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# HODA HADADI

# Biography



## Background

I was born on February 2, 1977, but my parents changed this date to September 20, 1976, to send me to school before 7, I was born in Tehran, Iran

My passion for drawing and art was first triggered by books, abundantly found in our house. I am known for my strong tendency to dive deep into the world of stories and revealing my imagination through painting. My steady progression toward becoming an international illustrator is owed to my constant connection with my environment and dedication to my career and of course, hard work.

As a kid, I found great joy in storybooks, read to me by my mother and older sister. Stories inside those books were harmonious to the way I interacted with my surroundings. I was lucky enough to have access to the institute for the intellectual development of children, through my father's friend who was kind enough to bring me books from the great library of the institute.

Later on, my father familiarized me with a Persian epic book, called Shahnameh (Book of the King) which fueled my desire for adopting a narrative style that accompanied my drawings.

## Education

In total, I have 16.5 years of education. I studied at the elementary level for five years at Shahid Hosseinmardi Elementary School in the city of Tehran. I have always been

fond of the Persian language, science, and painting.

As a small kid, my thirst as a dreamer was quenched in our small yard where I could integrate with the environment, and fuel my imagination with the different life forms there.

I then studied at the secondary level for three years at Omidvar School in Tehran, and four years at Vahdat High School in Tehran again. My enthusiasm for art was first triggered by a great art teacher at secondary school, when I first found joy in reading the world-famous Persian epic book, Shahnameh, narrating the story of all Iranian kings until the entrance of Islam in Iran as well as novels inked by Ernest Hemingway, Mark Twain, Victor Hugo, and Dostoevsky.

My craving for art grew bigger as I entered high school, but since my father had stood between me and registration at art school, I had to resist dull hours of being exposed to my unwanted high school major, applied science. I was left with no option, but to enjoy my love for art at home, where my determination to become an illustrator was bolstered.

The path ahead was not an easy one for me, since I had to prepare myself for the national university entrance exam to be able to finally major in art, while my high school major was irrelevant to what I sought to pursue at university. It took me one year to prepare myself for the art university entrance exam. My dream came true when I ranked 167 out of over 100,000 applicants, vying to major in Art. I studied Graphic Design at the Art University of Tehran for 4.5 years.

Despite the richness of my experience as an art student at the university, I still thought that my expectations cannot be met within the walls of the university. Therefore, I decided to enroll in professor Karim Nasr's studio, where I could spend 3 hours per week for 4.5 years concurrent with my time at the Art University of Tehran, studying for B.A. and feel like I was really making accomplishments.

## Early careers

However, the university I studied at had no tuition but my field of study was costly because of the materials I had to buy. papers, colors, specialized pens, and other expensive professional tools.

To cover the costs, I started to work two days a week in a private primary school to assist teachers in art, help pupils to work with scissors and papers, make masks, handicrafts, dolls, and draw objects.

The income was not significant but helpful and also a chance for me to be in touch with kids as the main audiences of my future books.

As I went ahead with my part-time job, I found working with kids very appealing. Their lack of hesitation to voice their demands and the way they communicated with their surroundings were among the reasons why I decided to choose them as the main audience of my future creations. All that gave me enough courage to introduce myself as an illustrator.



SIBIANA Danmark  
Hoda Hadadi - Thinking of a Home



In 1999, my first illustration was published in an old and famous Persian magazine dedicated to children, Keyhan for Kids. At the same time, another prestigious magazine (Soroush for Adolescents) published one of my stories, winning me the Audiences Award. These two achievements were the outset of my long-standing cooperation with children's magazines as an

illustrator, author, poet, and at times, a consultant.

My first illustrated book (Siasatnameh) drew the attention of big names in the community winning me the second prize of the national book festival held by the famous Iranian institute Kanoon.

I took my chances to get to know animation and other forms of digital art, but despite their influence on my works, they couldn't draw my enthusiasm as much

as hand drawing. My works are edited digitally, but they play a minimal role in the final result.

My third book “The Lullaby Story” won me my first international prize—The Encouragement Prize of Noma Conquers, Japan 2002— published by Mohajer publications, where I worked as a graphic designer for a year, during which I hardly found enough to concentrate on my favorite artistic creations.

Home has always provided enough space and comfort for me to advance my projects from A to Z. Working at home came so naturally and I was known to publishers as a self-employed artist with a strong tendency to stay in the house and manage my career mostly from there.

Over my 22 years of illustrating and authoring books, I have illustrated over 80 books and have been the author or poet of 12 books published by national and international publishers.

Most of my time is spent illustrating in my home studio, but other activities including, art consulting, art directing, workshop leading, and judging in art festivals are also part of my professional life.

I have always known who I am, what I wanted to be and I have always wanted to work for myself. By nature,



## Recognition of My Works

In my first time participating in an international event, I was chosen to attend the Biennial International Bratislava Workshop of Illustration on behalf of the Iranian illustrators’ society in 2005. The workshop had a profound influence on my professional style and perspective, encouraging me to implement a more minimalistic approach as an artist as well as to actualize my potentials in poetry. In 2007, I won the Golden Pen of Bratislava Illustration Biennial award, for one

of the books I illustrated using dried leaves and paper collages.

For the illustration of another nature-oriented book, I was awarded the grand prize of the Belgrade Illustration Festival in 2009, marking a highlight in my career.

My all-time favorite book, *Two Friends*, received international admiration for its unique depiction of the interaction of two girls with the environment in a forest. The story enjoys a poetic style of narration and a minimalistic approach in illustration and has been published in French and Italian as well. Winning the prestigious New Horizon Award of Bologna-Italy 2010, during Bologna Children Bookfair as well as Iran Book Council Award, the book is still a topic of discussion among critics after 10 years. Some call it an eco-feministic book, while some others simply admire it as a poetic experimental book. *Two Friends* played a central role in my solo exhibition in Belgrade in 2001 and my becoming a jury member of the illustration festival held there in the same year.

I reflected on my concerns about female characters in the world of literature with a focus on *Two Friends*, in an article titled “Forgotten Female Stories,” in an article published on BBC Persian website in 2019. There I elaborated on the female-centered fiction as being mostly focused on senses instead of events and observing instead of acting.

*Deep in the Sahara*, was my first book published in the USA by the well-known publisher, Random House in 2013. By then I had only published books in Europe and Asia, but this experience gave me a good understanding of the market in the USA. This joint work with Kelly Kunnane received admiration from a wide range of critics, and despite offers from different parts of America, I couldn't sign any contracts with American agents, due to sanctions imposed on Iran, but luckily small publishers were allowed to cooperate in new projects with Iranians.

*Drummer Girl* was my collaboration with Hiba Masoud and was published by Day Break press in 2016. It won the gold medal of Moon Beam Award for Best Illustration (Hoda Hadadi) in USA, 2017, Gold medal of Literary Classics Award for Best Illustrator (Hoda Hadadi) in the USA, 2017 as well as Gold Medal of International Book Award for Best Picture Book (Hoda Hadadi) in

the USA, 2018.

Currently, I am negotiating the launch of new projects with American publishers, one of which is centered around late world-renowned mathematician Maryam Mirzakhani, the only woman who won the Fields medal in mathematics. She was an Iranian woman the same as my age, dying because of breast cancer only two years following receiving the Fields medal. The author believes I can best portray her life in Iran, and I welcome the endeavor despite its hardship.



