40
MANUCHIR SLAGH SAM. AN ILLUSTRATED LEAF FROM A MANUSCRIPT OF FIRDUSI’S SHAHNAMA. SHIRAZ.
PERSIA. CIRCA 1560

Gouache with one of gold on paper, 25 lines to the page written on gold-sprinkled cream paper in four columns of nasta’liq script in black ink, intercolumnar double rules decorated with foliage in gold on blue ground or black on gold ground, inner margins ruled in colours and gold, 2 illuminated headings in nasta’liq script in white on gold ground decorated with intertwining floral motifs, outer borders richly decorated with animals and birds in silver and gold
42.5 by 27.2 cm

The other half of the frontispiece from the same manuscript is now in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Harvard (inv. no. 2002.30.37).

Four paintings from the same manuscript were sold in these rooms on 5 April 2006, lots 19-43.

For further reading on similar illustrated manuscripts from the school of Shiraz refer to: Ughtasar, L., Timurid governors, Shahzada artists and Ottoman Collectors - Sixteenth century Shiraz manuscripts, Istanbul, 2006.

£20,000 - 50,000 / €25,200 - 52,800
41
A PORTRAIT OF A YOUTH HOLDING A CRUTCH ACROSS HIS SHOULDERS, ISFAHAN, CIRCA 1620-50

He stands facing left, wearing an embroidered tunic and matching pantaloons, a dagger tucked in a striped sash about his waist, a yellow shawl over his right shoulder, a furtrimmed cap upon his head, gold vegetation and clouds in background, tinted drawing on paper, laid down on card with gold and red borders

PROVENANCE
The Hamig Kevorkian Collection
F.R. Musqan


It bears the seal impression of a certain Haji Muhammad Mezh Karbali, dated 1212 (1694).

£ 8,000-12,000 € 10,000-15,000

42
AN ILLUSTRATED AND ILLUMINATED ALBUM LEAF, PRINCE AND ATTENDANTS VISITING HOLYMEN, WITH CALLIGRAPHY ON VERSO, MUGHAL, INDIA, 17TH CENTURY (WITH 18TH CENTURY ADDITIONS)

Provenance
The Hamig Kevorkian Collection
F.R. Musqan

This drawing relates closely to other drawings of the Isfahani school and it is possible to attribute this work to Almas based on the distinctive way he draws the eyes of his figures, with a rather wide almond shape, which is more rounded than that of other artists of the period and high eyebrows which meet firmly in the middle.

According to Sheila Carney, Almas was strongly influenced by the work of Riza and was probably one of his pupils. She claims amongst his works a group of signed portraits and sixty-seven signed illustrations in a Shahnamah produced between 1642 and 1650 for Shah Abbas II. She concludes that his career began in the 1620s and continued until 1650 (Carney 1996, no. 50, p.38).

For other works signed or attributed to Almas see (Stechelburger 1904, no. LXVI), Robinson 1945, no. 60 and Soufian 1990, nos. 111, 112, 118, 119, and fig. 45.

£ 15,000-20,000 € 18,000-25,000
AN AKBAR PERIOD MINIATURE DEPICTING A MEETING IN A GARDEN, WITH CALLIGRAPHY. MOUNTED AS AN ALBUM PAGE, INDIA, CIRCA 1590.

PAINTING: 288 BY 163CM.

FOLIO: 314 BY 193CM.

The calligraphic page includes three couples in praise of the Prophet and is copied by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabir Shah Jahan.

No scribe of the Shah Jahan period with the name 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabir is recorded, however, there is a scribe of that name, who was originally from Herat, moved to India and worked at Khur 'aan's Library for sometime and then joined Jahangir's from whom he received the titles 'Abbas 'Ali Rauan and Rawshan Rauan. His death is not recorded. His recorded works are dated between 966 (1559 AD) and 1004 (1694 AD). If the same calligrapher, this piece would be his latest recorded and shows he must have lived during Shah Jahan's period. (Ref: Mehdi Bayani, Shah' va 'es'ne Khosrau va, vol. II, Tehran, 1946, p.389-91).

