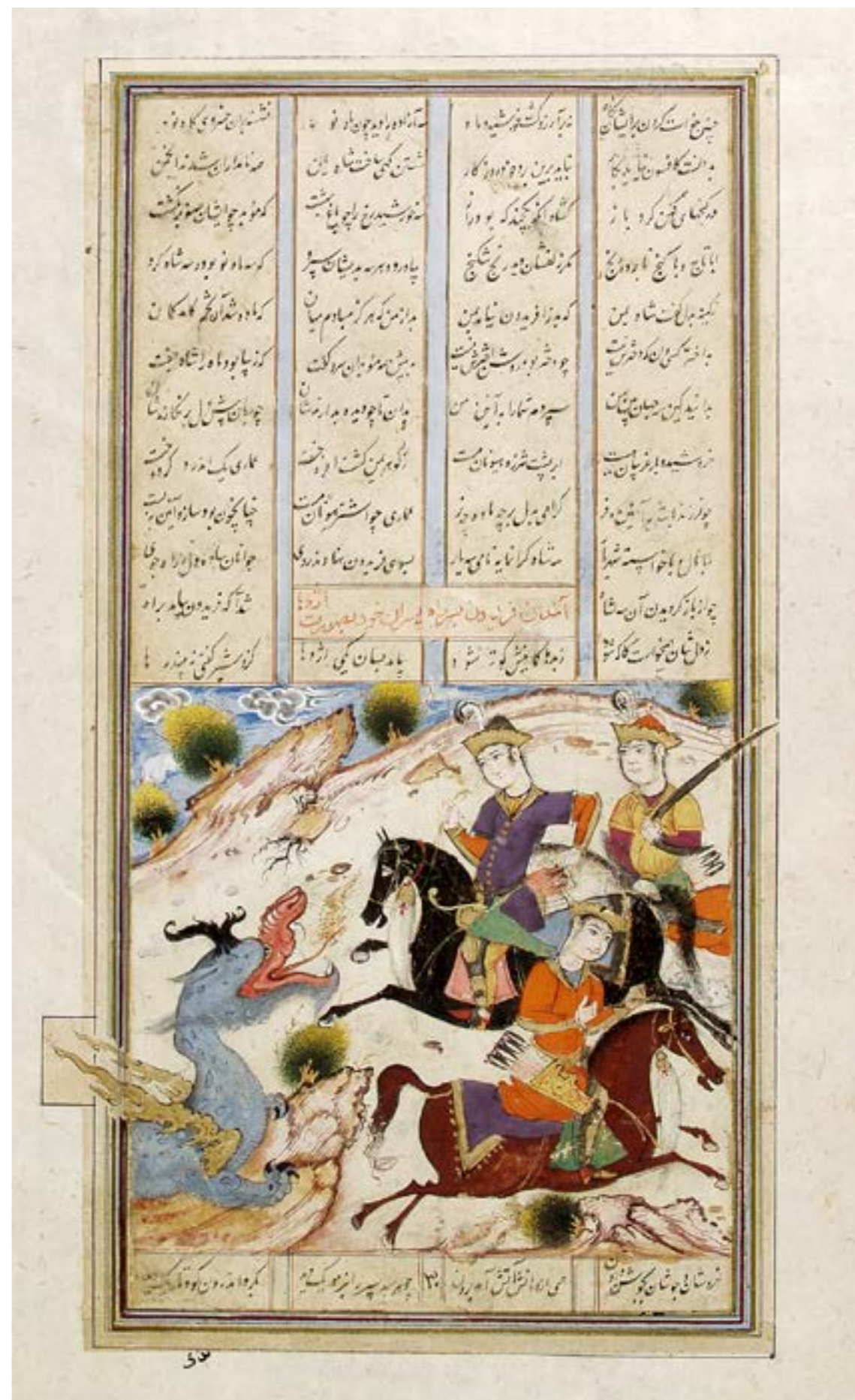
the rich use of colour and gold tones this is a very valuable illustration. At the top and bottom of the print we see Persian writing in gold leaf against a decorated background. The writing is quite large and takes up a fairly large part of the print. The scene centres itself around the well. The artist made good use of the perspective, picturing the depth of the well but also letting all the characters face the viewer. In the background of the print we see a rocky landscape with some trees.

