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THESIS DOCTORAL

**BAHMAN MOHASSES (1931-2010):
A CONTEMPORARY PERSIAN ARTIST,
IN A UNIQUE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
WITH GLOBAL ART**

Presented by:

Parnaz Goodarziparvari

Directed by:

Dr. Francisco Carlos Bueno Camejo

Dr. Álvaro Terrones Reigada

Tutored by:

Dr. Miguel Molina Alarcon

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Abstract

Bahman Mohasses (1931-2010): A Contemporary Persian Artist, In A Unique Intercultural Dialogue With Global Art

This doctoral thesis explores the artistic legacy and intercultural significance of Bahman Mohasses (1931–2010), a pivotal yet elusive figure in modern Iranian art. Engaging deeply with both Persian heritage and Western modernist currents, Mohasses created a body of work that bridges ancient traditions and contemporary concerns, reflecting philosophical, political, and aesthetic shifts in Iran and beyond. The research aims to: trace Iranian sculpture’s evolution from pre-Islamic to modern times; situate Mohasses within global modernism while identifying uniquely Iranian motifs; classify and analyse his recurring themes—human figures, mythic creatures, socio-political narratives, symbolic landscapes—through formal, mythological, and semiotic analysis; and examine the relationship between his philosophy, personality, and artistic production. The methodology is interdisciplinary, combining art history, philosophy, mythology, psychoanalysis, and semiotics with close visual readings of his paintings and sculptures. Findings show that Mohasses developed a distinct visual language in which form and content merge to convey solitude, critique, and cultural hybridity. Distortion, fragmentation, and symbolic ambiguity disrupt conventional narratives, while myth serves as a structural device for political and existential commentary. Semiotic analysis reveals his transformation of traditional sign systems into a personal code of layered meanings. A key contribution of this study is its framing of Mohasses as both guardian and challenger of tradition. Influenced by, yet distinct from, Pablo Picasso, he combined technical mastery with an Iranian sensibility rooted in historical memory and myth. His self-imposed solitude emerges as an active philosophical stance, enabling him to remain independent of both Iranian art institutions and Western market pressures. By integrating historical context, formal innovation, and intercultural dialogue, the thesis positions Mohasses as a rare bridge between Eastern and Western modernism. The research enriches the study of Iranian contemporary art and affirms the enduring relevance of his work in addressing identity, exile, and the transformative role of artistic expression.

Resumen

Bahman Mohasses (1931-2010): un artista persa contemporáneo, en un diálogo intercultural único con el arte global

Esta tesis doctoral explora el legado artístico y la trascendencia intercultural de Bahman Mohasses (1931-2010), una figura clave, aunque esquiva, del arte moderno iraní. A través de una profunda interacción con la herencia persa y las corrientes modernistas occidentales, Mohasses creó una obra que conecta las tradiciones antiguas con las preocupaciones contemporáneas, reflejando los cambios filosóficos, políticos y estéticos en Irán y más allá. La investigación tiene como objetivo: rastrear la evolución de la escultura iraní desde la época preislámica hasta la modernidad; situar a Mohasses dentro del modernismo global, identificando motivos típicamente iraníes; clasificar y analizar sus temas recurrentes —figuras humanas, criaturas míticas, narrativas sociopolíticas, paisajes simbólicos— mediante análisis formal, mitológico y semiótico; y examinar la relación entre su filosofía, personalidad y producción artística. La metodología es interdisciplinaria y combina la historia del arte, la filosofía, la mitología, el psicoanálisis y la semiótica con una lectura visual detallada de sus pinturas y esculturas. Los hallazgos muestran que Mohasses desarrolló un lenguaje visual distintivo en el que forma y contenido se fusionan para transmitir soledad, crítica e hibridez cultural. La distorsión, la fragmentación y la ambigüedad simbólica perturban las narrativas convencionales, mientras que el mito sirve como dispositivo estructural para el comentario político y existencial. El análisis semiótico revela su transformación de los sistemas tradicionales de signos en un código personal de significados estratificados. Una contribución clave de este estudio es el encuadre del artista, la convicción de Mohasses para adoptar el rol de mediador entre la pulsión innovadora y la tradición. Influenciado por Pablo Picasso, aunque distinto de él, combinó la maestría técnica con una sensibilidad iraní arraigada en la memoria histórica y el mito. Su soledad autoimpuesta emerge como una postura filosófica activa, lo que le permite mantenerse independiente tanto de las instituciones artísticas iraníes como de las presiones del mercado occidental. Al integrar el contexto histórico, la innovación formal y el diálogo intercultural, la tesis posiciona a Mohasses como un puente excepcional entre el modernismo oriental y el occidental. En definitiva, esta investigación enriquece el estudio del arte contemporáneo iraní y contribuye a preservar su trabajo, asimilando con convicción aspectos esenciales como la identidad, el exilio y el poderoso papel transformador del arte en una inercia vital que mejora las sociedades

Resum

Bahman Mohasses (1931-2010): un artista persa contemporani en un diàleg intercultural únic amb l'art global

Aquesta tesi doctoral explora el llegat artístic i la importància intercultural de Bahman Mohasses (1931–2010), una figura fonamental però difícil d'aconseguir en l'art iranià modern. En profunditzar tant amb l'herència persa com amb els corrents modernistes occidentals, Mohasses va crear un corpus d'obres que uneix tradicions antigues i preocupacions contemporànies, reflectint els canvis filosòfics, polítics i estètics a l'Iran i més enllà. La recerca pretén: rastrejar l'evolució de l'escultura iraniana des dels temps preislàmics fins als temps moderns; situar Mohasses dins del modernisme global tot identificant motius únicament iranians; classificar i analitzar els seus temes recurrents (figures humanes, criatures mítiques, narratives sociopolítiques, paisatges simbòlics) mitjançant anàlisis formals, mitològiques i semiòtiques; i examinar la relació entre la seva filosofia, personalitat i producció artística. La metodologia és interdisciplinària, combinant història de l'art, filosofia, mitologia, psicoanàlisi i semiòtica amb lectures visuals detallades de les seves pintures i escultures. Les troballes mostren que Mohasses va desenvolupar un llenguatge visual diferent en què la forma i el contingut es fusionen per transmetre solitud, crítica i hibridació cultural. La distorsió, la fragmentació i l'ambigüitat simbòlica interrompen les narratives convencionals, mentre que el mite serveix com a dispositiu estructural per al comentari polític i existencial. L'anàlisi semiòtica revela la seva transformació dels sistemes de signes tradicionals en un codi personal de significats estratificats. Una contribució clau d'aquest estudi és la seva manera de plantejar Mohasses com a guardià i desafiador de la tradició. Influenciat per, però diferent de, Pablo Picasso, va combinar el domini tècnic amb una sensibilitat iraniana arrelada en la memòria històrica i el mite. La seva solitud autoimposada emergeix com una postura filosòfica activa, que li permet romandre independent tant de les institucions artístiques iranians com de les pressions del mercat occidental. Integrant el context històric, la innovació formal i el diàleg intercultural, la tesi posiciona Mohasses com un pont únic entre el modernisme oriental i occidental. La recerca enriqueix l'estudi de l'art contemporani iranià i afirma la rellevància perdurable de la seva obra per abordar la identitat, l'exili i el paper transformador de l'expressió artística.

چکیده

بهمن محمصص (۱۳۱۰-۱۳۱۰): هنرمند معاصر ایرانی، در گفتگویی بی‌نظیر بین فرهنگی با هنر

جهانی

این رساله دکتری، میراث هنری و اهمیت بین فرهنگی بهمن محمصص (۱۹۳۱-۲۰۱۰)، چهره‌ای محوری اما ناشناخته در هنر مدرن ایران، را بررسی می‌کند. محمصص با تعامل عمیق با میراث ایرانی و جریان‌های مدرنیستی غربی، مجموعه‌ای از آثار را خلق کرد که سنت‌های باستانی و دغدغه‌های معاصر را به هم پیوند می‌دهد و منعکس‌کننده تغییرات فلسفی، سیاسی و زیبایی‌شناختی در ایران و فراتر از آن است. اهداف این تحقیق عبارتند از: ردیابی تکامل مجسمه‌سازی ایران از دوران پیش از اسلام تا دوران مدرن؛ قرار دادن محمصص در مدرنیسم جهانی ضمن شناسایی نقوش منحصر به فرد ایرانی؛ طبقه‌بندی و تحلیل مضامین تکرارشونده او - چهره‌های انسانی، موجودات اسطوره‌ای، روایت‌های اجتماعی-سیاسی، مناظر نمادین - از طریق تحلیل‌های رسمی، اسطوره‌شناختی و نشانه‌شناختی؛ و بررسی رابطه بین فلسفه، شخصیت و تولید هنری او. روش‌شناسی این پژوهش، میان‌رشته‌ای است و تاریخ هنر، فلسفه، اسطوره‌شناسی، روانکاوی و نشانه‌شناسی را با خوانش‌های بصری دقیق از نقاشی‌ها و مجسمه‌های او ترکیب می‌کند. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که محمصص یک زبان بصری متمایز ایجاد کرده است که در آن فرم و محتوا برای انتقال تنهایی، نقد و آمیختگی فرهنگی در هم می‌آمیزند. تحریف، تکه‌تکه شدن و ابهام نمادین، روایت‌های متعارف را مختل می‌کنند، در حالی که اسطوره به عنوان ابزاری ساختاری برای تفسیر سیاسی و وجودی عمل می‌کند. تحلیل نشانه‌شناسی، تبدیل نظام‌های نشانه‌ای سنتی به رمزگانی شخصی از معانی لایه لایه توسط او را آشکار می‌کند. یکی از دستاوردهای کلیدی این مطالعه، ترسیم محمصص به عنوان هم‌نگهبان و هم‌چالشگر سنت است. او که تحت تأثیر پابلو پیکاسو، اما متمایز از او، قرار داشت، تسلط فنی را با حساسیت ایرانی ریشه گرفته از حافظه تاریخی و اسطوره ترکیب کرد. انزوای خودخواسته او به عنوان یک موضع فلسفی فعال پدیدار می‌شود و او را قادر می‌سازد تا هم از نهادهای هنری ایران و هم از فشارهای بازار غرب مستقل بماند. این پایان‌نامه با ادغام زمینه تاریخی، نوآوری رسمی و گفتگوی بین فرهنگی، محمصص را به عنوان پلی نادر بین مدرنیسم شرقی و غربی قرار می‌دهد. این تحقیق، مطالعه هنر معاصر ایران را غنی‌تر می‌کند و اهمیت پایدار آثار او را در پرداختن به هویت، تبعید و نقش دگرگون‌کننده بیان هنری تأیید می‌کند.

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Introduction

This thesis represents the culmination of an extended inquiry into the evolution of Iranian sculpture and its dynamic relationship with modernity, ascending in a comprehensive study of the life and works of Bahman Mohasses. The research was born out of a desire to understand the unique trajectory of sculptural art within the Iranian cultural and historical context, and how this medium has interacted with philosophical, political, and aesthetic transformations across centuries. Structured across twelve chapters, this study bridges the ancient and the contemporary, the theoretical and the visual, and the personal and the collective. Each chapter has been carefully developed to form a holistic understanding of Iranian sculpture and Mohasses's inimitable contribution to its modern form.

Chapter One: A Glance on the Position of Sculpturing in the Persian Art

The thesis begins with a historical overview of sculpture in Iran, providing the necessary background for subsequent discussions. This chapter traces the origins of Iranian sculptural traditions from ancient civilizations such as the Elamites, Achaemenids, and Parthians. Monumental stone reliefs at sites like Persepolis are examined not only as artistic masterpieces but also as ideological tools of imperial identity and divine sovereignty. The chapter then explores the profound impact of Islam on visual arts, particularly the theological prohibition of figural representations, which significantly influenced the trajectory of sculpture. It discusses how, despite such constraints, sculpture survived in adapted, often abstract or decorative forms integrated into architecture. This part lays the foundational argument that Iranian sculpture has always existed in dialogue with sociopolitical and religious paradigms.

Chapter Two: The Effect of Modern Movements on Contemporary Iranian Sculptu

This section examines the profound transformation of Iranian sculpture under the influence of Western modernism and postmodern thought. It demonstrates that modern Iranian art, including sculpture, cannot be analyzed in isolation from the global philosophical and aesthetic movements of the 20th century. Theoretical frameworks

drawn from European modernism, existentialism, and surrealism are juxtaposed with native Iranian motifs and concerns, resulting in a hybrid form of expression. This section emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary approaches when studying contemporary art, warning against reductive or purely aesthetic analyses. By referencing the abrupt and often externally imposed transition from tradition to modernity in Iran, it highlights the inherent tensions and negotiations in the works of Iranian sculptors.

Chapter Three: A Window on Knowing Bahman Mohasses and His Works

This section introduces Bahman Mohasses as a pivotal figure in modern Iranian art. Described by critics and contemporaries as enigmatic, iconoclastic, and intellectually uncompromising, Mohasses is situated both within and beyond Iranian artistic circles. His deliberate marginality, combined with his avant-garde sensibilities, enabled him to critique dominant cultural and political narratives. This chapter outlines Mohasses's biography, his artistic evolution, and his complex relationship with both Iran and the West. Emphasis is placed on his dual engagement with Persian cultural heritage and European intellectualism, especially Italian art and literature.

