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**Short Essays**  
History of Art on Display in Tehran  
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## History of Art on Display in Tehran

Text on urban project in Tehran

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From May 5th to May 25th, 2015, Tehran municipality realized a project called "A Gallery as Vast as a City." In this potentially historic undertaking, all the commercial billboards and banners were used to exhibit images of renowned artworks from Iranian and international artists. Thus, in Tehran's gridlock routines, there were occasions for breath in some culture and art. There were everything from modern and classic paintings to traditional arts and pictures of old buildings. In fact, instead of consumerism, people were immersed in the visually valuable, or rather, the immensity of beauty. It became somewhat usual for a while to see the masterpieces of art history in Tehran's scramble. Like any other project, this also had



its own critics and advocates. The idea was to bring the most perdurable artworks from inside the art history books to the streets of Tehran. It is, however, not as easy as it may appear. Or is it?

Intentionally or unintentionally, a governmental organization has set out to educate people's visual taste: the municipality and billboard companies, in a surprisingly synchronized effort, had taken a pause from advertising to take a fleeting glimpse into art and culture. Apart from the visual delight during urban commute, which can take several hours, this was a decent way of raising the level of visual literacy in the short period of ten days. On a gen-



eral, impartial note, the original idea was brilliant; then again, the executorial defects were not few. Obviously, there was a precipitousness to the project, which is rather normal, even necessary to such works. Despite the overall satisfactory chord that the project struck, thanks to the organizers, there were also shortcomings that should be outlined. We do not want to exaggerate the positive aspects of the project on the one hand, and not be dismissive of its negative impacts on the other.

The diversity of the works and impartiality in selecting them, as well as the adequate descriptive notes provided, were certainly among the advantages. As for the cons, there were the bad printing quality, a general lack of proportionality between the size of the works and the frame of the billboards.

At any rate, the ten-day-exhibition of art certainly dominated the other 355 days of commercial images of detergents, household appliances, banks, and the like. Tehran's clear weather, with the occasional clouds and rain, was definitely ready to cooperate to prove that it is all too ready for so much poetry. The number of the billboards, the volume of this gallery, and other such records—suitable merely for official documents—are insignificant. What mattered was the visiting of the gallery on the weekend, during spring strolls, and while wasting time in the traffic jams and crowded streets.

