

Dictator's 1974 Paykan Hillman-Hunter Limo Is Now a Noble Art Car

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Dictators and corrupt politicians always leave behind incredible collections of... collectibles. The one invariable to whatever it is that they've been so fond of collecting is that it's tainted and, as such, no respectable collector would have it.

Take for example Nicolae Ceausescu's 1974 Paykan Hillman-Hunter limousine, which only found a buyer this year, after two separate listings at auction.

Ceausescu, for those unfamiliar with the name, was the leader of the Communist Party in Romania and the country's President (cough, cough) between 1974 and 1989, when he was overthrown in a bloody revolution. He was fond of airplanes, cars (even though he never had a driver's license), art pieces of all kinds and, legend has it, gold fixtures in all bathrooms because his number two did not stink, to paraphrase a common saying.

No wonder, then, that his Paykan limo failed to attract too much attention the first time it listed. On its second outing, despite the fact that it was offered in impeccable condition, it was estimated at a measly €4,000, which is under \$4,700 at the current exchange rate. After a fierce bidding war that topped at €95,000 (\$110,300), it found a new owner, and they're choosing to turn this dreaded symbol into a beacon of hope.

Some context is needed first, though. The limo was a present from the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, often referred to simply as The Shah, during an official visit to Romania in 1974. The Paykan was the first automobile produced in Iran, and it was based on the 1967 Hillman Hunter built in the UK by the Rootes Group.

The buyer of the limo is a non-profit, non-partisan organization named PaykanArtCar. It has commissioned Iran-born artist Alireza Shojaian to paint it in such a way as to become a symbol of human rights in Iran. Because Shojaian is now living in Paris due to the fact that it would have been unsafe for him to continue living in his home country, he chose to dedicate the initial works to the issue of LGBTQ+ rights, including three paintings inspired by the *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*).

The Paykan art car was introduced to the public at the Human Rights Foundation's Oslo Freedom Forum in Miami and will continue to travel the world once the exhibit ends, arriving next in Paris for the art fair Asia Now. When the current tour is over, the wrap will be removed and the non-profit will ask other Iranian artists to contribute with works, using the space on the body of the car as canvas.



John Parra/Getty Images for PaykanArtCar

To read the article on the web, please click [here](#).