Chapter Four: The Classification and Features of the Works of Bahman Mohasses

It develops a system for classifying Mohasses's body of work, not by chronology but by recurring themes and visual elements. The seven primary categories include: human figures, fishes, birds, historical events and social conditions, mythical characters and stories, inanimate nature, and background landscapes. These categories are not arbitrary but are informed by sustained visual analysis and thematic coherence. The chapter contends that such classification allows for a deeper understanding of Mohasses's visual lexicon and recurring concerns. Each category is introduced with representative examples and interpretations that link visual form with ideological meaning.

Chapter Five: Form and Content Analysis of Bahman Mohasses's Artworks

It undertakes detailed formal analyses of selected works by Mohasses. It investigates how he deploys visual strategies such as distortion, fragmentation, and exaggeration to convey psychological and philosophical depth. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between form and content—how aesthetic choices express political critique, existential anxiety,

and personal trauma. This section also highlights Mohasses's synthesis of mediums, particularly his movement between painting and sculpture, and how each medium serves a different yet interconnected purpose in articulating his worldview.

Chapter Six: Elemental Analysis of Bahman Mohasses's Artworks

Building on the previous outcomes, this section delves into the specific visual elements that constitute Mohasses's unique style. It analyzes recurring figures such as hybrid creatures, mythological beasts, and barren landscapes as symbolic motifs. The chapter argues that these elements reflect Mohasses's internal conflicts and philosophical preoccupations—his sense of exile, alienation, and absurdity. This visual vocabulary is situated within both Iranian and Western mythological traditions, revealing Mohasses's ability to merge disparate cultural narratives into a singular artistic voice.

Chapter Seven: Mythology in the Works of Bahman Mohasses

This part explores Mohasses's engagement with myth—not merely as narrative material but as symbolic structure. His use of mythological figures and stories is analyzed through the lens of cultural semiotics and comparative mythology. The chapter proposes that Mohasses's reinterpretation of myth functions as a critique of contemporary political and cultural realities. By returning to mythic archetypes, he reclaims agency in a world marked by censorship, displacement, and existential despair. It also considers the effect of his geographical displacement on the mythic tone of his later works.

Chapter Eight: Semiotics in Mohasses's Works

This section introduces semiotics as a methodological framework to decode the signs and symbols in Mohasses's artworks. It distinguishes between linguistic and non-linguistic signs, showing how Mohasses's use of visual semiotics enables him to communicate complex emotional and ideological messages. This chapter contends that the artist's work operates as a visual language in which each element—be it color, form, or gesture—functions as a signifier of deeper cultural and psychological meanings. It also explores how Mohasses reconfigures traditional sign systems to subvert dominant narratives.

Chapter Nine: Comparative Analysis of the Works of Bahman Mohasses and Pablo Picasso

It conducts a comparative study between Bahman Mohasses and Pablo Picasso, focusing on their shared modernist ethos and formal innovations. The influence of Picasso on Mohasses is traced through stylistic affinities, such as the use of distortion, fragmented forms, and symbolic ambiguity. Beyond surface-level comparisons, the chapter argues that both artists shared a commitment to the idea of the "artisan"—the belief in mastering form and technique as a pathway to artistic truth. Mohasses's admiration for Picasso is documented not only in his artistic output but also in his personal writings and interviews. This section deepens our understanding of Mohasses's artistic lineage while distinguishing the unique cultural inflections in his work.

Chapter Ten: Analysis of Mohasses's Personality

Here, the focus shifts from artwork to artist, attempting a psychological portrait of Bahman Mohasses. The chapter explores his loneliness, intellectualism, rebelliousness, and detachment as both personal traits and philosophical positions. Drawing from psychoanalytic theory, literary criticism, and biographical sources, the study portrays Mohasses as a man who saw art as a vehicle for existential exploration and self-revelation. This section argues that Mohasses's personality cannot be disentangled from his art; rather, his entire oeuvre is a mirror of his inner world.

Conclusions

The final chapter synthesizes the psychological, philosophical, and formal threads of the thesis. It argues that Mohasses's solitude was not a passive condition but an active choice—an existential stance that became central to his artistic identity. This solitude, transformed into philosophical insight, permeates his work in themes of exile, alienation, and tragedy. The chapter concludes by reaffirming Mohasses's position as a singular figure in Iranian modern art—one whose uncompromising vision, intellectual rigor, and symbolic depth offer enduring relevance in the study of art and identity.

Outcome Remarks

This thesis positions Bahman Mohasses not merely as an artist but as a cultural and philosophical interlocutor—a figure who compels us to rethink the boundaries of tradition, modernity, and artistic expression. Through historical contextualization, formal

and semiotic analysis, and interdisciplinary interpretation, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Iranian sculpture and the place of Mohasses within it. His work, steeped in solitude and symbolism, offers not only a mirror to his era but a lens through which to contemplate the human condition itself.

As the writer of this thesis, I approached this work not only as a researcher but as someone deeply engaged with the complex intersections of history, aesthetics, and identity. The process of examining Bahman Mohasses's life and artistic legacy has been both intellectually rigorous and personally transformative. In navigating the intricate layers of his work, I have also encountered the broader questions of exile, expression, and cultural continuity that shape modern Iranian art. It is my hope that this study contributes meaningfully to the academic discourse on contemporary Middle Eastern art and inspires further inquiry into the rich, often underrepresented narratives within it. With humility and appreciation for the enduring power of artistic expression, I present this work as both a scholarly endeavor and a tribute to the resilience of creative vision.

Methodology

1. Introduction

Bahman Mohasses, the Iranian modernist artist, is considered one of the most influential figures in contemporary Iranian art, with a significant body of work in both painting and sculpture. His artworks portray the human being in confrontation with a cruel, violent, and absurd world. Fragmented bodies, blurred faces, hybrid creatures, and silent, empty spaces are indicative of the mental world of an artist who sought to express his personal and universal voice amidst the tensions between modernity and Eastern cultural identity.

The present study aims to uncover the latent conceptual, aesthetic, and social layers embedded in Mohasses' works through analytical interpretation. Until this research, the narrative of Bahman Mohasses remained relatively obscure and opaque; much of his collective perception was either imaginary or based on interpretations derived from his surviving works. There is a notable scarcity of texts and archival materials concerning his life and art. This deficiency in documentation stems from multiple factors: one is the lack of recorded material during the decades of his cultural presence; another is his prolonged emigration and physical absence from Iran. However, the most significant reason lies in the enigmatic psychological and personal characteristics of the artist himself.

He neither trained students nor cultivated companions who could preserve and promote his legacy. These circumstances contribute to the elusive and mythical nature of his memory among post-revolution generations. Bahman Mohasses remains shrouded in narratives; aside from select series such as his "monsters" or still life, his works have largely been overlooked. His personal life is enveloped in mystery and continues to provoke curiosity, while his literary and theatrical activities remain marginal and hypothetical. This constitutes the current landscape surrounding one of the key figures in Iranian modernism—an artist who, until roughly a decade ago, had been nearly forgotten.

Therefore, this study intends to move beyond mere description of Bahman Mohasses and his oeuvre, and instead provide a theoretical, multifaceted analysis focused on the hidden layers of meaning in his work. In contrast to most existing sources that engage primarily with the surface features or historical context of his art, this research seeks to extract a

deeper understanding of the forms, symbols, and themes present in Mohasses' body of work.

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite Bahman Mohasses' artistic acclaim in international contexts, his works—particularly in the field of sculpture—have received relatively little analytical attention. The conceptual richness of his oeuvre, which combines social critique, existentialist subjectivity, and psychological symbolism, calls for an interdisciplinary approach capable of drawing upon diverse theoretical frameworks for interpretation. The central issue addressed in this research is how Mohasses, through a unique visual language, represents concepts such as violence, silence, repression, and identity crisis—and to what extent these representations are intertwined with the socio-cultural context of his time.

3. Significance and Rationale of the Study

This study is significant in two primary respects:

- **Artistically**, it contributes to the analysis of Mohasses' personal style and the identification of his visual language within the context of Iranian modern art.
- **Theoretically**, it employs philosophical and sociological frameworks to help uncover the deeper layers of meaning in his work.

Given the lack of comprehensive and theoretical research on Mohasses' sculptures and certain aspects of his paintings, this study aims to fill a critical gap in the existing literature on Iranian art.

4. Research Objectives

4.1. Main Objective

- To analyze the style, form, and content of Bahman Mohasses' paintings and sculptures from aesthetic and conceptual perspectives. This study seeks to investigate the artist's distinctive mode of expression and unique visual language, while offering a theoretical reflection on the hidden meanings and deeper layers of his works. Attention to form, composition, color, subject matter, and the relationships among visual elements—alongside the intellectual and historical

contexts of the artworks—provides a foundation for interpreting Mohasses’ oeuvre.

4.2. Secondary Objectives

- **To examine the visual elements in his works:** This includes identifying and analyzing components such as color, line, texture, light, composition, and spatial dynamics, all of which shape the formal structure of the artworks and indicate the artist’s stylistic evolution over time.
- **To analyze symbolic elements:** This involves investigating the symbols, signs, and visual references present in his paintings and sculptures that convey cultural, mythological, psychological, or philosophical meanings, as well as explaining their role in the formation of Mohasses’ visual language.
- **To explore the relationship between the artworks and their cultural–political contexts:** This includes examining how the intellectual and political climate during the periods of creation—including the impact of exile, censorship, isolation, and encounters with modernity—are reflected in the tone, themes, and formal qualities of the works.
- **To conduct a comparative analysis of the evolution of his work across different periods:** This entails tracing the transformation of his artistic expression before and after emigration from Iran, analyzing changes in technique, subject matter, color usage, and audience engagement, and exploring the possible causes of these transformations considering his personal life and socio-historical position.

5. Research Questions

1. What are the key visual and formal components of Mohasses’ works?
2. Which philosophical concepts are present in his art?
3. What is the relationship between Mohasses’ artworks and the socio-political conditions of Iran?

6. Hypotheses

- Mohasses' artworks reflect the internal crises of the modern human being as well as the oppressive conditions of society.
- The fragmented and violent forms in his works metaphorically represent decay, collapse, and loss of identity.
- Mohasses is a multifaceted artist who, through the visual medium, portrayed the intersections of philosophy, politics, psychology, and the surrounding world

7. Research Methodology

This research has been conducted using a qualitative methodology with a descriptive–analytical approach. Data has been collected through library-based and archival research, as well as through visual–conceptual analysis of artworks. The theoretical framework of the study is grounded in social critique. Sampling has been purposive, and the method of analysis is based on qualitative content analysis. The principal aim is to understand and interpret the latent meanings embedded in the artworks of Bahman Mohasses. The qualitative analysis employed in this research endeavors to uncover and examine the visual, symbolic, and conceptual complexities within his works.

Rather than offering a linear narrative or descriptive account of the artworks, this analytical approach attempts—through philosophical and critical inquiry—to reconstruct the inner world of the artist. It seeks to demonstrate how Mohasses' visual language conveys a bitter, and at times ironic, critique of the condition of modern humanity, structural violence, and cultural ruptures. In doing so, the study not only analyzes selected examples of Mohasses' paintings and sculptures but also examines the intellectual and artistic trajectory of his development, aiming to answer how he, through distinctive forms and radical expression, emerged as one of the singular voices of Iranian modern art.

The data for this research has primarily been gathered through the following methods:

- **Library research:** including the study of written sources such as books, articles, interviews, and exhibition catalogues, alongside sustained visits to the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

- **Archival research:** involving documents and images related to Mohasses' works, recorded conversations, artist's notes, and historical records.
- **Visual-conceptual analysis:** a direct examination of the visual structure, signs, style, and formal characteristics of the artworks.

The theoretical framework is based on social critique, whereby Mohasses' artworks are analyzed not merely as aesthetic experiences, but as reflections of the cultural, social, and political realities of his time. Within this framework, the fragmented bodies, empty spaces, and identity-less figures in his work are interpreted as symbols of violence, repression, identity crisis, and the condition of modern society.

For the selection of artworks, purposive sampling was employed. Artworks were chosen based on specific characteristics such as stylistic diversity, time period, symbolic content, or their significance within the artist's oeuvre—not on a random basis. Ultimately, the analytical method is qualitative content analysis, which allows for the extraction and categorization of hidden meanings, narrative structures, and key concepts from within the image.

Given that the primary aim of this research is to offer a novel and interpretive reading of the works of Bahman Mohasses—one of the most prominent contemporary Iranian artists—care has been taken to adopt a rigorous methodological approach in the art criticism process. This interpretation not only seeks to uncover concealed meanings in Mohasses' work but also strives to bridge modern theoretical discourse with the socio-cultural context of Iran, thereby contributing new perspectives to both contemporary visual artists and art critics.

In this context, the theories of Roland Barthes have been chosen as the foundational interpretive framework. Barthes, through his emphasis on the "openness" of the text and the polysemous nature of the artwork, offers a new vision of art—one in which the artwork is not a mere reflection of the artist's intent, but a site for meaning-making by the audience. From this perspective, Mohasses' works are approached as visual texts whose meanings are shaped by historical, social, and psychological contexts, and are thus decipherable through intertextual and open-ended interpretation.

To conduct a precise and coherent semiotic reading of Mohasses' works, this research categorizes his oeuvre into two distinct periods: "Pre-Exile" and "Post-Exile." This classification is made for several important formal and contextual reasons.

First, there are notable differences in stylistic execution, composition, color palette, and materials used between the two periods. Mohasses' early works, created largely within the cultural and social context of Iran, differ fundamentally in form and content from his later works, produced predominantly abroad. These differences are visibly manifest in color treatment, levels of abstraction, internal formal tensions, and the degree of engagement with the viewer.

