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A Critical Review of Iranian Conceptual Carpet Art

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ABSTRACT

My practice explores how the Persian rug can move beyond its traditional role as a decorative or collectible object and function instead as a medium for contemporary cultural, philosophical and social expression. I use traditional Persian rug-making techniques to address subjects that extend far beyond the medium itself, including identity, freedom, human rights, technology, mortality, society and the condition of the modern human being.A critical and independent perspective is presented regarding three of my recent works: **Silenced Intelligentsia***, **The Privilege of Touch***, and **The Silent Olympics***. handmade Persian rug titled "***The Privilege of Touch***." This museum-quality textile artwork explores accessibility through the interaction of two writing systems: visually subtle Roman lettering and tactile Braille woven in raised wool. The work invites viewers to reconsider perception, privilege, and the role of touch as an equally powerful means of communication. There are some works of art that ask us to look more closely. Others ask us to think. The Silent Olympics, a conceptual Persian handmade rug by Daniel Bikas, asks us to do something different: to experience sport beyond sight. Walking in Their Shoes: Seeing the World Through the Eyes of Disabled People. Understanding the experiences of disabled people requires more than empathy—it demands imagination, awareness, and action. While many of us may believe we understand the daily lives of individuals with disabilities, true comprehension goes beyond surface-level assumptions. It involves seeing the world as they do, recognizing both the obstacles and the resilience embedded in their journeys.

1. Introduction:

Disabled people often face a complex network of challenges, from physical barriers in public spaces to societal attitudes that marginalize their potential. Simple tasks for the able-bodied, such as accessing a building, navigating public transport, or even finding accurate information online, can become daily hurdles for someone with a disability. These obstacles are compounded by unconscious biases and systemic inequalities that limit opportunities in education, employment, and social engagement.

Yet, focusing solely on challenges risks defining disabled people by limitation rather than by capability. By walking in their shoes—literally and metaphorically—society can cultivate a deeper appreciation for the innovative ways disabled individuals adapt, communicate, and thrive. For instance, assistive technologies, adaptive sports, and inclusive design are not only tools for accessibility—they are pathways to empowerment and creativity.

Seeing the world through the eyes of disabled people also highlights the importance of empathy-driven policy, design, and cultural change. It encourages urban

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planners to create accessible cities, educators to implement inclusive curricula, and employers to foster diverse workplaces. Every small step toward inclusion not only benefits disabled individuals but enriches society as a whole, creating environments that accommodate human variation rather than penalize it.
Ultimately, understanding disability is not a passive exercise—it is a call to action. Walking in their shoes challenges us to re-examine our assumptions, to advocate for equity, and to celebrate human potential in all its forms. By seeing the world through the eyes of disabled people, we not only recognize the barriers they face but also the extraordinary perspectives and contributions they bring to our shared human experience.

Created especially with people who are blind or have low vision in mind, the rug transforms the visual language of the Olympic Games into a tactile and sensory experience. Across a deep black silk surface appear the symbols of 74 Olympic sports, together with the iconic Olympic rings. The composition is deliberately monochromatic: the background is woven in black silk, while the sports emblems are created in black wool and raised above the surface.

At first glance, the work appears almost mysterious. There is no conventional explosion of Olympic colours, no photographic imagery, and no decorative celebration of athletic movement. Instead, the viewer encounters darkness, subtle differences in black, texture, relief, and form. Sighted viewers must approach the rug and allow their eyes to adjust to the delicate contrast. For a person experiencing the work through touch, however, the raised wool becomes a language of its own.

2.Previous work:

In 2013, research regarding the classification of carpet patterns and their directional and textural features was presented by Mozhdeh Vafaei and her colleague [1]. In 2018, through the efforts of Afsaneh Ghani and her colleagues, the iconography of Bakhtiari pictorial carpets was studied and researched based on Panofsky's methodology [2]. In 2021, Sahar Giti studied certain geometric patterns shared between Persian carpets—recognized as one of the world's great art forms—and Iranian architecture [3]. In 2021, Leila Hojatkashani conducted research on the Sierpinski carpet and chaos within the periodic table of elements [4]. In 2020,by Mehdi Reza Shahabi et al, proposed image retrieval for a carpet e-commerce system [5]. In 2013,by Seyyed Ebrahim Hosseini et al, examined the impact of price, promotion, and distribution on the sales of hand-woven carpets [6]. In 1401, E, Ahmadi-Fard analyzed the transformative institutions within the knowledge and innovation system of the hand-woven carpet industry [7]. In 2023, Dorsa Rahmatian investigated the creation of modern Iranian carpet designs using the style transfer method [8]. In 2024, Hanah Kazemjan conducted a paratextual analysis of Qajar carpet design [9]. In 2006, Bahar Mousavi Hejazi examined et al the Persian carpet as a medium for communication between Iranian and European artists, as well as patterned hangings [10]. In the year 1405, by Siamak Sarbazi et al conducted an exploratory analysis and created a dataset of Qajar-era carpet designs and motifs [11]. In 1405, Masih Aslani conducted research examining the art of music, sports, and modern numerical systems within musical structures, as well as their relationship to musical temperaments and constellations [12–18]. Also in 1405, Fatemeh Etemadi-Rad carried out research concerning art, carpet weaving, and tourism [19–21]. In 1400, Mohsen Poursheikhi presented research on modern numerical systems, exploring their connections and similarities to Braille and carpet manufacturing patterns [22–23]. In 1399, Batul Shahryar analyzed issues related to cold damage and growth patterns within the climate relevant to carpet designers [24–25]. In 2022, Reza Kakoulvand presented methods for particle population balance and growth in his research [26-27].

3. Result and Discussion:

3.1 Discussion:

This is the central idea behind ***The Silent Olympics***: an artwork associated with one of the world's most visually recognisable sporting events is deliberately designed so that its meaning can also be discovered through the hands.

From Seeing to Feeling

Human beings often experience sport visually. We watch athletes run, swim, jump, skate, cycle and compete. We see stadiums filled with spectators, national colours, medals, flags, uniforms and Olympic symbols. Television and digital media have transformed athletic competition into an intensely visual global spectacle. But vision is not the only way to understand the world.

For a blind or low-vision person, a pictogram that is immediately recognisable to a sighted viewer may be inaccessible. A sports logo may communicate nothing visually unless it can somehow be translated into another sensory language.

The Silent Olympics proposes one possible answer.

The 74 sports symbols are not merely printed or embroidered onto the surface. They are constructed as raised forms. The wool elements physically emerge from the silk ground, creating a change in height and texture that can be followed by the fingertips.

The distinction between silk and wool therefore becomes more than a technical decision. It becomes part of the conceptual language of the artwork.

The smoothness of the silk and the tactile presence of the wool create two different experiences within the same surface. What appears visually as a subtle variation in black becomes physically perceptible as texture and relief.

The rug consequently exists simultaneously as a visual artwork and as a tactile object.

A Different Kind of Olympic Image

The Olympic Games have developed an extraordinarily sophisticated visual language. Pictograms and symbols have long been used to communicate sports across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The Olympic Studies Centre notes that sports pictograms have evolved considerably since Tokyo 1964 and have become an important part of Olympic visual communication.

The Silent Olympics takes this visual vocabulary and translates it into textile form.

Instead of presenting individual athletes, national teams or famous Olympic moments, the rug presents the sports themselves.

Each emblem becomes part of a larger constellation. Running, swimming, gymnastics, cycling, fencing and other disciplines are brought together on a single surface. The individual sports remain distinct, yet collectively they form one composition.

This creates an important conceptual parallel with the Olympic Movement itself.

The Games bring together athletes from different countries, backgrounds and sporting disciplines in a shared international event. The rug similarly brings many individual sports together into one unified work.

The individual symbol matters, but so does the whole.

Black on Black

The choice of black is one of the most significant artistic decisions in the work.

The rug does not rely on strong colour contrasts to make the sports symbols immediately visible. Instead, black silk forms the background while black wool creates the raised emblems.

The difference is subtle. For a sighted viewer, this requires attention. The forms emerge gradually from the darkness as the angle of light changes and the textures reflect light differently. The viewer is encouraged to slow down, move closer and observe.