A Leaf from a Safavid Shahnameh
17th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
32 x 22 cm





A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Alexander and Darius
 Late 15th Century
 Iran
 Gouache and gold on paper
 10.5 x 19.5 cm



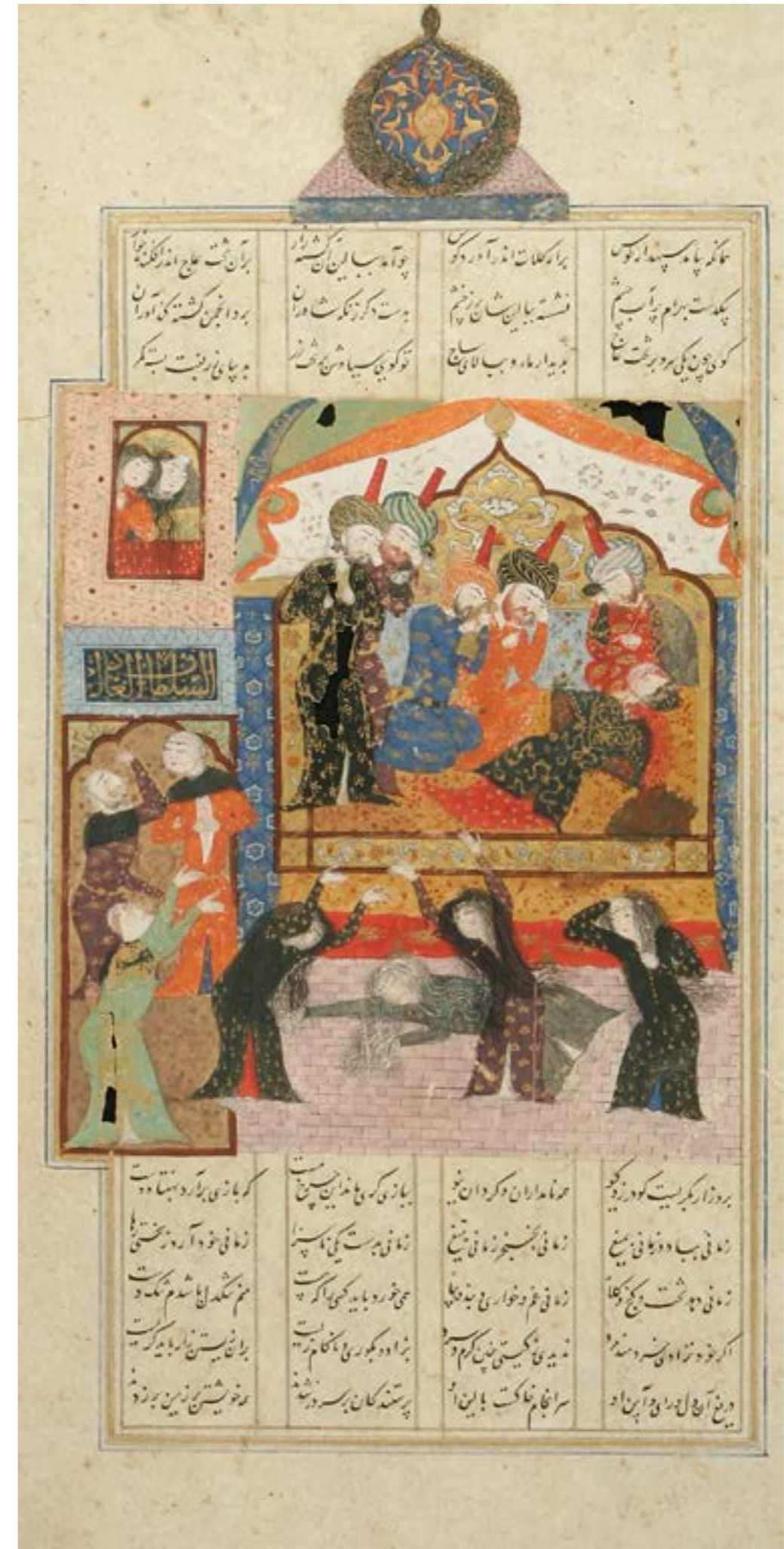
A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Ferydun and His Sons
 17th Century
 Iran
 Gouache heightened with gold
 16.5 x 13 cm

Initially, Bahram was sent to kill Rostam in order to secure the throne for his father. After an unsuccessful attempt where Bahram tries to roll a boulder into Rostam's camp, Bahram tells Rostam about his assignment. Eventually Rostam and Isfandiyar meet face to face and they fight to the death. In this scene Isfandiyar has just lost the battle. After trusting his son to Rostam, Isfandiyar dies in Bahram's arms.

