

**Professional scientific sessions for art, architecture and urban planning Thursday evenings**

**Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers**

**Date: 13.11.2014**

**Title: Iranian Contemporary art and architecture (2)**

**Speakers and panel members: Mr. V. Ghobadian, Mr. S. Cyrus**

The second part of the Iranian contemporary art and architecture session was held during the 29<sup>th</sup> session of Thursday evenings, in presence of the specialists and the interested public, discussing about the Qajar era's events. Like the preview sessions, this session was concluded by the usual question time, too.

A summary of the 29<sup>th</sup> session is presented as follows:

The first speaker was Mr. V. Ghobadian speaks about one of the principle problems that the Iranian society faces today. He believes that a reasonable relation doesn't exist between the artistic different fields and spheres, meanwhile in the past times between an architectural important work and the other arts existed an organic relation. The same phenomenon is recognizable in the pre Islamic era, for example between the art of sculpture and stone –cutting. The same phenomenon is clearly visible in the West, when during the renaissance changes are not exclusively reserved to the architecture, but the sculpture, literature... are positively influenced too. Mr. Ghobadian focused on the phenomenon when the Iranian society moved from an east world component to a third world component, so our characteristics changed to the characteristics of a non-developed country. In his opinion the source of inspirations in the eastern world are the traditions, meanwhile in the third world's countries the inspirations sources come from the developed world's countries.

Mr. Ghobadian divides the Qajar era in three periods that are;

The first period: from the king Agha Mohammad Khan to the king Nassereddin (Isfahan style).

The second period: the beginning of Nassereddin kingdom (a combination of Isfahan style and the western neoclassic style). In this period the cultural base of Tehran slides towards the western influences in all the artistic spheres, including the architecture.

The third period: the ending period of Nassereddin kingdom (neoclassic and Tehran style), development of modern movement.

Talking about the religious aspect of the matter, Mr. Ghobadian believes that in all the times the religion protected the traditions, and the first religious monument that was built under the western influence was the religious building of the government. Continuing his speech he focused on the Sepah square, than called Toopkhane and finally the Imam Khomeini square, that in his opinion is the first modern square in Iran, that is the first important urbanistic expression in Iran. In the past times the squares were used to celebrate religious ceremonies and rites, and near the squares were established the mosques,

the government building, the public bath and the water storage, meanwhile the main duty defined for the Sepah square was to host the army's arsenal, and in the principle axis the mosque is replaced by the bank office. Talking about the king Reza Pahlavi era Mr. Ghobadian says that is during this period that the Tehran's surrounding walls are taken away, at the same time the arrival of the cars dictates the enlargement of the narrow passages to wide streets. During this period the national architectural style experiences its highest flourishing levels, a style that copies the ancient Sassanid and Achaemenian styles. At the end of his speech Mr. Ghobadian says that actually 90% of the traditional architectural heritage belong to the Qajar era and he believes that the combination of the Iranian and western architecture occurred more successfully than what is happening in our days.

The second speaker was Mr. S. Cyrus who hinted at the problems that affect the Iranian painting, that the principle problem regards the poorness of the sources, because the paintings are spread round the world and the access to works is limited, so the first negative consequence is that there is no serious base for the edition of the Iranian painting history. Another problem identified by Mr. Cyrus is that in the Iranian painting the principles for the definition of the styles are insufficient and sometimes wrong regarding the traditional or modern painting. The definition of the styles is realized through the dynasties of the different kingdoms (like Qajar and Zand eras) and through a theoretical link to the cities, like the school of Herat, but we know that this school is spread to a very vast geographical territory. In general many processes and events have influenced the Iranian painting, that in many cases they have been ignored or considered improperly.

Mr. Cyrus spoke about the happenings that influenced the thought route of the Iranian painting, that are presented as follows:

1. Relationship with Europe: paintings that arrived from the Ottoman Empire and other European countries, as precious presents to the Iranian Court that influenced the preferences of the Iranian kings.
2. The arrival and activity of the Dutch painters during the Safavid era, that presented the realistic painting style (especially the Dutch school) to the Iranian painters.
3. The arrival of Armenian painters from the Ottoman Empire, that through their paintings brought to Iran, influence the Iranian painting.
4. The Gourkani painting that acts under the pressure of the British occupation that introduces the European style of painting in Iran.
5. The connection and link with the Iranian spiritual and literary heritage.

The mentioned sources are the main directions that help us to define the traditional bases of the Iranian painting.

Mr. Cyrus believes that during the Safavid era the individual painting reaches the highest levels and is considered saturated for its potentials. The first Iranian painter who travel to Europe to know and study what happens in Europe. Only after 100 years the painting lives the sphere of the books and literature

and is not only a tool for storytelling. One of the first painters that introduce the portraits painting (achieving excellent results) is the painter Reza Abbasi.

Talking about the employers of the painting works Mr. Cyrus says that in Europe the sole principle employers are not only the royal courts, but also the powerful European church, that makes important orders, meanwhile in Iran the sole employer is the royal court and the religious authorities doesn't have any role in the growth of the painting. He stresses the fact that the most important religious monuments are ordered and realized by the royal court. This kind of presence in the artistic field has a very negative aspect, because the political changes influence deeply the process of the arts in general and of the painting in particular, like what happened during the fall of the Safavid dynasty, that caused a gap last more than 50 years, living the painters without orders that arrived from the royal court.

Mr. Cyrus divides the Iranian painting in 4 periods:

The first period: the period of challenges of loyalty to the traditional painting (during the kingdom of Shah Abbas).

The second period: the period of prevalence (Nassereddin Shah and the painter Kamal -ol- molk) of the modern thought on the traditional concepts in the modern era.

The third period: is a period of the identity searches (from the beginning of the 1960), when the Iranian don't want to copy the western sources and mentality, at the same time they don't want to cry for the lost heritage. The Iranian want to be deeply modern and totally with a national attitude. The principle holder of this movement is Farah Pahlavi.

The fourth period: is the period of the battles of the ideas, began after the Islamic Revolution.

Mr. Cyrus talks about the loyalty challenge, that this context includes three different periods:

The period of stability:

Shah Abbas A. Beik Jabadar, M. Zaman and Sons

The period of chaos:

The painting of Chehelsotoun (the war of Nader and the Gourkani king) The Afgan attack, and the King Nader period

The beginning of changes (the exit of the painters from the royal court influence)

King Fath Ali and King Mohammad Shah Portraits making of the royal court members