

## Modern Iranian Art and Architecture (Manchester, 17–18 May 18)

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester, May 17–18, 2018  
Deadline: Feb 28, 2018

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### CALL FOR PAPERS

Modern Iranian Art and Architecture in the Shadow of the Classical Persian Past

A Conference at the University of Manchester,  
The John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester, UK  
May 17-18 2018  
Generously Sponsored by  
THE BRITISH INSTITUTE OF PERSIAN STUDIES

We are pleased to announce a conference on Persian and Iranian art hosted by the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester. The Department of Middle Eastern Studies has been in existence since the beginning of the last century, and Persian and other Iranian languages have long been taught here, alongside Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac and Turkish. In this conference we bring together scholars who are working in Persian/Iranian art and architecture.

There is an on-going problem in academic work on the history of the art and architecture of Iran: it is divided into two fields, one much more populated than the other. One of these is the widely studied historical field with its focus on pre-modern, medieval and ancient 'Persian' art and architecture; the other is the field of modern and contemporary 'Iranian' art and architecture. The problem arises in the fact that there is often little communication or appreciation between these two fields. Modern and contemporary artists and scholars reflect on classical art and architecture, but from the historical side there tends to be considerably less interest in the modern and contemporary field. Methodological practices also differ between the two: contemporary art history uses 20th and 21st century theoretical perspectives, whereas in the historical field, more often than not, historical and traditional art historical methods are used. Yet, the two fields are connected – artists and historians of art do not live in a vacuum, and Persian and Iranian art is by definition connected. There has always been a looking back at, and awareness of, the past among historians of art, but modern and contemporary artists too are rooted in, and make reference to, the past.

In this Conference we seek to bring together scholars from both the historical and contemporary fields to discuss certain issues which run across their respective subjects.

The School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester invites 250 word proposals for individual papers of 20 minutes on topics related to themes in the list below.

Please submit proposals to [iranianartconference@gmail.com](mailto:iranianartconference@gmail.com) by February 28, 2018.

Suggested general areas for topics:

#### 1. Traditionalist discourse

One theme of this Conference is to consider the so-called 'Traditionalist' discourse which occupied all academic study of art in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Such a 'Traditionalist' mode of interpreting culture, with its anti-modern essentialism and particular reading of history, sufficed as the desired conceptual apparatus for the newly-revolutionised Iran to build a new identity. However, traditionalism is not a water-tight and clearly-defined concept and contains variations from extreme right to far left approaches. This is one of the 'shadows' of the title of the Conference.

#### 2. Romanticism

From historical and modern perspectives, another shadow looms, which is that of romanticism. Different intellectual tendencies, such as, among other things, nationalism, nostalgia, 'Golden Age' constructions of the history of art, and the necessity to come to terms with the perceived decadence of the past, have resulted in the construction of a 'Classical Persian' art and a 'modern Iranian' art. Romanticisation of the people, history, and the land of Iran ('Persia' to the 'West'), was a common trend in art historical writing by Western scholars, and then by Iranian writers and artists themselves. How do romanticist trends contribute to historical and modern/ contemporary 'Persian' and 'Iranian' self-perception through art?

#### 3. Imitation and Xenophobia

'Neither East nor West', as the main slogan of the Islamic Republic, was not a completely strange and novel definition for Iran. Iran had always been a contradictory site of both welcome and also fear of foreigners and foreign powers. Art, too, is in a love-hate relationship with the West, also based on the ingrained attitudes of, respectively, welcoming influence, imitation, and borrowing, alongside suspicion and xenophobia of the foreigner.

#### 4. Contradictory Historiographies

The Conference seeks to map the diverse historiographies of Iranian art inside Iran and abroad with regard to their socio-political context: it is hoped that papers that take up this theme will discuss innovative ways which highlight the role of art historical narratives in different educational, social-psychological and political levels in modern Iran.

#### 5. In addition...

We invite proposals on any topic related to art historiography in Iran, regardless of its exact fit with the theme. Our aim is to encourage dialogue between scholars working on the art history of Iran from all disciplines.

The iconic and historic John Rylands Library, Deansgate in central Manchester will be the location for this two-day conference. Keynote speakers are to be announced. There will be an opportunity to view some examples of the John Rylands Collection of a thousand Persian manuscripts.

ArtHist.net

Scholars from Iran and elsewhere are being invited to attend the conference.

For further information contact the main convener of the Conference, Dr Aida Foroutan at [aida.foroutan@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:aida.foroutan@manchester.ac.uk).

Reminder: The deadline for submissions is Wednesday 28 February 2018

Reference:

CFP: Modern Iranian Art and Architecture (Manchester, 17-18 May 18). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 16, 2018 (accessed Apr 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/17104>>.