## Some experiences

In 2016, the International Board of Book for Young People (IBBY) of Denmark invited me to hold some workshops for children in Copenhagen, Denmark. My story of a moving mountain attracted the interest of the participants and received great admiration from schools, leading to more invitations. A year later, Shekufeh Heigberg the translator of the book I had authored “the Travelling Mountain”, who was also a publisher (Forlaget uro), expressed her eagerness to publish the story with me illustrating it. The eagerness grew to publish another book I had authored, as one of the branches of the Organization of Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB of Denmark) invited me over again for me to hold my big Solo exhibition in Copenhagen. In addition to a collection of my poetry books, the two published books, “I Am Thinking of a Home, (poetry collection)” and “A Travelling Mountain,” was put on display for Danish participants on the opening day on October 2018.

**Book launch**  
4. oktober 2018  
4 - 8 pm



**Jeg tænker på et hjem**  
Hoda Hadadi

Uro publishing presents  
two new books by Hoda Hadadi in danish  
**I'm thinking of a home**, a poetry collection  
&  
**The mountain who would love to travel**, a childrens book



**Bjerget**  
der ville rejse  
Hoda Hadadi

Both to be released 4. oktober at the launch of Hoda Hadadi's  
solo exhibition in Copenhagen, Århusgade 126A  
Everybody are welcome!

&

The exhibition was held on two 500 sq/meter floors in an iconic area in Copenhagen. 80 of my illustrated books, representing a decade of my professional life as well as an installation of eastern spices and a modeled Persian Kitchen along with a set of my new books for children were also part of the exhibitions. The book Travelling Mountain (authored and illustrated by Hoda Hadadi) received 5 stars from Politiken newspaper and the exhibition is still held from time to time in different locations in Denmark.

Although the exhibition was a great highlight in my career, the 40 incredible workshops with 40 schools that came with the event under the Open Schools Program of the Ministry of Education in Denmark, was even more valuable to me.

## In conclusion

If I am supposed to define myself, I have some words to say. a quiet dreamer who loves transparency, Nature, and stories.

For more information about my technique and my world please read this interview by picturebook snob site about my recent book (the Smile) published 2021 by the Pikku publishing house in London.



*When and how did you first become familiar with the work of Raoul Follerau?*

My first encounter happened through the work assigned to me by the Pikku publication. And then I found out that my favorite poet in Iran, Forough Farrokhzad, may have been influenced by Follerau's poems. To quench my curiosity, I did more research on Follerau and that made me more familiar with different aspects of his life and his artworks.



I love how the flowers, and even the sun, are smiling in this book! Smiling is so powerful and something that is easily taken for granted or forgotten. Is smiling very important to you and do you make a particular effort to smile in your everyday life? Do you have any personal experience(s) of, or anecdotes about, a smile having an impact on you or those around you?

I take myself as a person who smiles a lot since numerous small things in life make me smile and as you pointed out, smiling is powerful enough to overcome the small bad things that happen in life, and in particular, I believe that nature is always smiling at us and when nature smiles, I smile. On the power of smiling, I can say that it has given a tranquilizing feeling to the environment I was exposed to and it leads to the formation of friendship among people.

What, if anything, did you find most challenging about this project?

My biggest challenge in this project was the numerous changes I had to make on the sketches, due to the many alterations to the narrative by the publisher. To be more specific, this poem does not possess a narrative, since it's a descriptive poem and the publisher intended to integrate a story into this poem. This was a highly interesting idea, but every time I drew a sketch based on the publisher's rough idea, she decided to somehow make changes to the main narrative behind the story, and the repetition of this decision, was my greatest challenge. Although in the end, this was teamwork and the artistic manager, the publisher and I, used to collaborate to advance the story in an optimum way, and we managed to create something based on what Follerau had created and the result was highly satisfactory, despite the challenge it posed.

*Do you have a favorite spread or scene from this book?*

I certainly do and that is the scene of kids on their way to school, while parents were bidding them farewell as the lady next door was brooming her shop's front door. The scene inside the bakery where all the loaves of bread were baked in the morning, with people on their way to buy bread. To me, the bread itself is full of life and a start to the day.

*How long were you working on this book and how long does a project typically take?*

It took me almost one year, and it typically takes this same amount of time to accomplish an illustration project. I have to add that the length of time, depends on the amount of research a certain project requires as well as the extent to which it demands certain environments to be created.

*Do you do much research or any other preparation before*

*beginning to illustrate a book, and if so, what does this process involve?*

Surely, I do. Research has to be done, based on the story each book tells.

The process involves, most importantly, the consideration of the geography where the story takes place. Then comes the culture from which the story is rooted in. Closing in on the identity, appearance, and attitude of that character comes next.

Stories based on real characters or events require more research and the poetic and fantasy stories demand dedication of the illustrator's inner feelings and emotions.

*There's a very strong sense of joy that springs from each page of this book. Is this something that you strive to create when you're working on an illustration or does it just appear naturally because you enjoy what you are doing?*

Allow me to say that I smiled throughout every moment I spent illustrating this book, and I'm grateful to Follerau and the publisher for every smile that landed on my face since I was under tough treatment for cancer, and this book helped me smile under those difficult moments. I believe this book itself was a miracle and the joy that emanates from every page is authentic and a reflection of my smiles.

*How did you develop your distinct style? Have you always loved collage?*

It's been many years that I've chosen this technique as my style and I draw great joy from it, although it is an energy-consuming technique and it takes a lot of time to stick together the small pieces of paper, it has a distinct feature, which is of great interest to me, and that is the, sometimes, unpredictable shapes and features that appear on paper cuts that in a way, have their influence on the direction that my work goes toward.

*Before you get to work on a collage, do you make a sketch first or use another technique to design how the illustration will look?*

It depends on the topic. In the books solely incorporating poems, I start collage directly, without any prior sketch or any pencil outline, but in books such as *Smile*, which is committed to the story and character, the sketch and the storyboard are of great importance to me.

What materials do you use in your collage? Some of the paper looks like it has a different texture to the rest. Do you collect and re-use things like wrapping paper for future projects? The bedspreads in the children's room look very delicate but also as

though you may have made this by drawing onto very thin paper  
- do you make your patterned paper?

It's been a couple of years since I've been using transparent papers, that are called silk or tissue paper. If I am intending to apply a color, which couldn't be procured in the market, I paint a white tissue paper with Ecoline, until I get to create my intended color and you guessed right; I created the texture of the bedspreads with a rollerball pen.

I do utilize re-used papers, such as chocolate wrapping, wrapping paper, old notebook pages, etc.

*Do you make digital images of your collages and work on them digitally too, to apply things like the lettering on the wall of the bakery?*

90% of my work is a manual job and the rest is digital, which includes, letters, shop signs, editing colors, and at times, small changes in composition. All these digital works are done after scanning the work and transferring them to the computer.

*I've never been to Iran, but I've read a few books set there and it strikes me as a very vibrant place, from the types of food to the plants and flowers. Has Iran influenced how colorful and vibrant your work is? And/or where do you find inspiration?*

Iran's art has had more influence on me, than Iran itself as a whole. In the Iranian miniature, which forms a considerable part of my visual studies, the color is used in its pure and genuine form. Moreover, Iranian literature is filled with words such as follower, bird, and nature. Tehran, the city I live in, may not be filled with greenery, but living with Iranian art and literature, keeps me green.

*Have you always wanted to be a children's book illustrator and/or how did you become a children's book illustrator?*

I used to read books a lot, and the illustrations in the books used to mesmerize me, and I always wanted to be someone who paints the pictures in them, without knowing what this profession is

technically referred to. Time went by and I figured out that this is called illustrating and I was certain that I would want to become a children's book illustrator since I was a teenager. Therefore, I attended an art university and since then, it's been 22 years that I've been doing it. *Are you working on anything at the moment and if so can you tell us anything about it?*

Currently, I'm working on Sohrab Sepehri's poems. He's the poet I loved since childhood, and his poems never become repetitive to me. Now I would want to introduce this poet, whose audience was adults, to children, since I believe that a large part of Sohrab's poems about nature, discovery inside it, and the intuition is driven by it, can be read and felt by children, so that in adolescence, they may be able to understand deeper layers of his poems. Sohrab Sepehri is a contemporary Iranian poet and painter, whose works incorporate simple literature and deep meanings.

