

Tenth European Conference
of Iranian Studies

ECIS 10

Leiden University
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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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Photo: Instagram, @kazajohangr on Unsplash

Cultural Programme

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Exhibition: Splendours of the Silk Roads, curated by Elena Paskaleva

14 August-29 September 2023
Venue: Old Library, Rapenburg 70



The most unexpected innovations and fusions of the world's religions and material cultures have taken place along the trade and communication networks of Asia and Europe known today as the Silk Roads. A term coined by the German geologist Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877, the fabled Silk Roads have attracted much scholarly interest in recent years. Yet the whole complexity of these urban and port hubs remains largely unexplored and is still hidden under the veil of Euro-centric orientalist clichés about aspiring minarets, sunken ships full of precious Chinese porcelain, and exotic caravans of Bactrian camels trotting the red sand deserts. What is more, the term Silk Roads unnecessarily simplifies the artistic vibrancy of the empires that stretched from China to Turkey, and from Iran to India. Their cultures and artistic production were extremely sophisticated. The skylines of their cities and ports boasted

an exquisite decorum that was the product of continuous exchanges, mixing and melding of traditions.

At the centre of the Silk Roads, the endorheic territory of Central Asia encompasses the realms of powerful empires that ruled across huge swaths of land. Given the geographical, linguistic and social diversity of the region, the study of its complex history and rich material culture is essential for grasping the recent tensions, socio-political trends and narratives. The exhibition features postcards, prints, jewellery and textiles from Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Xinjiang. The objects are currently used for teaching within the MA and BA programmes Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University.

Elena Paskaleva is assistant professor in Critical Heritage Studies of Asia and Europe at Leiden University. Her current research focuses on the material culture of Central Asia, and in particular on the history and socio-political importance of Timurid architecture. She is the author of *Silk Road Cities documented through vintage photographs, prints and postcards* (Leiden, 2019), co-author and editor of the volume *Memory and Commemoration across Central Asia: Texts, Traditions and Practices, 10th-21st Centuries* (Brill, 2023). Currently, Dr. Paskaleva is editor-in-chief of the UNESCO two-volume collection *Exchanges along the Silk Roads. Urbanism. Landscape. Architecture* (UNESCO, 2023) and a member of the scientific panel of the UNESCO Silk Road Youth Research Grant. She has published widely on the restorations of Timurid architecture. In 2014 Dr. Paskaleva was an Associate at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University. At present, she is a researcher in the project “Turks, Texts and Territory: Imperial Ideology and Cultural Production in Central Eurasia” (2016-2024) funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO), and finalizing her monograph on the conservation of the Timurid monuments in Samarqand. Dr. Paskaleva has been a strong proponent of strengthening the study and teaching of Central Asia in Leiden within the framework of the Central Asia Initiative and LUCIS.

Exhibition: Niels Broszat, Hanging Rugs

14 August-3 September 2023

Venue: Lipsius Building, ground floor



In an era echoing with the cacophony of information overload and algorithmic entanglements, the clamour of our time is for a more elegant manner of engaging with one another. The profusion of information and algorithms has rendered the world an arduous task, fostering polarization and rigidity.

Artist Niels Broszat discerns that humanity's most profound treasures have emerged from the exchange of knowledge, skills, religion, art, and trade. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road, where tolerance, science, and art flourished, Broszat illustrates how we inhabit a period wherein connectivity is at its zenith. Yet, instead of nurturing greater tolerance, we find ourselves drifting apart. An unsettling sameness permeates various facets of existence: fashion, music, art, design, religion, and politics.

Broszat casts off the confines of convention, ushering in a new realm where fusion is celebrated. He interweaves cultures, sciences, faiths, and artistic expressions. His toolkit spans diverse materials, and his approach is multidimensional: impulsive/yet restrained, beautiful/ugly, naive/realistic, slow/fast, and so forth.

Broszat's artworks beckon us to reconsider the tapestry of our interconnected world, to reflect upon the fusion of cultures and the resonance of freedom's call. Through his artistic lens, he urges us to embrace the power of unity and individuality, and to champion the right to express and explore, unencumbered by the stranglehold of conformity.

According to curator Kenza Zouari, Niels has an exceptional sensibility when it comes to civilizations and understanding how people from all over the world, from different cultures and traditions used to live and how their customs have evolved through time and space.

He strongly believes that by tracing back to the beginning of times and understanding how civilizations created art out of their cultures' richness is a necessary anthropological process to go through in order to understand the profound meanings of humanity.

