



Berlin, 21. October 2015

PRESS RELEASE

Modern art comes from Tehran to Berlin
Steinmeier: At this time, especially, we need the diplomacy of culture – Parzinger: A symbolic bridge in a time rife with conflict
– Check against original text in German –

DER PRÄSIDENT
MEDIEN UND KOMMUNIKATION

INGOLF KERN
DR. STEFANIE HEINLEIN (Stv.)

Von-der-Heydt-Straße 16–18
10785 Berlin

Telefon: +49 30 266-41 14 40
Telefax: +49 30 266-41 28 21

pressestelle@hv.spk-berlin.de
www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de

One of the largest and most valuable collections of Western contemporary art has spent decades hidden away in storage in the Iranian capital Tehran. Soon some of these masterpieces, ranging from the French Impressionists to American pop art, are now due to go on show in Berlin for three months – the Vice President of the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz (SPK, Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), Günther Schauerte, and the Director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Majid Mollanoroozi, have just signed a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) has one of the largest collections of Western contemporary art outside Europe and the United States. Purchased under the patronage of the last Iranian Empress, Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi, and destined for the TMOCA, which opened in 1977, only a portion of these works has been exhibited since the Islamic revolution and the overthrow of the Shah.

Now a selection of the Western works is due to be displayed in Berlin for three months, together with an equal number of works by Iranian artists, also from the TMOCA collection. An agreement to this effect has just been signed by the Vice President of the SPK, Günther Schauerte, and the Director of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Majid Mollanoroozi, in the presence of the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and the Iranian Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs, Ali Moradkhani, in the Iranian capital. “Especially at times of difficult diplomatic issues, we need the diplomacy of culture all the more urgently. I am delighted that the SPK has succeeded in concluding an agreement on this major exhibition project. It will help to complete our picture of Iran and, in return, it will allow Iran better access to our culture,” remarked Steinmeier.

The Foundation's President, Hermann Parzinger, called the agreement with the Tehran museum a “symbolic bridge in a time rife with conflict”. He stated: “Whereas images are being destroyed elsewhere in the Middle East, here they are being brought out of the cellar. That underlines the power of art to civilize and to bring nations together. In holding this exhibition, we also deliberately want to help strengthen civil society in Iran. Now a solid basis has been created for the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz



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and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin), working jointly with the TMoCA, to create an exceptionally exciting exhibition, a direct comparison of artistic forms. We would like to thank the Foreign Minister and the German Embassy in Tehran for their tremendous support of this project.”

The Nationalgalerie (National Gallery) has collaborated with the Tehran museum since February 2015. This was when "Rainbow", a retrospective exhibition of Otto Piene's art, was shown in the Iranian capital.

The Tehran collection comprises 1500 works of different styles and periods, including Impressionism, Cubism, op art, pop art and minimal art. The TMoCA has a selection of abstract painting and sculpture on display in a successful presentation housed in its museum building at the heart of the city. In addition to the works on show, the museum also possesses key works by Claude Monet, Max Ernst, Wassily Kandinsky, Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon, Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol, which are kept in storage. In Jackson Pollock's *Mural on Indian Red Ground* from 1950, Iran possesses one of the American artist's major pieces. A significant selection of these items is to be shown in Berlin, together with major works of modern Iranian art.

Beyond the exhibition project, the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art also expressed their interest in cooperating in other fields of museum work, such as specialist assistance with the scheduled refurbishment of the TMoCA museum building.