Press Kit

Tagline

Official Tagline
“A film that doesn’t explain calligraphy… it performs it.”

Alternate Options

- *“Where poetry becomes form, and form becomes presence.”*
- *“The story of Nasta‘līq — a script of beauty, identity, and endurance.”*

Technical Information

Title (Official): *Performing Beauty | سماع قلم*
Title (For festival/press use): *Performing Beauty*
Runtime: 60 minutes
Completion Year: 2025
Languages: English, Persian, French
Subtitles: English (primary)
Optional: Spanish, Arabic, French, Turkish, German, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Korean, Urdu, Russian, Italian, Japanese, Persian, English Closed Captions (CC), and SDH
Shooting Locations: United States, Iran, France
Color: Color and Black & White
Aspect Ratio: 16:9
Sound: Stereo
Formats Available: DCP, ProRes, MP4
Production Company: Homa Films
Website: homafilms.com
Film’s Dedicated Website: nastaliqthefilm.com
Contact Email: office@homafilms.com
Alternate Email: haghighimehran@yahoo.com

Key Creative Team

- **Producer / Director:** Mehran Haghighi
- **Executive Producer:** Helen Afjehi
- **Writer:** Mehran Haghighi
- **Editors:** Mehran Haghighi (Lead editor) & Nathan Gopen (Co-editor)
- **Cinematographers:** Ali Loghmani, Sebastian Neville, Banon Olivier, Chris Ungco
- **Sound Design & Editing:** Iran Garcia
- **Music Director:** Mehran Haghighi
- **Music Consultant (credited):** Amir Hosein Pourjavady

Synopsis

Short Synopsis (50–70 words)
Performing Beauty | سماع قلم is a visual poem in seven movements that explores the aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural significance of Nasta'līq, the Persian calligraphic script. Through evocative imagery, poetry, and the voices of artists, scholars, and designers, the film traces Nasta'līq's historical unfolding and its enduring role in contemporary art, revealing a script born of verse that became a symbol of identity and beauty.

Medium Synopsis (≈100 words)
Performing Beauty | سماع قلم is a documentary in seven movements exploring the aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural significance of the Persian calligraphic script Nasta'līq. Blending evocative imagery, poetry, and the voices of artists, scholars, and designers, the film traces Nasta'līq's unfolding from its origins in Persian verse to its enduring presence in contemporary art and design. Structured as a visual poem rather than a linear narrative, the film invites viewers to experience calligraphy as presence — rhythmical, layered, and contemplative — revealing how a script born of poetry became a symbol of cultural identity, beauty, and resilience.

Long Synopsis (200–250 words)
Performing Beauty | سماع قلم is a feature-length documentary and visual poem in seven movements that explores the aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural significance of the Persian calligraphic script Nasta'līq. Often described as the most elegant of Islamic scripts, Nasta'līq is more than a writing system: it is a choreography of line and form that embodies cultural identity, memory, and artistic refinement.

Blending evocative imagery, classical and contemporary poetry, and the voices of calligraphers, scholars, artists, and designers, the film reveals how a script born of verse became a symbol of presence and beauty across centuries and geographies. It traces Nasta'līq's historical unfolding from its origins in Persian poetry to its role in visual culture today, where it continues to inspire new artistic expression in painting, design, and digital media.

Structured as a suite of movements rather than a conventional narrative, *Performing Beauty* unfolds like calligraphy itself — rhythmical, layered, and contemplative. Viewers are invited to encounter Nasta'līq not as a subject to be explained, but as a living tradition to be experienced. Without narration, the film lets the art speak through its practitioners, resonating with poetry, music, and silence.

By weaving past and present, *Performing Beauty* illuminates how this script endures as a cultural emblem, symbol of resilience, and poetic form in motion.

Director's Note

Short Version
When I began to direct this film, I didn't know its shape. I only knew I didn't want to make a documentary that explained Persian calligraphy — I wanted to make a film that let viewers feel it. Not as lesson, but as presence.

Nasta'līq is often described as the most beautiful script in the Islamic world. But for me, it was more than elegance — it was a kind of breath. A poetic form where meaning and motion are indivisible.

Performing Beauty | سماع قلم is not about learning how to write Nasta'līq, but about entering its world. My hope is that the viewer does not watch it with urgency, but with openness — to sit with it, return to it, and even begin to read the space between the lines.

Full Version
A Note from the Director

When I began to direct this film, I didn't know its shape. I only knew I didn't want to make a documentary that explained Persian calligraphy — I wanted to make a film that let viewers feel it. Not as lesson, but as presence.

Nasta'līq is often described as the most beautiful script in the Islamic world. But for me, it was more than elegance — it was a kind of breath. A poetic form where meaning and motion are indivisible. I wanted to create a structure that mirrored this: not a linear narrative, but a series of visual and emotional movements, like a musical suite or a layered painting. Each chapter

became its own collage — overlapping, echoing, and revealing different aspects of a living tradition.

There is no narrator in *Performing Beauty*. The voices you hear belong to artists, scholars, designers, and calligraphers — each speaking from their own lived encounter with the script. Their rhythms and silences carry the film forward. Poetry is not decoration here — it is the structure. Music is not background — it's voice. Stillness is not absence — it's invitation.

Cultural roots can fade or be rewritten. I felt the need to mark Nasta'līq's Persian foundation — not with argument, but through lineage, context, and lived testimony.

This film is not about learning to write Nasta'līq. It is about entering its world. I hope the viewer does not watch it with urgency, but with openness. That they will sit with it, return to it, and maybe even begin to read the space between the lines.

— **Mehran Haghighi**

Director's Bio

Short Version (≈100 words)
Mehran Haghighi is an independent filmmaker and producer based in Southern California. His work explores Persian art, culture, and history through a poetic and visually immersive approach. He co-founded Homa Films and previously produced *Of Kings and Paintings* (2020), which was acquired by more than 500 universities and institutions worldwide. His latest film, *Performing Beauty | سماع قلم* (2025), continues his exploration of Persian cultural heritage, blending scholarship and artistry to reveal the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of Nasta'līq calligraphy.

Long Version (≈250 words)
Mehran Haghighi is an independent filmmaker, producer, and cultural documentarian whose work explores the intersections of Persian art, culture, and history. Based in Southern California, he co-founded Homa Films with a focus on creating films that are both visually poetic and grounded in scholarship, bridging the worlds of cinema, heritage, and academic study.

His first feature-length documentary, *Of Kings and Paintings* (2020), examined Persian art in the Safavid era and was acquired by more than 500 universities, libraries, and cultural institutions worldwide. The film established his reputation for creating works that combine historical depth with cinematic artistry, reaching both academic audiences and the general public.

His latest film, *Performing Beauty | سماع قلم* (2025), continues this path. A visual poem in seven movements, the film explores the aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural significance of the Persian

calligraphic script Nasta'līq. It blends evocative imagery, poetry, and the voices of artists, scholars, and designers, unfolding not as a conventional documentary but as an immersive, meditative encounter with the living tradition of calligraphy.

Working across the United States, Iran, and France, Haghighi collaborated with an international team of cinematographers, editors, musicians, and scholars to realize *Performing Beauty*. The project reflects his commitment to films that not only document cultural practices but embody their rhythms, silences, and philosophies on screen. His work aims to foster cross-cultural dialogue and expand access to Persian artistic heritage for audiences around the world.

Reviews

- Up-to-date reviews: https://nastaliqthefilm.com/reviews.php

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Stills & Poster

- Download hi-res stills from the press kit page on our website: https://nastaliqthefilm.com/presskit.php