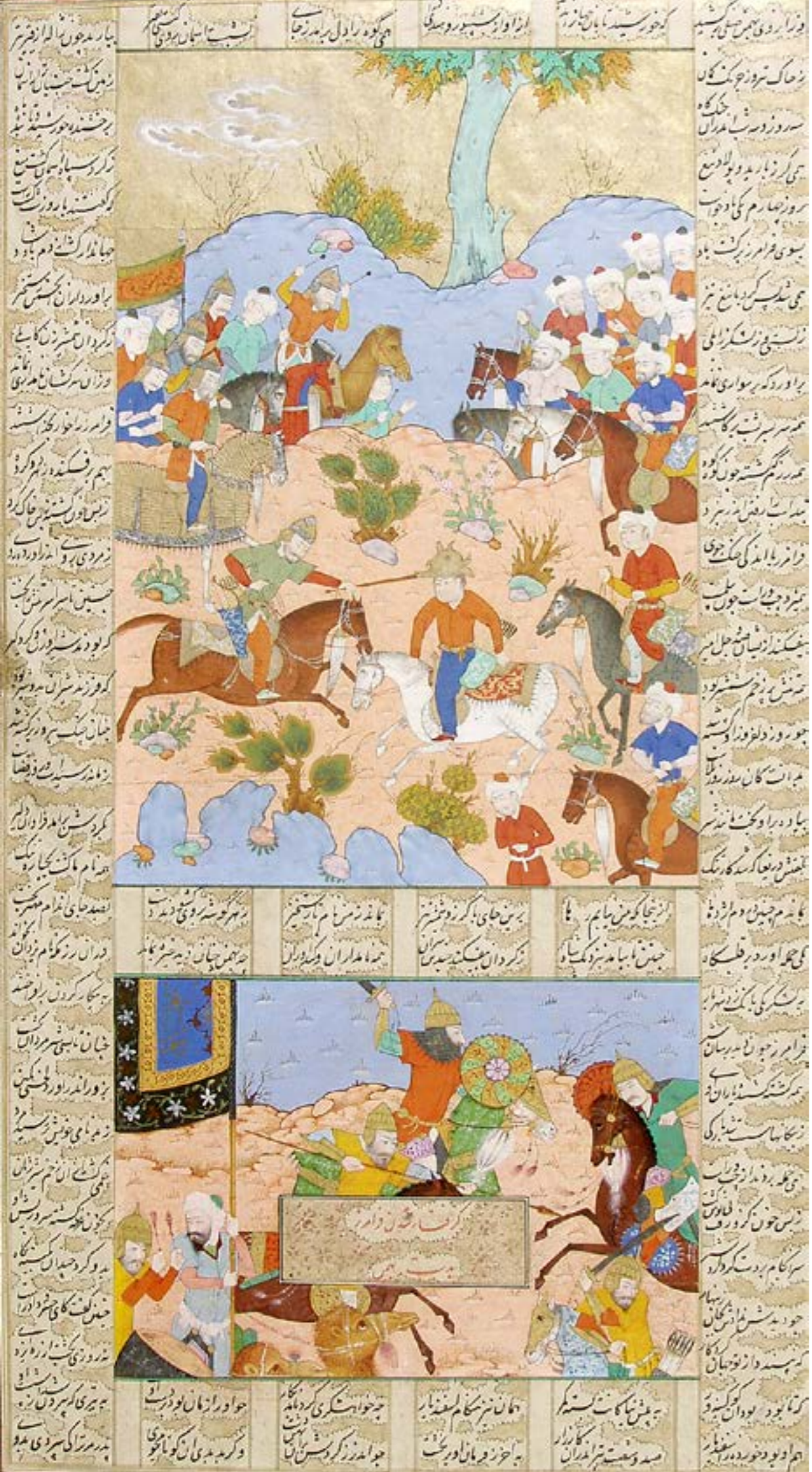
Bahram and the body of his father are the main characters in this illustration on the right. The decorated space around them emphasises this. Left of them there are 4 people grieving. On the foreground we see seven characters weeping. They look very hysterical, they show their desperation because of the loss of Isfandiyar. This is shown through their facial expressions, loose and messy hair, gestures and postures. On the upper left we see two people in a tower looking down on the mourning crowd.

The center stage and foreground are in balance because of the placement of the characters. The grieving crowd and the tower serve as a frame around the central scene. The artist has used the positioning to give depth and height to the illustration. The tower overlooking the scene is inscribed, most likely these are verses from the Quran.

The illustration is framed by a dark outlining. The outline follows the shape of the illustration and is therefore an irregular shape, instead of the painting being drawn inside an already set frame. At the top and bottom of the illustration we see four columns of Nasta'liq script, and on top of the frame there is an arabesque patterned oval shape as decoration.



A Leaf from a Shahnameh
15th Century
Iran
Gouache and gold on paper
24.5 x 12 cm



This is a recent miniature painted on old paper, showing two separate illustrations on one page. They are separated and framed by columns of Nastliq script.

Both illustrations show a battle scene. The upper one shows a large over view of a battle and the bottom illustration shows a close-up with fewer characters.

The first illustration shows two men on horses mid-battle surrounded by armed men. The men on the left are wearing helmets, some of them are on horseback and one of them is riding a camel. The group on the right is wearing turbans. They are moving towards each other, ready to fight.

The lower illustration shows fewer characters and a different view. In the middle of the illustration

there is a box with writing in it which overlaps the illustration. On the left we see a man playing the drums, next to him is a soldier holding a large flag. At the bottom of the print we see a camel, witnessing the battle scene. In the centre - partially overlapped by the box with writing - we see two horsemen riding to battle one holding a spear, the other one a shield and a sword. His sword doesn't fit the illustration and is cut off. They are riding towards two other soldiers one holding a shield the other one holding a large sword.