Second, since the early period of Mohasses' career is more familiar to Iranian audiences and has been subject to prior critique and interpretation, this existing critical landscape can serve as a foundation for diachronic readings of his work.

Third, there is a noted scarcity of visual documentation and surviving artworks from Mohasses' post-exile period. The limited availability of sources and samples from this later phase has necessitated that a significant portion of the analytical focus be placed on the pre-exile period—both in terms of volume of artworks and the researcher's access—offering a more fertile ground for semiotic analysis.

Therefore, by integrating qualitative content analysis with Roland Barthes's audience-centered theory of interpretation, this research aims to offer a fresh perspective on the works of Mohasses - one that transcends the boundaries of traditional criticism and invites the reader or viewer into the meaning-making process.

8. Research Limitations and Gaps

- Limited access to many of Bahman Mohasses' works or high-quality reproductions due to destruction, sale, or dispersal.
- Absence of integrated analyses that examine both his paintings and sculptures in tandem.
- Lack of interdisciplinary approaches combining philosophical, aesthetic, and socio-political perspectives.

- Scarcity of formal analyses grounded in modern aesthetics and symbolic interpretation.
- Inadequate Persian-language resources offering systematic theoretical critiques of his oeuvre.
- The symbolic complexity and interpretive multiplicity of his works necessitate multi-dimensional, cross-disciplinary readings.

9. Research Background

Despite Bahman Mohasses' pivotal position in the development of Iranian modern art, academic engagement with his work remains limited. Although recent decades have witnessed growing attention to his art and life, much of the available literature is descriptive and biographical in nature, with few analytical or interdisciplinary interpretations. This gap highlights the urgent need for critical scholarship that explores the conceptual and formal dimensions of his work.

9.1. Persian-Language Sources

- "Bahman Mohasses" by Arman Khalatbari

A concise biographical overview accompanied by a curated selection of paintings and sculptures. However, it lacks in-depth theoretical analysis.

- Documentary: *A Sight That Hears* (1964)

Directed by Ahmad Faroughi Qajar, this 18-minute film offers a glimpse into Mohasses' life and selected works.

- Documentary: *Fifi Howls from Happiness* (2014)

Directed by Mitra Farahani, this film provides a rich visual and narrative portrait of Mohasses' worldview, creative process, and selected works—an invaluable resource for understanding his intellectual legacy.

- Persian art journals such as *Honarnameh*, *Tandis*, and *Herfeh: Honarmand*
While a few scattered articles focus on the formal dimensions of Mohasses' work, most are descriptive and primarily contextualize his output within historical or socio-political frameworks.

9.2. *Non-Persian Sources*

- Publications such as *Bidoun* and *ArtAsiaPacific*

These English-language platforms have featured critical pieces exploring Mohasses' position in relation to modern art and identity crises in the Middle East. Such sources offer valuable external perspectives, though they remain relatively few in number.

10. **Concluding Remark**

Prior to this study, Bahman Mohasses remained a largely enigmatic figure. Much of what is known about him stems from fragmentary interpretations of surviving works or anecdotal recollections. The scarcity of textual archives, compounded by his long-term exile and physical absence from Iran's art scene, has contributed to his obscured legacy. More profoundly, his reclusive nature, lack of disciples, and refusal to engage with artistic circles prevented the institutional preservation and transmission of his legacy. As a result, Mohasses' image lingers more as myth than as documented reality for post-revolution generations. Mohasses' work bears remarkable resonance with Roland Barthes's theory of textuality. Barthes emphasized the active role of the reader in generating meaning, arguing that texts achieve significance not through authorial intent but through the reader's engagement with embedded cultural codes. In Barthes's view, the value of a work lies in its ability to challenge expectations and transform the act of interpretation into a dynamic, participatory experience. Mohasses' artworks function similarly—not as mere vehicles for aesthetic enjoyment, but as sites of intellectual provocation. His paintings and sculptures are characterized by deliberate ambiguity, symbolic layering, and a haunting silence that compels critical engagement. The relationship between viewer and artwork becomes reciprocal; meaning is not preordained but co-constructed.

Like Barthes, Mohasses views the artwork not as a transparent representation of reality, but as a constellation of forms and signs whose interpretation is contingent upon cultural discourses. His use of distorted figures, void-like spatial compositions, and recurrent motifs (e.g., fragmented bodies, mythical creatures, fish, birds, still life) resist simplistic readings and demands a semiotic lens. These visual codes do not yield meaning at first

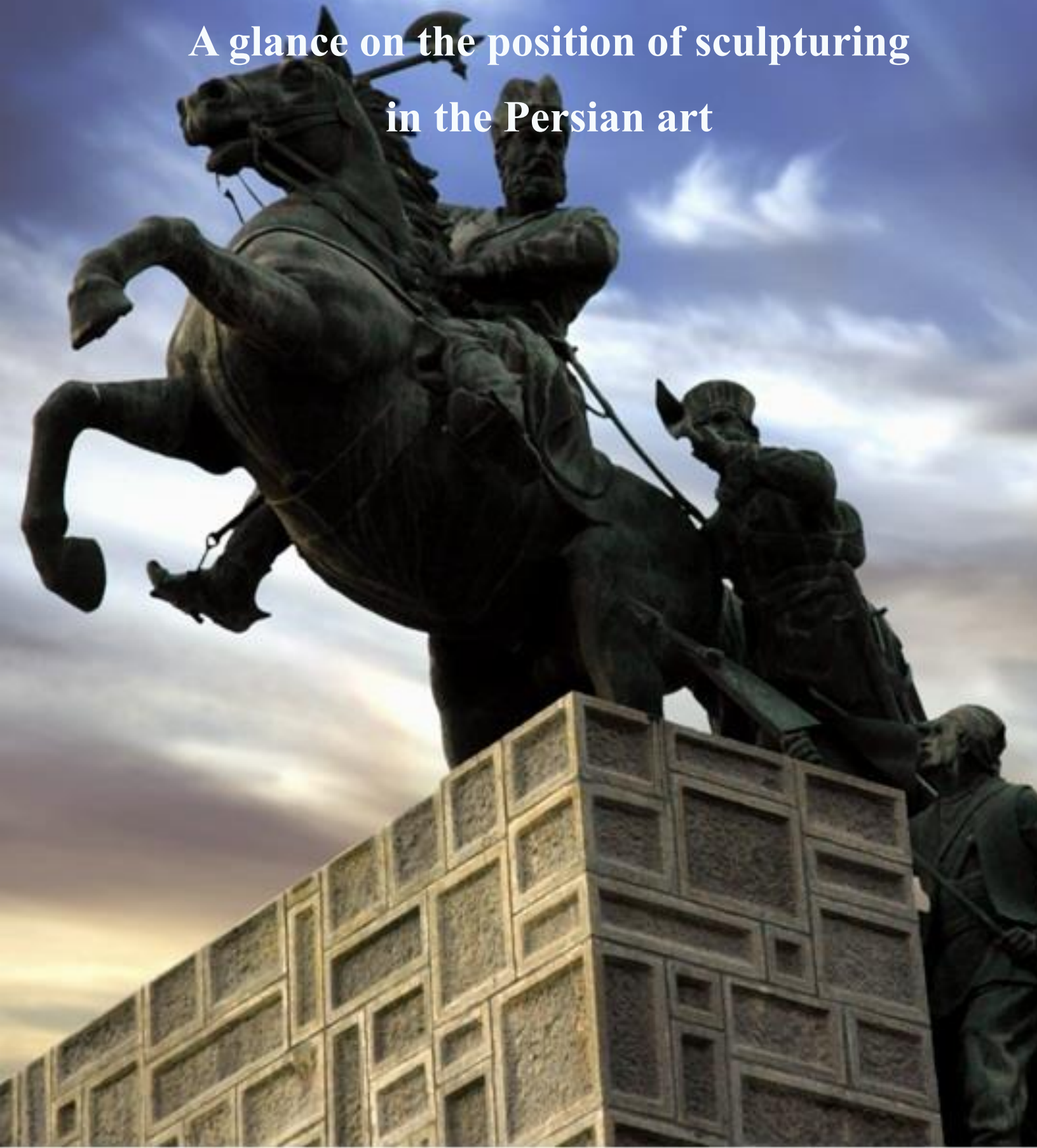
glance but require intertextual and contextual decryption. This research approaches Mohasses' art through close formal analysis—focusing on composition, color, visual rhythm, point of view, and spatial tension—as well as thematic examination of recurring subjects. Through this lens, the study uncovers underlying ideological and critical dimensions that often elude surface-level interpretations.

Ultimately, this inquiry asserts that the multi-layered, symbolically charged nature of Mohasses' visual language can only be unpacked through rigorous theoretical and semiotic analysis. His deliberate engagement with cultural codes, mythological references, and socio-critical discourse points to a conscious artistic strategy that demands interpretive sophistication. Hence, a semiotic framework proves the most effective methodology for decoding the dense meaning structures embedded in his works. Subsequent chapters in this dissertation apply this framework in a systematic reading of Mohasses' art to arrive at a deeper understanding of his conceptual architecture and aesthetic worldview. What distinguishes Mohasses from his contemporaries—both in painting and sculpture—is his insistence on a unique visual language, personal iconography, and resistance to both decorative modernism and traditional Iranian imagery. While many critics recognize Pablo Picasso as a major influence—particularly in terms of formal composition and Cubist visual vocabulary, Mohasses transcends mere stylistic borrowing. His art is marked by a somber, philosophical tone and critical stance that are uniquely his own. Although his early works share affinities with 1920s–30s European modernism, his compositional strategies and visual syntax clearly reflect the influence of Picasso's Cubist period. This connection has led some to label him the "Iranian Picasso"—a designation that, while acknowledging formal parallels, risks overshadowing Mohasses' singularity within the Iranian and global art contexts. His work ultimately represents not imitation but internalization and reinvention.

The author declares that the Doctoral Thesis is an original research project. If Artificial Intelligence tools have been used, these tools and their uses have been specified in the Thesis document.

Chapter I

A glance on the position of sculpturing in the Persian art



1.1. Introduction:

The history of sculpture in Iran is profoundly interwoven with the cultural, religious, and artistic evolutions that have unfolded across the region over millennia. From the intricately carved stone reliefs of ancient Elamite, Achaemenid, and Parthian civilizations to the abstract and conceptual forms of contemporary Iranian sculpture, this art form has continually mirrored the shifting ideologies, beliefs, and aesthetics of Iranian society.

In its earliest manifestations, sculpture in Iran served both ceremonial and political functions—glorifying rulers, depicting mythological narratives, and symbolizing divine authority. Monumental stone carvings such as those at Persepolis stand as enduring symbols of the grandeur and sophistication of the Achaemenid Empire.

However, the advent of Islam marked a significant turning point. Islamic teachings, particularly the prohibition against figural representation in religious contexts, led to a decline in the production of freestanding sculpture. Instead, Iranian visual culture flourished through calligraphy, geometric patterns, and architectural ornamentation. Sculpture, while never disappearing entirely, became more subdued and abstract, often integrating into architectural structures or serving functional and decorative roles. In the modern era, particularly in the 20th and 21st centuries, Iranian sculpture experienced a revival, influenced by Western modernism as well as a renewed exploration of native heritage and identity.

Thus, the history of sculpture in Iran is not a linear narrative, but rather a dynamic dialogue between tradition and transformation—an art form that continues to evolve, challenge, and reflect the complexities of Iranian cultural identity.

1.2. Brief History of Sculpture in Iran

The history of sculpture in Iran is deeply intertwined with the cultural, religious, and artistic transformations that have shaped the region. Iranian sculpture, with its roots in ancient civilizations, experienced profound changes under the influence of Islam. The boycott of idolatry in Islamic culture not only stunted the development of sculpture but also disrupted its terminology and conceptual clarity. Common terms such as "face," "image," and "resemblance," which were used by poets, historians, and scholars, lacked

specificity and failed to differentiate between sculpture and other forms of visual art, such as painting. Similarly, the term "carving" was often ambiguous, leaving it unclear whether the reference was to sculptural or architectural carvings (Gunter, 1992).



Image 1.1 *Stone carving in Biston mount by Farhad Kuhkan*

1.2.1. Early Iranian Sculpture and Farhad Kuhkan

The history of Iranian sculpture, in the sense of its artistic imagery, begins with the legendary figure of Farhad Kuhkan. Farhad is celebrated as a mythical sculptor who carved a mountain out of his love for Shirin, a tale that echoes throughout Persian literature. However, this romanticized narrative does little to illuminate the actual practices or achievements of sculptors in the early periods. During the Safavid era, despite the influence of European paintings and the ornate decoration of palaces, sculptors were relegated to peripheral roles. Their work was limited to carved columns and other minor architectural elements, reflecting the broader marginalization of sculpture in Islamic culture (Herzfeld, 1948).

The subsequent Zand and Qajar dynasties marked an era where painters enjoyed prestige and courtly recognition. Sculptors, on the other hand, continued to be overshadowed, often working under the supervision of court painters. It was only in the 19th century that sculptors began to gain recognition as independent artists. A pivotal figure in this

transition was Ali Akbar Hajjar, who emerged in the mid-19th century as one of Iran's first recognized sculptors, a full 14 centuries after the legendary Farhad Kuhkan. Hajjar's work, including the bronze statue of Nasser al-Din Shah, represents a significant milestone in the reestablishment of sculpture as an independent art form in Iran (Behnam, 1963).