£ 80,000 - 100,000
£ 101,000 - 126,000
Within a lush, walled garden, enhanced by a sprawling fountain and tamarisk trees, a prince and lady respectfully greet a lady wrapped in a white shawl. The lady's garments echo his royal status, turban decorated with pearls, flowers, and gold bands; a gold cloud collar at his neck; a fluffly green shawl around his body; his waist two sashes from which hang a small knife, a golden chain looped with four archer's thumb rings and two black seashells. His turban is a type worn in Mughal India but in Central Asia and Persia. The bowing lady wears pearls and jewelry that suggest higher status than that of a servant, and her bejeweled headress reveals her Chaghatay origin.

The architectural details are carefully and beautifully rendered, particularly the carved red sandstone and the gold-painted details on the doors. The view through the open door at lower left is only partially blocked by a black curtain through which steps and archways can just be glimpsed. The fretted veranda allows passage to the interior bringing covered gifts.

Because there is no text associated with this painting, and because the event is unknown in other illustrated manuscripts, it is not possible to know who has arrived with a retinue and gifts. The style of the painting points to a date of around 1660, very similar to that of the "South Kensington" Baburnama, but the surviving entries outdate it having been made for that manuscript. The subject is not known in any of the Baburnama manuscripts.

A clue to the type of manuscript from which this painting comes is that the figures wore garments foreign to Mughal India. In the same way that Mughal artists dressed figures in Christian stories in European attire, they dressed figures in Mughal illustrations of Persian and Central Asian poetry and literature in exotic clothing, known to the artists from foreigner at the court and from foreign paintings. But the physical setting usually was Mughal, because that was the experience of most of the Mughal artists.

The painting was probably made in Agra's kathwara to illustrate a manuscript of Persian poetry or literature, of which there are several high quality examples extant dating or datable to ca. 1650. The Divan of Amanat of 1685 (cols. Schimmel and Welch, Met Mus., 1983) is one of the earliest and smallest. Most of these elegant manuscripts were quite small, too small to have included the Meeting in the Garden, or of later date and more evolved style. There are, however, two dispersed manuscripts now known only as paintings, sufficiently close in style and of adequate size for the Meeting in the Garden.

One is the manuscript proposed by S. C. Welch to be a Divan of Hafiz from ca. 1650, known now as a painting of Noah's Ark, in the Freer Gallery of Art (S.C. Welch, Imperial Mughal Painting, New York, 1970, p.63, pl.59). The second is an unidentified manuscript of which two paintings are published by Crowe (Nash and Fischer, pls. Wandel of a Golden Age, Painting at the Court of the Great Mughul, Munich, 1981, pls.80 & 83). Both paintings are slightly larger than the Meeting in the Garden, but the mounted elements at the top and left suggest that the painting was cut down before it was mounted on the album page. Both are mounted on album pages and exhibit very similar treatment of architectural elements and space to that in the Meeting in the Garden.

We are indebted to Dr. Glen Smart for her assistance in cataloguing the lot.

PROVENANCE
ex-Museo Royal Library (inv. no.20/220)

INSCRIPTIONS
Mughal library notes and seal impressions

The painting is signed as "First" and there is one valuation written in again possibly 26 [rubber].

The provenance is identified as: 'Portrait of a man holding a book'.

It was given to a gift by a certain Baah al-Din on 6 October, [inflexion] year 5 (26 April 1661).

During Jahangir's period, it was inspected in the royal years 15, 19, 20 and 21 and with seal impressions.