*What's the funniest/strangest/most unusual thing that's happened to you during your children's book career (apart from a pandemic)?*

I've always been afraid of centipedes, but then I found myself working on a project, whose central character was a centipede and the story comes in three volumes and I was had to draw this character for something close to a hundred times. What's interesting is that this book is. Favorite of Iranian children. For years, they've painted the centipede in the book, made puppets modeled after the main character, and they constantly say that we love the centipede. They ask me how much I love the centipedes since I created this character and I have no certain answer to offer them. This character's name is Kooti Kooti and has been published by Kanoon publication in Iran.

*What's the best review you have ever gotten from a child about your work?*

I receive the best reviews for the novel, the Clown, and most of the kids say that they would want to be the character inside the novel.

Of the most interesting comments I received from the kids, was the one saying, “Hey I know that you are a clown and you’re trying to hide that from us.” The kid showed me an evidence, that she believed was an indication of me, being a clown.

*What were your favorite books when you were younger? Are there any authors and/or illustrators who have had a particular influence on you?*

As I have already said, I draw the most influence from the Iranian miniature, but concerning my technique, I may be a follower of Eric Carle. When I was younger, in addition to children’s books, I was a great fan of mystery books and thrillers. The book I used to read when I was ten, called, “Shahnameh”, or the book of kings, made me write and I was inclined to write more afterward.

*What do you love most about being a children’s book illustrator?*

Constant recalling of my childhood as well as feeling every moment of all those games I used to play and seeing the world in the eyes of a kid.

*Do you have any advice for aspiring children’s book illustrators?*

I want them to know that they themselves are the first audience of their works, but not at their current age; I mean at the time when they were at their target audience’s age, thus they should expose their works to their own judgement, asking whether I would have enjoyed seeing this creation if I were 8. If yes, they would be right to allow their creation to be viewed by children.

*Finally, I consider myself a picture book snob - is there anything you’re snobby about?*

Well, I never find an end to my curiosity about herbs. The more I look at them, the more wonderful they become in my eyes; herbs with thinner stems, and more delicate components are increasingly more mysterious and curiosity-inducing to me.



## Important Awards

- 2020, The little Black Fish award for Best Illustrator (Hey Kids, Here's Spring), Children's Book Council of Iran.
- 2018, Gold Medal for Best Picture Book (Drummer Girl), International Book Award, USA.
- 2017, Gold Medal for Best Illustrator (Drummer Girl), Literacy Classics Award, USA.
- 2017, Gold Medal for Best Illustrator (Drummer Girl), Moonbeam Children's Book Awards, USA.
- 2015, Best Arabic Books Award for Children, Spaceship Towards Outer Space, Bahrain.
- 2012, Nominated for Astrid Lindgren Memorial Awards (ALMA), Sweden.
- 2012, Appreciation Certificate of Oslo International Rumi Festival, Norway
- 2010, Winner of New Horizons of Bologna for Writing and Illustrating the book (The Two Friends), Italy.
- 2011, the best children book of the year (the ministry of culture) Qom, Iran.
- 2011, The second prize of the peace and friendship literature festival (for one of my poems).
- 2011, The third prize of the peace and friendship literature festival (for one of my stories)
- 2009, Grand Prix of Belgrade (The Two Friends), Serbia.
- 2008, The Third Prize of Teatro Festival, Italy.
- 2002 & 2008, Noma Encouragement Prize (The Story of Lullaby, Sara, Apple Jam and River), Japan.
- 2007, Golden Plaque of BIB, Bratislava (If I Were a Pilot & With Rain Again), Slovakia
- 2005, Second Prize of Katha (Smiling Crocodile – Not published), India.
- 2005, First Prize of Kanoon Book Festival (multiple artworks), Iran.
- *Note: Over ten more less important awards are left unmentioned.*

## Some Publications

- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. poet: Raoul Follereau. **The Smile.** Pikku Publications House, 2021 England.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. poet: Forough Farokhzad. **I Plant My Hands in the Garden.** Mirmah. 2020.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Poet: Hoda Hadadi. **I Am Thinking of a Home. Jeg taenker pa et hjem** Uro. 2018. Denmark.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Hoda Hadadi. **The Travelling Mountain, Bjerget der ville rejse.** Uro. 2018. Denmark.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Poet: Ali Seidabadi. **Rainbow in My Pocket.** Tiny Owl. 2016. England.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Hiba Masoud. **Drummer Girl.** Daybreak. 2015. USA
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Kelly Cunnane. **Deep in the Sahara.** Mitsumura. 2014. Japan.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Kelly Cunnane. **Deep in the Sahara.** Random House. 2013. USA
- Author: Hoda Hadadi. **The Clown (novel).** Kanoon. 2012. Iran
- Illustrator and Author: Hoda Hadadi. **Amies pour la vie.** Lirabelle press. 2010 France.
- **Illustrator and author:** Hoda Hadadi **Ill Bosco delle meragvie.** Terre .2010 Italy.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Hoda Hadadi. **The Two Friends.** Shabaviz. 2007.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Ahmad Akbarpour. **If I were a Pilot.** Emli Farhangi. 2006.
- Illustrator: Hoda Hadadi. Author: Farhad Hasanzadeh. **Kooti Kooti'a Story (3 volumes).** Kanoon. 2006 – 2007 – 2008. Iran, China, Turkey, Hongkong, Malaysia.



## Professional Career

### **Iranian Illustrator Society**

(non – governmental) Permanent member, 2003 – Present

Advisor of Board of Directors, 2016 – 2020.

Head of Managerial Team, 2007 – 2008.

Managerial Board Inspector for Financial Affairs of the Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Youth, 2005 – 2006.

### **Iranian Association of Writers for Children and Adolescents** (non – governmental)

Permanent member, 2016 – Present.

### **Iranian Artists Forum**

Member of Board of Visual Council 2017 – 2018.

### **Tehran International Biennial of Illustration**

Member of Policy Council Team, 2018.

Art Director of following Publishers, 2005 – 2018:

- Mehrab – e Ghalam
- Chekkeh
- Bagh – e Abi
- Peidayesh
- Mohajer

Art Director of three projects in Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults

## Jury Member

- 2020, Corona Virus children Painting Competition held by UNICEF in Iran.
- 2017, 2018, 2019, Neshan – e Aban (Highest Level Professional Award for Iranian Illustrators).
- 2017, 2016 Firoozeh award, the festival of

handmade products, Tehran – Iran.

- 2016, Nafas, the art festival of Organ donation by the Iranian society of organ donation.
- 2015 One thousand – and one–night illustration competition and exhibition – Tehran – Iran.
- 2013 – 2011 The best children’s book of the year (by the association of Iranian publishers), Tehran – Iran.
- 2014, National Environment and Nature painting Competition (Sepidar).
- 2014 The Best book of the year of Iran (by the ministry of culture of Iran).
- 2014, Fadjr visual art festival as the member of policy council (By the ministry of culture of Iran).
- 2013, Fadjr visual art Festival (By the ministry of culture of Iran).
- 2010 – 2012, Best Book of the Year, Iranian Publishers Association.
- 2009, Belgrade biennial of illustration.
- 2007, Art and Safety Festival.
- 2006, Mehr Question Competition for pupils by the Ministry of Education of Iran.
- 2004, Second prize of Press Festival for a story.