Image 1.2 *Bronze sculpture of Nasser al-Din Shah. Ali Akbar Hajjar*

1.2.2. The Islamic Era and the Decline of Sculpture

The advent of Islam brought significant changes to Iranian art, particularly sculpture. Islamic teachings, with their emphasis on the prohibition of idolatry, created an environment in which figurative sculpture was viewed with suspicion. This shift had profound implications for the development of the art form. Historians and poets who chronicled the early Islamic period often avoided terms such as "sculptor," opting instead for less contentious descriptors like "carver." This linguistic caution reflected the broader cultural and religious sensitivities of the time.

The collapse of the Sasanian Empire and the Arab conquest of Iran introduced new dynamics to Iranian art. Tabari, a prominent historian, provides a valuable account of the state of sculpture during this transitional period. He describes statues and carvings, such as a camel bearing the figure of a man, which demonstrate the technical sophistication of Sasanian artisans. However, such works were increasingly rare as Islamic cultural norms took hold. The early centuries of Islam in Iran were characterized by a significant decline in the production of sculpture, with only a handful of works surviving from this period (Shenkar, 2012).



Image 1.3 *Animal head (engraved metal)*

1.2.3. Early Islamic Art and the Absence of Sculpture

The paucity of sculpture in the early Islamic centuries is attributable to both cultural and political factors. Iranians, who initially embraced Islam for its promises of equality and justice, soon found themselves disillusioned by the oppressive policies of the Arab rulers. This discontent fueled movements for independence, such as those led by the Samanids, who sought to preserve Iranian culture and identity. Despite their efforts, sculpture remained a neglected art form during this period (Gluck, 1977).

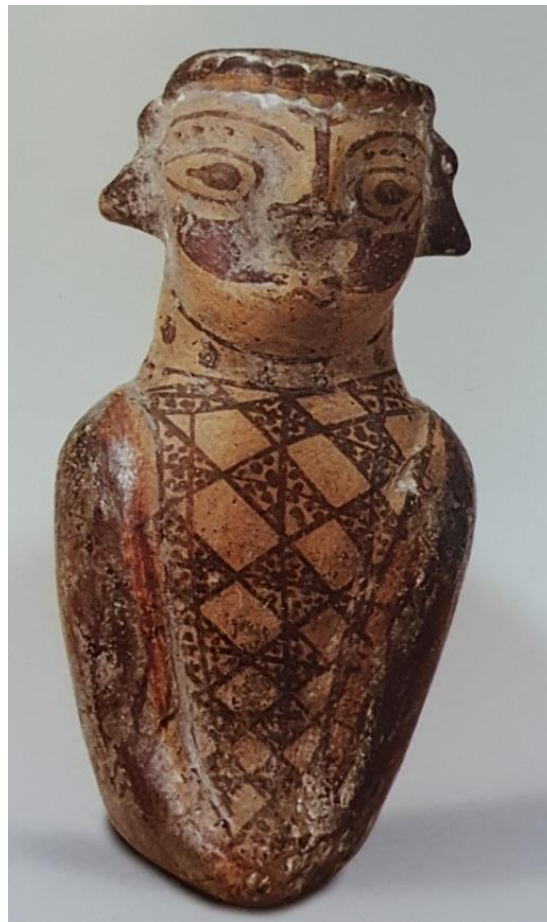


Image 1.4 *Clay pot in the form of human body, 8th century AD, Collection of David Khalili*

The Samanids, based in eastern Iran and Central Asia, fostered a cultural revival that laid the groundwork for later artistic developments. However, their contributions to sculpture were minimal. It was not until the rise of the Ghaznavids that a more concerted effort to revive Iranian art was undertaken. The Ghaznavids, who had emerged from the Samanid

court, adopted many of their cultural and artistic practices. While their court became a center for poets and painters, sculpture remained largely absent. Nevertheless, some evidence suggests that their palaces were adorned with decorative imagery, hinting at a gradual reintroduction of visual art (Pakbaz, 2007).

1.2.4. The Revival of Sculpture in the Islamic Era

A significant revival of sculpture began in the Ghaznavid and Seljuk periods, starting in the 4th century AH (10th century CE). These dynasties, enamored with Iranian art and culture, sought to expand its boundaries in various ways. The Seljuks played a crucial role in reinvigorating visual art, including sculpture. During this era, dramatic advancements were made in illustration, and human and animal figures became central motifs in artistic works.

Sculpture during the Seljuk period often took the form of functional objects with sculptural elements, such as incense burners, locks, and containers, many of which were crafted in the shapes of animals and birds. These small-scale sculptures reflect the ingenuity of artisans in combining utility with artistic expression. For example, a bronze lock shaped like a horse and a brass cosmetic container in the form of a peacock exemplify the creativity and technical skill of Seljuk craftsmen. These objects were not only practical but also served as a testament to the enduring appeal of figurative art, even in a cultural context that often discouraged it (Tanavoli, 1976).



Image 1.5 *Bronze lock in the shape of horse, 11-12th century AD, personal collection*



Image1.6 *Brass cosmetics container in the form of peacock, 11-12th century AD, personal collection*

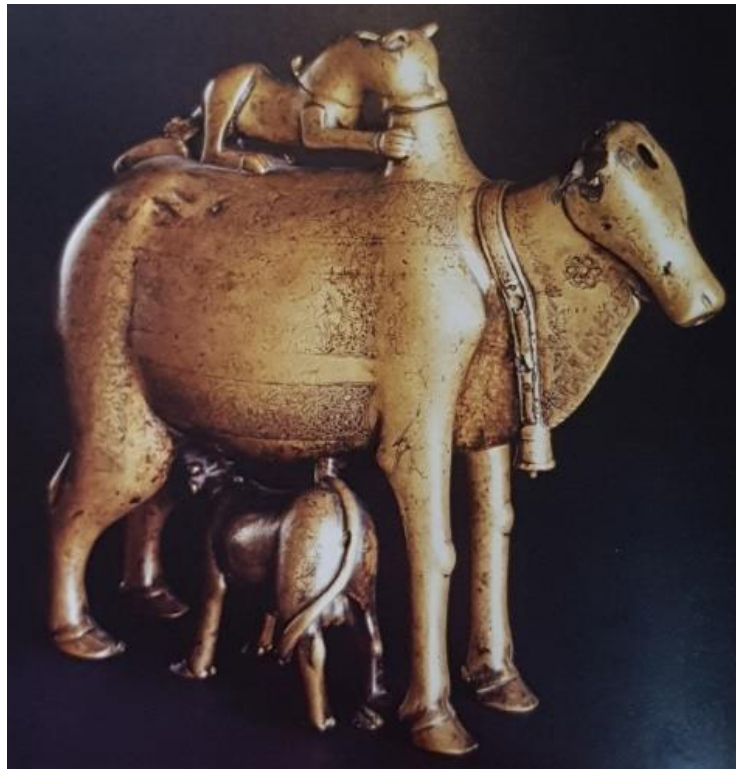


Image 1.7 *Brass water pot in the shape of cow, 1260 AD, Hermitage Museum*

1.2.5. Themes and Adaptations in Islamic Sculpture

The preference for animal and bird motifs in Islamic sculpture was influenced by several factors. Firstly, these forms lent themselves well to the creation of functional objects, such as water pots and incense burners, which could be easily adapted to various uses. Secondly, animal figures were less likely to be associated with idolatry, making them more acceptable within the Islamic cultural framework. Finally, the use of animal imagery resonated with the Seljuks' efforts to revive pre-Islamic Iranian artistic traditions, which often featured animals as central themes.



Image 1.8 *Limestone crowned human head, 8-9th century AD, Collection of David Khalili*

Human figures, although less common, also began to appear in sculptural works during this period. These representations were often stylized and abstract, avoiding the detailed realism that might evoke associations with idolatry. This cautious approach allowed artists to explore figurative sculpture within the constraints of Islamic cultural norms. By the 13th century, the incorporation of figurative themes into Iranian art had gained greater acceptance, laying the foundation for a more robust tradition of sculpture in subsequent centuries.



Image 1.9 *Gypsum human body*, 12th century AD, Collection of David Khalili

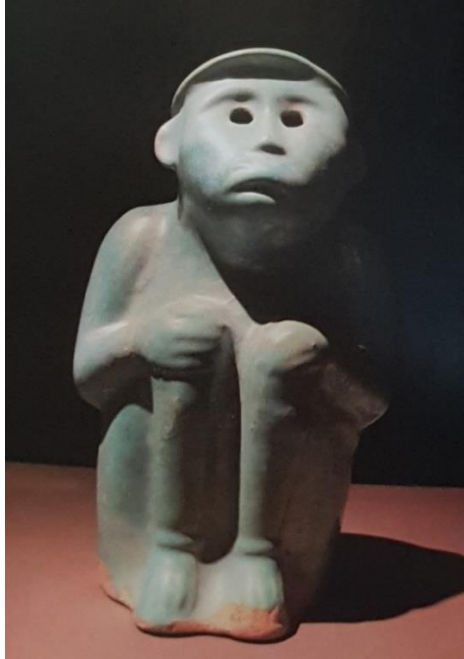


Image 1.10 *Monkey, Glaze on pottery, 12th century AD, Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar*

1.3. Human Representation in Iranian Sculpture: Revival and Evolution

The journey of human representation in Iranian sculpture after the advent of Islam reflects a complex interplay of cultural, political, and artistic factors. The re-emergence of figurative sculpture, especially human statues, in Islamic Iran likely began in the third century AH during the Samanid era. The discovery of a stone head with stylistic elements reminiscent of Sassanian art from the northern region of Greater Khorasan marks an important milestone. This headstone, believed to represent a prince, suggests continuity in artistic traditions from pre-Islamic Iran. Mounted on a pillar or wall, this piece indicates an early effort to incorporate human imagery within an architectural context, albeit cautiously (Loukonin, 1995).

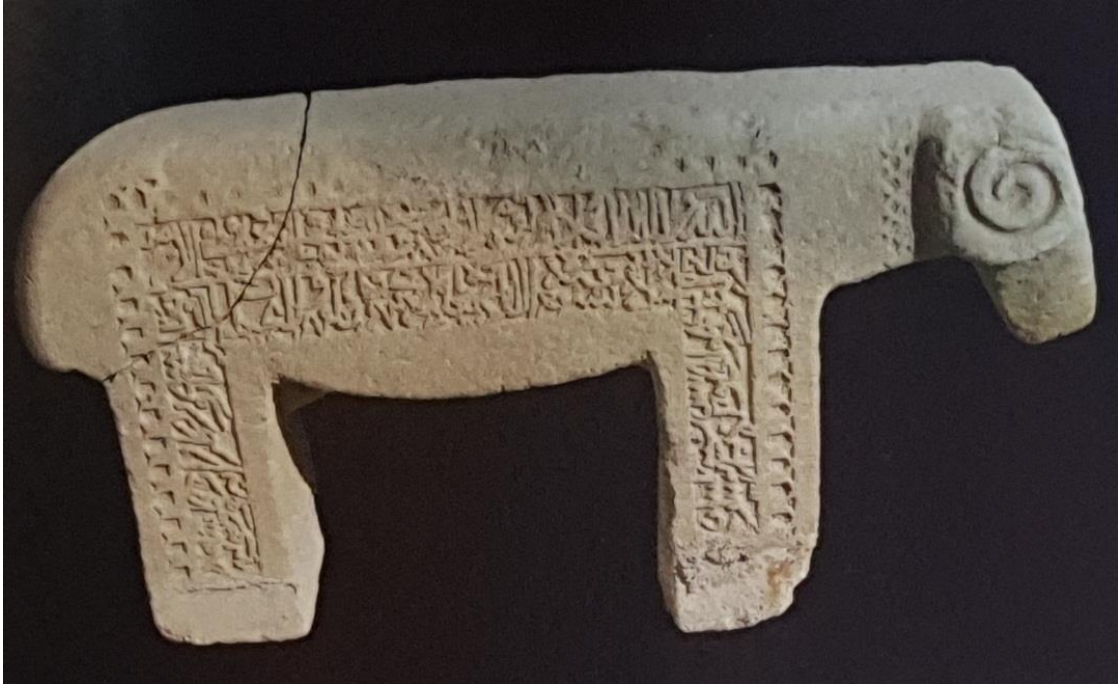


Image 1.11 *Stone ram*, 14-15th century AD, Cultural Heritage Center, Zanjan, Iran

1.4. Early Post-Islamic Figurative Sculpture

The Seljuk period, around the 11th century CE, brought further advancements in sculpture. Plaster statues and other figurative works from this era depict Seljuk princes and were likely installed on palace walls, underscoring the architectural integration of sculpture. These sculptures, while decorative, remained subordinate to the architecture, reflecting a trend that persisted for centuries. Despite this, the Seljuk round sculptures are particularly significant as some of the earliest large-scale human representations. These works marked a bold departure from prevailing norms, embodying purely artistic ambitions rather than functional or ritualistic purposes. This shift toward independent sculptural expression, although tentative, laid the groundwork for future developments in Iranian art (Pope, 1977).

The Seljuk period also saw the production of ceramic sculptures featuring human and animal subjects. A 12th-century glazed pottery figure of a monkey from this period, preserved at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, exemplifies the playful and imaginative qualities of Seljuk ceramic art. Such pieces demonstrate the versatility of Iranian artisans in exploring new mediums and techniques for sculpture (Gibson, 2023).