This is an unusual experience in relation to Olympic imagery, which is generally designed for instant recognition.Here, recognition is deliberately slowed. The viewer has to work for the image.

That process creates an important conceptual bridge between sight and touch. A person with normal vision may initially experience the rug by searching for contrast. A blind or low-vision viewer may explore it by searching for texture, edges, shapes and relief.

The same artwork can therefore produce different pathways toward discovery.

The Power of Touch

Touch has a unique relationship with textiles.

Unlike a painting behind glass, a textile naturally possesses a physical surface. Its fibres, density, pile, knots and construction can all become part of the viewer's experience.

Persian handmade rugs are particularly suited to this kind of exploration because their identity is fundamentally connected to the physical act of weaving. Every knot represents a physical action. Every line and shape is constructed through thousands of individual decisions.

In ***The Silent Olympics***, that physicality becomes part of the artistic message.

The raised sports symbols invite the hand to participate.

The viewer is no longer simply standing in front of an image. The viewer can potentially trace a form, follow its contours and distinguish one symbol from another through changes in texture and elevation.

This transforms the rug from a two-dimensional representation into a three-dimensional sensory field. The artwork does not simply depict accessibility. It attempts to embody it.

Persian Craftsmanship Meets Contemporary Art

At the heart of the work is an encounter between ancient craftsmanship and a contemporary social idea.

Persian carpet weaving has a long history of transforming complex imagery, symbolism and narrative into woven surfaces. Traditionally, rugs have served as decorative objects, cultural records, expressions of craftsmanship and carriers of symbolic meaning.

Daniel Bikas approaches this tradition from a contemporary conceptual perspective.

Rather than treating the Persian rug solely as an object of decoration, he uses weaving as a medium through which contemporary ideas can be communicated.

In ***The Silent Olympics***, the traditional rug becomes a platform for discussing accessibility, inclusion, sport and human achievement.

The technical language of Persian weaving is therefore placed in dialogue with the modern language of international sport.

Silk and wool become more than materials.

They become instruments of communication.

Art Beyond the Visual

The work also raises a broader question: ***Why should art be primarily designed for the eyes?***

For centuries, much of the world's artistic heritage has been created and displayed according to visual assumptions. Paintings hang on walls. Photographs are framed. Sculptures are illuminated. Museums often depend heavily on visual interpretation.

Yet human experience is multisensory.

We hear music. We touch objects. We experience temperature, movement, texture and spatial relationships. We recognise people through voices and physical presence.

For people who are blind or have low vision, the challenge is not a lack of artistic sensitivity. The challenge is that much of the art world's communication remains dependent upon visual access.

The Silent Olympics proposes that accessibility can be integrated into the conception of an artwork rather than added afterward as an accommodation.

This distinction is important. Instead of creating a conventional Olympic artwork and subsequently asking how it might be made accessible, Bikas begins with accessibility as part of the artistic concept itself.

The tactile dimension is not an accessory.

It is fundamental to the work.

The Olympic Values and Human Dignity

The conceptual significance of the rug extends beyond accessibility.

The Olympic Charter describes Olympism as a philosophy that combines sport with culture and education and seeks to promote human development and respect for fundamental ethical principles. It also states that the practice of sport is a human right and emphasises participation without discrimination.

These ideas provide a natural context for understanding ***The Silent Olympics***. The work is not simply about sports symbols. It is about who gets to experience the symbols.

If the Olympic Games represent participation, friendship, excellence and respect, then accessibility becomes an essential part of that conversation.

The rug asks a quiet but significant question:

Can an Olympic symbol be experienced by someone who cannot see it?

By raising the sports emblems from the surface, the artwork attempts to answer: yes—not necessarily through vision, but through another form of perception.

The IOC has also described the Olympic Movement in terms of universality and solidarity, while emphasising the connection between sport, education and culture.

Those principles resonate strongly with the conceptual foundation of this rug.

A Celebration Without Spectacle

There is another paradox at the centre of ***The Silent Olympics***.

The Olympic Games are among the world's greatest spectacles. They are associated with enormous stadiums, opening ceremonies, millions of viewers and extraordinary displays of athletic ability.