## Participation

- 2019, Stand owner in Creative Festival (Dubai – UAE).
- 2017, Presented Essay at Symposium of BIB (Bratislava Illustration Biennial).
- 2008, Member of cook book illustration Workshop of Italian Embassy in Tehran.
- 2007, Manager and Member of British Council Workshop.
  - 2005 Bratislava Albin Brunovsky Workshop at the sideline of BIB.
  - 2005, Frankfurt Book Fair Workshop in Tehran.

## Teaching Experiences

- Course on Making “Picture Book”, Iranian Illustrators Society, Iran, 2016 – 2019.
- Tutor of Ten Children’s Workshop, Denmark, 2016 – 2018.
- Tutor of Two Children’s Workshop, Sweden, 2017.
- Tutor, “Picture Book” Competition, Technical Publication, 2017.
- Director of Danish Art Student, Silkeborg School in Tehran, 2015 – 2016.
- Curator of “Eidestan” Exhibition, 2014 – 2016.
- Jury and Tutor of “Picture Book” competition, “Science and Culture” Publication, 2014.
- Tutor of workshop (the European children’s literature in Iran) 2004.

## Exhibitions

2018 – 2019, **Solo Exhibition of Hoda Hadadi**, Titled, “Thinking of a Home,” exhibited 80 works of Hoda Hadadi’s 10 years of work on illustration and installation, Copenhagen, Denmark.

2007, **Solo Exhibition of Hoda Hadadi**, Collection of Hoda Hadadi’s Illustrations, Belgrade, Serbia.

More than 20 Group Exhibitions in Iran, India, Czech Republic, Croatia, Germany, Slovakia, Denmark, Malaysia, Korea, Japan.

## Print

### 1. Catalogues

Le immagini della fantasia, Sarmede, Italy 2019 – page 80 – 81.

Nami concours, Nami island, south Korea, 2019 – page 86.

Sharja Exhibition for children’s book illustrations, Sharjah, UAE, 2019 – page 220 – 221.

Ing creative festival – Dubai – UAE 2019 – page 57.

Birds of a feather (Illustrators of Iran) by orange regional arts foundation,

Australia 2016 page 24 – 25.

One thousand – and one – night, Iran 2015 – page 168.

3th festival of text books (Mosavar), Iran – page 106.

Sharjah Exhibition for children's book illustrations, Sharjah, UAE, 2015, page 285 – 286.

Nya bildern fran Iran, Goteborg, Sweden, 2016 – page 18.

Nye billeder fra Iran, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2015 – page 16.

Anarestan, Berlin, Germany, 2013, page 30 – 31 – 32 – 33.

Bienale ilustracii Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2009, page 141.

Ghosts and get aways, Venezia, Italy, 2008, page 36 – 37 – 38 – 39.

Mil e uma noites, Barrerio, Portugal, 2008, page 28.

9<sup>th</sup> international biennial of illustration, Belgrade, Serbia, 2007, page 105.

Bienale ilustracii Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2007, page 360.

Second Croatian biennial of illustration, Zagreb, Croatia, 2008 – page 111

First Croatian biennial of illustration, Zagreb, Croatia, 2006 – page 88

Noma concours Asia/pacific cultural center for UNESCO, Japan 2009 and 2003.

Bienale ilustracii Bratislava, Bratislava, Slovakia, 2003, page 160.

Annual book of Iranian illustrators 2005 – 2006 – 2008 – 2010.

Youth art festival, Tehran, Iran 2003 – page 177.

## **2. Calendars**

Munich International library of children's book calendar 2015 and will be in 2022 – Germany.

Children's Book council of Iran – 2016 – 2018.

Sarmede calendar 2018 – Italy.

Unesco calendar ACCU 2004 – 2014 Japan.

## List of Works as an Illustrator

- Siasat Nameh, Khajeh Nezamulmolk, Peidayesh Publications, 1999.
- Lullaby Story; M. Azad, Mohajer Publications, 2003.
- I Know What To Do (five volumes); Afsaneh Mousavi Garmroudi, Zeitoon Publications, 2003.
- Blue Coat, Safura Nayeri, Farhang Gostar Publications, 2003.
- My Cloudy Day, Hada Hadadi, Shabaviz Publications, 2003.
- Motherly, M. Azad, Mohajer Publications, 2004.
- Riddles (five volumes), M. Azad, Mohajer Publications, 2004.
- The Smiling Flower, Jamileh Farahani, Shabaviz Publications, 2004.
- What A Taste, Cambiz Kakavand, Shabaviz Publications, 2004.
- Suzan's Red Apple, Mazdak's Yellow Train, Saman's White Horn, Farhad Hasanzadeh, Behnashr Publications, 2004.
- Attar's Quartets, Attar Neishabouri, Peidayesh Publications, 2005.
- The Orange and Bergamot Girl, Nasser Yousefi, Peidayesh Publications, 2005.
- Arash the Archer, Mohammad Mohammadi Nikoo, Mohajer Publications, 2005.
- A Cat and Five Rats, Mustafa Rahmandoost, Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, 2005.
- Paradise cherries are ripe, Hadith Gholami, Shabaviz Publications, 2005.
- Hands (four volumes), Mostafa Rahmandoost, Peidayesh Publications, 2006.
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## Overview of Works

Hadi Hadadi is one of Iran's most influential artists who wrote and illustrated significant books for children and adolescents over two decades of work and activities. Certainly, her knowledge and understanding of the world of stories and poetry play an important role in choosing suitable texts for her illustrations. Hadadi has a special and sensitive reading of literature that has turned her illustrations so different from the works of the others so that her style could be recognized and distinguished at the first glance. Hadadi's presence as the Chair of the Iranian Association of Illustrators, as well as her activities in the field of teaching and educating illustrators, has led to the growth of illustration art among ordinary people. We know Hadadi with her various works, with a diversity that covers novels, poetry, short stories, as well as creative sculptures. However, her illustrations for children are certainly the most dramatic and most prolific work part of her creative productions.

The world of Hadadi's illustrations is a female world. Women constitute the largest volume of her figures, and even if the image of a man is depicted, again it has the same femininity in composition. The same femininity created a distinct and continuous line in her work which has been developed and advanced and has reached richness and maturity. In addition to femininity, nature is also the subject of this artist. The connection between femininity and nature is so strong as in her *The Two Friends*, where the figures become an integral part of nature and are in coordination and connection with it.

There is strong care for spaces in Hadadi's works, especially in her earlier periods of activity, which somehow makes her borrow from eastern art. Meditation and silence, which are the fundamental principles of eastern art, are the foundation of Hadadi's work and distinguishes her art. She wants the audience to see the unseeable in privacy and silence. Trees are sometimes designed on a white background and free from any detail. The nature that Hadadi describes in most of her works is minimalist and selective, and it is not exactly what exists in reality. She chooses details

with a special sensitivity and obsessivity, and when she finds it necessary, she removes all details. In later years, however, she moves from this approach and replaces it with rhythm and movement. The first works of Hadadi can be included in minimalistic arts. Hadadi herself points out somewhere to her silence and minimalism in her childhood: “A small silent and drowsy baby does not have a better refuge than painting and storytelling!” Hadadi turns nature into poetry and with her unique outlook and interpretation, returns it to us. However, what is more rigorous about Hadadi’s work to date and can be checked in most of her illustrations as compared to the works of other artists, is her consideration for some form of meditation.