Since 2012 his work has revolved around the visual language of the Middle Ages in Europe, however, his gaze shifted over the years, outside of the Western world following the Silk Road, growing an interest in the country of Syria. He has learnt greatly from Syrian people, whose open-mindedness he encountered nowhere else. From religions, to architecture, they have embraced foreign cultures and used diversity as a powerful weapon of knowledge. That particular country showed him the importance of celebrating our differences in times when we seem to drift further apart and made him question his Western beliefs as well as the practices and so-called critical thinking we've been taught from an early age.

His art feeds on the visual languages and cultures surrounding us, using knowledge and technology to create new forms of beauty, reflecting his dream of building a new culture celebrating our diversity.

If only we could pay more attention to one another, taking the time to understand our differences, we would certainly enrich every aspect of our lives.

Statement

What makes me tick

“What if” is of greater importance to me than “what is”. I am constantly on the lookout for challenging viewpoints on whatever I encounter. This is how I entertain myself, this is how I learn. Combining elements that at first glance have little or nothing in common is what intrigues me most.

How I work

Therefore in my art I combine as well: impulsively and by mere association I add on, scrape off, thus building my creations. My work process is a succession of surprises; once it's finished I feel a comfortable distance to the work. Like I didn't make it, but someone (or something) else. This gives me a sense that my art is larger than me, because: “how on earth could something like that have been made by me?”

What it's about

The essence of my work is blending the present with the past, from the Dutch 17th century to medieval European culture. Recently I turned my attention to the Silk Road, focussing on Syria. Not only am I attracted to the richness of the cultures that gathered there and their connection to world events today, but I also want to draw attention to Syrian heritage that was lost due to the war.

My art is rich, raw, refined, cheeky, naïve, adventurous and bold. I paint and draw, make sculptures and installations, ceramics as well as digital art/NFTs. Each of the artworks is unique and self-contained, but put them together and they tell my story.

Niels Broszat

Exhibition: Farah Ossouli, Selected Paintings from the East-West & Shahnama Series, curated by Firuza Melville

14 August-3 September 2023
Venue: Lipsius Building, ground floor



Farah Ossouli (b. 1953, Zanjan, Iran), graduated from the painting department of Tehran High School of Fine Arts in 1971, and received her B.A. in Graphic Design from the Fine Arts Department, Tehran University in 1977. Ossouli's work draws on her wide-ranging background, experience, and passionate involvement in painting, photography, film, animation, graphic design, literature, and theatre. During her forty-year career as an artist, Ossouli has achieved a fusion of techniques, materials, themes, and storytelling, which has evolved into her personal style. She has been among the artists to introduce contemporary themes and ideas into miniature painting, before this practice was widely adopted by many of the region's artists.

The expressive aspects of Farah Ossouli's works are the results of her narrative style. To create a context, she has used Persian poetry in many of her works, including the "Hafez" series, but the particular feature of her work is the structures she forms on this context. The use of rich visual and literary cultures, along with traditional and contemporary tools, has made her works universal. Ossouli's traveling exhibitions held in Iran and abroad, alongside the acquisition of her works by different museums and collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), are perhaps the results of specific and yet universal narratives.

Ossouli was a co-founder of the first women's art group DENA in 2001, which introduced three generations of Iranian women's artists with different voices both in Iran and abroad. Alongside her own practice, she also advises graduate students on their art theses, curates national and international exhibitions, including the 6th Painting Biennial of Tehran (2003), regularly mentors young artists and participates as a jury in biennials and competitions, since 1998.

Exhibition: Winners of the photography biennale Contemporary Shahnameh, curated by Firuza Melville

14 August-3 September 2023

Venue: Lipsius Building, ground floor



Samaneh Asghari, 'Talking to the leaves', Sabzevar, 2017

Only several photographs represent the most important project on the National Shahnameh Photography Biennale, initiated by Korosh Javadi in 2017 and held twice before the pandemic. The participants and winners of the Competition were both professional and amateur photographers of different ages and background from all over Iran. The award-winning images were taken on a tour across the whole country being exhibited in various big and small venues and proved to be an overwhelming success, having attracted lots of attention. Compared with the medieval manuscript illustrations contemporary photography is more multidimensional,

