



Smithsonian
*Freer Gallery of Art and
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery*

Album of Persian Photographs

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
National Museum of Asian Art Archives
Washington, D.C. 20013
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery Archives
Title:	Album of Persian Photographs
Date:	undated
Identifier:	FSA.A2015.09
Creator:	Sevruguin, Antoin, 1851-1933
Extent:	1 Item (album (120 photoprints))
Language:	Persian .
Digital Content:	Image(s): Album of Persian Photographs

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Purchase; 2015.

Citation

Album of Persian Photographs, FSA.A2015.09. National Museum of Asian Art Archives. Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository.

Biographical / Historical

Antoin Sevruguin managed and operated one of the most successful commercial photography studios in Tehran in the late 19th century. Born in the 1840s in Iran, Sevruguin's mother returned with her children to her hometown of Tbilisi after his father Vassil, a Russian diplomat in Iran, died in a horse riding accident. Trained as a painter, Sevruguin returned to Iran in the early 1870s accompanied by his two brothers, establishing a photography studio first in Tabriz and then Tehran. His studio's ties to Tbilisi, however, persisted through the years; many of the early portraits of Dervishes and women have been simultaneously attributed to Antoin Sevruguin and Dimitri Yermakov, the Georgian photographer who is often referred to as Sevruguin's mentor from Tbilisi. Many of Antoin Sevruguin's photographs were published as early as 1885 in travelogues, journals and books indicating that by that time he had a fully established practice in Tehran's Ala al-Dawla street, with ties to the court of Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar. Often unacknowledged as the producer of published images in his own time - the 1902 photographic survey of Persepolis being the most glaring of such authorial misrepresentations - he was nevertheless celebrated and acknowledged for his artistic vision and his keen eye for composition, achieving the Medal of Lion and Sun from Nasir al-Din Shah, the 1897 Medal of Honour in the Brussels International Exposition, and the 1900 Medal of Honour in Paris International Exposition.

Reflecting a career that spans nearly half a century, Sevruguin's diverse body of work includes studio portraits of families, women and dervishes, survey photographs of archeological sites, objects, landscapes and architecture, and photographs of royalty, high officials and ceremonies of the Qajar court. The range of his output not only demonstrates his own pictorial concerns and artistic abilities but also the divergent interests of his clients. Despite numerous devastating incidents throughout his career - the loss of more than half of his negatives in a 1908 blast and fire, an unsuccessful attempt at diversifying into cinematography in the 1910s, and the confiscation of the remainder of his negatives in the mid-1920s to name a few - his studio remained operational even after his death in 1933. A number of negatives from the Sevruguin studio can be dated to the years after Antoin's death, indicating that the Sevruguin studio continued to be commercially viable. As one of the most prolific early commercial photographers in Iran, Antoin Sevruguin's artistic legacy has since proved far more enduring.

Scope and Contents

Black leather bound album of 119 albumen prints and one silver gelatin print. Prints are likely produced by the studio of photographer Antoin Sevruguin in the 1870s and 80s in his early career in Iran. Includes handwritten captions in Persian. Many of the prints have an unusually purplish tone.

Arrangement

images indexed by original order in the album

Local Numbers

FSA A2015.09

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Architecture
- Clothing and dress
- Hairstyles
- Jewelry
- Landscapes
- Military
- Musical instruments
- Palaces
- Portrait photography
- Qajar dynasty -- Iran -- 1794-1925
- Qajar dynasty, -- Iran, -- 1794-1925
- Religious buildings
- Royalty (Nobility)
- Street vendors
- Women
- headgear

Cultures:

Qajar dynasty -- Iran -- 1794-1925

Types of Materials:

Albumen prints
Photograph albums
Photographic prints
Photographs
Studio portraits

Places:

Asia
Bandar Anzalī (Iran)
Iran
Iṣfahān (Iran)
Tehran (Iran)