

Iranian Artists in Europe in the Nineteenth Century: Ignoring Modern Art Movements

Abstract

During the Qajar Period (1795-1925) in Iran, the presence of Iranian artists in Europe was one of the most crucial factors that led Iranian painting toward European realism. Iranian artists who traveled to Europe studied the paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque periods and were attracted to Realism, which they preferred to Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and other modern movements.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European artists, fascinated by arts from Asia, including Japanese woodblock prints, Chinese hanging scrolls, Middle Eastern manuscript illuminations and textiles, experimented with pure vibrant colors, the lack of perspective, flatness, stylized forms, decorative surfaces, abstract and geometrical shapes, and other elements including, what European artists felt were exotic characteristics of Middle Eastern art, that had been used by Iranian artists for centuries. These qualities were not of interest to Iranian artists in the nineteenth century. Rather, perspective, three-dimensionality, the use of dark colors, and the indication of individuality in portraits and figure painting became fascinating aspects of study for Iranian artists of this era.