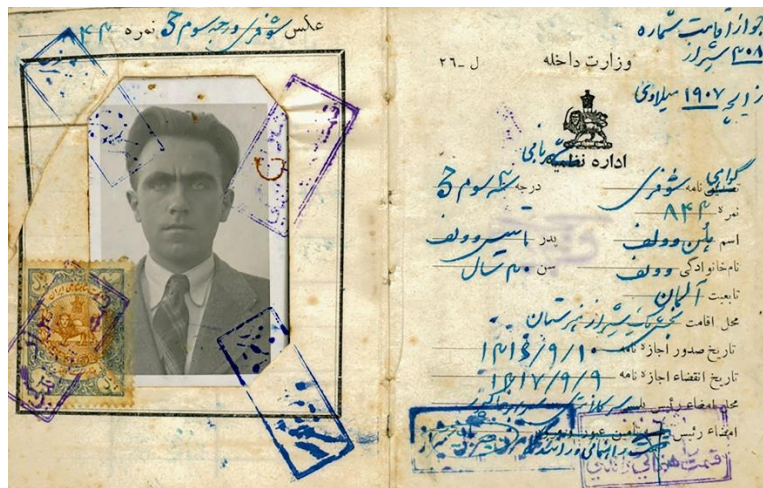
allowing more layers of perception detached from a particular story. However, the modern photography related to the theme of the Shahnameh paradoxically tends to be almost as narrational as the ancient stories in the Shahnameh. They show that the link between the ancient tradition and its legacy in post-Shahnameh Iran is very strong. What is amazing is that despite the millennium-long gap between Ferdowsi and contemporary Iranian society, the world of the Shahnameh is literally a part of the people's everyday life.



Exhibition: Official Documents, Research Material and Objects of Wulff's Collection, curated by Pedram Khosronejad

21 August-25 August 2023

Venue: Old Library, Rapenburg 70



Wulff Iranian driving documents issued in 1937 (Wulff Collection)

In conjunction with “Rereading Hans E. Wulff’s Archive of the Traditional Crafts, Technology, Science, Material Culture, and Art of Iran as A Source for Iranian Studies” panel at ECIS 10, this exhibition brings some of the official documents, research material and objects of Wulff’s Collection to the attention of researchers and scholars of the field.

In 1936, Johannes Eberhard Wulff (1907-1967) was given an official position to go to Iran at the request of Reza Shah Pahlavi the king of Iran (r. 1925-1941), to plan and set up the first ever schools of technical engineering in Iran, as foreign aid of the German government to the Iranian government. The first technical college was established by Wulff in Shiraz in 1937, and it was during the official opening of this school that he received a royal order from Reza Shah

to collect the necessary data for the preparation of an encyclopaedia of the “Traditional Crafts, Technology, Science, Material Culture, and Art of Persia”.

Documents and materials in this exhibition showcases a small parts of the mainly understudied yet significant work and achievements of Wulff during his long-term stay in Iran. The selected objects for this exhibition, include personal travel documents; photographs of technical colleges; visual research fieldnotes; personal diaries and research notes of Wulff during his imprisonment (1941- 1946) in the Australian World War II Internment Prison Camps.

Pedram Khosronejad is Adjunct Professor at the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University and the founding moderator of Anthropology of the Middle East and Central Eurasia (ACME) Network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). He is internationally recognised for his contribution to the fields of visual piety and material religion; war, memory and forced displacement; gender, sexuality, and race including slavery in modern Iran and Persianate societies, the greater Middle East and Central Asia, the Muslim world and Australia. In particular, he explores the manners by which culture, memory, and visual material are bound up in as well as influenced and altered by wider political, social, and cultural trends. Professor Khosronejad has taught at the University of Oxford (2004-2007) and was appointed as the Goli Rais Larizadeh Chair of the Iran Heritage Foundation for the Anthropology of Iran at the University of St Andrews (2007-2015). He was also a Visiting Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka (2013-2014) and elected as a Visiting Professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies of Nantes (2014-2015). He also served as Farzaneh Family Scholar and Associate Director for Iranian and Persian Gulf Studies at the Oklahoma State University (2015-2019). Between July 2020 and January 2023, he was appointed as the Curator of Persian Arts at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

Monday, 21 August 2023: Film screening
The Road of Hope and Heritage

Venue: Lipsius Building, Room 003

Time: 15:00-15:30 hrs



Film screening at the opening exhibition in Peshawar Museum, Pakistan

The Road of Hope and Heritage is an ethnographic documentary produced with the support of the “Resilient Silk Road Heritage Network” project led by the University of Central Asia in Bishkek, Laajverd in Islamabad and Durham University in the UK. It is funded by the UK's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). The GCRF project links local organizations and academic institutions in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to help develop resilient local economies and sustainable mountain societies. The film was shown during the travelling exhibition “Imagined Futures; transit corridors in High Asia” curated by Zahra Hussain and Altyn Kapalova featuring Pakistani and Central Asian artists; it opened in Peshawar and travelled to Bishkek, Tashkent, Dushanbe, Almaty in February-March 2022.

