

CULTURE

# Iranian Door Knockers open up lost world

*Project documents age-old architectural tradition*

■ *Iranian Door Knockers: Photographs by Alireza Jahanpanah*, on now until July 4 at Deep Cove's Seymour Art Gallery. On Sunday, June 14, a talk and screening of a short film about this project will be presented at 2 p.m., followed by a reception with live Iranian music by Nava Music Centre at 3 p.m. Free. For more information visit [seymourartgallery.com](http://seymourartgallery.com).

ERIN MCPHEE

[emcphoe@nsnews.com](mailto:emcphoe@nsnews.com)

A new exhibition on now at the Seymour Art Gallery is showcasing the efforts undertaken by an artistically-minded husband and wife duo that, for the last 25 years, has sought to document Iranian door knockers through their travels to 20 Iranian towns and cities.

Architect Alireza Jahanpanah, born in Tehran, Iran, has been photographing and with the help of his wife Irandokht GH. Pirsaraee, born in Gilan, Iran, they've continued to research and analyze various aspects, ranging from the knockers' shapes, designs and details, to the forging methods used in their creation.

Migrating to Canada in 2009, the couple, married for 23 years, and their son, now 11, came to North Vancouver in 2013. Upon arrival on the North Shore, Pirsaraee, a graphic designer



Iran dokht GH. Pirsaraee sets up a display for the *Iranian Door Knockers* exhibit, which is on now through July 4 at the Seymour Art Gallery in Deep Cove. PHOTO MIKE WAKEFIELD

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## Door knockers determine visitor's gender

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and owner of IGH Design Studio, started volunteering at the Seymour gallery and was encouraged by staff members to submit a proposal to showcase she and her husband's collection.

The show, entitled *Iranian Door Knockers: Photographs by Alireza Jahanpanah*, opened Wednesday and will remain on display until July 4.

This marks the couple's first time exhibiting their work in Canada, an opportunity they're extremely grateful for, allowing them to offer something of themselves to their new community, and providing them with a stronger sense of belonging, says Pirsarae, 52.

For more than 20 years, Jahanpanah, 51, has been working as an architect designing residential spaces in Iran and consulting for custom-made exhibition projects in the Middle East and Europe. His experience in designing and building residences led to

an interest in documentary photography, which has long been a passion.

The seeds for Jahanpanah's interest in Iranian door knockers was the result of his travels related to a research project on indigenous and historical buildings and living spaces in Iran.

"I spent 200 days a year over the span of six years (1986-1992) travelling across Iran in search of basic indigenous examples of living spaces that I mapped, researched, discussed with locals and photographed," says Jahanpanah in his artist statement. "Cataloguing, organizing and archiving the information took up the rest of my time in those years. As I passed through urban and rural architectural spaces, door knockers, a tiny part of a building, which can be touched by hands to create a sound that sends a simple message from the outside in, began to capture my interest as a poetic expression of people, architecture, culture



While architect Alireza Jahanpanah was travelling around Iran in search of indigenous and historical buildings and living spaces as part of a research project, he grew increasingly interested in door knockers, which he likewise began to document. PHOTO MIKE WAKEFIELD

and history."

The door knockers are of both cultural and historical relevance in the context of Iran. For example, historically, dwellings were

equipped with different knockers for males and females, announcing which gender was at the door.

"What I've tried to show in these photographs is the

simple, vibrant, aesthetic talents of local people, which are rapidly fading away with the passage of time," says Jahanpanah, in the statement. "I also

wanted to reveal a unique hidden cultural identity of door-knockers as a nation's indigenous relics and the small part they play in our cultural and historical heritage. This is an example of how organic factors in old buildings and the spaces built by humans situated us in harmony with the universe and could make life in its details creative, rich and pleasurable."

The couple hopes to publish their *Iranian Door Knockers* project as a photography book in Tehran in 2017.

The exhibition is featuring a selection of Jahanpanah's more than 2,500 photographs, high quality inkjet prints on satin paper, as well as two antique door knockers.

A number of opening festivities have been planned for Sunday, including a talk and screening of a short film about this project at 2 p.m., followed by a reception with live Iranian music by Nava Music Centre at 3 p.m. Pirsaraee will be in attendance.