

ARBITER OF STYLE

A sumptuous coffee table book published by luxury publisher Assouline puts the spotlight on contemporary artwork collected by the glamorous Farah Pahlavi, the former shahbanu (empress) of Iran, who was exiled in 1979. As a style star during the 1960s and 1970s, the book is a significant documentation of the impressive art collection she amassed in order to open an art museum in Tehran. It's the first time a collection has been made so public, running across 200 pages and featuring more than 100 illustrations.

The third wife of the Shah, Farah was a client of Yves Saint Laurent, rubbed shoulders with artists such as Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol, and would often be seen wearing haute couture creations from Dior to Guerlain. Her tireless work in promoting the arts and culture of Iran to the world is celebrated by authors Viola Raikhel-Bolot and Miranda Darling, who highlight her devotion to social and cultural causes and shedding light on Iran's cultural life. Working closely with auction houses Sotheby's, Christie's and The Metropolitan Museum, Farah's collection included works by Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Francis Bacon and Vincent van Gogh. One of her personal commissioned portraits by Warhol forms the basis of the cover art.

"It was during an exhibition in the late 1960s that the idea for a museum of contemporary art first occurred to me," writes Farah in the book's introduction. "A female artist . . . told me how she wished for a permanent location for Iranian artists to display their projects. The modern art in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art reflects how Iran, during the late 1960s, found itself at the centre of East and West; I view art and culture as an eternal permanent institution." — Dan Ahwa

• *Iran Modern* by Viola Raikhel-Bolot and Miranda Darling, about \$1274, published by Assouline. Available from Assouline.com

