

Seyed Asadollah Shariatpanahi, Contemporary Iranian Painter

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Biography

Seyed Asadollah Shariatpanahi was born in 1938 in Semnan, Iran. At his childhood and under influence of his grandfather, who was painting Imams [Shiite] portraits, Seyed Asadollah fortified his inclination towards painting and art.

His talent and interest in art painting was initially discovered by his teachers, and then with recommendation from one of the renowned elders of his hometown, Shariatpanahi entered the circle of Esmā'il Ashtiani, a protégé of Kamal-ol-Molk¹, and became his student.

After getting his diploma in 1960, he was employed by the ministry of education and became a painting teacher in Semnan high schools in 1963.

In 1965, he entered Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran University and studied art painting under Morteza Momay'yez, Seyhoon, Behjat Sadr, Vaziri-Moghaddam, and Javad Hamidi who are recognized as pioneers of the visual arts in Iran.

Between 1965-1967, under influence of Hooshang Seyhoon (who was an advocate of the traditional architecture in comparison to modern art that was new in Iran), he moved towards realism in his paintings. Seyed Asadollah became increasingly interested in portraiture, and painted famous characters.

After Seyhoon, when Professor Fazlollah Reza became the dean of Tehran University, the previous (traditional) milieu of the university gave way to modernity. He was encouraged by his professors at university to utilize of modern techniques in painting. Thus, Seyed Asadollah experienced freedom of thought in art domains and acquired a free rein in their practice of art. In fact, in 1960s modernity was a new horizon in the sky of the Iranian art.

From 1975 till 1996, he had been member of jury in the annual festival of arts painting, held by ministry of education in Iran, where the talented students were identified.

In 1969, when he finished his bachelor study, he returned to his home-town, Semnan, and started his job in the organization of education for Teachers. He also taught art at Center of Intellectual Training for Children and Teenagers, which led to the birth of a new generation of artists who now hold their own spectacular artistic positions.

In his early work in 1970s and after completion of bachelor program, he was impacted by Cubism. Human body in a variety of different configurations and viewpoints was the main focus of his artworks which were analyzed, broken and deformed in a two-dimensional form in a greater context.

He continued this in the same manner until the Islamic Revolution in 1979, when Iranian society experienced profound changes in the political regime. Changes were experienced in every section of social life and the arts, including the visual arts, were no exception. During this period after revolution till the end of Iran-Iraq war, when revolutionary Islamic art was dominated, government was against any sort of modernism. His career was influenced by revolutionary excesses and he was banned for a year from serving in the organization of

¹ One of the most celebrated Iranian painters of all time

education. Shariatpanahi who was in his early way of professional career, had to put away all his paintings and stop painting to save his life.

In early 1990s, after the war ended, when Iranian society was ready to experience the post-revolutionary period in art and culture, Shariatpanahi did not find the society to be motivational and the extreme ideological medium in the society was still governing every aspect of social life.

In 1997, almost after 30 years of graduation from university, when reformists' period started and huge development in contemporary Iranian art happened by being connected to the world, Shariatpanahi benefited from a relaxation of the rules thus re-started his art paintings and now backed by 30 years' knowledge from traditional architecture, history of art in the world, as it was one of his lecture courses.

The golden period of his career began after 2000 by entering into his new-found Iranian-modernity paintings.

His artwork after 2000, are the scene of the interaction of modernity and the traditional world in such a way that his works include signs of both modernity and modern system of thought along with traditional paradigm of thinking. Shariatpanahi has consciously carried out his role in this historical twist which is carried out by avoiding the conflicts of modern-traditional worlds and creating an Iranian modernity.

Shariatpanahi's works possess modern features because he detaches himself from his work and studies it as a subject requiring more recognition (separating man). He is also centripetal in the sense that he places his own understanding in the center of his ideology and offers his perception of the notions around him. In some of his recent paintings between 2012-2016, by placing the pictures of his own face into his paintings, he not only does detach himself from the world around him but also parts from his own identity as the subject matter of the painting.

Seyed Asadollah Shariatpanahi's work has been the subject of several solo and group exhibitions in national level since 2011 to 2016; among which three exhibitions in the Koomesh Cultural Center of Semnan between 2011-2015 and one exhibition in the Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center in 2016 can be called.

In 2015, his collection of painting was published in Iran in bilingual (Persian-English) called "The Veil of Clarity".

He had been teaching art paintings over 35 years in several high educational centers in his home-town from 1960-1996 and holding courses in the area of art painting and art history at University of Semnan, Iran, as invited lecturer.

Throughout his 50 years' effort in teaching art, Seyed Asadollah has received numerous accolades. Among which, in 2015, in appreciation of his triumphs and impacts on Iranian painting and for promotion of Iranian drawing art, for more than half a century, a celebration alongside an exhibition of his artworks was held in Iran (by Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance).

Asadollah Shariatpanahi now lives in Semnan where he continues to teach painting to his students at his own art gallery.

