

# The Spirit of Nowruz

British Council Exhibition,  
5 March – 15 May 2015, London  
Curated by Haleh Anvari





# The Spirit of Nowruz

**Held at the British Council,  
10 Spring Gardens, SW1A 2BN.  
5 March – 15 May,  
Mon – Fri, 9.00 – 8.00**

Nowruz or 'New day' is a thirteen day New Year celebration which is tied to Zoroastrian and Persian traditions, dating back at least three thousand years. It begins on the first day of spring in the solar calendar, around the 21st of March, a date that marks the New Year for many and is a national holiday in a number of countries.

Today, Nowruz is celebrated officially in countries across the Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia, with many more communities worldwide getting together to mark this important international event.

The geographical span of the communities who celebrate Nowruz highlights the wide reach of cultural flows from the Persian plateau over thousands of years. In the UK several million people celebrate Nowruz each year.

With contemporary photography from artists in Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Kurdistan, Iraq, this exhibition highlights the breadth of Nowruz's reach, crosses national borders and includes people from different ethnic, linguistic and religious communities.

From depictions of kite flying in Uzbekistan, to wrestling in Afghanistan, and fire jumping in Iran, it is clear that Nowruz embodies a richly varied set of ritualistic traditions. But while the subject matter of the photographs is varied, in almost all there is a strong focus on communal activity and engagement with the natural world.



*Feroz Muzafari*

## A diverse celebration

Communities throughout the world celebrate Nowruz very differently, and even their pronunciation of the word varies widely. Some different translations of the word include Noroz, Newroz, Navrez, Nowroj, Nauryz. For clarity, the spelling Nowruz will be used throughout the exhibition.



# About the Exhibition

Curated by Haleh Anvari, this exhibition focuses on the contemporary experience of celebrating Nowruz, with contributions from artists around the world. The exhibition features photography, film and animation from artists in Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Kurdistan, Iraq.

The exhibition includes:  
**Kambiz Safari**, 'The Table', 2015,  
3 minutes 50 seconds

**Katayoon Forouhesh**, 'Tree'.  
Vinyl and animation comprised with text from Poem 445 in Hafez of Shiraz's Divan-e-Hafez: 'The airs of a New Year's breeze are coming from the street of the friend' (translated by Peter Avery).

**Jila Peacock**, associated work (goldfish) from 'Tongue of the Hidden', created from Poem 144 in Hafez of Shiraz's Divan-e-Hafez. Animated by Florian Ghibert.



Ranj Abdullah



Max Penson

AppTalia founded by **Rashin M. Taheri**, 2013

Photography from AKSbazi.com, shared by **Haleh Anvari**

Photography slidereel edited by **Babak Salek**

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Reza Sahel



## Photography from:

Abbas Kowsari  
Nafis Motlaq  
Nosrat Tarighi  
Amir Jadidi  
Abnous Alborzi  
Sara Ghanbari  
Arash Hamidi  
Sara Abri  
Mojgan Deldadeh  
Cyrus Omoomian  
Newsha Tavakolian  
Fardid Khadem  
Sahar Mokhtari  
Bahar Dashtban  
Maryam Mohammadi  
Khashayar Sharifae  
Omid Akhavan  
Reza Sahel

Yama Rahimi  
Fardin Waezi/UNAMA  
Taqi Popal  
Feroz Muzafari  
Fatima Omir  
Batyrkhan Tazhiyev  
Ernest Kurtveliev  
Farkhod Karimov  
Victor An  
Ildar Sadikov  
Ranj Abdullah  
Seivan M. Salim  
Mohamed Sinjari  
Asghar Noor Mohammadi  
Didar Ali  
Mirnaib Hasanoglu  
Max Penson



Reza Sahel



Ranj Abdullah



Fatima Omir



## Personal reflections on Nowruz

“The precise nature of the countdown to Persian New year with the exact minutes and seconds, creates a thrilling suspense each year. One can feel the release from the bulkiest measures of time in the countdown that begins a month, a week, a day before Nowruz, to the delicate minute and second before the canon goes off followed by the ecstatic sound of the Nowruz heraldic music played on the traditional Dohol and Sorna. No matter how old you are, it still gets to you, a heart-warming moment of sheer excitement and joy. A new day arrives, the old is discarded with all its troubles and weariness, a sense of new possibilities begins on this, the New Day.”

**Haleh Anvari**

“Shahnameh’, the Persian Book of Kings and Avesta, the Zoroastrian sacred book, recount a shared legend, that of Jamshid Shah’s descent from the sky. The light reflected from his crown is said to have lit up the world, banishing the night. So, he decreed the day to be named ‘Nowruz’ – New Day – and celebrated as the first day of Spring, marking the transformation of nature and the renewal of life.”

**Kambiz Safari**



*Didar Ali*



*Mirnaib Hasanoglu*



The exhibition is part of the British Council's **UK-Iran Season of Culture** an exploration of the cultural links between the UK and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The programme will feature three months of events which aim to promote, and develop the cultural relations ties between the two countries. Building on long-standing links and contemporary collaboration, the season of culture will strengthen opportunities for greater cultural engagement, improve mutual understanding, and increase trust.

The season runs between January – April 2015.

Participate and find out more

[www.britishcouncil.ir/en/underline/season](http://www.britishcouncil.ir/en/underline/season)

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.



*Batyrkhan Tazhiyev*

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*Abbas Kowsari*

For more images from the exhibition  
and personal reflections on Nowruz, visit:  
[www.britishcouncil.ir/en/underline/season](http://www.britishcouncil.ir/en/underline/season)

**Facebook: British Council Iran**  
**#SpiritOfNowruz**  
**#IranUKculture**

For information about tours and weekend  
openings email [Nowruz@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Nowruz@britishcouncil.org)

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*Assistant Curator – Stephanie Farmer*

*With support from:*

**Ellen Berry,**  
**Karen Brodie,**  
**Mansoor Jalal,**  
**and Danny Whitehead.**