This rug chooses silence. It removes spectacle and replaces it with contemplation. There are no cheering crowds. No flashing lights. No movement. No sound. Only the quiet relationship between silk, wool, form and touch. This transformation gives the work its title.

The Silent Olympics is not silent because the Olympic spirit has disappeared. It is silent because the work asks us to encounter that spirit differently.

It asks us to move away from the noise of competition and toward the human experience behind it.

Seventy-Four Sports, One Human Story

The inclusion of 74 Olympic sports creates another layer of meaning.

Every sport has its own techniques, equipment, traditions and physical demands. The athlete who performs a movement in one discipline may have little in common technically with an athlete in another.

Yet all share certain fundamental qualities: discipline, training, perseverance, courage and the desire to achieve one's best. The rug places these different disciplines side by side. In this sense, the sports symbols become metaphors for human diversity itself. Different abilities. Different bodies. Different methods. Different journeys. One shared field.

The composition suggests that diversity does not weaken the whole. It enriches it.

From the Stadium to the Museum

A work such as ***The Silent Olympics*** can occupy an unusual position between art, sport, cultural heritage and accessibility.

It can be understood as a contemporary conceptual artwork, but it is also an example of traditional Persian crafts man ship. It references the global language of Olympic sport while addressing a contemporary question about inclusion.

This makes it potentially relevant to museums, Olympic cultural programmes, sporting institutions, accessibility initiatives, universities and exhibitions exploring the relationship between sport and art.

The Olympic Movement has itself recognised the importance of artistic and cultural engagement. Olympic educational resources have explored the relationship between sport and art, including the evolution of Olympic emblems, mascots and pictograms.

In this context, a Persian handmade rug becomes more than an unusual medium for Olympic imagery.

It becomes part of a broader conversation about how sport is represented, remembered and experienced.

The Rug as a Bridge

Perhaps the most important quality of ***The Silent Olympics*** is its ability to create a bridge.

It connects ancient and contemporary.

East and West. Craft and concept. Sport and art. Vision and touch. Individual achievement and collective identity. Most importantly, it seeks to connect people with different sensory experiences.

The rug does not suggest that blind and low-vision people should experience art in exactly the same way as sighted people. Instead, it proposes that different forms of perception can coexist.

The sighted viewer may notice the subtle contrast between black silk and black wool.

Another viewer may concentrate on the physical relief of the sports emblems. Another may study the crafts man ship and construction.

Another may interpret the work through its relationship with Olympic values. There is no single required way to experience it.

A New Language for the Persian Rug

Throughout its history, the Persian rug has been capable of carrying stories.

The Silent Olympics extends that tradition into contemporary conceptual art. Here, the rug is not merely something to place on a floor or hang on a wall. It becomes an intellectual and sensory proposition.

Its darkness is deliberate. Its monochromatic palette is deliberate. Its raised forms are deliberate. Its selection of Olympic sports is deliberate.

Together, these elements create an artwork whose meaning exists not only in what is represented, but in how representation is experienced.

That may ultimately be the most powerful idea within the piece. A symbol does not have to be seen to have meaning. A story does not have to be spoken to be understood. And art does not have to depend exclusively on vision to communicate.

3.2 Result:

The Silent Olympics:

In the end, ***The Silent Olympics*** is a meditation on participation.

It begins with the world's most recognisable sporting symbols and transforms them into something quieter, slower and more intimate.

The 74 sports and Olympic rings are woven into a field of black silk and raised black wool. To the eye, the differences are subtle. To the hand, the surface becomes a landscape.

The rug invites us to reconsider what it means to see.

It invites us to recognise touch as a legitimate form of perception and accessibility as a creative principle rather than simply a technical requirement.

And it reminds us that the deepest values associated with sport—excellence, friendship, respect, participation and human dignity—are not dependent upon the ability to see a stadium, a medal, a flag or a symbol.

They belong to everyone. In this way, ***The Silent Olympics*** transforms the Persian handmade rug into something larger than a textile. It becomes a quiet statement about inclusion. A tribute to human achievement.

A meeting point between Persian artistic heritage and the universal language of sport. And, perhaps most importantly, an invitation to experience the Olympic spirit not only with the eyes, but with the hands, the mind and the imagination. *Figure 1* shows the *Olympics Rug for the Blinds*.