Director: Aibek Baiymbetov is a filmmaker and a research fellow at the University of Central Asia. He has been working in the field of cultural heritage for more than 10 years with a focus

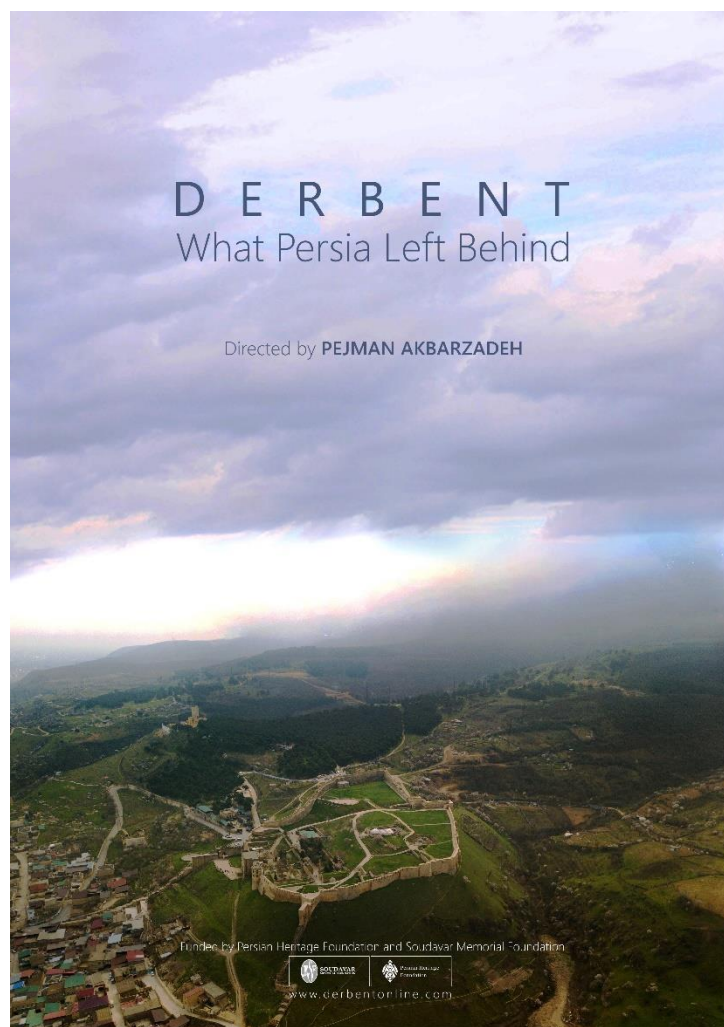
on preserving intangible cultural heritage, popularizing the best traditional knowledge and cultural practices in the high mountains of Central Asian.

Curators: Altyn Kapalova is an artist and curator based in Bishkek Kyrgyzstan. Her research focuses on cultural heritage and she has experience with working with artists across Central Asia. Zahra Hussain is an architect and cultural practitioner working for the protection of cultural heritage in the mountain areas of Pakistan. Contact: hussain.zahra@icloud.com

Tuesday, 22 August 2023: Film screening
Derbent: What Persia Left Behind,
followed by a discussion with the
director Pejman Akbarzadeh

Venue: Lipsius Building, Room 019

Time: 18:00-19:00 hrs



Derbent: What Persia Left Behind

Directed by Pejman Akbarzadeh

(Dutch Premiere + Q&A) - 30 Min., English

Registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the 6th-century Derbent (Darband) fortification complex is considered the largest defensive structure of Sasanian Persia in the Caucasus. It is now located in the Republic of Dagestan, the southernmost tip of Russia, where Westerners have been advised against travelling due to the bloody conflicts between Islamist groups and Russian forces. This film illuminates the historical significance of the fortification system, which was originally built to guard the northern frontier of the Persian Empire (Iran). *Derbent: What Persia Left Behind* also explores the unique architecture of the massive fortress, and how it has been preserved for some fifteen centuries by Persian, Arab, Turkish and Russian rulers. Built strategically in the narrowest area between the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea, the fortification includes the northernmost Middle Persian (Pahlavi) inscriptions in the world, which are in danger of destruction. The 42 km defence wall of the complex toward the Black Sea was already destroyed during the Soviet era.

