



## QANDRIZ, MANSUR

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**QANDRIZ, MANSUR** (Maṣṣur Qandrīz, b. Tabriz, 11 Esfand 1314 Š./1 March 1936; d. in a car accident near Čālus, 7 Esfand 1344 Š./26 February 1966; [FIGURE 1](#)), modernist artist and a noted member of Saqqā-ḵāna School of Art.

### LIFE

Born and raised in Tabriz, in 1954 Qandrīz attended the Tehran School of Decorative Arts (Honarestān-e honarhā-ye zibā), founded by Jalil Ziā'pur (1920-1999) and a group of artists in 1951. His teachers at the newly established school included, [Sohrab Sepehri](#), Mansureh Hosayni (Maṣṣura Ḥosayni, b. 1926), Mehdi Vishkai (Mehdi Viškā'i, b. 1920), Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad, Simin Dānešvar (Simin Daneshvar, 1921-2012), and Yahya Zoka (Yaḥyā Doka', 1923 -2000), (Mašhadizāda, p. 9). In 1961, after a three-year gap, Qandrīz continued his art education at the Faculty of Decorative Arts (*Dāneškada-e honarhā-ye taz'ini*). While in the college he married Louise Ḥamidi, and the couple had a son named Nimā.

Qandrīz and [Morteżā Momayyez](#) played pivotal roles in the establishment of Tālār-e Iran (Iran Gallery), which was founded in 1964, in collaboration with [Sadeq Tabrizi](#) (Šādeq Tabrizi, b.1939), Faramarz Pilaram (Farāmarz Pilārām, 1938–1983), and Massud Arabshahi (Mas'ud 'Arabšāhi, b. 1935). “The establishment of Tālār-e Iran would have never been possible if it wasn't for Momayyez, and the four-member group would have never joined the students at Tehran University if it wasn't for Qandrīz” (Tabrizi, 1999, pp. 88-99). They organized one major exhibition at the space and later another show of several



avant-garde artists including Sepehri, Bijan Saffari (Bijan Şaffāri, b.1933), Marcos Grigorian (1925-2007), Parviz Tanavoli (Parviz Tanāvoli, b.1937) and Manuchehr Sheybani (Manučehr Šeybāni, 1924-1991). After the first exhibition at Tālār-e Iran, however, the group separated. Qandriz, Tabrizi, Pilaram, and Arabshahi also cooperated in the establishment of Iran's first interior design office in 1964, which also saw its end after the untimely death of Qandriz at the age of thirty. Tālār-e Irān was later named Tālār-e Qandriz (Aḥmadi Maleki, p. 35).

## WORK

While still in high school, Qandriz was drawn to the progressive realist paintings of Ilya Repin (1844-1930) and Russian-Armenian seascape artist Ivan Aivazovsky (1817-1900). Later in college, and before turning to a paradigmatic exhortation of modernist language within local Iranian narrative, and developing his own semi-abstract style, he was introduced to European modernism, and he delved into the tradition of Russian realists and European classical and figurative art (FIGURE 2, FIGURE 3) Incorporating the figurative techniques of old masters, he created his own corporeal abstraction, which also indicates a process of gradual formalization, progressing from free forms to order. Matisse, Picasso, and Persian miniature paintings inspired Qandriz's early figurative work. He chose, as a critic commented, "mystical symbols to combine traditional and modern elements into his abstract designs" (Keshmirshekan, 2009).

Imaginary elements and heavenly figures, reminiscent of spiritual quests, are characteristics of Qandriz's early paintings. Although he started with nature scenes, his visual language was based in the visceral world. He inclined towards pure forms and a combination of imagery featuring pastoral scenes. One of the founding members of what was later called *Saqqā-kāna* school of painting, a term coined by the art critic *Karim Emami* to describe the school of art influenced and inspired by the Iranian folk art (Ekhtiar, 2000; Gudarzi, pp. 67, 146), Qandriz was instrumental in formulating a modernist and yet ethnic visual language. The appeal of such concepts as "national" and "Iranian identity" contributed, largely, to the popularity of *Saqqā-kāna* school of art in the 1960s (Yarshater, 1958, pp. 2-3; see also idem, 1979, pp. 363-77).

During his *Saqqā-kāna* period, Qandriz abstracted many ethnic ornaments and simplified geometrical designs characteristics of Persian and Islamic art. Human and animal forms, found in traditional and ancient manuscripts, along



with Persian tiles and ceramics, became particular sources of his inspiration. Many of his canvases depicted mystical symbols combined with modern elements, which he spread throughout his canvases. However, unlike many Saqqā-kāna artists, he did not incorporate calligraphy in his work, and yet his fresh, new canvases, based on local narratives, enabled him to bridge European modernism with Iranian ethnic sensibilities. Qandriz specifically searched for beauty in Iranian motifs and popular art (Emami, 1965, pp. 46-48; see also idem, *Exhibition Catalogue*, Borghese Gallery, Tehran, 5 Ordibehešt 1345 Š./24 April 1966; FIGURE 4, FIGURE 5).

Qandriz, as contended by Sādeq Tabrizi “was not an independent thinker, and his later works were clearly influenced by the works of Masoud Arabshahi, who had previously incorporated mythical and exotic motifs in his paintings”—works that made Arabshahi the winner of the Fourth Tehran Biennial (Tabrizi, 2005 pp. 26- 27; see also Afšār Mohājer, pp. 201-6). However, a closer look indicates that although they used ethnic images, Qandriz, Tanavoli, and Arabshahi were clearly individualistic in their approach (Keshmirshekan, 2005, pp. 607-30). Neither the passive recipients of European modernism, nor the simple imitators of local narratives, the Saqqā-kāna artists were well informed by the Western tradition and yet turned to ethnicity and popular culture within a new aesthetic context (Fouladvand, p. 36).

Qandriz was among the first group of Iranian artists who focused on mythical motifs, tribal textile designs, and metalwork. In his various artistic efforts, he attempted to offer a modern language “to elaborate and define a truly Iranian style” (Pākbāz, 1974, p. 33; idem, 2006, p. 307).

The ten-year span of Qandriz’s career coincided with the opening of the Tehran Biennials (Emami, 1987, pp. 641-42), which, inspired by the Venice Biennial and supported by the Ministry of Culture, were organized in an attempt to promote contemporary arts, focusing on Persian heritage and civilization (Yarshater, 1979, pp. 363-77). Qandriz’s works were shown at several exhibitions, including the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Tehran Biennials, the Collection of Modern Iranian Art, which toured the United States and Israel, the São Paulo Art Biennial, and the Iranian Contemporary Art Exhibition in Paris.

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