A Leaf from a Shahnameh
2002
Iran
Gouache, gold and silver on paper
39 x 21 cm



A Leaf from an Indian Shahnameh
17th Century
India
Gouache, gold and silver on paper
30.5 x 20.5 cm



A Leaf from an Indian Shahnameh
17th Century
India
Gouache, gold and silver on paper
30.5 x 20.5 cm

Indian Moghul miniatures were the art of the elite in Medieval India. Indian miniature paintings share many characteristics of the longstanding tradition of Islamic miniature painting. Both include incredible detailing, in foreground as well as in the background, with their vivid colours and depiction of nature. Miniature painting developed in India between the 10th and 12th centuries.

One of the most influential and thriving schools of art in India was the Mughal School. The Mughal school of miniature painting flourished in Northern India, especially under the patronage of the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan. Entrenched in a diverse mix of artistic, religious, and cultural traditions, it became one of the most productive schools in the history of Indian-Islamic art.

At the centre of this illustration we see Rostam, left character, chasing another man on horseback. Both characters are waving their weapons. On the foreground there is another chase by a larger group of men (probably Persians). The Persians have swords while the

other men have spears and shields. The men in the background are announcing their presence with trumpets. They are positioned behind the rocks in the background.



At the centre of the illustration sits the king, which highlights his importance both, in real life and in the drawing. He is sitting on a grand throne while the others are sitting on the ground around him. The king's throne appears to have a well in front of it, and is flanked by a decorated enclosure on his left and right side. Perhaps this serves to protect him. The king is covered by a grand carpet, or cloth, coated in fine flowers, to keep him out of the sun. The king is surrounded by people. On the right there is a servant bringing him food on a gold platter. Behind the mountains on the right there are two people and

a horse lurking to catch a glimpse of the king. This scene shows the power and the importance of the king over others. The characters are drawn in a simplistic fashion, and do not show any expressions. The composition of the people around the king, although not expressing much joy, does suggest admiration for the king.

A Leaf from a Shahnameh
 16th Century
 Iran
 Gouache and gold on paper
 25.5 x 17.5 cm



A Leaf from a Safavid Shahnameh
16th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
25.5 x 21 cm



A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Iskandar Entering the Land of Darkness
 17th Century
 Iran
 Gouache heightened with gold
 25.2 x 14 cm



A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Iskandar Battling the Zengis
 16th Century
 Iran
 Gouache heightened with gold
 21 x 14 cm



Portrayed is Rostam in battle with the Chinese emperor and his defeat, with Rostam pulling the rider off his elephant. There are elephant riders in the background on the right and observers on the other side wearing black hats. The illustration is framed by a dark outline and four columns of black nasta'liq script. This is a very typical Shahnameh illustration; it shows a large crowd and a lot of activity. Though it seems chaotic at first, the stark differences in colour, and black outlines, make it easy to differentiate between characters and their movements.

Rostam immediately stands out because he is larger than the other characters and has empty space around him, showing that he is the most important character within the scene.

A Leaf from a Safavid Shahnameh
16th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
25.5 x 21 cm



A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Garshasb Shooting an Arrow Before Caesar
16th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
13.5 x 20 cm



A Leaf from a Shahnameh, Faramarz Kills the Divs
17th Century
Iran
Gouache heightened with gold
19.6 x 21.5 cm



SIAMAK FILIZADEH

Rostam II and Zaal Join Forces (Detail)
2009
Digital print on canvas
102.5 x 162.5 cm

کجک کوفتن رستم از زال شیرکش و سیرع برای ازین بردن هر بازا بهرین

Siamak Filizadeh

Siamak was born in 1970 in Tehran and graduated from the Tehran Azad University with a degree in Graphic Design in 1988. As a graphic designer he worked in various fields such as advertising, branding, and visual arts. From 1997 to 2002, he was appointed Art Director and Graphic Designer of the Iranian Fajr Film. Filizadeh uses the visual language of advertising not only to genially mock the consumerist ambitions of a certain segment of the modern-day society, but to ironically highlight the official proscriptions on the imported luxury goods to which they aspire. In recent years, Siamak's works have been presented as a part of exhibitions in Chicago, Dubai, Los Angeles, New Delhi, New York, Rio de Janeiro, and Tehran.

In his series *Rostam II - The Return*, Filizadeh portrays the great Persian mythical hero in the context of present-day Tehran.

In his retelling of the classic Persian tale, Filizadeh by-passes its universalities in favour of more specific social commentary. His skillful blending of anachronistic and contemporary details carry the viewer from the mythical realm of Persia's greatest champion—Rostam—to the artist's take on the kitsch consumerism and popular culture

of today's world. The *Rostam II - The Return* series consists of sixteen prints, most of which are in the form of digitally constructed images juxtaposing photography, illustration, and graphic design. The series allows the audience to explore the artist's satirical manipulation of cultural literacy and national identity through his clever and seamless refashioning of this ancient legend.