Funded by the Persian Heritage Foundation in the United States and the Soudavar Memorial Foundation in Switzerland, the documentary features commentary from four internationally recognised scholars; Murtazali Gadjiev (head of the Archaeology Department of the Dagestan Science Academy), Dietrich Huff (German Archaeological Institute), Parvaneh Pourshariati (New York City College of Technology), and Matthew Canepa (University of California, Irvine). More Information & Trailer: www.DerbentOnline.com

Wednesday, 23 August 2023: Music performance by
Jansouz Collective

Venue: Scheltema Restaurant

Time: 21:00-21:30 hrs



This is an invitation for a musical journey in the Iranian cultural civilization, focusing on the two prominent instrument families of this music world based on Oud and Tanbur. This invitation aims to provide a brand-new and novel understanding of the cultural heritage of the modal music system.

JANSOUZ COLLECTIVE (2012) is a musical narration from the interpretation of multiculturalism in the performing art and music industries with an innovative approach. In the past years, the Jansouz Collective has been creating & performing interdisciplinary forms of music related to the Iranian Cultural Civilization. Sepand Dadbeh (artistic director) and Khorshid Dadbeh (lead artist) named their music collective, *Jansouz* after the artistic name of their grandfather, a renowned maestro in the field of singing and the cultural history of Persian music. The collective has enriched its artistic visions by cooperating with international artists and combining ancient musicians' musical self-discipline with a novel understanding of modern times. The core of this approach is, first and foremost, a representation of the archetypal human heroes who become detached from their origins and who would set foot on a

challenging path, afflicted by farewell and nostalgia, travelling within and without until, eventually, they reach a novel realization of the time and the being.

Sepand Dadbeh is an Iranian multi-instrumentalist, troubadour, artistic director and cultural entrepreneur. He was born in 1992, grew and flourished in a wealthy family of artists and musicians. At nine, he first took up music with Tombak, moving on to specialize in Oud and Tanbour under the supervision of some of the best musicians in Iran, such as Sohrab Pournazeri and Arsalan Kamkar. Sepand became a member of the Shams ensemble, led by maestro Kaykhosrow Pournazeri in 2011 while performing alongside great artists such as Sohrab and Tahmoures Pournazeri, Homayoun Shajarian, Alireza Ghorbani, and Antoni Rey. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Tehran University. He completed his MMus in World Music at the Codarts University in Rotterdam, where he also worked and studied in the field of Maqam music with maestro Kudsi Erguner as his educator.

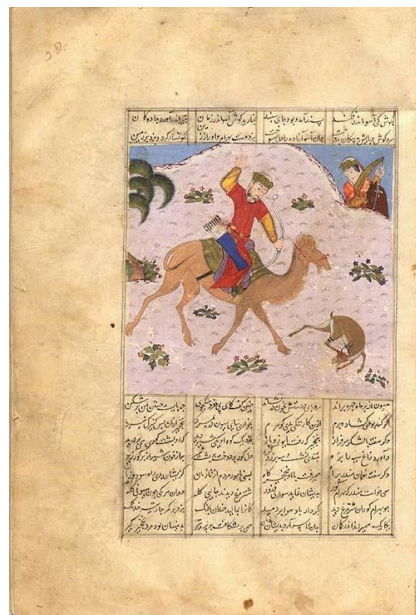
In 2012, he established with his sister Khorshid Dadbeh the musical collective *Jansouz* in Iran. After coming to Europe, they expanded their collective for a new brand career in music and performing arts. Sepand has had the privilege of collaborating with countless artists and experts worldwide in the past few years. Each project solidified his dual and concomitant passion for musical performance and cultural entrepreneurship, ultimately guiding his decision to pursue further his education in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship at Erasmus University Rotterdam. It is this very desire that, since 2015, has been the driving force behind his pursuit of a cultural advisory organization as "Persiart," which he founded in Paris, and has been dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of the arts. As a co-founder of the organization, he has sought to create a multidisciplinary approach to cross-cultural dialogue.

Khorshid Dadbeh is an Iranian Tar, Tanbour, and Setar player born in 1995. She grew up in an artistic family and started her musical journey playing Setar with her father. Later she studied at the Conservatory of Tehran. Khorshid stepped into professional activities when she was only sixteen, performing with the Shams Ensemble. During all these years, she has had the privilege of joining artists and musicians on their tours, internationally and within Iran. Khorshid completed her musical studies with a master's degree at Codarts University in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Since 2012, she has been working on different projects to present her artistic visions under the name of *Jansouz*. She performs music compositions and improvisations from Iran and collaborates with international musicians.