1.5. Recession and Revival: The Impact of Mongol Invasions

The promising trajectory of Iranian sculpture faced a dramatic interruption in the 13th century with the Mongol invasions led by Genghis Khan. The widespread destruction wrought by the Mongols devastated cities, architectural monuments, and the artisans who created them. The resulting dispersal of skilled craftsmen led to a significant decline in sculptural production, marking a prolonged period of stagnation. However, this recession was not permanent. The successors of Genghis Khan, the Ilkhanids, embraced Iranian culture and art with fervor, creating a fertile environment for artistic revival (Ettinghausen, 1987).

During the Ilkhanid era, advancements in painting, book illustration, and architectural decoration were significant, but sculpture did not regain its earlier prominence. While stone sculptures such as a 14th–15th century ram from Zanjan represent isolated instances of sculptural craftsmanship, the art form remained overshadowed by other visual arts. This second major recession in Iranian sculpture extended into the Safavid period, lasting for several centuries.

1.6. The Safavid Era: Cautious Steps Toward Revival

The Safavid dynasty (1501–1736) ushered in a period of artistic flourishing, particularly in painting and architectural decoration. However, the Safavids approached sculpture with caution, likely due to lingering religious and cultural reservations. Despite this, the period saw a modest revival in sculptural practices. Stone lions, carved fountains, and other ornamental works became prominent during the Safavid era. These pieces, though limited in scope, reflect a renewed interest in three-dimensional art forms.

The stone lions of the Safavid period, found in sites such as Chehelsotun (40 Columns) Mansion in Isfahan, hold particular significance. Their robust and stylized forms recall earlier traditions while adapting to the aesthetic sensibilities of the time. Although modest in scale and ambition compared to earlier epochs, these sculptures underscore the resilience of Iranian sculptural traditions and their gradual reintegration into the artistic landscape (Keyvani, 1982; Tanavoli, 2014).



Image 1.12 *Stone lion*, 17th Century AD, Chehelsotun Mansion, Isfahan, Iran

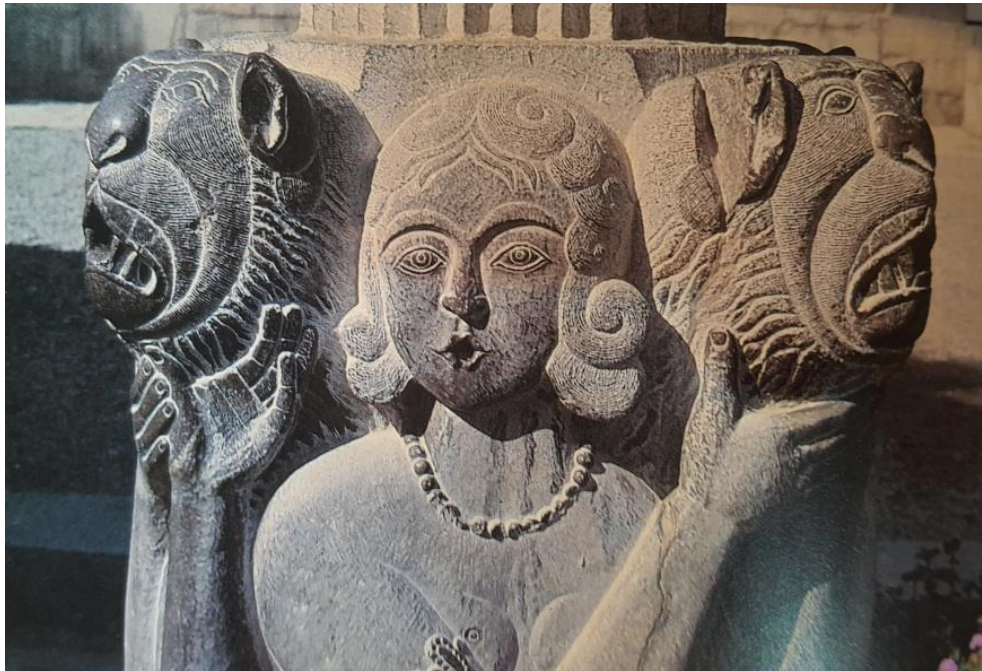


Image 1.13 *Stone fountains*, 17th Century AD, Chehelsotun Mansion, Isfahan, Iran

1.7. Shiraz: A Historical Hub of Iranian Sculpture

Shiraz and its surrounding regions have historically played a pivotal role in the development of Iranian sculpture. This city emerged as a center of artistic excellence during three distinct periods: the Achaemenid era (6th–4th century BCE), the Sassanian era (3rd–7th century CE), and the Zand period (18th century CE). Each of these periods saw the rise of distinctive schools of sculpture, often under the patronage of visionary leaders.

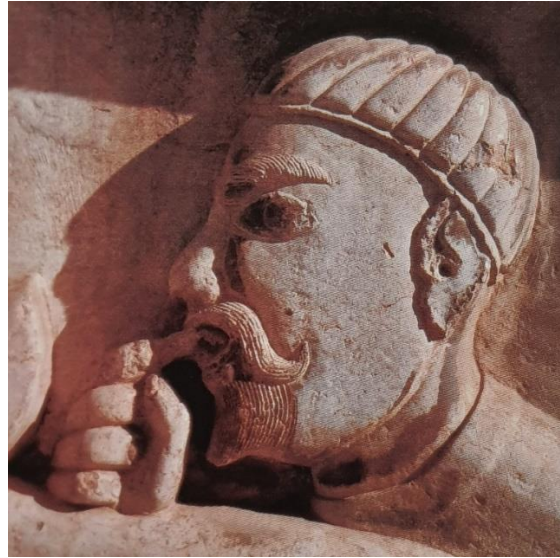


Image 1.14 *Ashkboos in the battle with Rostam*, Marble, 18th century AD (Karimkhan Mansion, Shiraz)

During the Zand dynasty, Karim Khan Zand championed a revival of sculptural art in Shiraz. His patronage led to the creation of significant works, including marble reliefs depicting epic scenes such as "Ashkboos in the Battle with Rostam." These works not only celebrated Iran's literary heritage but also established a new aesthetic standard for sculpture in the post-Islamic period. Karim Khan's innovative use of carvings in architectural design influenced subsequent developments, ensuring that sculpture remained an integral part of Shiraz's artistic identity (Soudavar, 1992).



Image 1.15 *Rostam*, Marble, 18th century AD

(Karimkhan Mansion, Shiraz)

1.8. The Qajar Dynasty: A Golden Age of Iranian Sculpture

The Qajar dynasty (1789–1925) marked a transformative era for Iranian sculpture. Fat'h Ali Shah, in particular, played a central role in reviving the art form, earning him recognition as one of the most influential figures in the history of Iranian sculpture. Under his patronage, sculpture achieved remarkable progress, encompassing a wide range of themes, materials, and styles.

Fat'h Ali Shah's sculptural commissions can be broadly categorized into three types: marble bed carvings, throne carvings, and tombstone carvings. Each of these categories reflects a high level of craftsmanship and artistic innovation. For example, the *Takht-e Marmar* (Marble Throne) in Tehran's Golestan Palace stands as a masterpiece of Qajar sculptural art. Its intricate carvings and regal proportions highlight the technical and aesthetic sophistication achieved during this period.



Image 1.16 *Takht-e Marmar*, Marble (Golestan Palace, Tehran)

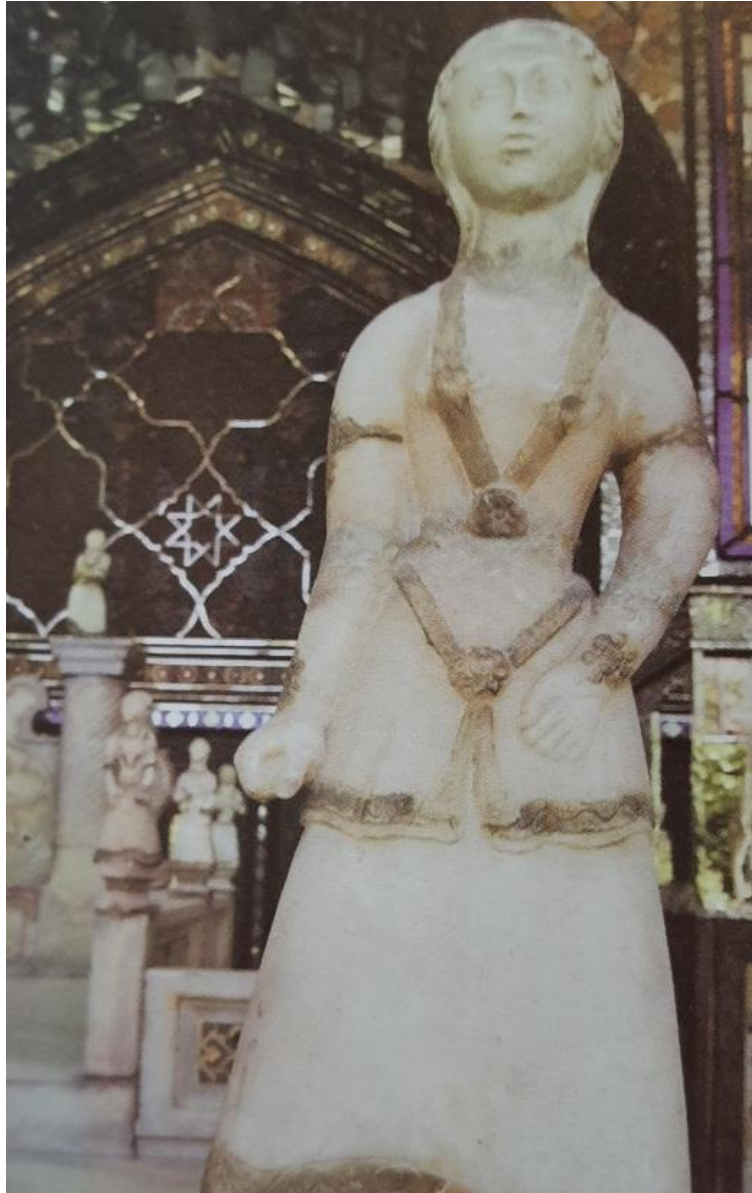


Image 1.17 *Lady's icon*, Marbel (Golestan Palace, Tehran)

Another notable aspect of Fat'h Ali Shah's patronage was his revival of rock carving, a tradition that had been dormant since the Sassanian era. Rock carvings, such as the depiction of a royal assembly at Cheshmeh Ali near Shahr-e Rey, evoke the grandeur of ancient Iranian art while incorporating Qajar stylistic elements. These monumental works underscore the enduring significance of rock carving as a uniquely Iranian art form (Ekhtiar, 1988).

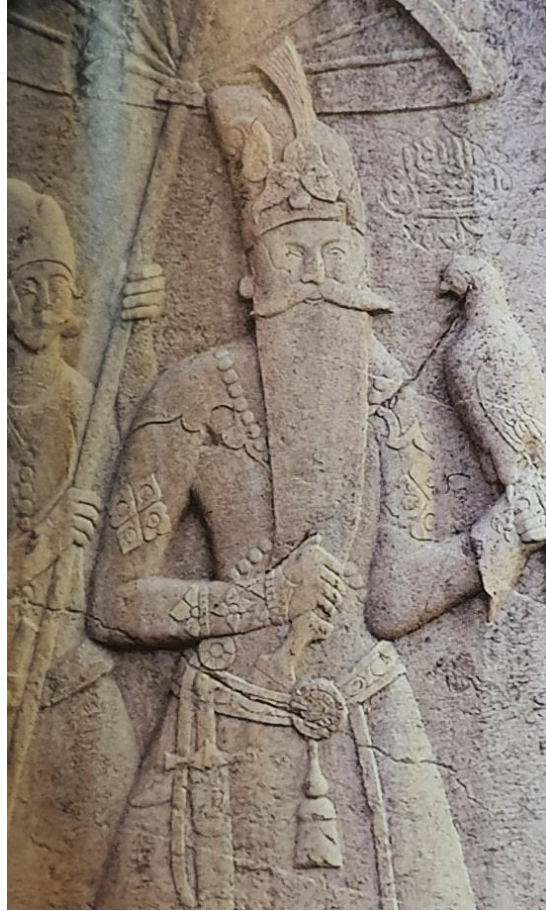


Image 1.18 *New year eve meeting of Fat'h Ali Shah*, Embossed on the cliff

(Cheshmeh Ali, Shahr-e Rey)

1.8.1. The Legacy of Qajar Rock Carvings

The Qajar era's revival of rock carving extended beyond Fat'h Ali Shah, influencing his successors and children. Mohammad Ali Mirza Dolatshah and Hossein Ali Mirza Farmanfarma, among others, continued to commission rock reliefs, leaving a legacy of monumental art across Iran. These works, often located in strategic or scenic locations, served both as expressions of royal power and as tributes to Iran's artistic heritage.

Despite their historical and artistic importance, many questions about the production of Qajar rock carvings remain unanswered. Details about the planning, execution, and organization of these projects, such as the roles of designers, craftsmen, and technical supervisors, are largely undocumented. This lack of information adds an air of mystery to these works, inviting further research into their creation and significance.



Image 1.19 *Embossed on the cliff* (Allah-o Akbar Mount, Shiraz)

One notable example is the rock relief of Nasser al-Din Shah at Burieh in Mazandaran, carved by the renowned sculptor Ali Akbar Hajjar in 1878 CE (1295 AH). This relief exemplifies the continuity of Iranian rock carving traditions while showcasing the innovative approaches adopted during the Qajar period (Loukonine, 1995).