“THE IMAGES IN THIS EXHIBITION ARE BASED ON A WORK OF FICTION AND ANY RESEMBLANCE OF THE NAMES AND CHARACTERS OF THIS STORY WITH THOSE OF FERDOSI'S SHAHNAMEH IS ENTIRE COINCIDENCE.”

- SIAMAK FILIZADEH

Amir Saam was the foremost state senator and the prime dignitary of politics and diplomacy of his time yet the grand senator had no offspring and coveted one. Many a physician he consulted and many a means he applied only in vain until...

Eventually the long wait was over and came the moment of the birth. A beautiful baby boy with white hair was born. Overcome by fear from the Amir's wrath, the Filipino maids of the Lady fled the country with the excuse of needing to renew their visas. The Lady herself was petrified that if the Amir would see their son, he would suspect that this is yet another machination of the British who had a long record of animosity with the Amir. Accordingly, they had planned to bring sorrow rather than mirth to his home. Nevertheless, there was no way out and Uncle Hooshang who was a man of... and valiant went to the Amir and said, "Praise God Almighty who has blessed you with a son whose body is as bright as silver and his face as graceful as heaven and hair as white as camphor. Amir Saam went to his Lady's chamber, saw the child, and rather than rejoicing broke down with dismay. He took off the Hermes tie from his neck, tore the Giorgio Armani shirt he was wearing, raise his head to the sky, and screamed, "Oh God..."

The Amir ordered his personal driver that very night to take the little boy off to a corner in the

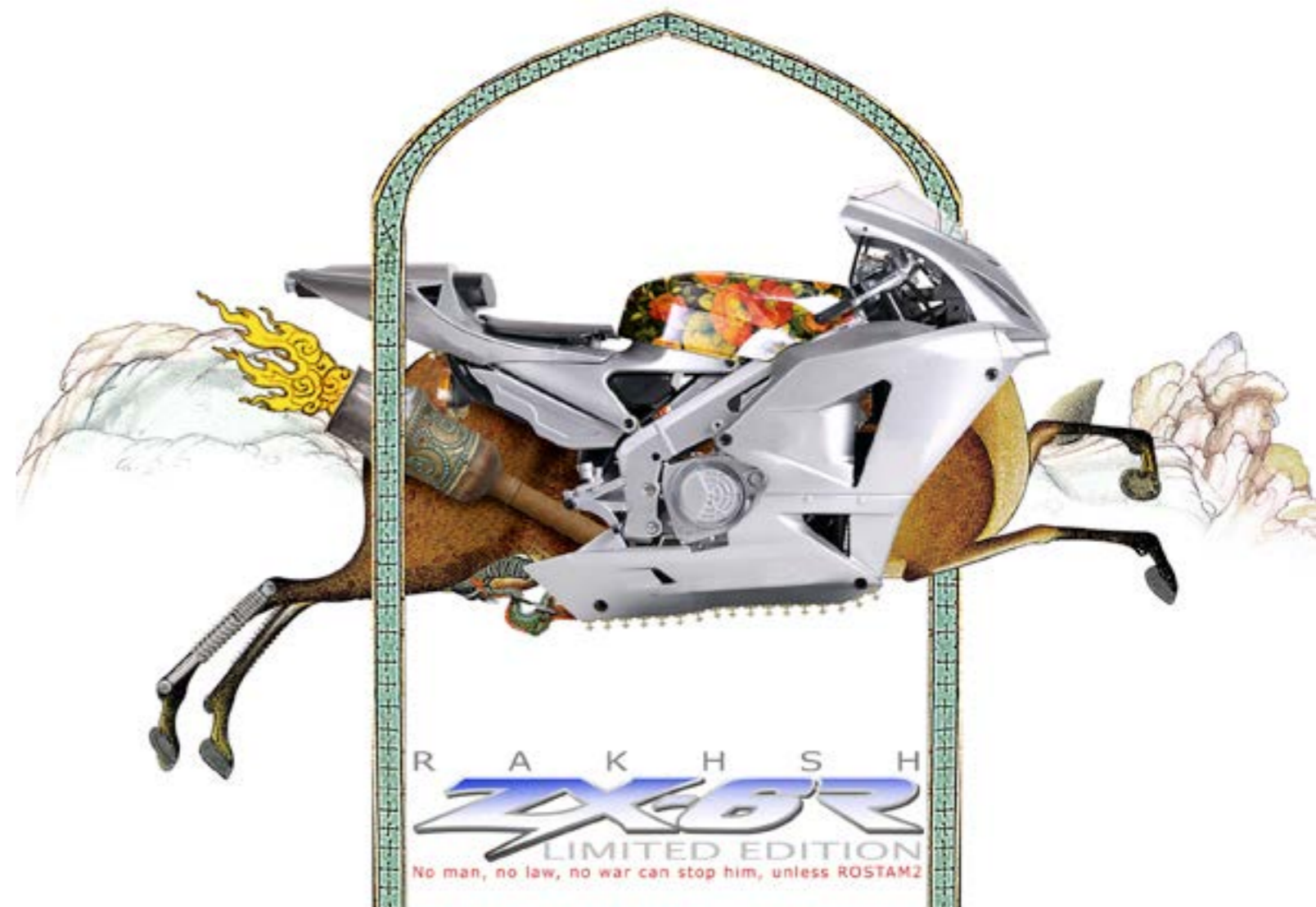
poor areas of the city and leave him there. The separation of the mother and the child was immensely heartbreaking. She put the milk bottle in the baby's mouth and looked for the last time at the baby's white face, kissed his white hair and eyebrows, and said, "Oh God, I leave my son in your hands." A moment later, the driver came along and took the baby to the remotest area of the city. The sound of the baby's crying broke the silence of the night. He was looking for a spot to leave the baby that all of a sudden he saw an immaculate pickup truck on the street. The driver wasted not a moment in hiding the baby in the back of that truck. The truck was none but a Simorgh.

