

Iran's master lyrical painter marries painting and calligraphy

By: Karen Dabrowska

Ali Bozorgmehr is a man with a mission: to sow the seed of love everywhere through his lyrical paintings. His name means «big love». He has an empathy and compassion for all living beings and is convinced that «love is the first and only way» to resolve the world's problems, especially those of his homeland.



«The young people in Iran who go peacefully for freedom make me proud I am a Persian. I hope my
out into the streets to demonstrate

art work will inspire them in their search for freedom». Most of the visitors to his face book pages are young Iranians. «They are searching





for love and beauty and the find me», Bozorgmehr said with an non arrogant pride.

The 65-year-old Iranian-born artist who displayed his works in the house of a friend in London at the beginning of March 2010 is planning a major exhibition in the British capital. His works are found in over 50 countries fulfilling the universal, never-ending search for unique, beautiful art work.

«The world sings of love; the trees,

when the wind stirs their leaves: the earth, when rain soothes its thirst and the soul when illuminated with passion and understanding. My work balances and reflects upon these natural elements. It is my hope to reveal these unaffected, genuine gifts that are too often overlooked in our chaotic, self-indulgent world».

Bozorgmehr is the founder of lyrical painting. He calls his art 'zibanegar', portrait of beauty. The

works are a synthesis of calligraphy, poetry, and painting. Every creation begins with the selection of a passage of poetry from ancient Persian literature, from Rumi or a philosophical saying. The written words are illuminated with natural images. Deer, birds and swans are frequently featured in his work. The curves and movement of the animals' form, synchronize with the calligraphy written in or around the image to create harmony and

balance. He speaks to everyone with images that convey the universal expression of love.

Portraying a range of human emotions, Bozorgmehr brings the message of peace, friendship and love to those who see his work. He feels he has succeeded if visitors to his exhibitions let go of greed, doubt and jealousy. Each unique painting is a faithful repository for deep thought from a philosopher or from an ancient





epic and each brings forth timeless secrets and complexities of life.

Ali Bozorgmehr was born in the Iranian city of Neishabour which has been an inspiration for artists and poets for centuries. It is the birthplace of Omar Khayam and countless other Persian poets and artists.

As a young child he mastered the art of calligraphy and developed his own distinctive style. Admirers

who have purchased his work, ranging in price from \$2,000 to \$40,000 include Madonna, the Indian mystic Deepak Chopra and Tony Curtis. His daughter, a student of art history, acts as his agent.

He left Iran soon after the revolution as he felt freedom was being restricted. He exhibited in his home country three years ago and was planning another exhibition in June but politics intervened and

he did not want to travel when the country was in turmoil.

Art is his life. "I don't need anything else", he said. "I am needless". His home is in California but he travels frequently to arrange exhibitions and is frequently in the Gulf.

Visitors to the exhibitions are given a small booklet with photographs

of his art. But to capture the majestic beauty of the paintings is almost impossible: they have to be seen, hanging in their artistically designed frames to be appreciated. Simplicity is Bozorgmehr's guide but his works are more than just simple paintings: they reveal universal truths and ancient secrets.





Lobos to capture his quaint landscapes. Other famous «regulars» to Madeira included Bernard Shaw and Sarah Bernhardt.

We took a cable car ride from Old Funchal to the mountain village of Monte and enjoyed a striking view of the harbor and orange-tiled rooftops along the way. At the top, in the center of the village, women were selling beautiful lacework. After a light

lunch, we walked to one of Madeira's best known attractions, the toboggan ride.

Once a well-established means of transportation in the hilly terrain, the toboggans are now used solely by tourists. They are made of wicker with wooden runners and each can accommodate two people. Men wearing old-time straw hats steer and control the toboggans down the road, much like a dogsled. It's a 20-minute

ride down, and costs about \$15 per person.

Taking its name from the largest island of the group where Funchal is located, the archipelago of Madeira also includes Porto Santo Island, which caters to the sun and surf set, and two other islands inhabited only by sea lions and sea birds.

Madeira has long been famous for the wine that bears its name,

and vineyards were once managed by Jesuit priests. Each September, there are colorful festivals that celebrate the grape harvest. Seafood, of course, plays a large role in the typical menu, but grilled meats are also common and honey features prominently in desserts.

From Funchal we took the short charter plane to Tenerife, largest of the six Canary Islands, and checked into Hotel Botanico. The





Canaries are about twice the size of Madeira and attract two to three times as many international tourists, upwards of 10 million a year. It is also much closer to the African continent—from Tenerife to the Sahara Desert is less than 30 miles!

While the vast majority of tourists flock to the Canary Islands for its beaches, there is also rugged mountainous terrain including the 12,000-foot Mount Tiede, Spain's

highest peak and biggest volcano. There is an astounding diversity of plants and animals unique to the world in this area along with more than 700 species of insects.

Shaped like a duck, Tenerife is dominated by two large mountain ranges, Anaga and Teno. The north is green, the beach playgrounds mostly to the south. There are isolated villas along the sea surrounded by banana plantations that serve as retreats

for international celebrities trying to avoid the paparazzi press.

As in Madeira, there are picturesque villages at the base or up the mountain slopes, like the quaint hamlet of Icod, which has something in common with Madeira's Monte and its tourist toboggans. Except in Icod, there is no charge for the toboggan ride, but the stakes are a little higher.

Every November 29 a festival takes place in Icod to mark the harvesting of the grapes. One of the «highlights» of the celebration is careening down the streets on any type of wooden board available—often a simple door—at speeds approaching 25 miles per hour. There are usually a number of crashes and spills along the way and ambulances and medical attendants wait below to treat the injured. Amazingly, Icod officials claim there has never been a fatality.

Until recently, Madeirans went to mainland Portugal and Canary Islanders (Canarios) to mainland Spain for their vacations. Now, they're glancing across the pond at each other—Madeirans like the

nightlife and beaches of their neighbors, and Canarios like the rugged beauty and tranquility on the other side.

In addition to the charter propeller planes, overnight ferry service is available between the two islands. After centuries of hardly even noticing each other, love is in full bloom in central Macaronesia.

(Dominick A. Merle is Canadian Director of the International Travel Writers Assn. and is based in Montreal).

IF YOU GO:

From North America, the best air routes are through Lisbon for Madeira or Madrid for The Canaries. No visas are required; only a valid passport.

Casual dress is perfectly acceptable on both islands. Bring comfortable walking shoes, and a light jacket or sweater for the higher elevations.

For further information on Madeira, visit www.madeiratourism.com or e-mail info@madeiratourism.com. For Tenerife, visit www.webtenerife.com or www.tenerife.es