Another important feature of Hadadi’s works is a form of peace and emotionalism in the design of settings and characters. She suggests a pure form of inner peace and moves away from violence. This worldview and point of view make her search and find texts with peaceful and nonviolent themes and concepts for her illustrations. Kindness, graciousness, and poetic outlook are that are associated with this outlook toward the world, are basic ingredients for Hadadi’s illustrations of the world. In such an illustration, the faces are innocent and the hands are stretching to hug the others. In other words, Hadadi’s illustrations are poetic images and illustrative poems.

Hadadi has also taken important steps toward discovering and creating beauty in form and color. She puts pieces of transparent and colored papers together and displays the beauty of the juxtaposed colors. She loves the effect of transparent and colored sheets on the objects behind them. She experiments and this is something that could not be hidden from the viewer. She puts wide pieces along with narrow surfaces in an artistic way to use the resulting contradictions to diversify her illustrations. Sometimes she leaves the colorful surfaces aside makes the delicate and curvy lines to create the pictures. She uses colored pencils or narrow brushes to draw the folds and fabrics of the images, to paint on clothes, and to make the faces animated and attractive. In her works, matte or dark colors have no function. She prefers her colors to be childish and joyful. When she applies colors, she makes sharp colors as smooth as possible to make the gentle. Her colors are light and clear.

Like color, form is also important for Hadadi to the extent that it is hard to

distinguish between these two elements. Colors make forms and the forms are not free from color. The form in her work has passed a series of transformations. In earlier phases, leaves and branches of trees are the main and most important part of Hadadi collages. But it seems that these natural elements with their predetermined forms failed to respond to the investigative spirit of Hadadi. So, instead of limiting herself to collage with the leaves of the trees, she puts them aside to find newer forms of artistic creating through colored papers, a technique that is a signature of Hadadi's work even today.

The form and face of characters in Hadadi's works have also passed through transformations. She distances herself with simple faces in the early periods that have only two points for eyes and a line for the mouth toward a new approach to making more complex images, with more distinct faces, different eyes and eyebrows, and more realistic organs. Her figures are inspired by the old art of Iranian portrait, and in the construction of clothes and covers, she is often using the design of textiles and old Iranian dishes.

Despite all these, Hadadi is not overwhelmed by technique, and to put it more clearly, the use of diverse techniques is not her concern. She focuses only on one technique: collage with colored paper. She tried to discover her technical capacities to express her desired concepts and to establish a form of connection and association between transparent papers and such concepts as peace, freedom, and friendship. Hadadi, instead of testing a variety of techniques and new approaches, has often tried to expand the existing technical capacities and capabilities. It can be said that Hadadi is one of the few artists who has discovered and used new capacities in collage to achieve the desired and unique forms. Therefore, in addition to maintaining the overall coherence of works, Hadadi has searched for new approaches in her professional course.

Hadadi considers her audience as the most important and considers the children's pleasure as the main objective of her art. Children are important to her and she cares for their aesthetic development through artistic endeavors. She does not want to confuse the viewing children with some strange colors. She accompanies her audience and cares about their aesthetic receptions. By creating lines

that move the arbitrary movement of the eye, and do not disturb the viewer, she provides the opportunity for the audience to see and enjoy images and colors. She simplifies the complexities and reduces the frills and unnecessary details. The beauty is reached in smooth lines and simple and familiar combinations, not in extreme fragments, weird deformations, or sharp angles. Hadadi has no concern to introduce herself as a different and unconventional illustrator. What matters to her is attention and a rising level of understanding and experience by the children, an approach that has differentiated her work in contemporary.

With a general understanding of two decades of Hadadi's activities, two distinctive phases of her artistic creation is evident:

The first phase is related to improvisations and emotional compositions, where improvisations play an important role. The images are more subjective and drawn from the imagination of the artist and the leaves and branches of trees are created with a marvelous variety. Minimal and detailed works are trying to attract the attention of the viewer and transfer her to an art form based on understatement, even a call to silence. In this process, *The Two Friends* can be considered as the apex of the first phase of artistic creation and also a very important milestone in her works.

In the second period, Hadadi, while preserving the same familiar and desirable compositions, steps even further. In this way, empty surfaces are filled with consistent rhythms of points, lines, and structures. Forms are repeated and with their repetition, they create rhythm, movement, and music. The stagnation gives way to dynamics and lines and images become more pronounced. Persian motifs flow into clothes, covers, and lines of faces. Besides figures, the spaces, the overall images become free from generalizations and the native nature and culture of Iran find their way in the works. Settings are developed and open spaces become dominant. Different degrees of color find diversity and technical competencies enter the newer levels. *The Children of Spring* is an important example of the second phase of Hadadi's achievements.

Along with the technical expansion and advances, what continues in both phases is the preservation of such concepts as femininity, nature, friendship, and peace. These are the concepts that are so fundamental and important in Hadadi's outlook that has not never been set aside.



## Review of Some Works

### Rainbow in my pocket

Iran is the land of poetry. We have expressed everything we wanted to say through poetry until contemporary time. History and philosophy and wisdom and mysticism, and even some of the old sciences are written in poetry. Even the beggars use poetry to ask for money, some of them even sell poetry that is used for fortune prediction. The fortune-tellers usually have a small bird who picks up a small folded paper from a row, with lines of poetry printed on it. The poems are from Divan of Hafez, the fourteenth-century Persian poet whose collected works are regarded by many Iranians as a pinnacle of Persian literature. The passengers give some money to the fortune-teller without talking about the intention, question, or idea they have. The fortune-teller and the bird pick a random piece of paper with some verses on it. It is through personal interpretation of the verses that the questioner will discover her answer.

In such a country and with such a culture everything can have an ingredient of poetry. Part of the Iranian illustration tradition was somehow at the service of poetry, and the classical Persian texts of Iran, such as Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and Nezami's Leili and Majnoon, were illustrated by Iranian artists. Iranian painting contains some form of poetry. In the new century, however, as poetry lost its position as the main medium of expression of feeling and news, and retreated to certain locations in households, so painting and illustrating searched for its independent position from poetry and architecture. Strangely, in Persian poetic tradition, poetry is strongly linked to strong architecture that is immune to the damages of wind and rain. The modern Iranian illustration has kept its links to the pictorial tradition and at the same time has distanced itself from poetry. In such an atmosphere, the illustrations of Hoda Hadadi become prominent and her drawings for poetry become even more special.

In Iran and countries like Iran, which has a long history of literary and pictorial tradition, artists and writers are always faced with two concerns. How can we enjoy cultural traditions, without being overwhelmed by them and with free spaces for our differences? And how can we accompany modern art and literature, without completely forgetting our cultural traditions?

Hoda Hadadi's works are good guides for reaching an answer. Her works are modern and contemporary and at the same time, they are the continuation of a certain cultural tradition. This cultural tradition in *The Rainbow in My Pocket* and many other works are contemporary examples of poetic illustrations by Hoda Hadadi. She composes poetry through her illustrations.

This book is about the diary of a girl who writes her dreams. They are dreams that fit in her pocket. She faces her everyday life and is imagining and thinking about her life. She even looks at her ordinary life with a critical outlook, and occasionally talks about her dreams to change.

Images develop poetry through imaginative collages and the creation of open and empty spaces, they create spaces for the active imagination of the audience and her new reading of the book. Through the application of such techniques and the use of papers and plant tissues, Hadadi creates new assemblages that make the text more poetic, the elements that are poetic in themselves in the modern and contemporary sense of the word. The creation of ambivalent and imaginative forms also avoids the text being closed and univocal and opens it to further meanings and interpretations. Her illustrations, in coordination with the poems, can be considered as an artistic and aesthetic reaction to violence. Especially since her illustrations carry the voice and image of women. In this book, almost all characters are girls, except in one place where there is a person with a stone directed toward a sparrow.