Portrait of Amir Saam
2009
Digital print on inkjet paper
70 x 49.5 cm





Rostam II Returns at the age of 30 Having Been Brought Up Abroad
 2009
 Digital print on canvas
 140 x 106.5 cm



Rakhish the Choice of Rostam II for Transport
 2009
 Digital print on canvas
 72 x 103.5 cm



Return of Rostam II to Iran to Fight the Demons of Modern Day
2009
Digital print on canvas
107 x 132 cm



Rostam II Meets Tahmineh and Straight Away Marries Her
2009
Digital print on canvas
106 x 128 cm

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IRAN VA TOORAN ZAMIN
SECOND FOR CELEBRITY NEWS
OUR BIGGEST ISSUE EVER

IRAN VA TOORAN ZAMIN * 2009

DAR PEYE
BAR NAGASHTAN-E
ROSTAM2
BE KHANEH PAS AZ
SHABE AVALE EZDEVAJ

TAHMINEH:
AZ ROSTAM2
SHEKAYAT MIKONAM

PLUS! ZAAL FIGHTS WORLD HUNGER

Tahmineh is Pursuing Rostam II After He Disappears Following the Wedding Night
2009
Digital print on inkjet paper
124 x 90.5 cm

THE REGION'S BIGGEST CELEBRITY MAGAZINE

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OUR BIGGEST ISSUE EV

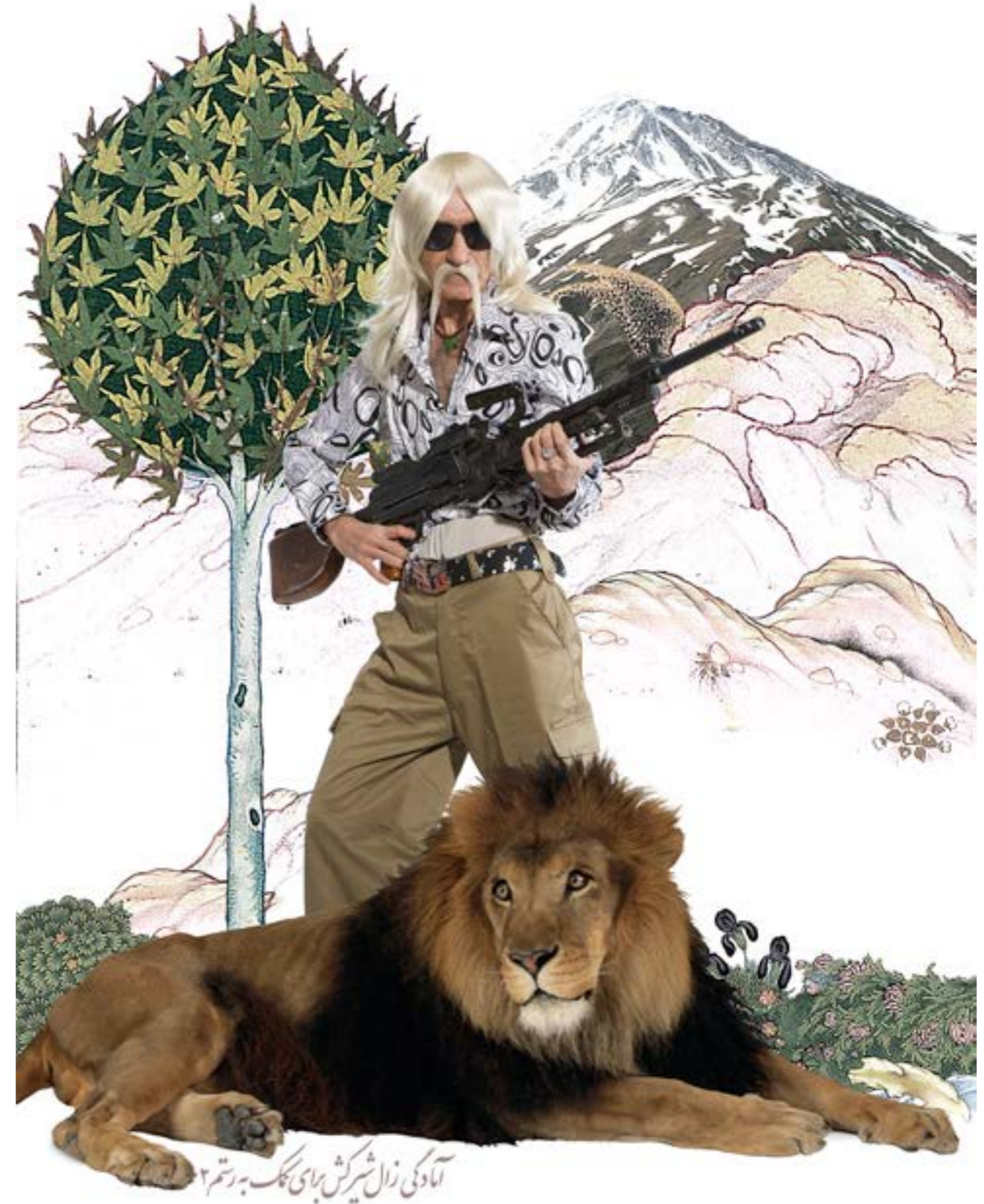
SHOMAREYE 280 ZEMESTAN

WORLD EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW!
ZAAL-E SHIR KOSH



PLUS! PICTURES OF TAHMINEH AND BABY SOHRAB

The Tabloids: Zaal Returned to Iran to Help Rostam II Fight the Demons
2009
Digital print on inkjet paper
124 x 90.5 cm



Zaal Picks Up Arms to Help Rostam II
2009
Digital print on canvas
188 x 102.5 cm



The Soldiers of Evil are Killed by Rostam II
2009
Digital print on canvas
106 x 139 cm



Rostam II and Zaal Join Forces
2009
Digital print on canvas
102.5 x 162.5 cm

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DAR VAKONESH
BE EZHARATE
TONDE HAFTEYE
GOZASHTEYE
SOHRAB JOON

ROSTAM2: MIKHORAMET JOOJEH

 **PLUS! SOHRAB'S NEW GIRLFRIEND**

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SHOMAREYE 239 - ZEMESTAN



KARSHENASAN
NEZAMI
MIGOOYAND
ROOSTAM2
HARGEZ BA
BACHEHA
NEMIJANGAD

SOHRAB JOON: BAYAD BE JAVANHA FORSAT DADEH SHAVAD

 **PLUS! SOHRAB LOOKING REALLY GOOD THESE DAYS!**



Finally Rostam II Kills His Son (Sohrab) Not Knowing That He Is the Father
2009
Digital print on canvas