Image 1.20 *Nasser al-Din Shah, Embossed on the cliff by Ali Akbar Hajjar, 1295 H*
(Burieh, Mazandaran)

1.8.2. The Sculpture Capital is Alive

Modern Iranian sculpture traces its origins to Shiraz, with the early cultural foundations laid by Karim Khan Zand. This city, rich in both historical and artistic expression, became the cradle of sculptural activity. However, as political and cultural power shifted to Tehran with the reign of Fat'h Ali Shah, the momentum of sculptural production continued, despite the geographical movement. While the capital's move didn't halt the momentum of sculptural traditions in Shiraz, Tehran's involvement signified an evolution in artistic direction. The city became the locus for the continued development of Iranian sculpture, particularly during the Qajar era, which played an instrumental role in the resurgence and advancement of the art form.



Image 1.21 *Shahnameh* heroes (Shiraz)

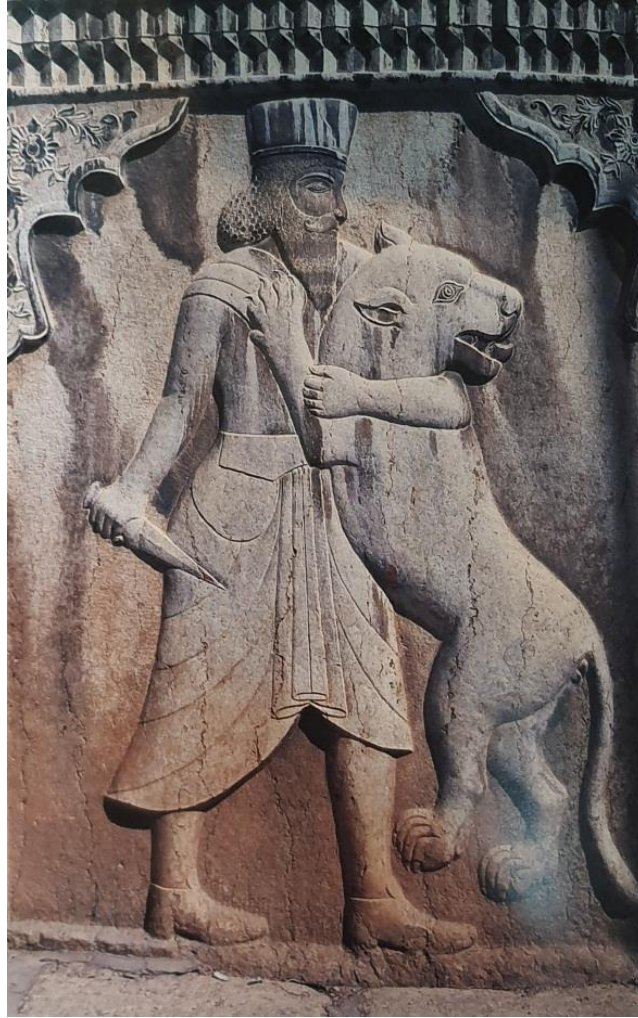


Image 1.22 *Khashayar Shah and lion (inspired from Persepolis)*, Embossed on the stone.

(Narenjestan mansion, Shiraz)

The Qajar period was one of both continuity and innovation, blending the deep Persian roots of sculpture with European influences. This cultural exchange was particularly significant in the era's architecture and art, leading to the creation of masterpieces that still define the artistic legacy of the time. Among the key examples of this fusion is the Eram Garden mansion in Shiraz, a building not only admired for its architectural beauty but also for its incorporation of sculptural elements. The figures in Eram Garden's sculptural works are derived from Persepolis, but the attire, such as the hairstyles and the pants, reflect a mixture of Persian and European designs. This blending of ancient Persian traditions with contemporary European stylistic influences is a characteristic feature of the Qajar era's art scene (Ekhtiar, 1998).



Image 1.23 *Fat'h Ali Shah's illustrated tombstone, Marbel (By: Mohammad Hossein Hajjarbashi)*

1.8.3. Sculpture in the Qajar Era: The Eram Garden and Tombstone Traditions

One of the most striking aspects of Qajar art was the extensive use of sculpture in architectural design, particularly in gardens and royal palaces. In the Eram Garden mansion, sculptures were not mere decorations but integral elements that conveyed royal power and mythological connections. These artistic works bridged the gap between Persia's ancient past and the European ideals that were beginning to shape the country's artistic expression. The use of Persepolis as an inspiration, reinterpreted through a European lens, is an excellent example of how the Qajar court infused traditional Persian imagery with modern sensibilities. This hybridization was not only evident in architecture but in the tombstones that emerged as major works of art during the Qajar dynasty.



Image 1.24 *Nasser al-Din Shah's illustrated tombstone, Marbel*

(Golestan Palace, By: Abbasqoli Hajjar)

Fat'h Ali Shah's contribution to the evolution of Iranian sculptural traditions is particularly notable in the domain of royal tombstones. Before his reign, the practice of depicting oneself in sculptural form on a tombstone was unheard of in Persian art. However, Fat'h Ali Shah's monumental tombstone, which features an engraved image of the king, set a precedent for future generations. His image was not merely a portrait, but a symbol of royal grandeur and divine right. Fat'h Ali Shah's tombstone marked a transformative moment in Iranian sculpture, one that emphasized both life and power beyond death. This practice, which continued through subsequent monarchs, became a signature feature of the Qajar period and remained influential for decades.

Fat'h Ali Shah's innovations in tombstone sculpture carried a deep symbolic message. Unlike European tombstones that often featured closed eyes to signify eternal rest, Qajar tombstones typically depicted their subjects with open eyes. This was not just a stylistic choice but a representation of vitality and an ongoing connection to the living world. The Qajar royal tombstones celebrated life, glory, and the enduring legacy of the monarch,

contrasting with the more somber and introspective nature of their European counterparts. These tombstones encapsulated the Qajar vision of monarchy — one of perpetual grandeur, even in the afterlife. Nasser al-Din Shah, the grandson of Fat’h Ali Shah, continued the legacy of royal tombstones. His tombstone, like his grandfather's, was monumental in size and intricacy. It also included an engraving of the monarch, reinforcing the concept of royal immortality. However, with Nasser al-Din Shah's death, this era of royal tombstone artistry came to a close, marking the end of a unique 60-year period in Iranian art. Despite its relatively short duration, the practice of royal tombstone sculpture left a lasting imprint on Iran's artistic landscape, influencing both official and popular traditions for generations to come (Tanavoli, 2013).



Image 1.25 *Eve, Marbel* (By: Ali Akbar Hajjar, Collection of Marco Gregurian, Yerevan Museum)

1.9. Western Influences on Iranian Sculpture

One of the most significant factors influencing Iranian sculpture during the Qajar period was the increasing interaction between Iran and the West. Nasser al-Din Shah, in particular, played a critical role in this cultural exchange. His three trips to Europe exposed him to the grandeur of Western art, architecture, and sculpture. These experiences shaped his vision for the future of Iran's visual arts and led him to implement several key reforms aimed at modernizing Iranian culture.

A major development in this context was the establishment of Dar al-Fanon, Iran's first modern school dedicated to the fine arts. This institution introduced Western artistic principles and methods into the Iranian educational system, fostering a new generation of artists who would go on to integrate these ideas into their work. Among the early students were such luminaries as Kamal al-Molk, Jalayer, and Ali Akbar Hajjar. They were trained in Western techniques, which they later adapted to the rich tapestry of Iranian visual culture (Pakbaz, 2002).

Nasser al-Din Shah's patronage of Western art also extended beyond institutional reforms. He sent Iranian artists abroad to study in Europe, allowing them to directly engage with the European artistic tradition. This exposure to Western art, particularly the classical tradition, brought about a profound shift in the way Iranian artists approached sculpture. Western techniques such as realism, anatomical accuracy, and three-dimensional modeling began to merge with traditional Persian motifs. This combination resulted in sculptures that were both contemporary and culturally grounded.

An important milestone in this period was the growing independence of Iranian sculptors. Before Nasser al-Din Shah's reign, sculptors were often considered craftsmen working under the supervision of court painters or architects. Sculptors were expected to execute the designs created by these higher-status artists. For example, the Marmar Throne, constructed under the direction of Mirza Baba, an official court painter, was the work of the best carpenters in Isfahan. However, the late Qajar period witnessed a shift in the status of sculptors. Artists like Ali Akbar Hajjar began to achieve recognition as independent sculptors in their own right, not simply as craftspeople executing others' designs. Hajjar's statue of Nasser al-Din Shah is a prime example of this evolution. It was

a work conceived and executed by a sculptor, marking the emergence of a new artistic identity for Iranian sculptors.

1.10. Technological Advances and Artistic Innovation

The modernization efforts that began during the Qajar period extended to many sectors of Iranian society, including the arts. The most notable technological development in the field of sculpture during this time was the improvement of casting techniques in the armory. The armory, which had been primarily a weapons manufacturing facility, was transformed under Nasser al-Din Shah's rule. European experts were brought in to modernize the casting department, which enabled sculptors to work with new materials and methods.

One of the most significant outcomes of these improvements was the creation of large-scale sculptures, including the equestrian statue of Nasser al-Din Shah. This statue was cast in bronze, and its size and complexity demonstrated the advanced capabilities of Iranian sculptors at the time. The work represented a synthesis of Iranian and European influences, blending traditional Persian art with Western classical sculpture. The equestrian statue became a symbol of the king's power and modernity, marking a turning point in the history of Iranian public sculpture (Scarce, 2006).

1.11. Illustrative Plasterwork and the Integration of Sculpture

Alongside the development of stone and metal sculpture, Iranian plasterwork also saw an evolution during the Qajar period. Traditionally, plaster had been used for decorative purposes in mosques and shrines. However, during the 19th century, Iranian plasterers began to experiment with incorporating human figures and historical themes into their designs. This shift marked a significant departure from earlier decorative practices and reflected the broader artistic trends of the time.

Plasterwork became increasingly popular in aristocratic homes and palaces, where it was used to decorate ceilings, walls, and arches. In these settings, plaster artisans began to combine decorative floral patterns with figural elements, often depicting angels, historical figures, or mythical beings. This merging of figurative and ornamental design created striking visual effects and demonstrated the skill and versatility of Iranian plasterers.



Image 1.26 *Khashyar Shah, inspired by Persepolis*, Plaster and oil paint, 19th century

(Afifabad Garden, Shiraz)

One of the most notable examples of this type of work is the depiction of Khashayar Shah (Xerxes) in the Afifabad Garden in Shiraz. This 19th-century plaster relief, inspired by the reliefs at Persepolis, showcases a striking level of detail and realism. The use of oil paints to enhance the plaster further demonstrates the technical skill of Iranian artisans and their ability to adapt traditional techniques to contemporary artistic needs.

1.11.1. Folk Sculpture: Art of the People

Alongside the courtly and elite artistic traditions, folk sculpture flourished in Iran during the Qajar period. These works, created by ordinary people, were often characterized by their simplicity and practicality. Unlike the grand royal sculptures commissioned by the elite, folk sculptures were typically created for personal or functional purposes.

One of the most prominent forms of folk sculpture during this time was the gravestone. These gravestones, which were carved from stone, featured intricate designs and often included symbolic imagery. The motifs used in these sculptures ranged from flowers and birds to geometric patterns, reflecting both the artistic sensibilities and cultural beliefs of

their creators. Despite their functional purpose, these gravestones were often crafted with great skill and care, reflecting the cultural importance of death and remembrance in Iranian society.

In addition to gravestones, folk sculptors also created decorative pottery, wooden carvings, and other small-scale sculptures. These works were often produced by local craftsmen and artisans who were not formally trained in the arts but who nonetheless possessed a deep understanding of their craft. The legacy of these folk sculptures continues to influence contemporary Iranian art, providing a link between the past and the present (Tanavoli, 1985).



Image 1.27 *Masonry, embossing on stone (Abolazim Shrine, Shahr-e Rey)*

1.12. Sculpture in Contemporary Iran

The rise of contemporary Iranian sculpture can be traced back to the early 20th century, coinciding with the spread of modernist ideas across the world. As Iran began to experience the effects of industrialization and Westernization, the visual arts also began to evolve. The formation of new schools of art and the establishment of institutions like the Faculty of Fine Arts played a crucial role in the development of contemporary sculpture in Iran.

Modern Iranian sculptors were influenced by both Western artistic movements and traditional Persian forms. This blend of old and new gave rise to a distinctive style of sculpture that reflected the social and political changes taking place in Iran. As Iranian artists became more independent and began to explore new techniques, sculpture became an important means of self-expression and social commentary.

The works of early contemporary Iranian sculptors, such as those trained at Dar al-Fanon, reflect a deep engagement with both national identity and global artistic trends. These sculptors sought to bridge the gap between Iran's rich cultural heritage and the modernizing forces at play in the country. Their works, which combined traditional Persian symbolism with modern artistic techniques, laid the foundation for the vibrant sculptural tradition that continues to thrive in Iran today (Daresh, 2006).

