

Subject: EM: Art History Job Talk: Reza Mirzaei (THURS @ 4:30pm)
Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at 2:59:36 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Inform
Attachments: April 30-Mirzaei job talk.jpg

From: Art History

The Department of Art History at Scripps College invites you to a job talk by:

Reza Mirzaei, PhD

The Mask as Argument: Parody, Authority, and the Body in 1960s Iran

Thursday, April 30, 4:30 pm

Edwards Humanities Bldg. 204, Scripps College

Pizza and refreshments will be served

The binary of imitation and originality has long governed the reception of non-Western modernisms: either an artist reproduces Western forms derivatively or asserts an autonomous local tradition. This talk argues that the Iranian artist Bahman Mohassess (1931-2010) refused both positions, wielding Western sources not as models to emulate but as instruments to dismantle their authority. Drawing on what Linda Hutcheon theorizes as parody's critical distance, Mirzaei examines case studies from 1960s Tehran: an equestrian painting replacing Marino Marini's expressive suffering with hollow, performed authority; a staging of Pirandello's *Henry IV* framed between caricatured royal portraits resonant with Pahlavi iconography; reclining nudes stripped of any capacity to refuse the gaze; and a Lamentation for Martin Luther King Jr. honoring the convention's grief while exposing its racial exclusions. Together these works reveal a third position, neither imitation nor autonomy, in which inherited Western forms become the instruments of their own critical undoing.

Reza Mirzaei is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Art History at Alfred University, where his courses span contemporary art, global modernisms, and history of photography. His first book, forthcoming from Bloomsbury, examines the work of Iranian painter Bahman Mohassess and argues that parody and deniable allegory served as critical political strategies in 1960s Iran, reframing how we understand artistic dissent under authoritarian conditions. His peer-reviewed scholarship appears in *ARTMargins* and *History of Photography*, and a second project on late Qajar court photography examines the politics

of institutional image making and argues for an indigenous modernism that challenges Eurocentric periodizations of the avant-garde. Mirzaei recently curated *Subnegotiation* at Alfred University's Fosdick-Nelson Gallery, an exhibition of nine photographers from Iran and its diaspora. He holds a PhD from UC Santa Barbara, where he received the Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Award, and an MFA from the University of Pennsylvania.

Scripps
Art History
Candidate
Job Talk

Thursday, April 30
4:30pm
Humanities 204
Scripps College
Pizza & refreshments



REZA MIRZAEI

**The Mask as Argument:
Parody, Authority, and the Body
in 1960s Iran**

Image: Bahman Mohassess,
Untitled, 1965. Oil on canvas.
39 1/2 × 27 1/2 in.

For More Information:
arthistory@scrippscollege.edu