



INSIDE THE GALLERY PODCAST – SERIES 4 EPISODE 8 (late September 2022)

PEDRAM KHOSRONEJAD

WEAVERS MERCHANTS AND KINGS

CADRY'S 70th ANNIVERSARY IN AUSTRALIA (Persian rugs)

Tim Stackpool:

... here at the Powerhouse Museum. Pedram, always a great pleasure to have you on the podcast.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Good afternoon, Tim. Thank you so much for giving the time of your beautiful podcast for us. And I welcome you and your participant in the podcast to the Weavers, Merchants and Kings, 70th anniversary of Cadrys business in Australia.

Tim Stackpool:

Now, there's a number of artifacts here which come from Cadrys exclusively. Is that what we are looking at, at the Powerhouse today?

Pedram Khosronejad:

The exhibition is dedicated to Jacques Cadry's legacy and their family business, known in Australia as Cadrys. In this exhibition, we have 14 objects. Majority come from Cadry's family collection, except four of them that I will show and talk about them to you soon. What we have here in the first gallery, is huge Dorokhsh carpet made in the east of Iran in Khorasan. The second gallery dedicated to Paul Ratzler's legacy. And the third gallery are other larger objects from Cadry's collection. And in the very end, we have an interview, nicely done with Bob Cadry regarding the history of their family.

Tim Stackpool:

So is he the son or the grandson of the original Cadry?

Pedram Khosronejad:

Bob Cadry is the youngest son of Jacques Cadry, and at the moment, the manager of Cadrys business, because they have two showrooms, one in Sydney, run by Bob's youngest son, Jared, and the other showroom in Melbourne runs by eldest son of Bob, Ari Cadry. So is really family business.

Tim Stackpool:

And I have to admit, I don't know the history all that well, but they're almost... I mean, they're the original guys who pretty much brought Persian rugs and that whole concept, the artistry, of course, and the great work that they are, to Australia so many years ago.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes, actually the grandfather, Jacques Cadry, was the first Persian Jewish immigrant to Australia, landed here in 1951, and began his business in Persian and Oriental carpet in Sydney in 1952. Bob Cadry and the other protagonists in my research told me about Jacques Cadry, he was really a person who collected objects and collected people.

Tim Stackpool:

How so?

Pedram Khosronejad:

The thing historically is that after the First World War, Persia, today, Iran, became a safe land for those who struggled the big Depression period of Europe, and suddenly Iran became a market for good, talented Westerners, mostly Europeans, to come to Iran for infrastructure developments. But in the same time they found a safe place. But with the outbreak of the Second World War, they needed to leave Iran again. And somehow, many of them came to Australia, but they didn't know each other. And Jacques Cadry, I can confirm, probably was the eminent philanthropist, philosopher, lover of Persian and European history, poetry, literature. And when he came here, I think, if he could, he wanted to create the faculty of Persian and Orientalist studies. But in the same time, he was a man dedicated to family, his family. He said when he arrived in Australia, found, oh, this is the safe country when I should raise my children.

Pedram Khosronejad:

He opened his showroom in Edgecliff, where they have their Persian carpet business. But if not on daily basis, weekly basis, little by little, those who lived in Iran fled Iran because of many political, cultural, religious issues. And non-Iranians they are. None of them are Iranians, only Jacques is Iranian. They found themselves welcome to the Jacques Cadry's shop, and sit, have a nice Persian tea and learn from him about things, or share their experiences, which will arrive in this exhibition. Talk about Paul Ratzer, work together. And they created a friendship that lasted their life. So yes, you are right. After Jacques, his sons Eddie and now Bob and two grandchildren of Jacques, Ari and Jared, they are the first that presented the authentic Persian rugs.

Tim Stackpool:

Authentic Persian rugs. Now, we'll talk about the actual pieces that you have here in the exhibition in a moment. But first of all, I mean, you are of Iranian heritage. When you think about the Cadrys here in Australia, are they like the poster boys of Persia for people like you here in this country, for other Persians in this country? Are they held up with significantly high esteem?

Pedram Khosronejad:

Good question. I look at them as cultural ambassadors of Persia, for three generations, minimum, in Australia and more than I think other three generations in Persia, Cadry's family were the holders of this culture of Persian carpet and antique carpets. They travelled for generations in Iran between Persia, Israel, Europe, especially London. And just wherever they did go, all carpet dealers they knew them, because they understood they are the lovers of the craft, not only the buyers or dealers. They knew them as the keepers of the crafts of Persia. And this is now what I see, yes, in Cadrys family. Bob and his two children are really the lovers and keepers of Persian art and craft.