120 x 162 cm

MO!
IRAN TOORAN ZAMIN
SECOND CELEBRITY NEWS
OUR BIGGEST ISSUE EVER

SHOWREZE 2009 JAN * 2009

SPIDERMAN: MARGE SOHRAB JOON YEK MASALEYE JAHANIST VA MAN ENTEGHAM MIGIRAM



AKHARIN TASAVIRE SOHRAB JOON
DAR MAJALEYE VOGUE

Spiderman is Pursuing Rostam II and Demands Revenge on Death of Sohrab (Left)
2009
Digital print on inkjet paper
124 x 90.5 cm



کشته شدن اسپایدرمن علیه دست رستم ۲

Rostam II Gets Rid of Spiderman (Above)
2009
Digital print on canvas
106 x 145.5 cm





ARTEFACTS

A Rare Ottoman Coral-set and Gold Damascened Steel Dagger (Jampiyya)
18th Century
Ottoman
Steel and gold
50 x 10 cm

Metalwork is perhaps the most continuous and best-documented artistic medium from Persia during the Islamic period. It survives mainly in brass and bronze. Most gold and silver wares, better known through literary accounts, were likely melted down. At times, echoing the forms of more ephemeral or less costly materials such as ceramics, metalwork from Persia and adjacent lands served a wide variety of utilitarian functions. These were nonetheless luxury wares that absorbed the creative energy of some of the best artists and reflected the main artistic trends and the tastes of successive dynasties.

Persian metalwork is therefore an important resource for understanding the art of Persia in the Islamic period, in particular and for the history of Islamic art in general.

Sometime toward the middle of the 12th century, the metalwork industry in Persia underwent a major transformation. Bronze and brass objects, some of them copying shapes in precious metal, were inlaid with silver and copper or gold. At

roughly the same time, hammered brass began to replace cast brass in the manufacture of luxury metal-ware.

This efflorescence of Persian metalwork in the 12th and early 13th centuries was part of a larger period of creativity in the so-called decorative arts, one that changed dramatically with the Mongol invasion, which brought to an abrupt end the important metalwork centers in Khorasan. Post-Mongol metalwork, largely attributable to Azerbaijan and Fars, exhibits simpler and less varied shapes.



