In our age of social media and selfies, it may be difficult to grasp the importance of painted portraits and studio photographs in nineteenth-century Iran. During this time, known as the Qajar era, rulers such as Fath-Ali Shah (reigned 1797–1834), a contemporary of Napoleon, and Nasir al-Din Shah (reigned 1848–96), a contemporary of Queen Victoria, used portraiture to convey monarchical power and dynastic grandeur. Through a selection of about thirty works from the Freer and Sackler collections, which include recent major gifts and acquisitions, this exhibition explores how Persian artists transformed modes of representing royalty and nobility. Paintings on canvas, lacquerwares, and photographs also highlight Iran's complex artistic and cultural interactions with the West as European conventions and new technologies were being introduced.

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