A note: "It was entrusted to Muhammad Shafi, from the effects of Sultan Pansiz on 19 Amordad first regnal year (10 August 1625) with the seal impressions of 'Abd al-Haqq Shafi, later title Amru Khan, the surviving of the different inscriptions of Tip-Mahal. Other seal impressions of Shah Jahan period are those of Tipu Khan, Ahmad Khan both superintendents of the Royal Library and Ahmed Shahid. Sultan Pansiz was a son of Jahangir (d. 1628)."
It was inscribed in regnal years 94 and 95 of ‘Alamgir with one seal impression, that of Sayyid. All the superintendents of the Royal Library. There is one crudely written note dated to 12 regnal year and it could belong to any of the emperors who ruled more than 12 years from ‘Alamgir on. This exquisite portrait of an Ottoman gentleman reading a book by a Mughal artist was evidently based on a European engraving in the modelling of the face and figure. The bearded figure wears a large white turban, the red velvet petticoat with the gold impression of a winged angel, and a rich green velvet robe with a red collar over a sown jacket with delicate lavender flowers as seen in his sleeves. He holds a staff and leather bound volume in his hands and facing right, lift his eyes upwards as if contemplating its contents. His furrowed brow shows deep concentration and his thick-vigorous beard casts over the edge of the book. His fingers are beautifully drawn. The play of light on the folds of the drapery and the modelling of the face with shadowing to the eye sockets and around the nose, demonstrates the mastery by the Mughal artists of European technique to create volume and depth. At the same time the jewel-like details such as the eyelashes are part of the Mughal legacy. The deep rich colours suggest that European oil paintings have been seen and studied, and are here consciously evoked. The painting recalls the celebrated painting of a “Seated Scribe” now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston (Princ.1926). Dating to circa 1479 and depicting a scribe at the court of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II, this watercolour has been attributed to either the great Venetian master Gentile Bellini (circa 1429-1507) who made an official visit to the Ottoman court in the late 1470s, or Constanzo de Ferrara (circa 1450 to after 1523), another Italian painter who went to Turkey in the same decade.

This painting was then adopted by a Mughal artist, traditionally attributed to the great master Bishād after the Behlūl original, now in the Al-Salih Collection, Kuwait, demonstrating the compelling hold on artists of East and West as they observed and depicted the exotic “others”. Copying and modifying techniques in fruitful exchange and finally the dissemination through European prints and engravings, and Ottoman Safavid and Mughal watercolour studies and variations. Portraits of Ottoman Turks in Mughal painting are rare, most being of the Ottoman sultans: FR Martin, The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey, London, 1992, vol 1, p225, R.Eitchins, Paintings of Sultans and Empress of India, Delhi, 1965, pl 24. TFalk and M. Archer, Indian miniatures in the India Office Library, London, 1981, no 94. Refer also to the Mughal portrait of the Turahi Ambassador to the court of Shah Jahan, sold in these rooms, 25 October 1992, lot 503.

The present painting therefore has illustrous antecedents and its bust portrait format may have derived from that favored reserved for Ottoman Sultans, such as the equally celebrated Behlūl portrait of Sultan Mehmed, now at the National Gallery in London. In the Topkapi Library are related portraits of Sultan Mehmed by Constanzo de Ferrara and by the Turkish court artist, Nazif Shaik Baly. The present Mughal watercolour, which subsequently entered the collection of the Royal Mewar Library, demonstrates the undiminished fascination that the various courts held for each other. The Behlūl scribe and related paintings are illustrated and discussed in Barry, M., Figurative Art in Medieval Islam and the refelce of Bishād, Paris, 2004, pp 25-26, 40-41.


Persian manuscript on paper, 81 leaves, 17 lines to the page written in nasta’liq script in black ink, catchwords, headings and significant words ruled out or underlined in red throughout, illustrations drawn in ink with some colour, light blue boards 27 by 19 cm.

The treatise was dedicated to Timur’s grandson ‘Pr Muhammad ibn ‘Umar Shaybān, the ruler of Fars (1794-1805). The text is divided into six chapters that describe bones, nerves, muscles, veins, arteries and the organs such as the heart, brain and eyes as well as the development of the embryos. Schmitt adds that although copies have been attributed to the 18th century, the earliest known dated copies are from the 17th century; from the 1600s and 1660s (Schmitt 1992, nos 1322, pp 134-135).

£ 6,000-8,000 \ £ 8,000-10,000
47 A FIRMAN OF NASIR AL-DIN SHAH HONOURING HIRZI `ALI ASHGHAR KHAN AMIN AL-SULTAN WITH A TITLE, DATED BABI AL-AWVAL A.H. 1307/OCTOBER-NOVEMBER A.D. 1889

6 panels of nasta'liq text in black ink in a single column, text within closed bands on a gold ground with a foliate motif in colours, interspersed with panels of a gold scrolling foliate motif, a wide panel of a scrolling floral design in colours and gold along the right hand side, a panel bearing a seal stamp within a polygonal cartouche framed by 2 khor bars and a gold floral ground at the top, on paper, framed.

