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MINIATURE PASTED ON AN ALBUM LEAF. "A COURTIER WITH AN ASTRAKHAN HAT"

IRAN; C. 1860

LEAF: 41.9 × 26.7 CM

Qajar Iran became Europeanized in earnest under Nasir-al-Din Shah (1848-1896). In order to counter pressure from Russia, the country was allied with the Western powers, and the shah was very interested in modern technology, not just weapons, but also other inventions. He was a competent photographer, for example.

A photograph must in fact have been the model for this portrait, which in many ways breaks with ancient Persian tradition. The face clearly reflects a real one, and there is none of the stylization that otherwise characterized earlier Qajar painting. But although the depiction of the fur-trimmed caftan with the carefully detailed *boteh* pattern is naturalistic, the painting still seems curiously two-dimensional and alienated.

Published in:

Sotheby's, London, 11/12-1986, lot 142;

Kjeld von Folsach: *For the Privileged Few: Islamic Miniature Painting from The David Collection*, Louisiana, Humlebæk 2007, cat.no. 125;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer: *The Human Figure in Islamic Art – Holy Men, Princes, and Commoners*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2017, cat.no. 70;