Pedram Khosronejad:

They are the connoisseur of the beauty and aesthetic, and they value today in 21st century fighting against the negative part of, for example, labor help woman in craft of carpet in different countries. I'm aware that sustainability is very important for them. And when you sit with them in the showroom, as I did many times, even people they don't know when they come in. I think when they go out is like they read half a book about Persian, Islamic art and craft. And like the father and grandfather, they collect people too. And this is recipricated, they also learn from people. So they are very welcoming family. Is not only business for them, they are really the keepers of the culture and the heritage of Persia.

Tim Stackpool:

Now, the title image that I'm using for this podcast is the piece which is in front of us here, Pedram. It's enormous. It's the first piece you see when you come up to level four of the Powerhouse to take a look at this exhibition, Weavers, Merchants, and Kings. You need to tell us a little bit about this because it's enormous and it's rich in its content.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Thank you so much, Tim. Yes, it's rare unique carpet in the world, which has only one twin sister, which is in Golestan Palace Museum in Tehran, which was the last palace of the last real king of Persia. Dorokhsh carpets belonged to a school of carpet weaving of Persia, which I can confirm probably closed by early 20th century because of the Europeanization of Persia. Dorokhsh is a little city in the province of Khorasan near the Birjand. In technical matter they are famous because of the Persian tied of the carpet, because of large size and the thick bounds around the carpet.

Pedram Khosronejad:

And normally, in the middle, they have normal design with a medallion shape form. But what we have here is a special type of carpet. The importance of this carpet is when definitely it was made in village of Dorokhsh in Iran, the patron and the person who ordered this carpet to be made somehow was connected to India. When we look at the image in the center of this carpet is in matter of the school of iconography is **Qajar** Persia, but the content is Indian architecture in two third of the carpet, and on the top it is very interesting. I will tell you a little bit later.

Tim Stackpool:

If I look around the outside of this, the border area, I see what would, I would guess, is regular sort of Islamic-

Pedram Khosronejad:

Architecture.

Tim Stackpool:

Yes.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Which mixture absorbed in Indian traditional architecture.

Tim Stackpool:

Yes. But the interior of the rug, of course, is very much unlike that, which is where you're saying the Indian influence comes from.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes, exactly. But let's look at the image at the whole and see if he can have some more, put it in the context. After my preliminary research on the carpet, what we have in front of us is the port of city of Surat in Gujarat, India, which based on historical material that I could find, had import and export connections to the southern ports of the Persia for the textile and carpets from Khorasan region from Iran. But if you go from top, first we have amazing sky full of stars. On the top we had lady sunshine. In Farsi you say Khorshid Khanoum, which is Qajar, typically. And in left, very end of left, very end of right

side of the star, which is full of the stars and sunshine, we have two moons. How is possible that in one sky we see all the stars, sun and two moons?

Pedram Khosronejad:

When we come down, we see a series of mountain chains, and in the middle, there is a white one. And then we have the sea and little boats that they are navigating. And then we come to the land with this Indian architecture. For me, what we see on the mountains is Persia. And that white mountain in the middle is the symbol of Persia, the Damavand mountain, which since history written in Persia is the symbol of Persia, that Damavand mountain. And the water and those boats is Persian Gulf and showing the trade route, Indian trade route between Persia and India, and those boats are those that do this import/export. And that beautiful sky shows how the navigators on the Indian Ocean used Islamic astronomy and astrology because of the situation of stars, sun, and moon, to find anywhere from Persian Gulf to Surat and vice versa.

Pedram Khosronejad:

And when we come to this bottom of the carpet, which is two thirds of the design, we have beautiful architecture of city of Surat, but building is like early modern architecture. And if we go very close there, smokes come out of the chimney, which bring to our attention, Surat always was a city famous for the makers of the textile. But once India became colonised, Indian office, India Company created modern European textile factories in Surat, which is still today, they exist. So what we see is internal, probably late 19th century inside the Surat city.

