



Los Angeles



LACMA's burgeoning contemporary Islamic art collection

Now on view

This week, LACMA's [Islamic Art collection](#), renowned for its Persian carpets and antiquities, is going contemporary with the unveiling of a new collection of photos by 34-year old Iranian photographer [Shadi Ghadirian](#). Over the past two years, curator of Islamic Art Linda Komaroff has started collecting [contemporary art](#) from the Middle East, a region with a buzzing contemporary art scene. Ghadirian's Untitled (Qajar series), inspired by 19th-century Iranian Qajar dynasty photo albums, are photos of young Iranian women (all friends of the artist) in traditional 19th-century Iranian dress with one modern object like a Pepsi can, a vacuum cleaner or sunglasses. One photo shows a young veiled woman with a boom box

perched on her shoulder, chin up, and a piercing look of defiance worthy of a hip hop star. A clever commentary on the modern versus the traditional and the ambiguous place Iranian women occupy in this dichotomy, Ghadirian has received international attention thanks to the series. When Komaroff visited the British Museum's 2006 exhibition [*Word into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East*](#), she was introduced to a fresh contemporary take on Islamic Art which she didn't know existed. "I thought this [art] would augment the collection at LACMA," says Komaroff. And now LACMA is the first museum in the United States to have the entire 33-part series in their permanent collection. Other artists in LACMA's collection include Iranian [Sadegh Tirafkan](#), [Ali Omar Ermes](#) of Libya, and Syrian Ali Hassan. Ghadirian's photos will be on display through March 2009.

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Posted by: [Yasmine Mohseni](#) on July 29, 2008