

Synopsis of Monograph and Research Interests of Dr. Mahsa Nejat

Introduction

The evolution of modern and contemporary Iranian art is a rich and complex field, shaped by the interplay of historical, cultural, and political forces. My academic journey, culminating in a Ph.D. in Art Studies from the Art University of Isfahan, has been dedicated to exploring these dynamics, particularly through the lenses of gender studies, visual arts, and cultural discourse analysis. My research has primarily focused on how the roles of female artists and concepts of gender and masculinity have transformed within the context of Iranian art. My monograph, based on my doctoral thesis, presents a critical discourse analysis of contemporary Iranian women's art from 2001 to 2020, emphasizing the influence of "emerging events" and "cultural-political institutions" on this art form.

Main Research Focus

The core of my monograph is an exploration of how contemporary Iranian women artists have navigated and responded to the socio-political landscape of Iran over the past two decades. The study is framed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a methodological approach that allows for the examination of how power, politics, and culture intersect in artistic expressions. By focusing on the works produced by women artists during a period marked by significant political and cultural shifts, my research highlights the ways in which these artists engage with and challenge dominant narratives of gender, identity, and modernity in Iran.

A central research question driving my monograph is: How have contemporary Iranian women artists used their work to respond to and critique the socio-political developments in Iran between 2001 and 2020? To address this question, I conducted an in-depth analysis of selected artworks, considering both the visual elements and the broader discursive contexts in which these works were created. My research also examines the role of cultural-political institutions in shaping the discourse surrounding contemporary Iranian art, particularly in relation to issues of gender and identity.

Key Findings and Arguments

My research reveals that contemporary Iranian women artists have played a crucial role in reshaping the discourse of modern Iranian art. Through their creative practices, these artists have not only responded to the socio-political challenges of their time but have also actively participated in redefining the boundaries of gender

and identity in Iranian culture. The study uncovers how these artists employ a range of strategies, from subtle critiques to overt political statements, to address issues such as gender inequality, cultural identity, and the tension between tradition and modernity.

One of the key findings of my research is the significant impact of cultural-political institutions on the development of contemporary Iranian art. These institutions, which include both state-sponsored and independent art organizations, have played a dual role in both supporting and constraining the artistic expressions of women artists. My analysis demonstrates that while these institutions often impose limitations on the themes and forms of artistic expression, they also provide platforms for artists to engage with and critique the socio-political status quo.

The monograph also explores the concept of "emerging events," referring to significant socio-political moments that have influenced the trajectory of contemporary Iranian art. These events, ranging from political protests to cultural reforms, have acted as catalysts for artistic innovation, prompting artists to explore new themes and adopt novel artistic techniques. My research shows that the response of women artists to these emerging events has been particularly impactful, contributing to a broader rethinking of gender and modernity in Iranian art.

Conclusion

My research offers a comprehensive examination of the role of contemporary Iranian women artists in shaping the discourse of modern Iranian art. By combining critical discourse analysis with cultural and gender studies, my work provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between art, culture, and politics in Iran. Looking ahead, I aim to expand this research to explore broader regional trends and the impact of global issues on artistic practices, positioning my work at the forefront of contemporary art studies in the Middle East. Through this ongoing research, I hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which art can serve as a powerful tool for social and cultural critique in an increasingly interconnected world.