Tim Stackpool:

It's interesting that it creates that connection between Persia and India, because perhaps to most people, those who are not educated in this, you wouldn't actually even consider there'd be too much of a connection there. And yet this work here cements that.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Well, this is true, but we should always, I said in class, Persia has big debt to India, because today, if really we want to learn about big part of Persian literature, we need to go to Indian libraries. We should not forget that between 16th and 18th century, the Islamic period of India, that we call it Mogul Empire, Persia and Iran, they had very, very deep connections. And many of the court intellectuals, philosophers, writers, artists of India, they were from Persia.

Tim Stackpool:

It's fascinating that a single piece like this, as enormous as it is, has so much depth and takes us so much further back in history to this education that you are talking about. Let's move on to the next gallery. I can see two plinths that you've set up. They're glazed underneath. So are these particularly precious pieces? What do we have first of all?

Pedram Khosronejad:

This gallery is regarding the legacy of Paul Ratzer. And I'm happy to let you know that Paul Ratzer's daughter is with us and will join us in a few minutes, but before she join us, I just explain who was Paul Ratzer and what we have here. Paul Ratzer was a well-educated, intellectual Russian. During the Russian Revolution he didn't like the situation and with his young wife came to Iran, settled down in Iran. And probably he's one of the most important non-Iranians who engaged in the art and craft production and

trade of Persian carpets. What we have here in the right side showcase, we have four beautiful designs of Persian carpets done by the hand of Paul Ratzer in Iran in 1930s.

Tim Stackpool:

These are original pieces, are they?

Pedram Khosronejad:

They are original pieces and we are very lucky and proud that they are part of Powerhouse collection today. And this is first time that four of them showcased together for the public. So Paul Ratzer in Iran designed them and gave it to their own weavers. And there the weavers, what we have in second wing right produce such a beautiful refined carpet, which is rolled here in front of us with both the designs. In left side, we have photographs of Paul Ratzer and his wife in Persia. And in the right side, we have photographs of Paul here in British dressing, working with local carpet weavers of Torbat-e Jam in Khorasan.

Tim Stackpool:

How far back would this date, this piece that we're standing in front of?

Pedram Khosronejad:

Paul Ratzer, as his daughter will tell us, was active in Iran in this business, probably between 1920s and 1930s. And they left Iran a year before the outbreak of Second World War. So this beautiful carpet today belong to Cadry families that they loaned us. But originally it was part of Paul Ratzer's collection.

Tim Stackpool:

Close to a hundred years, then.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Close to a hundred years. Yeah. And I see that Renata Ratzer is coming. Hello, Renata. Thank you so much for your time and welcome to, I think, your own family gallery.

Renata Ratzer:

Thank you, Pedram. I'm Renata Ratzer. I'm the daughter of the late Paul and Barbara Ratzer, who in almost all his time in Australia were good friends with Monsieur Jacques, as we all used to call the founder of Cadrys Carpets.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Renata, can you just let us know a little bit about your family and yourself, and what was the story that parents came to Australia?

Renata Ratzer:

Well, my parents were Russians of the ancien regime. My mother's father was a general in the Grenadier Guards. My father was in charge of strategy and tactics in the Imperial White Army. And they fought off the Bolsheviks in the Revolution as long as they could. And then, when it was obviously useless, he escaped over the mountains with his wife and a British half crown piece in his pocket into Persia, where there were some of the adventurers fighting to keep the Bolsheviks out of Russia with Prince Mirza

Khouchak Khan, working as a coolie until they discovered what else he could do. And then eventually, he looked around and thought, what can you do in this country? More especially, what can you do in this country when you have two PhDs, but your government has a price on your head and is not going to acknowledge your qualifications? And he came to the conclusion that the best thing in Persia was the rugs.

Renata Ratzer:

They were fantastic. They had a wonderful and rich history. They were beautiful, they were creative. So daddy being daddy, he had himself apprenticed as a weaver, got his master weaver's certificate, which Bob Cadry saw once. And I still have the two rugs he designed and wove himself as his masterpieces. Then he founded and made a very profitable business, designing and weaving his own rugs. He had his own team of weavers. He had his own flocks of sheep. He would drive right across the desert very early in the morning to inspect them, cull out the black sheep and so on. This continued until 1932. And they loved living in Persia. They loved the people. They loved the culture. They had good friends. But my father became increasingly aware the Persian government as it then was, was becoming increasingly pro-German.