A Cast Openwork Horse Head Incense Burner
12th Century
Iran
Bronze
15 x 10 cm



A Mughal Engraved Steel Helmet
18th Century
North India
Steel
39 x 23 x 20 cm



A Fine Deccani Chain-Mail Coat
17th Century
India
Steel
80 x 50 x 30 cm

For centuries the noble Bukhara, one of the most ancient cities of Central Asia, was considered to be the second Mecca of the Islamic world. The millennial traditions of state organization and urban life were preserved in Bukhara until its incorporation in the Russian Empire in 1860s. Nevertheless, Bukhara continued to enjoy a certain degree of political independence, and the practice of gift exchange served as an important way of maintaining good relations with Russian emperors.

Graceful horses of the Akhaltekin race were the most welcomed gifts for the Royal family, and exquisite saddles were made to match them. Bukhara was famous for its trapping making. Every item was a scrupulous work of three to five craftsmen: saddle-makers, goldsmiths, and experts in making festive horse-clothes, girths and saddle bands.

The prestige attached to the horse resulted in the production of equestrian armour and

trappings of considerable richness. Saddles were sometimes decorated with beautiful metal fittings; even stirrups were finely ornamented. The saddles from later Ottoman periods are similar to contemporary Turkmen jewellery.

This particular saddle has ivory pommel in the form of a lion's head, the contours overlaid with ivory plaques set with turquoises, padded seat, with stirrup straps.



An Ivory Mounted Wood Saddle
19th Century
Bukhara, Uzbekistan
Wood, ivory
50 x 45 x 25 cm



An Ottoman Coral-Set Pistol
19th Century
Turkey
Steel and silver
66 x 17 cm



An Arab Straight Sword
19th Century
Qajar
Metal
107 cm



Gilded Swords
18th Century
Iran
Metalwork with gold
103 x 15 cm



Deer Horn Dagger
19th Century
Europe
Deer horn, steel
44.5 cm

The complex history of Safavid ceramics is due in part to the geographical position of Persia, placed as it was between the Ottoman Empire, the lands of Uzbek rulers, the Mughal Empire and the Indian Ocean. The Safavid dynasty ruled over Persia for over two centuries, with the first century proving to be a challenging time on all borders with intense military disruption on the Ottoman frontier.

In Persia during the Safavid period, Kerman emerged as a major production centre of pottery. Kerman wares are characterized by decoration in cobalt blue and brownish red under a clear glaze. The drawing on examples from Mashhad appears much closer to Chinese prototypes. Tiles were also made for large decorative panels, sometimes including figural elements.

Another important type of tile decoration at this time was lustre tile. Lustre tile panels were made in square, rectangle, hexagon, octagon and polygonal forms. They contained lustre designs of human, animals, floral and geometrical motives with borders of inscriptions, which included poems, proverbs and sayings attributed to Prophet and other religious personalities.

This tile, which has been done using the Cuerda Seca technique, is of irregular hexagonal form. It has a white background painted with finely drawn figure with long moustache and yellow and green turban, with scattered cloud bands.

Cuerda Seca means applying coloured glazes to ceramic surfaces. When different coloured glazes are applied to a ceramic surface, the glazes have a tendency to run together during the firing process. In the Cuerda Seca technique, the water-soluble glazes are separated on the surface by thin lines of a greasy substance to prevent them running out of their delineated areas. A dark pigment such as manganese carbonate is usually mixed with the grease to produce a dark line around each coloured area. The artists usually used mostly yellow and shades of brown colour because the blue shades were much more expensive.



A Fragmentary Safavid Tile
17th Century
Iran
Ceramic tile and color pigment
16 x 16 cm

Considered especially expert in the use of their weapons, Mughal horsemen armed with bows could shoot three times faster than musketeers. Archers were called tir-andaz (arrow-throwers).

The Persian name for the quiver was Tarkash. It was generally a flat case, broad at the mouth, with one side straight and the other sloping to a point, and provided with a shoulder strap. This broad shape was due to the fact that the quiver was used to hold the bow as well as the arrows, although cylindrical examples also exist. Nevertheless, separate bow cases known as Qirhan were also used. Common quivers were covered with leather; more costly ones with blue or red velvet, and these were often embroidered on one side in gold or silver. A slightly different quiver case is known, which had the same width all the way down with one side straight and the other shaped in two crescent-like curves.

This quiver case has leather cases covered with velvet, which is embroidered with silver and gilt metal thread entwined around yellow silk thread, forming a lattice design. The gold and silver embroidery tells us that someone wealthy used this. The case contains eleven arrows, each with ivory terminals, delicate lacquer decoration and steel points.



A Rare Mughal Quiver and Bow Case
17th Century
India
Leather and velvet
83 x 20 x 5 cm

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ABOUT ME WHOEVER HAS INTELLIGENCE,
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SPEECH.”

- FERDOWSI