1.13. A Brief View of Artistic Modernism in Iran

The beginning of artistic modernism in Iran can be traced back to around 1320 in the Islamic calendar (approximately 1941 in the Gregorian calendar), coinciding with the fall of the first Pahlavi government and the occupation of the country by foreign powers. This period marks a significant moment in Iran's history, as it signaled the country's transition into a new phase in its cultural and artistic life. The start of artistic modernism in Iran is closely intertwined with these turbulent political and social changes. Scholars have debated the origins of modernism in Iranian art, with some extending its roots to the period of Mazin al-Dawla and his followers, while others point to the work of Kamal al-Mulk and his school as the precursor to modernism. Additionally, the constitutional revolution (1905-1911) is often cited as another pivotal moment that helped lay the foundation for the development of modern art in the country.

However, it is essential to note that while these earlier periods certainly influenced the direction of Iranian art, they did not fully embrace the core principles of modernism. Modernism, as a movement in the arts, is not merely defined by a break from traditional forms, but also by its conscious effort to keep pace with the evolving artistic styles and methods of the broader world. In addition to formal differences, modernism encompasses themes such as self-identity, conscious effort, and up-to-dateness. Kamal al-Mulk, despite his importance in Iranian art history, is often seen as a conservative figure whose work, although highly influential in the 19th century, cannot be classified as modern art in the true sense. His style, rooted in the traditions of Persian naturalism, adhered to established rules and conventions, and his work was not concerned with the radical departure from tradition seen in modern movements in the West (Issa, 2001).

1.14. The Shift Toward Modern Art

It wasn't until the early 20th century that Iranian art began a true transformation, driven by both domestic and global factors. Under the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, the establishment of new institutions such as the University of Fine Arts in Tehran played a crucial role in ushering in modernism. Along with the university came the arrival of foreign professors and artists, such as André Godard, who exposed Iranian students to contemporary global art trends. This period also witnessed a marked shift from the dominance of Kamal al-Mulk's naturalistic school, which had previously served as the dominant artistic tradition in Iran.

The establishment of the University of Fine Arts marked a turning point for modernism in Iran, as it introduced Western ideas and artistic techniques to Iranian artists. As this new generation of artists emerged, they began to experiment with various modern art styles and methods. The more liberal atmosphere of the time encouraged these artists to explore new forms of expression, which contrasted sharply with the academic traditions that had prevailed in Iranian art for centuries. Despite the challenges they faced—such as political instability, economic hardship, and resistance from the older generation, these artists were eager to embrace new ideas and forms of artistic expression (Grigor, 2014).

The modernization of Iran's artistic landscape was also fueled by the country's interaction with the broader global art scene. Many Iranian artists who studied abroad, particularly in

Europe, returned with fresh ideas and a new perspective on the role of art in society. These artists, who had become familiar with the major Western movements of the time—such as Cubism, Surrealism, and Expressionism—played a key role in introducing modern styles to Iran. A notable example is the work of Jalil Ziapour, who studied under André Lhote in Paris and became acquainted with the Cubist movement. Upon returning to Iran, Ziapour became one of the pioneers of modern Iranian painting, helping to introduce these new styles to the country.

1.14.1. The First Generation of Modern Artists in Iran

The first generation of modern Iranian artists, including figures like Ziapour, engaged in a complex dialogue between tradition and innovation. They were part of a transitional phase, in which they struggled to reconcile the cultural heritage of Iran with the need to adopt contemporary global artistic forms. For these artists, the process of modernizing their work was not immediate or easy. Much of their early output reflects the tension between the old and the new, as they worked to digest new artistic ideas while remaining connected to their cultural roots. This transitional phase was essential for the development of modern Iranian art, although many of these early works have been criticized for their lack of depth or their superficial engagement with Western styles.

Despite these shortcomings, the efforts of these artists should not be dismissed. Their work laid the groundwork for future developments in Iranian art, and their exploration of new techniques and styles helped create a fertile ground for the growth of modernism in the country. These early modernists faced numerous challenges, not least of which was the widespread lack of understanding among both the public and the ruling authorities about the significance of these new artistic movements. For example, during this period, many people struggled to differentiate between Cubism and Communism, a reflection of the political and cultural confusion of the time. Nevertheless, these artists persevered, and their efforts eventually led to greater recognition and acceptance of modern art in Iran.

1.14.2. The Rise of Modern Art in Iran: The 1337 Biennale

A major milestone in the development of modern Iranian art came in 1337 (1958), with the organization of the first Iranian Painting Biennale. This event marked a crucial moment in the history of modern Iranian art, as it represented the official recognition of

modern art by the Iranian government. The Biennale provided a platform for artists to showcase their works and helped establish modern painting as the dominant art form in the country. In the years following the Biennale, modernism became increasingly entrenched in Iranian artistic institutions, and the rise of modern painting and sculpture became one of the defining features of Iranian art during the mid-20th century.

The success of the Biennale also reflected the changing political and social climate in Iran. Under the leadership of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the country experienced rapid modernization and westernization, which provided fertile ground for the growth of modern art. As Iran became more closely integrated into the global economy and political sphere, its artists began to look outward, drawing inspiration from both European and American art movements. At the same time, there was a growing sense of national pride and a desire among Iranian artists to assert their unique identity in a world that was increasingly dominated by Western culture (Keshavarzi, 2021).

1.15. Iranian Artists and the Quest for Identity

A central theme in modern Iranian art during this period was the search for a unique Iranian identity. Iranian artists were deeply concerned with the question of how to assert their cultural and artistic identity in the face of global influences. For many, this search for identity was shaped by the contradictions between Iran's rich cultural heritage and its rapidly changing political and social landscape.

This tension between tradition and modernity was particularly pronounced in the context of the constitutional era, when intellectuals and artists were grappling with the legacy of Iran's past and the desire to bring the country into the modern world. The question of identity was made even more urgent by the increasing influence of Western culture, which seemed to threaten the authenticity of Iranian traditions. In response to this, some artists looked back to the past, drawing on traditional Persian motifs and forms, while others sought to embrace a more universal artistic language that would transcend national boundaries.

The tendency to look back to the past was exemplified by the artists of the Saqakhaneh school, a movement that sought to incorporate traditional Persian art forms and religious symbolism into modern artistic practices. While the Saqakhaneh movement was a

significant force in Iranian art, it was often criticized for being overly nostalgic and for failing to address the contemporary issues of Iranian society. Some critics argued that the Saqakhaneh artists were more concerned with preserving the past than with engaging in the challenges of the modern world.

On the other hand, artists who embraced a more universal approach to modernism faced their own challenges. While they sought to engage with global artistic trends, they were often accused of being too disconnected from the realities of Iranian society. These artists, who often worked in the style of European modernism, were criticized for being too abstract and for lacking the emotional depth of traditional Iranian art. Despite these criticisms, their work played an important role in bringing modern art to Iran and in shaping the trajectory of Iranian art in the 20th century.

1.16. The Role of Political and Economic Forces in Iranian Art

One of the key factors that shaped the development of modern art in Iran was the relationship between art and the political and economic forces of the time. Throughout much of Iran's history, the production of art was closely tied to the royal court. From the Safavid period onward, the monarchy played a central role in the patronage of the arts, providing financial support to artists and commissioning works for the royal court. However, this system of royal patronage had its drawbacks, as it limited the ability of artists to engage with the broader society.

In the modern period, the role of the monarchy in the production of art began to shift, especially with the rise of oil wealth in Iran. The increasing importance of oil revenues meant that art became more commodified, and many artists began to create works with an eye toward the commercial market rather than for the purposes of state patronage. This shift had both positive and negative consequences for Iranian art. On the one hand, it allowed artists to explore new themes and techniques, but on the other hand, it led to a growing focus on decorative and non-critical art.

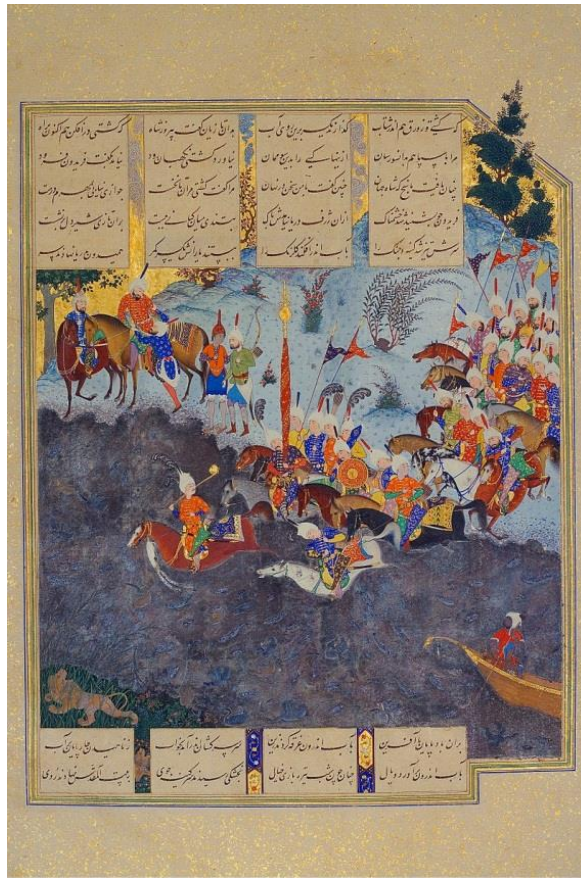


Image 1.28 Example of illustration in Tahmasbi Shahnameh

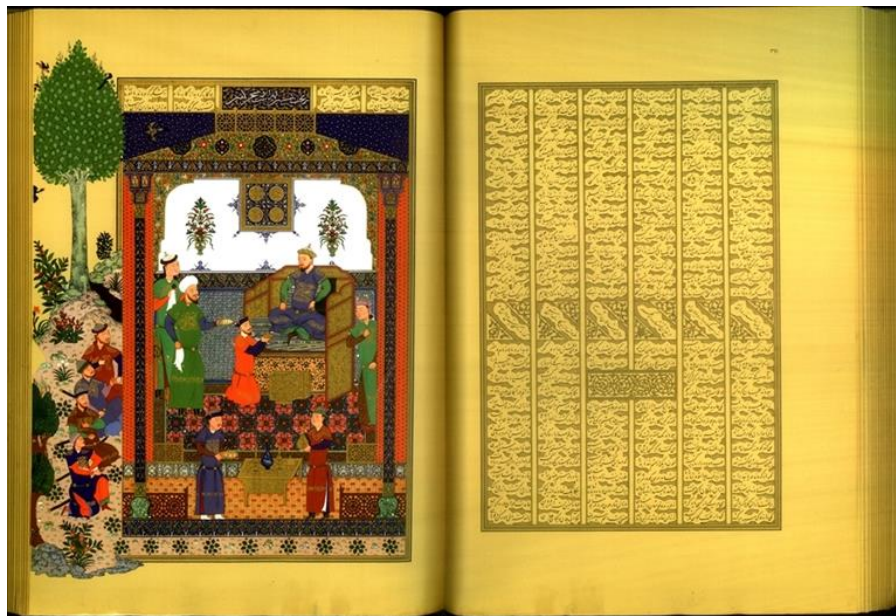


Image 1.29 Example of illustration in Baysanghari Shahnameh

The commercialization of art during this period also led to a certain disconnect between the art world and the broader society. While artists were experimenting with new forms and styles, many people in Iran remained disconnected from the art world, which was seen as an elite and intellectual pursuit. This gap between art and society became more pronounced in the years following the 1979 revolution, when political and social upheaval dramatically changed the landscape of Iranian art (Keshmirshekan, 2007).

1.17. The Evolution of Iranian Sculpture: From Tradition to Modernity and Beyond

Sculpture in Iran has undergone significant changes over the past century, evolving in response to both domestic and global forces. While many of these works were approved or supported by the government in the periods before and after the Islamic Revolution, the art form often had to navigate a fine line, with attention to the government's ideological and cultural "red lines." These red lines, set by the ruling authorities, played a critical role in determining the direction of sculpture and its subject matter in Iran. Sculpture activities in Iran, like in many other parts of the world, began within two general categories: academic and experimental. While both forms of sculpture played an important role in shaping the Iranian art scene, they developed in response to specific historical, political, and cultural contexts.

1.18. Early Iranian Sculpture: Academic and Nationalistic Foundations

In its early stages, Iranian sculpture was heavily influenced by the country's rich history, especially the Persian Empire. Early sculptures were often limited to statues of kings and prominent historical figures, reflecting the deeply rooted tradition of monumentality in Iranian culture. These sculptures were designed to evoke national pride and to commemorate the glory of past rulers. Among the first schools and institutions dedicated to sculptural art were the Mustazarefa Industries and the Anthropological Museum, both of which contributed to the development of Iranian sculpture in the 20th century. These institutions served as important centers for training sculptors, and many of Iran's prominent sculptors from different generations were graduates of these schools.

The 1940s marked a pivotal time for Iranian sculpture, coinciding with a broader shift in the country's engagement with Western culture and modernism. Iran's relationship with

the West, particularly during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, took on a new form. As the Pahlavi regime sought to modernize and westernize the country, urban planning, architecture, and public art played an important role in this transformation. Reza Shah's modernization projects included the installation of sculptures in public squares and other urban spaces, a process that introduced the Iranian populace to modern sculpture. These sculptures were not merely decorative but were intended to symbolize national progress and modernity. In this context, sculptures were often placed in squares and parks to establish a modern aesthetic that was connected to both national pride and global trends in art.

One of the most famous examples of this early phase of modern sculpture in Iran is the statue of the great Persian poet Ferdowsi, which can be found in Tehran's Ferdowsi Square. This monument represents a fusion of modern sculptural techniques with a traditional theme—the honoring of a national literary hero—and illustrates how modernism was adapted to Iranian cultural and historical contexts during this period (Pope, 1977).