Renata Ratzer:

While he hated the Bolsheviks with a great passion, of course, they having murdered all his family and destroyed his homeland, he also disliked the Nazis with a great passion since half his family were of Jewish origin. And anyway, in principle, he disliked what they stood for. So he left Persia for England in the beginning of 1932. They were there very profitably. He only ever made two copies of the one rug design and they'd have a different color background to each one. And one would go to England and one would go to the United States so you never had two people with the same rug. Anyway, at the end of the thirties, the doctors said that my mother's health would not survive another English winter, and she needed sunshine. And that's why they came to Sydney, Australia, which was supposed to have one of the highest daily quotas of sunshine in the world. In 1939, on the last civilian ship allowed out of England before the declaration of war, with a private cabin for the Chow Chow dog. The dog was one of the great stories of my childhood.

Renata Ratzer:

It was in quarantine for six months after they arrived in Sydney. And two weeks later, after he got out, he got a tick and was killed. However, apart from that little tragedy, Paul looked to land and discovered that there was absolutely nobody in Australia who knew what a Persian rug was or cared. The Cadrys had enough trouble in 1952, when at least some of the post-Hitler refugees were coming over. But this was 1939, we didn't even have Hungarians. So he bought up a whole lot of harbor front real estate and changed his focus to that.

Renata Ratzer:

However, I remember coming home from school when I was about 12 years, 1956, to hear them very excited because they'd met a Persian, a charming gentleman who spoke French, as they did, was very, very cultivated and very, very interesting. And they were over the moon because it was a fairly lonely existence for intellectual refugees in the 1930s and '40s, as you can imagine. They got on very, very well and became family friends ever after. My father was a wiz at real estate and I think he helped Monsieur Jacques set up the business a little bit and certainly helped him buy that wonderful building they had in New South Head Road, Rose Bay.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Now we are in the gallery where in these two showcases, right side, we have full, beautiful rug design painting by your beloved father, Paul. And left side, we have one beautiful rug designed and made under supervision of your father. How your father talked about those periods in Iran, and how he engaged with Persian carpet design and production?

Renata Ratzler:

I wish I could tell you more, but you don't listen to the important details when you are a kid, you want the romantic bits of the story. However, I remember him telling me that there used to be a huge room with many looms and the weavers would all be working on them. And there was a large stool with a sort of superintendent dictating in a sing-song voice. And if you look under all my dad's carpet designs, there are little squares with different colors and numbers. And those are the dye lots of the different wools, because he bought his own wool, he made his own dyes. And the person up there would be saying, "Six knots to the right, pink B, seven knots upwards, blue, dark blue, C18," or whatever. And so it went on, which is really all I remember of the process, except that once he became successful, of course, there were lots of attempts at industrial espionage.

Renata Ratzler:

And one of the workers tried to spy in the vat to find out the secret of these dyes, and unfortunately fell in and was sort of boiled into soap. Not nice. I know that when he was working, they had by that stage a British driver called Ward, and they would set off at two o'clock in the morning across the desert before it got too hot, to visit the outlying villages, to check on the fleeces, to check on some of the tribal rugs, to buy the wool and so on. And there would be many trips to Afghanistan, to India, to Turkmenistan, to look at tribal rugs, to buy, to sell. For a man who was primarily... Well, his doctorates were in pure mathematics and economics, and he always said economics wasn't a serious subject, it wasn't science. He could be right.

Renata Ratzler:

Someone who simultaneously studied military science and tactics. He was also a very creative man and he loved creating those designs. Mummy said sometimes if he got an idea that worked, you could hear him laughing from the other room because he was so happy. And I remember my father used to teach me how you could tell what was handmade, what wasn't, how many knots, how you could tell this was a nomadic tribe rug, because you could see the slight change when they moved from one place to the other and the loom tension changed, and all of those things.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Do you have still any of the designs of your father of Persian carpets?

Renata Ratzler:

I don't. I gave them all to Cadrys when I moved to Adelaide, really, because I thought, they're just going to sit in the bottom of a chest and Cadrys are the only people in the world who know what they're worth, who appreciate them, who will do something with them.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Thank you, Renata, for your time.

Renata Ratzler:

Thanks very much, Pedram.

Tim Stackpool:

She's a remarkable woman.

Pedram Khosronejad:

She's really remarkable and she has very, very good memory, sharp eyes. And as she's a teacher also, she's a very good storyteller indeed, Tim.