Statement

The Middle Eastern Society fears the modernity and feels unsupported and lost in a demythologized world. I would like my paintings to be seen as a necessity for the oriental man who seeks a path through traditional being to what the era of modernity imposes on him, by carving the way through the rigid traditions, and putting light into darkness of modernity. I try in my work to imply the message to the viewers that the modern life can be as elucidated as traditional life. If the traditional life, proposes blindness in the light, and if modernity is an inevitable darkness to eyesight, my work envisions a conceptual framework in which the man lives with sight in a bright world.

I try to help the bewildered oriental man, who cannot live with his past traditions through inspiring him to reproduce a new thinking paradigm. The creation of this new paradigm starts with reviewing and pruning the traditional views and synthesizing them with new concepts. My artworks are the scene of the interaction between modernity and traditional world in such a way that my works include signs of both modernity and modern system of thoughts along with traditional thinking. I am neither the product nor the effect of modernity so much so that its influence forced me to abandon my own traditions; while I am not either a bigot adherent of traditions.

I have created this setting in order to have free rein in explaining my outlook towards the world around; a setting in which I would be able to relay my ideas and reflections of the world around me without solid explicitness of realism, and with more freedom, too. I also like the act of camouflage belonging to the traditional world, the curving and intertwining lines that hide within shapes and forms. In my works, concepts are neither conspicuous between lines and colors nor hidden in such a way that the observer is unable to detect their presence. With careful reading between the lines, the viewer could grasp the shapes and intentions the painter had in mind, and through the mixture of drawings and pictures hidden within colors and curves of the lines, one can reach a deeper understanding of my psychology.

My paintings are not a recording of the events happened around me but my reflection of them. I apply this approach to painting of the political and social events of the Iranian society not as a replica but my own perception and interpretation of them. I offer the audience my understanding of the events.

Solo Exhibitions

2017	d'Angers Art Gallery	Semnan - Iran
2017	Iranian Artists Forum	Tehran - Iran
2017	Ebn-e-Sina Art Center	Tehran - Iran
2016	Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center	Tehran - Iran
2015	Koomesh Cultural Center of Semnan	Semnan - Iran
2013	Koomesh Cultural Center of Semnan	Semnan - Iran
2008	Koomesh Cultural Center of Semnan	Semnan - Iran
1970	6th Bahman Higher Education Center	Semnan - Iran

Group Exhibitions

2018	d'Angers Gallery	Semnan-Iran
2017	Society of Canadian artists-Online	Canada
2017	University of Semnan	Semnan-Iran
2016	Golestan Gallery	Tehran - Iran
2016	Abstract Exhibition - Contemporary Art Gallery Online	Maryland - United States
2016	All Colors Exhibition - Contemporary Art Gallery Online	Maryland - United States
2016	Colors of Humanity Art Gallery	Everett - United States
2016	Contemporary Art Gallery Online	Annapolis-Maryland - United States
2003	Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art	Tehran - Iran
1969	Naghsh Gallery	Tehran - Iran

Educations

1965 – 1969	Bachelor- Fine Arts in painting	University of Tehran- Faculty of Fine Arts
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Teachings

1989 – 2000	History of art	University of Semnan- Semnan-Iran
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Jobs

2008 – 2009	Lecturer at the Faculty of Arts	University of Semnan, Semnan, Iran
2008 – 2011	Lecturer	Narjes Institute of Higher Education, Semnan, Iran
2003 – 2006	Lecturer	Iranian Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research (Jahad-e-Daneshgahi), Semnan, Iran
1996 – 2016	Director	Mani Art Gallery, Semnan, Iran
1996 – 2016	Graphist	Self-employed, Tehran- Semnan, Iran
1997 – 1998	Supervisor	School Education Department, Semnan, Iran
1975 – 1996	Member of Jury	Festival of Art Painting, Tehran, Iran
1970 – 1974	Director	Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, Semnan, Iran
1960 – 1997	Art Teacher	Several Higher Education Schools, Semnan, Iran

Achievements

2015	Appreciation of Artist's Impacts on Iranian Painting	Seyed Asadollah Shariatpanahi - Semnan-Iran
1997	The best poster designed on the occasion of teacher's day in Iran	Winner of First Prize - Tehran – Iran
1976 - 2015	Ministry of Education	More than 40 Letter of honor- Semnan-Iran
1971	Minister of Education of Iran	Letter of honor - Semnan-Iran

Publications

2015	Author of a book called 'The Veil of Clarity'	Tehran-Iran
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Media

1340 ART	War and Art-Review of artist's work-Q2 Edition	2018	The Netherland
ARTiculAction	Interview with Asadollah Shariatpanahi	2017	London - United Kingdom
Art Maze Magazine	Art Review - Asadollah Shariatpanahi	2017	London - United Kingdom
Art News Portal	The Hidden Vein of Colors, an Exhibition by Asadollah Shariatpanahi	2017	New York - United States
IRIB Channel 4	Interview	2016	Tehran - Iran
Radio Javan - Leaf Language	Book Review: The Veil of Clarity	2016	Tehran - Iran
Tandis Magazine	A Look into Asadollah Shariatpanahi Exhibition	2016	Tehran - Iran
IRNA	"Veil of Clarity" Book Launch and Seyed Asadollah Shariatpanahi Exhibition	2015	Tehran - Iran
Semnan TV	With An Artist	2000	Semnan - Iran