Thursday, 24 August 2023: Pop-up exhibition
A selection of Persian manuscripts from
the Special Collections of Leiden
University Library,
curated by Arnoud Vrolijk

Venue: Vossius Room, Leiden University Library
(main entrance hall, second floor)

Time: 14:00-16:00 hrs



In this pop-up exhibition a selection of Persian manuscripts will be on display in the Vossius Room of Leiden University Library. Arnoud Vrolijk, Curator Oriental Manuscripts and Printed Works at the Leiden University Libraries, will be present during the exhibition.

The Special Collections of Leiden University Library hosts around 1200 Persian manuscripts, which form part of the larger Leiden collection of Middle Eastern manuscripts. This collection is known as the *Legatum Warnerianum* (Warner's Legacy), after the orientalist and diplomat

Levinus Warner (1619-1665). Warner spent twenty years in Istanbul, where he acquired around 1000 manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and Ottoman Turkish for the Leiden University Library.

Among these 1000 manuscripts are two hundred Persian manuscripts, including an illustrated copy of Firdausi's *Shahnama* dated 840/1437 (Or. 494), which will be on display at the pop-up exhibition. The two hundred Persian manuscripts collected by Warner form the basis of the much larger and still growing present-day collection of Persian manuscripts, some of which can be viewed online via the University Library's website.

The late J.T.P. de Bruijn (1931-2023), Board Member and Secretary of the Societas Iranologica Europaea and Chair of New Persian Language and Culture at Leiden University, extensively studied the collection. In his valedictory lecture, entitled *Een Perzisch handschrift in Leiden* (A Persian Manuscript in Leiden) he mapped the fascinating travels of manuscript Or. 242, a manuscript copy of Sa'di's *Gulistan*, which is also one of the manuscripts on view during the pop-up exhibition.

The most complete and up-to-date access to the Leiden Persian manuscripts is Jan Just Witkam's [online inventory of Oriental manuscripts](#).

Text: Gabrielle van den Berg, based on the Leiden University Libraries [Collection Guide Persian Manuscripts and Rare Books Collection](#).

Thursday, 24 August 2023: Film screening
Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture,
followed by a discussion with the
director Pejman Akbarzadeh

Venue: Lipsius Building, Room 019

Time: 18:00-19:00 hrs



Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture

Directed by Pejman Akbarzadeh

(Dutch Premiere, + Q&A) - 30 Min., English

Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture is the first-ever documentary film on the world's largest brickwork vault. The palace is the symbol of the Persian Empire in the Sasanian era (224-651 AD), when a major part of Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) was part of Persia (Iran). The mysterious monument was abandoned after the Arab invasion of Persia in the 7th century AD but has remained a source of inspiration for archaeologists, poets, and other travellers.

Taq Kasra was in serious danger of ISIS attacks in 2015-2016 and this was the main motivation for documentary maker Pejman Akbarzadeh, based in Amsterdam, to travel to Iraq twice and film the arch before it was potentially destroyed. The film explores the history and architecture of Taq Kasra (also known as Arch of Ctesiphon) with respected archaeologists and scholars from around the world and portrays the huge impact of war and ideological policies on the identity of this ancient monument.

The following scholars have been interviewed in the film: Hossein Amanat (Persian-Canadian architect), Prof. Ed Keall (Former director of Royal Ontario Museum's Near Eastern Department), Prof. Touraj Daryaee (Director of Jordan Center for Persian Studies, Univ. of California), Dr. Ute Franke (State Museums of Berlin), Dr. Vesta Sarkhosh-Curtis (British Museum), Dr. Ali Mozaffari (Australian Research Council, Deakin Univ.), Dr. Mahmoud Mullakhalaf (Iraqi Ambassador to UNESCO), Dr. Qais Huseen Rasheed (Head of Iraqi State Board of Antiquities), Dr. Miroslav Zeman (ProjektyZeman, Prague), Prof. Robert Hillenbrand (University Of Edinburgh).

Taq Kasra: Wonder of Architecture premiered at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (SOAS) in 2018 and subsequently screened at various international conferences, museums and universities including The Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art in Washington DC, Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Yale University, the 8th Biennial Convention of the Association for the Study of the Persianate Societies in Tbilisi and the 12th Conference of the Iranian Studies Association at UC Irvine.

The film is funded by the Soudavar Memorial Foundation and the Toos Foundation. More Info and Trailer: www.TaqKasra.com

Partners



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