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Realism in Nineteenth Century Iranian Figure Painting

Iran's deep religious roots and the decisive attraction of mysticism created an art that for centuries reflected the Iranian fascination with a world of the mind. It was not until the nineteenth century that the desire for a materialistic world would replace the religious basis of Iranian society. As a result, art served to display cultural and social changes, which eventually led to the European style realism in Iranian painting demonstrated explicitly in figure painting. In this process, the study of European art became a constructive tool for Iranian artists who voyaged to European cities such as Rome, Florence, and Paris, studied directly under European artists who traveled to Iran, or were trained in European-style schools. Photography, lithography, and art patronage became effective as well. Realism in the figure painting of this period can be defined as freedom for artists to express real events or real people, focusing on what exists in the society, indicating the individuality and temperament of their sitters, and to demonstrate dramatic subjects and disasters and feeling such as joy, pride, bravery, weakness, sadness, and foolishness.