

Achievements of Women Artists in the Post-Islamic Revolution Era

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Sociologists believe that it is possible to understand society from the study of its works of art because there is always a two-way relationship between art and society, i.e., while art is nurtured and emerges within the context of society, it provides a context for social developments. Iranian women have had an increasing presence in various social fields and a very sensitive role in the post-Islamic Revolution Iranian art movement. Just as they had an effective role in their revolution, the Iranian women have manifested their increasing influential role in the field of art. In other

words, it can be confidently said that the Islamic Revolution and Imam Khomeini's views greatly contributed to the presence of women in all fields of society including art.

Women have been engaged in traditional artistic activities in Iran from time immemorial. The Islamic Revolution of Iran was a great and epoch-making revolution the deep and widespread effects of which were not limited only to Iran and quickly gained regional and global dimensions and marked fundamental changes in the field of culture, society, and economy. With the victory of the Islamic revolution and the

enlightened views of the late leader of the Islamic Revolution about the character and identity of woman, privileged and unique opportunities were provided for the presence of Iranian women in various fields, including culture and art. Iranian women have experienced remarkable growth in cultural and artistic activities and the available statistics confirm the authenticity of this claim. The most explicit stance of the Islamic Revolution towards women was reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic. Not only there is no gender discrimination in this constitution and it provides a legal



way for the participation of women in different fields, but also it supports the family and social dignity of women, which is a sign of the positive attitude of the leaders of the Islamic Revolution towards women's issues. It was this kind of attitude that led to the widespread presence of women in the fields of science, research, history, literature, politics, art, etc.

When it comes to the role of women in today's Iranian art it can be discussed with two approaches: 1) as a subject and 2) as creator. In fact, women, who have always been the subject of artistic creation have now also become creators of outstanding artworks.

By producing and publishing such works in the field of art, which had never been paid attention to, contemporary Iranian women artists have boldly and vigilantly created outstanding artworks with these themes. Also, by using new related media, they have been in increasing interaction with those who appreciate art. Art Media can be divided into two categories, traditional and new, of which the traditional art media

include music, theater, painting, and sculpture while the new art media include decoration, video art, digital art, photography, performance art, etc.

Regarding the presence of women in the field of art and culture, it should be said that in recent years, due to the provision of opportunities for women's growth and excellence, Iranian society has also benefited from their abilities in such fields as writing, translation, painting, editing, calligraphy, photography, and publishing. Today, the number of Iranian women who work in the field of playwriting, directing, stage design, and other theatrical trends is not comparable to the pre-revolution era.

By accepting Islamic culture and using their creative minds and capable fingers, Iranian women have always created artworks that were unique. Carpet, silk fabrics, rugs and mats weaving, silk embroidery, pottery, toreutics, kalamkari, and calligraphy are among the arts that have been popular among Iranian women at all times and have been passed down from generation to generation.

Available statistics reflect upon the active and extensive presence of women in the field of contemporary arts, such that in five biennial exhibitions (between 1991 and 2003), the number of women artists stood at 484 comprising 31.84% of the total number of artists participating in these exhibitions. In other words, in the fifth round of these exhibitions, Iranian women artists constituted half of the participants, and this statistic shows the growth of the presence of women and their legitimate freedoms. By the same token, as a result of the creation of art education facilities for women and girls in the country, more than half of admissions to art and technology colleges and centers of higher education go to women and girl students. Thus, in the field of art, the contribution of Iranian women in creating and presenting works of art is no less than that of men and their works are presented in numerous exhibitions and festivals.

In the field of calligraphy, most of the learners of this art are women, and despite the fact that this art



has always been considered a male art, women calligraphers have gone through professional stages and a number of them have become master calligraphers. The Iranian Calligraphers Association was established in 1950 with a membership of 15 people, and today the number of active branches of this association within the country and abroad stands at 345 and 20 respectively.

The formation of painting groups after the revolution and the large and impressive presence of women among them shows the extensive activity of women in the field of Iranian art and culture. Through their efforts in the post-revolution era, Iranian women have earned an independent identity for themselves in this field of art. At the beginning of the formation of modern art in the 1950s and 1960s, only a few well-known female artists such as Mansoureh Hosseini, Iran Doroudi, and Behjat Sadr were active in this field of art but today Iranian women artists outnumber men for the most part. Available statistics prove this claim.

During recent years a large number of works of Iranian women painters have been exhibited abroad and their artworks have received the appreciation of visitors at international events. For instance, Farah Osouli is an Iranian woman painting artist whose works have been well received in international auctions and are sold at a price exceeding \$25 thousand.

Statistics show that Iranian women have had a significant presence in the field of miniature painting as well. In the 10th biennial exhibition of miniature paintings of Iran, 104 of the 195 artists whose works were accepted were women artists. Similarly, three of the five artists whose works received prizes in the ninth biennial

were women. By the same token, 38 of the 50 miniature painting artists whose works were accepted at the Fajr Festival in 2016, were women.

In the field of handicrafts such as rugs, carpets, bags, and backpacks, which are among the most prominent artistic masterpieces in terms of their patterns, colors, and stunning creativity and beauty the Turkmen women of Iran are renowned. The accuracy and elegance of Iranian Turkmen girls and women result in the creation of unique masterpieces and as a result, in addition to carpet weaving, Turkmen women have also turned to other handicrafts. Turkmendouzi is a particular type of embroidery and handicraft art of Turkmen women of Iran, which has attracted the attention of many international forums in the post-Islamic Revolution.

In the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, too, handicraft artworks are popular among women of which mention can be made of Balochi needlework (the oldest and most popular handicraft art of the province), coin embroidery, mat weaving, rug weaving, and pottery.

A number of Iranian women have undergone higher education in the field of ceramics and some of the graduates of these fields have produced outstandingly unique ceramic handicrafts from the artistic point of view. If we want to mention the achievements of women in this field after the revolution, the best practical example of it is the biennials pottery and ceramic exhibition. Thirty-two of the 77 artists whose works were published in a book in the year 1996, were women, while in the biennial selection of contemporary pottery artworks published in the spring of 2001, 67 of the 111 selected works were produced by Iranian women artists.

Some Artistic Activities of the Author

Being a calligrapher, this author has engaged in certain activities in line with the expansion of Iranian-Islamic art and culture including:

- Establishment of a branch of the Iranian Calligraphers Association in Manila, the Philippines, in order to teach the art of Iranian-Islamic calligraphy to Iranians and students living in Manila;

- Organizing more than 53 specialized calligraphy exhibitions with the focus on "Interreligious Dialogue" and points common in the Holy Quran and other holy books such as "Hazrat Maryam (SA);

- Organizing calligraphy workshops for Filipino university and secondary school students in various university centers;

- Presentation of calligraphy artworks of this author containing Qur'anic verses, mystical poems of Iranian poets, and texts related to interreligious dialogue, to religious, cultural, and artistic centers the most important of which was the presentation of 8 calligraphy artwork containing the verses of the "Surah Maryam" of the Holy Qur'an to Pope Francis through diplomatic channels and with the cooperation received from the Iranian and Vatican embassies in Manila as well as the presentation of calligraphy artwork containing Verse 45 of Surah Aal-e Imran to Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle of the Philippines, which paved the ground for interreligious dialogue through the art of calligraphy in Manila and peace and coexistence among Muslims and Christians. These works have received the appreciation of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran as well as that of Pope Francis.