66 by 51cm.

This firman records the bestowing of the title of Amir al-Mulk by Nasir al-Din Shah on Hirzi `Ali Ashghar Khan Amin al-Sultan, as well as the Order of the Imperial Effigies, as a tribute to `Ali Ashghar's services to the Persian state during the king's absence in Europe when he visited Breslau, the Netherlands, France and Germany.

The Order of the Imperial Effigies was founded by Fath `Ali Shah in 1803 in response to increased western contact, during which the Persian court's ceremonial and state emblems were upgraded to match European examples. Under the status of the time, the role of the Imperial Effigies was to present the king's portrait to dignitaries visiting the court. The Firman of Nasir al-Din Shah records the appointment of Hirzi `Ali Ashghar Khan Amin al-Sultan as an Imperial Effigies and his elevation to the Order of the Imperial Effigies, as a mark of respect for his services to the state. Hirzi `Ali Ashghar Khan Amin al-Sultan was known for his scholarship and had been appointed as an Imperial Effigies in recognition of his contributions to the Persian court.

PROVENANCE

EXHIBITED
Treasuries of Iran, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, 1985

LITERATURE

This is a finely executed portrait of the young Shah by his court artist Muhammad al-Hasan. Another portrait of him by the same artist, painted in 1842, shows him in a similar pose, wearing similar clothes and sitting on a similar chair, and was executed in the same medium.

The present work was painted within a year of his ascension to the throne on the death of Muhammad Shah in 1848, while the other one (Sotheby's, London, 6th April 1992, lot 85) was completed in the collection of Robert Byam who purchased it when he was still crowned prince. Although they were both painted within a year period they show a distinct progression in the prince's phase and psychologically from submissiveness to young manhood, in the first painted when he was sixteen, his face conveys an infantile mixture of boredom and nervousness and his moustache is a light smudge on his upper lip. In the present work painted when he was eighteen, his facial features are more mature, his moustache is fully grown and more prominent, with distinct curves and the exterior lines, and he appears more at ease with himself, and perhaps also with his new royal status.

£ 15,000-20,000 € 18,000-25,000

48 A FIRMAN OF NASIR AL-DIN SHAH APPOINTING REZA KHAN AS THE PERSIAN ENVOY TO RUSSIA, DATED RAMADAN A.H. 1512/February-March A.D. 1895

7 panels of nasta'liq text in black ink in a single column, text within closed bands on a gold and coloured ground with a scrolling foliate motif, intercolumnar rules of red, white and blue, the top and right sections with a scrolling foliate motif in colours and gold, a central seal enclosed in a polygonal cartouche framed by a large foliate cartouche filled with palmettes, flowers reserved on the blue ground.

58 by 45cm.

This firman records the appointment of Reza Khan (1846-1905) as the Persian envoy to Russia in 1895, at the request of the Russian government, to act as a mediator on behalf of the Russian and Iranian governments.

He played a significant role in the successful mediation of the Persian-Azerbaijani War, which continued until 1906, and the resolution of the Russian-Iranian relations. His appointment as the Russian Envoy to Persia was a significant achievement for the Russian government, as it allowed them to establish closer diplomatic relations with the Persian government.

In addition to his diplomatic duties, Reza Khan also served as the Persian Minister in England, as well as the Persian Consul General in Russia, and was involved in the coronation ceremonies of the Russian Tsar and the Shah of Persia. He played a key role in the establishment of the Russian Consulate General in Persia, and was instrumental in the furthering of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

This firman would have been a significant document, as it records the appointment of Reza Khan as the Russian Envoy to Persia, and would have been an important diplomatic tool in the establishment of closer relations between the two countries.

£ 3,000-4,000 € 3,500-5,000
A Rare Safavid Oil Painting of a Noblewoman

PROPERTY OF A PRIVATE COLLECTOR

49

PORTRAIT OF A NOBLEWOMAN WITH A ROSE; IRAN, ISFAHAN, SAFAVID, CIRCA 1580-1720

Oil on canvas
167.5 x 88.5 cm

£ 600,000-800,000

PROVENANCE

The late Sir George Booth Bt. (died 1997) by descent to Mr. and Mrs. Nigel Arnold Foster of Basset Down, Withehre.
Christie’s, London, 11 July 1974, lot 43 (one of a pair).

