

**John Curtis, Ina Sarikhani Sandmann, Tim Stanley.**  
*Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture*

Yuka Kadoi

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## REFERENCES

John Curtis, Ina Sarikhani Sandmann, Tim Stanley. *Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture*. London: V & A Publishing, 2021, 336 pp., over 300 ill., ISBN: 978-1851779291

- 1 Organised by the Victoria and Albert Museum with the Iran Heritage Foundation in association with the Sarikhani Collection, *Epic Iran: 5000 Years of Culture* was one of the major exhibitions that took place during the second year of the pandemic crisis (29 May – 12 September 2021). While the timing was not particularly right to encourage in-person visits, the exhibition website (<https://www.vam.ac.uk/exhibitions/epic-iran>), including a trailer ([https://www.youtube.com/embed/bJC\\_oERR\\_j8/?autoplay=1&playsinline=0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/bJC_oERR_j8/?autoplay=1&playsinline=0)), serves to provide an impression about the gallery space and installation as an on-site art show. Besides various online resources, a lavishly illustrated printed catalogue serves to capture the epic scale of the exhibition in terms of themes, media and lenders. Chiefly authored by three contributors, the catalogue is chronologically and thematically divided into nine sections: 1. Emerging Iran: Silent Treasures from the Dawn of History (by Curtis); 2. The Persian Empire (by Curtis); 3. Last of the Ancient Empires: The Iranian Renaissance (by Curtis); 4. Change of Faith: The Advent of Islam (by Stanley); 5. The Iranian Synthesis: An Identity Reborn (by Stanley); 6. Literary Excellence (by Stanley); 7. Royal Patronage (by Stanley); 8. The Old and the New (by Stanley); and 9. Modern and Contemporary Iran (by Sandmann). Covering a wide range of media, such as goldwork, ceramics, glass, illustrated manuscripts, textiles, carpets, oil paintings, drawings and photographs, more than 200 objects, including those which were on display at the exhibition and/or later added to the catalogue, are described in short entries. Most of the displayed objects came from

the V&A's permanent collection and the Sarikhani Collection, supplemented by loans from several UK domestic and international lenders. Among the exhibition highlights after the rise of Islam (from no. 114) are a double-page painting from a copy of the *Horoscope of Iskandar Sultan* (1411) from the Wellcome Collection (no. 134) and a sixteenth-century carpet from the Boughton House in Northamptonshire (no. 182). Finally, different from survey exhibitions of Iranian art in the past (the biggest milestone was the *International Exhibition of Persian Art* in London in 1931), *Epic Iran* has taken an inclusive approach to the presentation of Iranian visual art and material culture by incorporating modern and contemporary artworks into its art-historical narrative, so as to demonstrate the development of artistic production throughout the time.

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