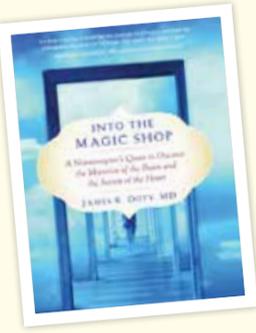


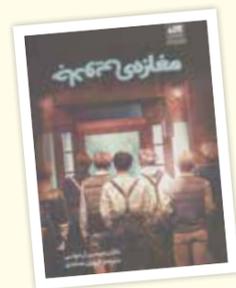
Iran reads:
'Into the Magic Shop' by
James R. Doty



EXCLUSIVE

"Another mystery of the brain is that it will always choose what is familiar over what is unfamiliar. By visualizing my own future success, I was making this success familiar to my brain. Intention is a funny thing, and whatever the brain puts its intention on is what it sees."

One of the bestselling books in Iran this week is James R. Doty's memoir 'Into the Magic Shop: A Neurosurgeon's Quest to Discover the Mysteries of the Brain and the Secrets of the Heart', originally published in 2016, which takes the form of a novel about a poor 12-year-old boy with an alcoholic father, who one day stumbles upon a magic shop and meets Ruth, a woman who teaches him a series of exercises to ease his own suffering and manifest his greatest desires.



Simply translated as 'Magic Shop' and published a few months ago, the quasi-novel has gained extreme popularity among the reading public in Iran. This would come as no surprise given the readers' recent thirst for self-help books that transcend the genre, offering entertainment as well.

In terms of social media, the book has fared especially well on Instagram, where there are currently more than 1,000 posts dedicated to the novel, mostly promoting it. On Goodreads, the book has garnered mostly favorable reviews, with a very high rating of 4.2, and just a handful of comments suggesting that James Doty's memoir is not worth reading. Hamid, a neuroscience graduate writes in his review, "The book wasn't what I expected it to be. I thought it would focus on the 'Neurosurgeon' part of the title, so I expected it to be a story about how we can discover the mysteries of the brain through academic research. However, it was a spiritual story and even though I am not big on spirituality, the story was extremely interesting and worth the time it takes to read it."

University of Washington professor of philosophy Jana Mohr Lone: Ask children if they ran the world, what would they do differently?

EXCLUSIVE



Jana Mohr Lone, professor of philosophy and director and founder of Center for Philosophy for Children at the University of Washington

IRAN DAILY: Many of the very young children are apparently asking questions about all sorts of structural evils present in the society, in the case of our society mostly about poverty or at least precarious economic situations. How would you advise parents or educators to approach a dialogue with children (mostly under 10) on such matters?

JANA MOHR LONE: As with all deeper questions from children, I would advise adults to begin by listening and not rushing to answer the question. Ask the child questions that elicit what he or she is thinking about, and engage with the child by reflecting yourself about the question. Often the most rewarding conversations with children emerge when we respond with curiosity and openness to the more challenging questions they ask, questions that also perplex us, and that allow us to think with them instead of feeling as if we have to provide answers.



We'd appreciate it if you could give us some concrete examples for public use, because it seems that at least some children are taking a deeper look at their surroundings, sometimes in a comparative manner, asking really difficult questions about why their society, or even the

whole world for that matter, is running into so many troubles. I would suggest to parents and teachers that they encourage children's growing awareness of the economic and political challenges in their communities and our world. Ask the children what they

think. Why do they think more families are struggling? What do they think we should do about this? And perhaps offer them suggestions for reading, and reading something together that delves into these deeper issues – which can be as simple as a picture book that raises

issues of inequality and injustice. Ask the children/teens: If you ran the world, what would you do differently? Ask them how they are feeling. Are they feeling fear? Anger? Sadness? Often just giving them space to name these emotions and being willing to listen to them is hugely helpful.

● PIRON GUILLAUME/UNSPLASH

Thus spoke the artist:

Classy designers know how to hand-draw

EXCLUSIVE



● COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

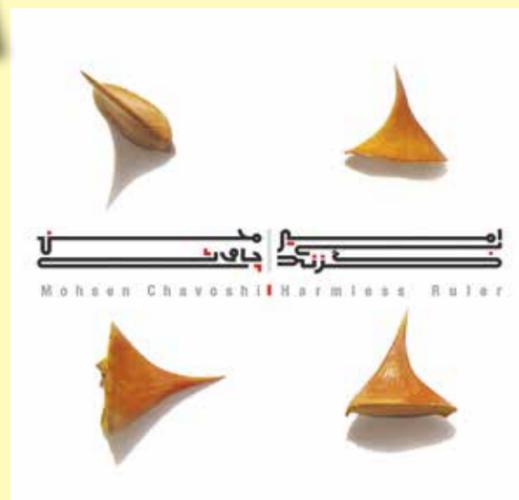
Even though the phrase "graphic design" first appeared in print in 1922, the art form's origins are tied to the rise of printing in 15th century Europe. The growth of consumer culture in the aftermath of the industrial revolution, however, was the main reason for it to emerge as a professional practice closely associated with advertising. In spite of the fact that the academic education of graphic design in Iran dates back to the 1960s, when a few French designers were employed by the College of Fine Arts in Tehran University to teach the principles of the art, by the late 1990s, it was still considered a risky venture by many Iranian families.

"Back then, parents were not quite certain about the nature of graphic design as a profession, especially worrying that it might not lead to a financially secure future. So, they quite understandably – in retrospect – were against their children pursuing it academically," said the 42-year-old graphic designer Hooman Akbarian. He was, therefore, somewhat pushed towards natural sciences in high school, a prelude to a career in medicine. But the future had something else in store for Hooman, who is pleased to announce that he is a "self-taught artist." The seeds of a career in producing aesthetically appealing objects, howev-

er, were already there. He was born in a family of connoisseurs, with his father being a movie director for cinema and television. "I learned from him a lot, as I used to hang out behind the scenes of his movies, observing everything that was unfolding, if not actually serving as an intern assistant." Hooman plunged his way into his field of choice by working as a photographer, as well as editor, for the printing press, almost 23 years ago. "I jumped into the work environment the first chance I got, and learned things by doing. It was no piece of cake, to be honest," he said. By the time he started working for the papers as a graphic designer, computers had already begun to best layout designers who took great pride in their work, which required many manual skills.

that it has anything to do with condescending generational assumptions – not without a good reason, though. He asserts that the machinations of graphic design require a certain level of competency in hand-drawing. "Imagine this: I have work that needs to be done in a couple of days. Does that necessarily mean that I have to be sitting behind my PC all the time? I don't think so. I could be sitting in a café, drinking my usual black tea – as I don't like coffee – and working on the project, all at the same time," he said, making a

doodling gesture. The hip-looking designer claims that his best, most memorable work is the cover of the 'Harmless Ruler' album he did for the renowned pop singer Mohsen Chavoshi – for free. Many tracks in the album, whose lyrics are taken from Rumi, have something to do with Sufi whirling. "That bunch of thorns picked, set and photographed for the cover, I imagine, are themselves whirling, not entirely unlike their original setting, on a stem of rose."



"That bunch of thorns picked, set and photographed for the cover, I imagine, are themselves whirling, not entirely unlike their original setting, on a stem of rose," said Hooman Akbarian.



● IRAN DAILY