Ex-pat Iranian artists will tell their stories

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Thanks to a grant of almost £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) the Hammersmith-based Iranian Association will be interviewing a range of artists, including musicians, film directors, comedians, poets and satirists.

Among the prominent Iranian artists living in the UK are comedian Omid Djalili who has recently taken over a lead role in the West End hit musical Oliver, Mehrdad Seyf, director of the film The Persian Revolution, Hadi Khorsandi, an exiled poet and satirist and father of comedienne Shappi Khorsandi, and musician Vida Edalat who performed at the British Museum's Shah Abas exhibition earlier this year.

These are just some of the Iranian artists who will be approached by those managing the project. Poetess Shadab Vajdi has already agreed to join the project's advisory group. The artists' memories will be used to produce a DVD, website video and booklet, all of which will help to keep Iranian heritage alive among the UK-based community. It is also planned to establish a network of Iranian artists to provide information about their activities, give them a collective voice and strengthen cultural ties.

A series of exhibitions will be mounted towards the end of the project at London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Gunnersbury Park Museum, and during Refugee Week next June. Volunteers who will be undertaking the interviews from next January will also have a guided tour of the British Museum so as to compare and contrast modern day and ancient Persian art.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Sue Bowers, Head of HLF London, said: "Although several Iranian artists are recognised in this country as talented individuals, there has not until now been an attempt to reflect on their work within the context of their Iranian cultural heritage. This project will create a new sense of pride and identity among the Iranian community and help promote good role models and inspiration for others."

Commenting on the project, Iranian Association Education Centre Manager Kaveh Kalantari, said: "The Iranian Artists, who live in the UK, are a very industrious group of people whose contributions have often been overlooked by the wider community in Britain. We would like to thank the HLF for supporting us to record the artists' heritage and increase the awareness of the public about their contributions in the UK."

This year HLF is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Since 1994 it has not only revitalised hundreds of museums, parks, historic buildings, landscapes and wildlife sites, but has also given new meaning to heritage itself: people from every walk of life are now involved with the heritage that inspires them, making choices about what they want to keep and share from the past, for future generations. During this time, grants worth more than £8.5 million have been awarded to more than 50 projects in the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Notes to editors

Since 1984 the Iranian Association has developed a diverse range of services in response to the needs of the ethnic minorities and refugees in London. It provides welfare and immigration advice as well as education and advice. It is also an accredited Learndirect centre.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £850 million granted in London alone.

Further information

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