



Inv. no. 30/2003

CAT. 37. "PORTRAIT OF FATH ALI SHAH QAJAR." MINIATURE
PASTED ON AN ALBUM LEAF. SIGNED BY AHMAD

IRAN; 1226 H = 1811

THE MINIATURE H: 33.7; W: 22.8 CM

Of the portraits of rulers on exhibit, the one of Fath Ali Shah Qajar (r. 1797–1834) is among the most monumental and majestic, although placing him in the midst of a deserted landscape can seem rather absurd.

The Shah is shown in all his princely raiment, with his distinctive crown and beautiful pearls and jewels. He also flaunts his big black beard, of which he was very proud and that made it easy to recognize him both then and now. Otherwise the face is idealized, but typical of the Qajar period, when the black eyebrows that almost meet over the nose were standard for both men and women.

Despite its modest size, the portrait radiates some of the monumentality that is found in the oil paintings that gained ground during the period in Iran, inspired by art from Europe. This influence

can also be seen in the use of perspective in depicting the landscape and in the motif, which brings to mind contemporary princely portraits of Napoleon, for example.

The figure itself is flat, however, with the emphasis on bright colors and thus in keeping with classical Persian traditions from before 1600.