However, neither in this book nor in any other work, Hadadi is

not entrapped in stereotypes and clichés and her reactions to phenomena always remain artistic and aesthetics. Although in her recent books, women's voice and image are highlighted and her illustrations are poetic images that are crowded by women and girls. She is an illustrator of women and poetry, the poetic and colorful voice of women in Iran. The same feature as juxtaposed to actual limitations of women in Iran makes the artistic endeavors of Hadadi highly social.

## **The Two Friends**

The Two Friends is the book Hadadi has both written and illustrated. It narrates a one-day touring of two children in a forest. The setting of the story is nature, somewhere at the heart of primitivity and novelty, away from crowds, the city, and materialism. The Two Friends is a poetic work of fiction. The dialectic relationship between the text and the image often opens new interpretations and meanings. The book begins with this sentence: "We found each other one morning that smelled the forest and plant." The image beside this text shows several insects together as if the sentence is uttered by one of these insects. But the reader-viewer realizes that the narrator is originally one of two girls and not insects. Therefore, the book, in the beginning, tells us with a work that wants the audience to be an active reader – viewer, and to actively reflect and engage with whatever is printed on the page and eventually activate his or her imagination. Hadadi does not care so much about realism. She makes her termites, ants, and mosquitoes that are different from real ones.

The story is devoid of the world of men and the general characteristics of masculine behaviors, instead, they are full of femininity, imagination, and affection. The book invites children to enter the general world of friendship between human beings and between humans and nature. The work is produced by such techniques as collage of color papers, leaves,

small branches, and textiles. The foliage and seeds of the plants are used for the display of birds, mosquitoes, termites, fishes as well as transparent and colored pieces of paper are used for the images of The Two Friends. In fact, for more emphasis on nature, Hadadi has turned to creativity in the technique and instead of drawing trees and foliage with a pencil or any other means has directly used available small pieces from nature with her artistic talent and without elaboration or superfluous details. Most of the frames of pictures are occupied by nature, a vast nature that has embraced the small and delicate body of the two friends. It is as if the girls are touring in a safe and immune environment and are in absolute peace and harmony with nature.

The two girls are not of the same age, one is older than the other. So there is something beyond the cliché of age to shape and deepen their friendship, something that has certain links with their share experiences of stories and touring in nature. They have common experiences of understanding and discovery. They listen together to the sound of the termites, they fishing together and watch the flying birds. Thus, through common experiences, they make their friendship deep and deeper.

The sensitive and precise view of the narrator of The Two Friends sees things that cannot be seen by ordinary eyes. For example, the two girls see a group of birds “that are not like one another” (from the original text). This statement is beside a picture in which all the birds are similar to each other. This is the way to emphasize the special outlook of the female narrator, a point of view that sees nature with thousands of variations and differences and searches for differences and variety in similar things.

In the book, two characters are free and cheerful. They are frustrated, obedient, or sad! The two friends, as they go together and taste the delicacies of comradeship, their love and

friendship are polished, the sharp edges of their characters are slow down and become round and soft and smooth, as round as a ripe, red peach.

## **I Plant My Hands in the Garden**

This work is a collection of poems by Forough Farrokhzad, the contemporary and modern poet of Iran. The poetry of Farrokhzad is full of female feelings and desires and Hadadi has masterfully accompanied the poet and has a better focus than the previous works on the image of women. The vacant and empty backgrounds dramatize the loneliness of the narrator. The presence of two fishes, one goat, and a bird portray the connection between the woman and something beyond herself. Sometimes the curl of women's hair turns into green vegetations and sometimes green branches grow out of their hands. Although the bodies are located in white backgrounds, the cloth details make the eyes wonderful and curious. Also, the figures are portrayed in a dancing movement that is in a harmonic connection with the entire sensory setting of the lyrics. Most of the figures are portrayed in a side view and in a normal view, they are neither close to us nor away from us. There are plenty of beautiful typographies all over the book from the cover to the title page and the middle pages.

## **It's Springtime Kids!**

It's Springtime Kids! is a book full of the pure moments of human life and humans living together. The text heralds for the time of spring and joy. Hadadi maintains this vitality from the beginning with colorful images of flowers and children in the cover to the image of green maintains the end of the book. The book begins with the image of an old man who has a backpack of green plants. The face

of the old man reminds us of the face of Nima Yushij, the innovative and contemporary Persian poetry who is often considered as the father of modern Persian poetry. The text of the book is a poem by Nima Yushij. The next images of the book refer to the green spaces of northern parts of Iran, the local clothes and gable roof houses, green hills, and blossoming flowers. The women wash their clothes by the river, and the boys are running after each other with their long caps and loose trousers. There are a celebration and a wedding ceremony that amplifies joy and happiness. Even the ducks have opened their tips and are singing joyfully, and there are the frogs who look at the bride and the groom from behind the mosses. Nature, human beings, and animals are in harmony and coordination with each other. Washed clothes on the washing line with one side tied to a green tree and a shepherd under the tree are the subjects of images. Most of the space is occupied by the image of women. The birds fly under the rain, and children are also joyful and playful as if they want to fly like the birds in the sky.

## Mother

Hada Hadadi, in this book, portrays and reanimates “mother” a famous poem by Iraj Mirza, an early twentieth-century Persian poet. Cover illustration gently guides the reader to the central pages. On the front page, there is the image of the mother who has kneeled in front of the cradle of the baby and has embraced the child with tenderness to guard the child against hardships of the merciless world. Inside the cover, there is the image of a man and lady, whose white clothes and the flower they carry as well as the green setting, represent their lovely relationships. In this picture,

the father who is not present in the original poetry of Iraj Mirza is depicted as a man in love. The illustrator narrates the life of a child who is born as a result of the love between a woman and a man. In these illustrations, there is a mother satisfied by the love of a father and breeds a child in her arms. The revitalizing presence of the mother's life in Hadadi's Hadadi illustration is rebuilding life itself. The use of live and transparent colors has supported the poetic image of the setting. The use of green color, the basic color of life, and fertility color emphasize femininity and the role of the mother in survival. The design of the mother through curved and smooth lines, both conveys the meaning of the poem and reminds the viewer of the meaning of motherhood. On the next page, beside the line "they say when the mother gave birth to me" the child is born. The illustrator responds to the poet/child that your mother gave birth to you to give joy to life. In the setting of this page, the event of the birth of life/child/joy is reported by the relatives as they carry different gifts and souvenirs. They also carry small torches and are burning fragrant materials. In the next images, it is the mother who in her privacy teaches the child to feed, sleep, walk and talk. The final image of the book portrays a child who has a certain distance from her mother and free from the domination of the adults, is practicing whatever he has learned, and reads the closing lines of the poem:

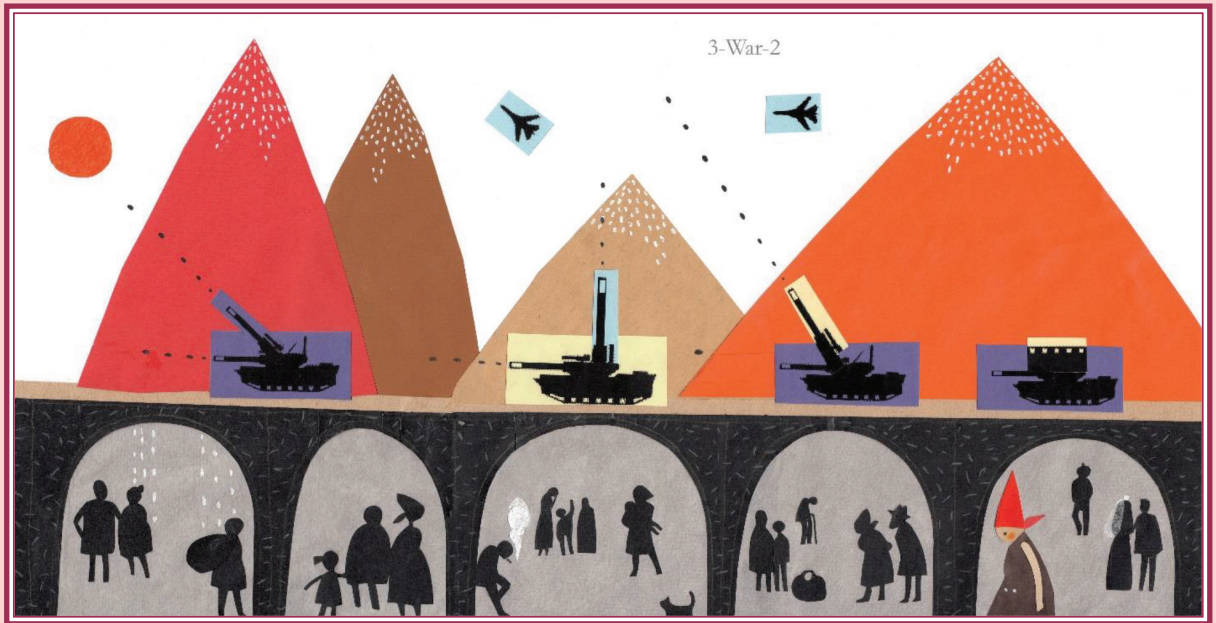
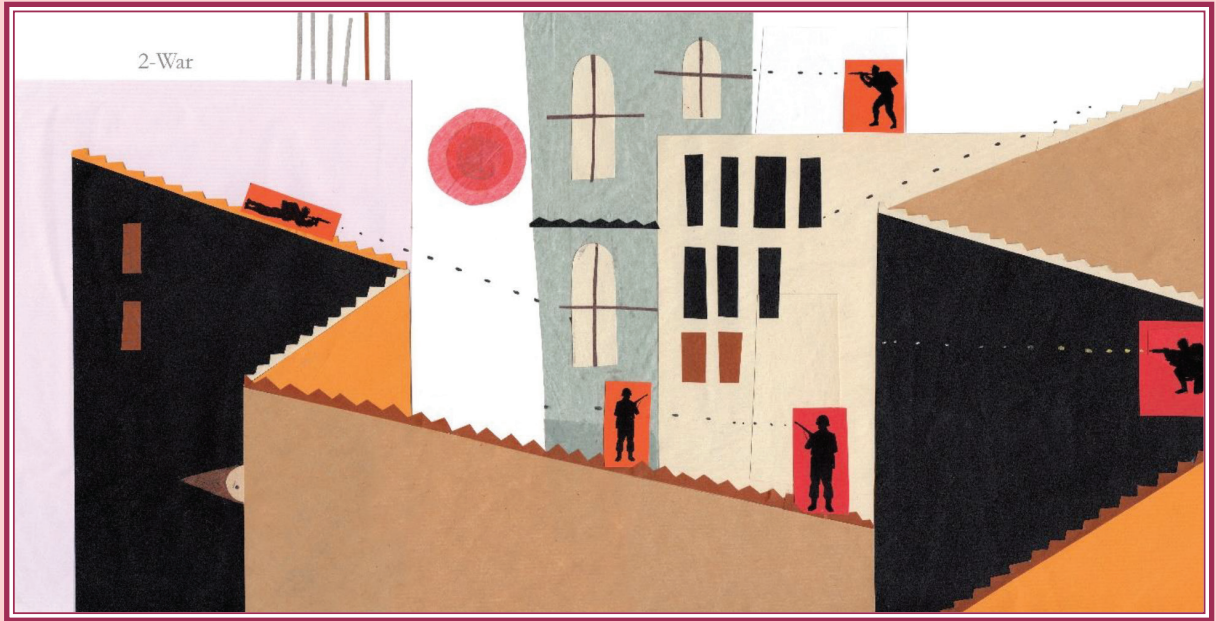
Therefore my being is part of her being;  
I will always love her as far as I and she exist.  
Hadadi the illustrator in her realistic style is in coordination with the emotional tone of the poetry. Her use of assemblage technique, through the collage of papers with different shapes, thickness, and colors, and textures, and the construction of transparent layers for the figures, masterfully conveys the happy nature of life and birth. Using the collage technique, Hoda Hadadi artfully depicts the relationship between a free and active child and a mother who has no intention to dominate him. Hence, it can be

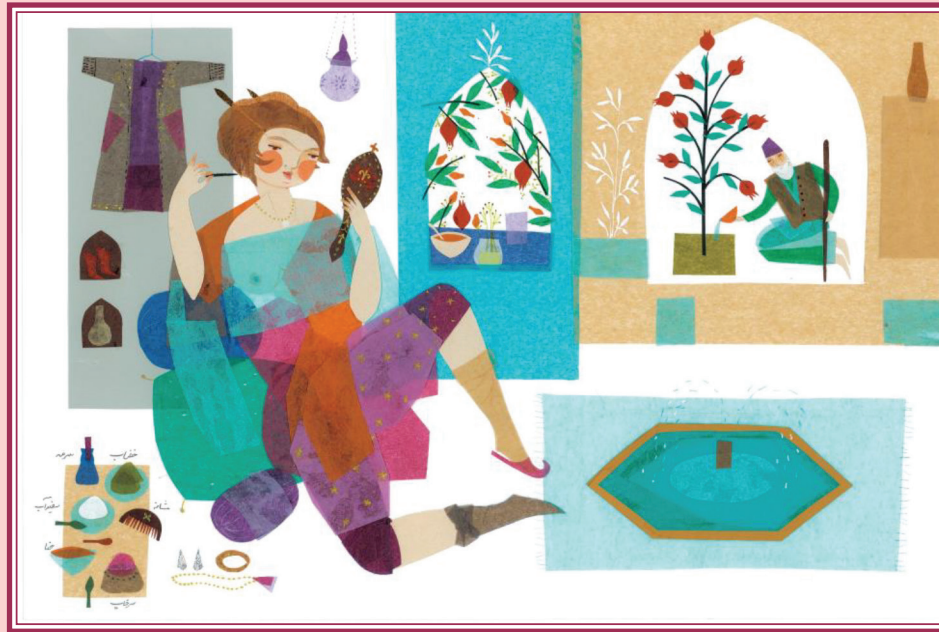
said that the illustrative narrative of Iraj Mirza's poetry has something to express about the contemporary relationship between generations. The design of spaces through pictorial narrative, despite being marginal and limited, defines the emotional relationship between the mother and the child. The pictures are so dynamic and attractive that the reader is encouraged to view and reflect on all pages. The use of a font similar to handwriting is in coordination with the emotional and expressive tone of the book.





