

# Rice opens Iranian art show in US

By Majid Joneidi

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**US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has officially opened an art exhibition in Washington featuring works from 30 contemporary Iranian artists.**



Speaking at the opening, Ms Rice referred to the event as "a great day".

Condoleezza Rice said art could help people understand each other

She referred to art as "the language of peoples who need to know each other and understand each other".

The exhibition comes amid increasing tensions between the two countries over Iran's nuclear program and Tehran's alleged involvement in Iraqi unrest.

The US administration has made it clear, however, that it is looking to expand cultural exchanges between the two nations.

Last month the US state department offered to train Iranian wrestlers in the US ahead of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

Previously the American wrestling squad had travelled to Iran, where it was given a warm welcome by the people and the officials.



**In pictures: Iranian artists**

Stuart Holliday, president of the Washington-based Meridian International Center, organised the Wishes and Dreams art show in partnership with the University of Tehran.

"The exhibition will help US citizens better understand the Iranian people and appreciate the many interests we share," he said.

Fourteen Iranian artists from the group of 30 whose works are on display at the Meridian Center have travelled to the US to help promote the event.

Bahar Behbahani, a modernist artist who has been working in that field for the past 15 years, said: "Nowadays, the media are stereotyping Iranians but this exhibition will show the Americans that Iranian artists

are part of the world and their message is that of peace."

Rashin Kheiriyeh, another artist whose works are on display, said she considered the event a good opportunity for both Americans and Iranians.

She added: "Now that cultural exchanges are on the rise, political ties may follow suit and move towards improvement."

The exhibition will run until 29 July and will also tour cities including New York and Santa Fe, to give Americans across the country a chance to experience artistic works from Iran.



All the Iranian artists whose work is being shown are aged 22 to 40