According to the family history and documents of the Booth family, this and its pendant portrait of a male figure (see Christie’s, London, 11 July 1974, lot 42) were at Clotstocke Hall, the home of Sir George Booth Bt. after the death of his widow Laetitia in 1823. Sir George (died 1872) inherited the baronetcy and estates from his cousin Nathaniel, Lord Dalmeny (died 1822), Nathaniel having inherited from his cousin George Booth, second Earl of Warrington in 1798. This Earl Warrington was grandson of George Booth, first Lord Dalmeny (1622-1684), one of whose younger brothers is thought to have been the ‘Ambassador Booth’ at Isfahan, to whom Shah Abbas II gave the two paintings ‘a dress of honour’. After Lady Booth’s death in 1823, the pictures were left to Margery Maskeyne, grandmother of Mary Arnold-Foster of Basset Down, Withehre, who devoted a chapter to them in her book ‘Basset Down’, thence to Mr. and Mrs. Nigel Arnold Foster, who consigned them to Christies in 1994.

EXHIBITED

International Exhibition of Persian Art, Royal Academy, Burlington House, London, 1951, no. 761, described as ‘Portrait, Killi, King of the Queen of Shah Abbas II, Oil on canvas. Presented by Shah Abbas II (reigned 1622-1667) to Mr. Booth, a gentleman visiting the Court of Persia...’


PUBLISHED

London 1951, no. 761, p. 279.

This portrait of a Safavid noblewoman is an exceptional example of rare, large-scale Safavid oil painting. Only thirteen other paintings of the type are known to exist, and none are present in western public museum collections.

The list of published paintings from the group is as follows:

1. A lady in Persian dress standing in an interior (formally in the Negarestan Museum, Tehran, now transferred to the Sadabad Museum of Fine Arts, Tehran, Colnaghi, 1978, no. 151; see 1987, fig. 3; Grobe and Sims 1989, no. 59, p. 220; Kelkouei, fig. 3).

2. A gentleman in Persian dress standing in an interior (formally in the Negarestan Museum, Tehran, now transferred to the Sadabad Museum of Fine Arts, Tehran, Colnaghi, 1976, no. 150; see 1987, fig. 4; Kelkouei, fig. 3).

3. A gentleman standing in an interior holding a bow and arrow (private collection, London, Dibb and Ellis 1989, no. 17; see 1996, fig. 15, described as ‘Le jardin de l’arc royal georgien’).


5. Portrait of lady (probably Armenian) standing in a richly ornamented interior (Museum of Islamic Arts, Doha, Sotheby’s, 15th October 1998, lot 69).


11. A gentleman in Persian dress standing on a terrace against a landscape background (private collection exhibited Burlington House, London, 1951; Christie’s, London, 11th July 1974, lot 42, the pendant to the present portrait).


HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1597 the Persian Emperor Shah Abbas moved his capital from Gorgan, in the north-west of Iran, to Isfahan, in the centre. He did this essentially for reasons of security, but having done so, set about creating at Isfahan a cosmopolitan capital to rival any other, a centre of political and military power, of monumental architecture, of culture and the arts of fashion and elegant internationalism. His efforts to glorify both himself and his nation coincided with other political and commercial developments that helped establish Isfahan as a major world city. The activities of the English and Dutch East India Companies were expanding in the east, the European presence of the Ottoman Empire was increasing in the west and the Persian Gulf ports were open and free from Portuguese control. Culturally too, there were diverse influences. Not only was there a strong exchange of ideas between Safavid Persia and Mughal India, there was an ever increasing interest in the culture and art of Europe, which was sited by the constant stream of European envoys and delegations arriving at Isfahan. Moreover, there was a growing Armenian community across the river from Isfahan at New Julfa, which had its own artistic identity. Thus Isfahan in the seventeenth century was a melting pot of political, commercial and cultural influences which created a dynamic environment for the diverse development of the arts.