

MOHAMMAD EHSAI

Iranian, born 1939



Ehsai is one of the most renowned innovators in the field of calligraphic painting (known as Naghashi-khat in the Middle East and particularly Iran). He remains an extremely influential figure for the younger generation of artists and graphic designers. He has written articles on calligraphy, Iranian and Islamic art and has lectured widely in Iran and elsewhere.

Ehsai's artworks have been shown in many important museums including The State Hermitage Museum's *The Dance of Quill and Ink - Contemporary Art of the Middle East* (2007) and The British Museum's *Word into Art* exhibitions. An example of his work is included on the Time Line of Art History on the Metropolitan Museum of Art web site. The acclaim his work has achieved among discerning collectors of Middle Eastern art is reflected in the recent Christie's Art Auction, Dubai (April 2008) where one of his canvases

realised over \$1 million. Clearly the significance of his art production is being acknowledged on an international level.

Ehsai approaches his calligraphy from a religious background; he first mastered formal calligraphy before exploring the flowing rhythms of the Naskh (late eighteenth-century cursive script), Shekasteh (broken form) and Nasta'liq (a variant of taliq, or hanging, script developed by Persians in the late fifteenth century). His calligraphic expertise combined with his knowledge of modern art gave rise to a new visual language of his own. This unique method of transforming the traditional Persian scripts and procedures is an abstract method of self expression that best serves his particular artistic language whilst still respecting the original premise of the sacred art of calligraphy.

Zekre Allah is a visual interpretation of the unceasing recitation of the name Allah and the Qur'anic verse: 'There is no God but Allah', which is at the foundation of spirituality of the Islamic faith. The unceasing recitation of the name of Allah is a sacred concept, which links Man with the Source of Creation. A fifteen-part painting from his *Zekre Allah* series made \$336,000 at Bonham's auction in Dubai last year.

Brief Biography

Ehsai studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University, where he later became a calligraphic instructor. In 1964 he began to use calligraphy in his graphic designs and paintings. During this time he worked on the layout and calligraphy of various publications and schoolbooks, and was commissioned to work on a number of architectural projects including the inscriptions of the Alghadir Mosque in Tehran, the conference hall of the 'Ellahiyat' Faculty of Tehran University and the Iranian Embassy in Abu Dhabi, UAE. His work has been exhibited in noteworthy galleries and art fairs from the early 1970s and he has received multiple awards, including a prize at the Cagnes-sur-Mer Festival (France) in 1976. In 2005 he was awarded Iran's National Award of Art and Culture. His works can be found in important collections and museums around the world including The British Museum in London.