Figure 1; *Olympics Rug for the Blinds*

The Privilege of Touch

This handmade Persian rug rests on a ***black silk background***, smooth and deep like a silent night sky. Upon this darkness appears the ***first writing***, woven in ***dark blue silk*** using an ***old Roman font***. The letters carry a classical dignity, but the choice of dark blue against black makes them difficult to discern. Their low contrast forces the viewer to lean closer, to search, to work for comprehension. The message exists, yet it whispers instead of speaks—present, but visually elusive.

WRITINGS:

1- Your vision extends beyond sight, it is woven from the threads of strength, creativity, and unyielding spirit.

2- In the darkness, your inner light shines even brighter, guiding you to achieve remarkable things.

Directly ***on top of this faint Roman text***, the ***second writing*** emerges: The ***Braille translation***, woven with ***wool in black and blue***. Each tactile dot rises in small, deliberate bumps, creating an embossed surface that the fingers can read with certainty. While the sighted struggle to decipher the faded Roman letters, a blind reader can immediately access the meaning through touch. The Braille writing overlays the visual writing like a guiding hand, revealing what the eyes fail to see.

The interplay between the two writings—one barely visible, the other tangible and elevated—creates a powerful commentary on perception, privilege, and

accessibility. The rug becomes a layered manuscript of human communication: the historical beauty of Roman script muted by darkness, and the clarity of Braille asserting itself above it, both literally and symbolically.

A textile that speaks through ***contrast, texture, and hierarchy***, it invites the viewer to reconsider which senses truly reveal truth—sight or touch. A schematic of "*The Privilege of Touch"*, (A1 – A2, B1 – B2) is shown in Figures 2-5.

Rug Specifications:

Size: 70x50 cm, KPSI: 529, Crafting Time: 4 months

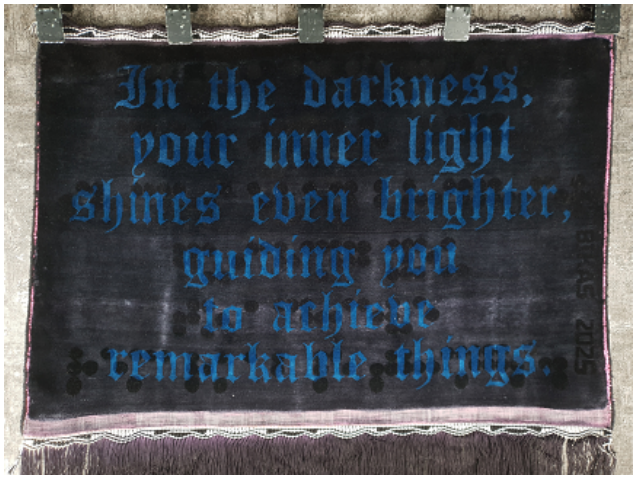


Figure 2; *The Privilege of Touch- A1*



Figure 3; *The Privilege of Touch- A2*



Figure 4; *The Privilege of Touch-B1*

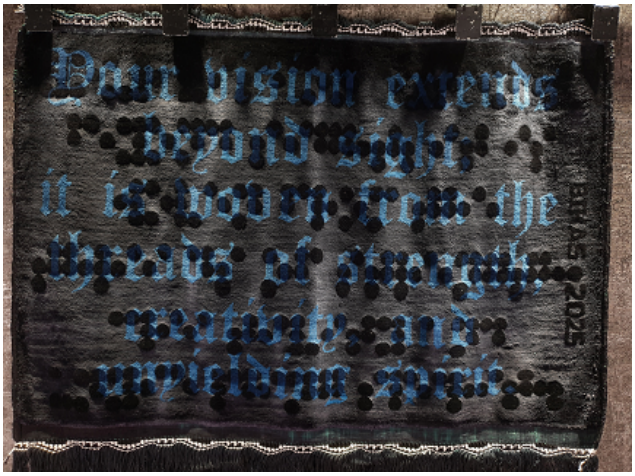


Figure 5; *The Privilege of Touch-B2*

Figure 6 *shows the pictorial carpet titled "Silenced Intelligentsia."*



Figure 6; *Silenced Intelligentsia*

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