Tim Stackpool:

So in the third part of your exhibition here, you have some pieces, again, behind glass set back, a few photographs here. Who are these people in these pictures here?

Pedram Khosronejad:

Well, in the first photograph left side, we have Jacques Cadry is in his showroom in Sydney, in 1966, with one of his apprentice to learn how to work on the carpet, repairing the carpet. And in the right side, we have the father, Jacques Cadry, in the middle, and left side, Bob Cadry, right side, Eddie Cadry. And the date back to 1980 in David Jones's art gallery in Sydney. In this showcase also we see very beautiful Qajar textile, which was made in Yazd. It is a wool and *Zaribaft*. And on the top we have another Safavid pen box. And I'm happy to let you know that both of them are, after it's been donated by Cadry families to the Powerhouse collection.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. Looking at the didactic on the wall, it says that the textile may date back to 1850.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes. The majority of these objects belonged to Qajar dynasty, which is dated 1725 to 1925.

Tim Stackpool:

Yeah. And the pen box, that's also featured here. It says 1700-

Pedram Khosronejad:

Isfahan during Safavid period. Very prestigious objects they donated to us.

Tim Stackpool:

Incredible.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes, definitely.

Tim Stackpool:

Moving along.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes. In this gallery, we have very rare and beautiful little carpet. We call this series of carpets, royal portrait carpets because they depicts the portrait of Qajar kings, but they came to the market mostly during early 20th century and after the invention of photography. So what we have here, we have the last king of Qajar, Ahmad Shah Qajar, who fled Iran for Europe. And this piece of rug, they are very rare, made in, as I told you, early 20th century, this one in Kashan, and this series of carpet we call the Mohtasham. On the top of the head of king, we have poetry, which is from Saadi, famous Persian poet.

Tim Stackpool:

It appears it's around a meter by a meter. It's not quite square.

Pedram Khosronejad:

No, no.

Tim Stackpool:

There is a portrait of the Shah-

Pedram Khosronejad:

In the middle, in his official uniform with official hat, which is Qajar hat with jewelry and crown. It's a mixture of that, his army uniform and a medallion] on his left side of his chest.

Tim Stackpool:

Hand-woven.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Hand-woven, yes, exactly. In city of Kashan in Iran in 1900.

Tim Stackpool:

And there's also here a young woman's garment, which indicates it dates back to the 1850s as well. We've been talking about rugs and carpets here, but I guess in terms of creating this as well, there's no reason why we shouldn't see textiles-

Pedram Khosronejad:

No, because weaving in Iran has deep tradition for thousand years. And weaving this type of *Zaribafi*, which, again, comes from Kashan, the city of Kashan, begins from late Savarid and Qajar period, goes very popular product for making dress garments, especially for women. And what we have in front of is very refined example of those series. And one of the uses of textile was making this type of very refined but expensive garments.

Tim Stackpool:

It is a very fine weave.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Very, very fine. And I'm happy to, again, confirm that also this object was donated to the Powerhouse by the Cadry families.

Tim Stackpool:

It's lovely. Now in the background, you might be able to hear a recording and interview that you did?

Pedram Khosronejad:

Yes. This is the interview that I did with Bob Cadry regarding the oral history of their family and their business. And this film will be every day in there, looping, and visitors of the exhibition can see and just learn more about the history of Cadrys. But I should add that every day we have also a documentary film in our cinema, Kings Cinema in museum, which talk about the twin sister of Dorokhsh carpet in the first gallery. I encourage everyone to come and sit and watch that film if they would like to learn more about the school of Dorokhsh carpet weaving with this type of Indian iconography.

Tim Stackpool:

Well, obviously you're very proud of the work of the Cadrys as well, the heritage that they bring to Australia and also this exhibition. It's fabulous stuff. If you love anything to do with Persian history, anything to do with weaving or textiles, it's really worth coming to the Powerhouse to have a look at. And Pedram, as always, lovely to walk around the museum with you. And thank you so much for your time on the podcast.

Pedram Khosronejad:

Thank you, Tim. Jacques Cadry began to donate Persian objects to the Powerhouse Museum since 1962. So yes, I'm very proud that after all these years, 70 years, for the first time we celebrate this connection between Cadrys and Powerhouse. And I hope, and I'm sure, not hope, the future generation of Cadrys will continue and keep this connection between our collection and their business. Thank you, Tim.