1-white watermelon





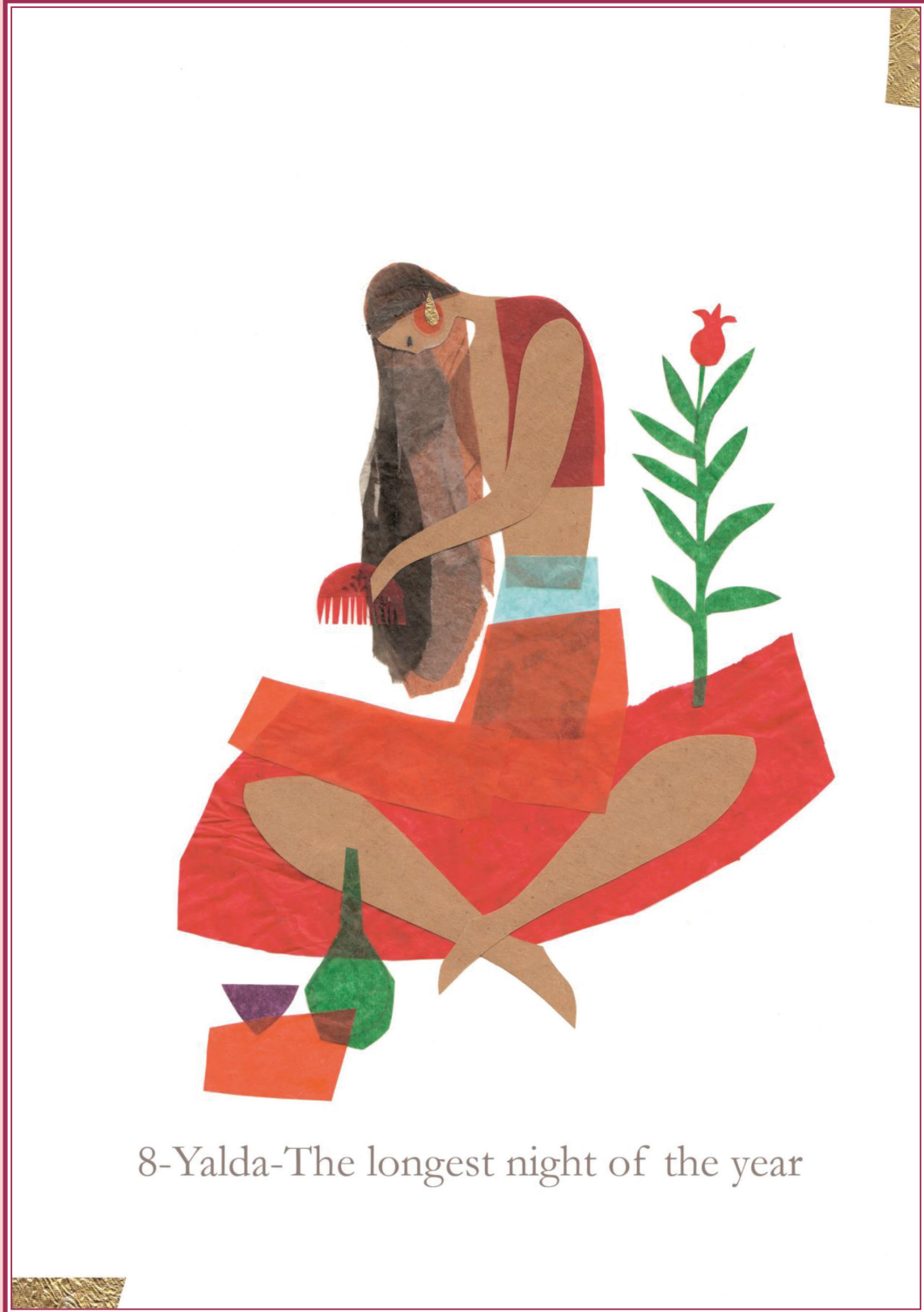
5-Lady beetle  
a folk persian story



6-the Mirror

7-The seed is late





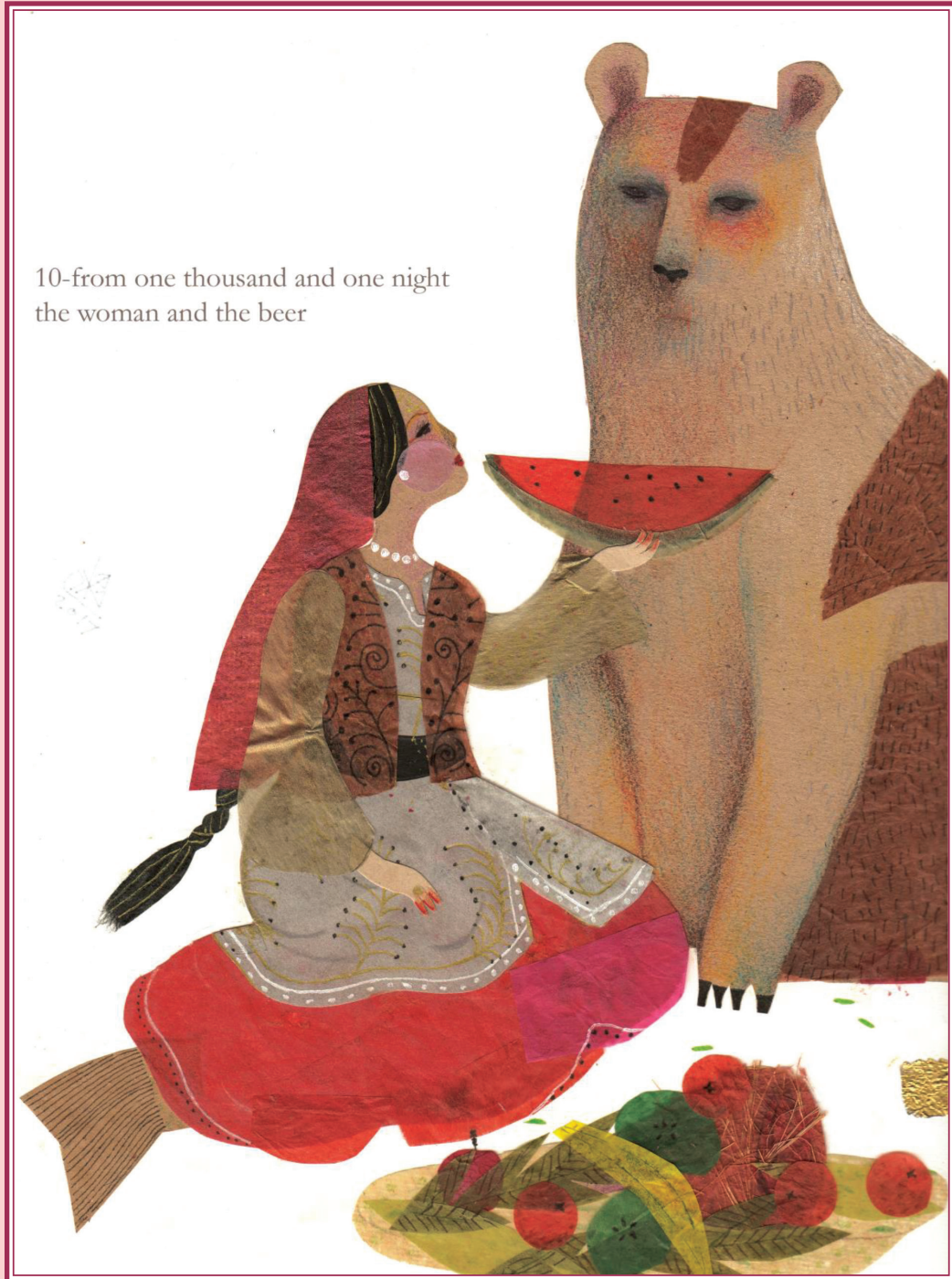
8-Yalda-The longest night of the year

بہ یک خانہ  
گلری کلم...



9-The winery

10-from one thousand and one night  
the woman and the beer





برنگی درخت  
پرتغال کوچکی  
برنگی نان و  
برنگی شراب



11-Ten  
A poem

## Contact

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