Image 1.30 *Statue of Ferdowsi (Persian Poet) in a square (Tehran)*

1.18.1. The Saqakhaneh Movement: A Fusion of Tradition and Modernism

Alongside the broader trends of modernization, a significant movement emerged in Iranian art during the 1940s and 1950s, which blended traditional Iranian and Islamic themes with modern artistic practices. The Saqakhaneh movement, which had its roots in painting and sculpture, was a response to the growing influence of Western modernism. The artists of this movement, including prominent sculptors like Parviz Tanavoli and Jazeh Tabatabai, sought to revive national identity through their works while simultaneously engaging with global art forms.

Saqakhaneh artists combined ancient and traditional elements of Iranian and Islamic society with modern artistic methods. This movement emerged as a bridge between traditional and indigenous arts and modern world art, drawing from popular cultural and religious symbols while integrating contemporary forms. The style became known as "spiritual pop art" due to its use of industrial products and its engagement with the popular symbols of mass culture, yet with a distinct spiritual and national character. While this style was innovative and revolutionary, it faced challenges in communicating with a broader audience, as its complex and unfamiliar combinations of traditional forms often alienated the public.

The Saqakhaneh movement utilized unconventional materials, including metal waste, car parts, and machine components, to create sculptures that were simultaneously modern and deeply rooted in Iranian culture. Sculptors like Qudratollah Memarian and Bahman Mohasses were at the forefront of this movement, pushing the boundaries of what sculpture could represent and how it could reflect Iranian identity in the modern world (Keshavarz, 2020).

1.19. The Post-Revolutionary Period: Sculpture and Islamic Ideology

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 had a profound impact on all forms of art in Iran, and sculpture was no exception. One of the first and most significant consequences of the revolution was the question of whether sculpture, particularly figurative sculpture, could be considered acceptable in an Islamic society. The Islamic tradition generally prohibits

the creation of idol-like figures, considering them to be blasphemous. As a result, the art of sculpture was effectively banned in its traditional forms after the Islamic Revolution, particularly when it came to the creation of human or animal figures.

The challenge for post-revolutionary sculptors was to navigate these religious and ideological restrictions while still continuing to create meaningful art. Some artists argued that sculpture did not necessarily equate to idol worship and that it was the act of veneration, rather than the art form itself, that made something an idol. This perspective allowed for a reconsideration of sculpture's place within Islamic Iran, although the content and form of sculpture had to align with the broader ideals of the revolution and Islamic values.

In the years following the revolution, many sculptors focused on commemorating the values and ideals that were central to the new Islamic Republic, such as faith, resistance, and martyrdom. Works often depicted symbols of the revolution, the war with Iraq, and the ideals of self-sacrifice and national pride. These sculptures became tools for reinforcing the new government's ideological narrative, with an emphasis on depicting heroes and martyrs who fought for Islam and the nation.

At the same time, the style of sculpture during this period underwent a transformation. Moving away from figurative depictions, artists began to experiment with more abstract and symbolic forms. In the early years after the revolution, many sculptures incorporated Islamic calligraphy, abstract shapes, and forms inspired by Islamic geometry. The use of Kufic script, birds, and other Islamic motifs became prevalent in sculptures, marking a departure from the more figurative representations of earlier periods.

During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the role of sculpture took on a new significance. Monuments and statues were erected to honor martyrs and soldiers, and sculptures became powerful symbols of national identity and resistance. This period marked the rise of war memorial sculptures, which celebrated themes of patriotism, self-sacrifice, and religious devotion. These works were not only about honoring the past but also about reinforcing the ideological goals of the revolution (Talaiei, 2016).

1.20. Sculpture in the Post-Revolutionary Era: Revival and Internationalization

By the mid-1990s, Iranian sculpture began to experience a revival, due in part to official state support and a growing interest in contemporary art. In 1998, the formation of the Association of Sculptors provided a platform for artists to organize and showcase their work. This period saw a renewed focus on urban sculpture, with sculptures being placed in public spaces as part of larger urban planning projects. The Museum of Contemporary Art played a key role in supporting sculptural developments during this time, holding exhibitions that introduced contemporary trends to the Iranian public.

In the late 1990s, Iran's participation in international art events, such as the Venice Biennale, marked a new phase in the country's sculptural landscape. Iranian artists began to engage more directly with global art trends, while still maintaining a strong sense of national and cultural identity. The exhibitions and festivals organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, such as the Conceptual Art Exhibition and the exhibition of New British Sculpture Pioneers, helped to create a dialogue between Iranian sculptors and their international counterparts.

The Saqakhaneh movement also experienced a revival during this period. Exhibitions reviewing the works of Saqakhaneh founders allowed a new generation of Iranian artists to reflect on the legacy of this movement and to explore how it could be reinterpreted in the contemporary context. The return to national and indigenous characteristics in art, while also engaging with global artistic developments, became a key theme for Iranian sculptors in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

1.20.1. The Biennale: A New Era for Iranian Sculpture

One of the most significant events in the development of Iranian sculpture during this period was the holding of the second Tehran Sculpture Biennale in 1999. The biennale served as a major platform for Iranian sculptors to showcase their work and evaluate their position in the broader art world. The biennale helped to promote sculpture in Iran, offering both an opportunity for sculptors to present their works to a wider audience and a chance to engage with the international art scene.

The biennale became a critical event for Iranian sculpture, contributing to significant quantitative and qualitative changes in the field. Sculptors began to experiment with new materials and techniques, and the dimensions and forms of sculptures grew more diverse. In this period, the use of space and exhibition environments became a central concern for artists, particularly after the success of the Conceptual Art Exhibition. Artists began to consider how the space in which a sculpture was displayed could affect the meaning and impact of the work itself.

One of the key trends in post-1999 Iranian sculpture was the exploration of feminist identities and issues related to gender. Sculptors like Fatemeh Emdadian, Mahsa Tehrani, and Genius Taghizadeh used sculpture to explore the experiences and struggles of women in Iranian society, addressing themes of identity, power, and social roles. This new approach reflected the broader intellectual challenges posed by postmodernism, as Iranian sculptors began to question traditional norms and experiment with new forms of expression.



Image 1.31 *Sculpture with the revolutionary concept*

(By: Qodratollah Memarian)

1.20.2. The New Wave of Iranian Sculpture: Postmodernism and Critical Engagement

In the early 21st century, Iranian sculpture entered a new phase characterized by intellectual engagement with both the postmodern situation in Iran and the broader global art world. This new wave of Iranian sculpture sought to critically engage with the modernist traditions that had dominated the 20th century while also responding to the challenges of contemporary life in Iran and the world.

While Iranian sculpture continued to be shaped by elite cultural values, there was a growing recognition that the art form needed to break out of its traditional confines and engage with a broader audience. However, despite these efforts, Iranian sculpture remained somewhat disconnected from the public, as the forms and themes employed in many works remained complex and difficult to access for those without a deep knowledge of art.

Today, Iranian sculpture continues to evolve, with artists working in a wide range of styles, from classical sculptures to installation art, conceptual works, and minimalist pieces. At the same time, the emphasis on the novelty and modernity of sculpture reflects an ongoing attempt to align Iranian art with global trends, while still maintaining a distinctly Iranian identity rooted in cultural and Islamic values.

Today, Iranian sculpture continues to evolve as a dynamic and multifaceted art form, shaped by the creative tensions between tradition and innovation. Contemporary Iranian sculptors work across a broad spectrum of styles and mediums—ranging from figurative and classical forms to experimental installation art, conceptual pieces, kinetic works, and minimalist sculptures. This stylistic diversity reflects the growing openness of the Iranian art scene to global artistic discourses and the desire of artists to engage with international movements such as postmodernism, abstraction, and environmental or socially engaged art. Despite this global orientation, many Iranian sculptors remain deeply connected to their cultural roots. Their works often embody symbols, motifs, and philosophical ideas drawn from Persian mythology, Islamic aesthetics, Sufi mysticism, or the rich heritage of Iranian poetry and literature. This dual commitment—to innovation and to cultural continuity—has led to the emergence of a distinct contemporary Iranian sculptural language that both resonates on the world stage and retains a strong local identity.

Moreover, the emphasis on the novelty and modernity of sculpture in today's Iran can be seen as part of a broader effort to redefine and reimagine Iranian visual culture in the context of globalization. Artists are not merely imitating Western trends but are instead actively interpreting them through the lens of their own histories, sociopolitical realities, and spiritual philosophies. In this way, contemporary Iranian sculpture serves as a powerful medium of dialogue—between past and present, East and West, individuality and collective memory.

Chapter II

The effect of modern movements on contemporary Iranian sculpture



2.1. Introduction

An accurate and nuanced understanding of the characteristics of contemporary art—and the ways in which it departs from traditional frameworks to embrace modern and postmodern expressions—requires a close and thoughtful examination of the works and intellectual contributions of prominent and influential artists. Engaging in research within this field, without a deep familiarity with seminal artworks and the complex ideas underpinning them, risks yielding a superficial and incomplete analysis of the evolving artistic landscape. Such research would be insufficient in explaining both the practical evolution of art forms and the theoretical frameworks that shape them.

Therefore, scholarly inquiries that treat the art and thought of major cultural figures as merely one-dimensional or isolated phenomena fall short of offering a comprehensive perspective. Instead, what is needed are interdisciplinary and analytical studies that explore these figures in relation to broader socio-cultural, philosophical, and historical contexts. These studies are essential for illuminating the layered meanings embedded in modern artworks and understanding the aesthetic, ideological, and existential transformations that define contemporary artistic expression.

The shift away from inherited artistic traditions and the creation of entirely new visual languages have introduced novel concepts of modernity and human existence. In societies like Iran—where the movement from tradition to modernity has often occurred abruptly, spurred by external cultural influences rather than internal, organic evolution—art becomes a rich and complex site of negotiation between past and present. In these contexts, artistic expressions frequently reflect a dynamic interplay between deeply rooted cultural heritage and the disruptive presence of foreign ideologies and aesthetics.

This cultural tension gives rise to works that are hybrid in nature—simultaneously honoring tradition while challenging and deconstructing it. As a result, questions about how tradition and modernity interact and coexist remain among the most debated and significant issues in the study of contemporary Iranian art. As Abrahamian notes, these interactions are not merely artistic but are deeply tied to broader societal shifts, identity formation, and the struggle to reconcile authenticity with innovation (Abrahamian, 2008).

2.2. The evolution of sculpture in contemporary Iran

The emergence and development of Iranian sculpture has coincided with the spread of the wave of modernism and modeling of advanced industrial countries. Therefore, considering the socio-historical conditions of the study period, we can have a more accurate understanding of contemporary sculpture. Placement in the context of the events reveals that along with the extensive developments in Iran, in the acceleration of modernization, the visual arts also came to dominate this view because a work of art, in addition to being the outward manifestation of the artist's mind, It is also the product of his creative understanding of the culture of society. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, the formation of sculpture in Iran, after the Islamic era, dates back to the visit of the Qajar kings to the West. Later, the first step was taken to revive this art by the first generation of contemporary sculptors, in a classical way. After the Second World War and the introduction of new philosophies of thought and the move towards industrialization and modernization, the world and consequently Iran were going through a tense period. In such an atmosphere and after a long vacuum lost for many years, sculpture became common as an independent art like other arts in Iran. The establishment of the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Decorative Arts also led to the development of sculpture and the training of new artists. Technology and the breadth of thoughts and ideas among Iranian sculpture, made fundamental changes, and in this evolutionary process, artists, through representation, went beyond search, the result of which was the emergence of a progressive and uplifting space. Volumetric works left in the history of Iran, at any point in time, express the mentality, values, ideals, policies and in different periods, an indicator of changing public attitudes or in other words show the undeniable relationship of a work of art with Culture and society as its creators. On this basis, a sculpture can not be considered the only reflection of the artist's mind and independent of society (Aliatov, 1993).

Thus, tracing the origins of contemporary Iranian sculpture requires a historical overview of the events that took place at that time. The revival of contemporary sculpture took place in the context of internal transformations that were the result of following global changes. These developments were spread by the ruling regime and Western-educated intellectuals in Iran and affected all aspects of life, including politics, economics, culture,

as well as the visual arts. The developments that followed the modernist movement of Abbas Mirza were followed during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah and reached their peak. At that time, various measures were taken to eliminate the backwardness of the country from other developed countries of the world. Economic programs, the establishment and development of various industries, the exploitation of mines and agricultural lands, the expansion of the printing industry and the establishment of newspapers, and most importantly the establishment of the Academy of Arts with the help of European professors, were among the government's efforts for further development. In the meantime, the travels of Qajar kings to the West and the attraction of foreign cultural manifestations also played an important role in the evolution of visual arts. It began and was welcomed along with other aspects received from the West. So that years later during the Pahlavi rule, many similar examples were installed in different regions (Etemadi, 1999).

In the Sharaf newspaper of 1340 AH, we read: According to the instructions of His Excellency Iqbal al-Saltanah, a statue of the holy servants, was made and cast on horseback in formal clothes. The casting industry and the science of painting and the fit of details are the same as the work of European master's while the masters and craftsmen of this sculpture are all Iranian. The construction of the statue was completed in Sha'ban 1304 AH. According to Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad Al-Saltanah in the newspaper, at first, they intended to place it in Topkhaneh Square, but this did not happen, and it was in Qorkhaneh for two years until it was taken to King's Garden (Sattari, 2005). Later, contemporary Iranian sculpture in the context of socio-cultural changes resulting from the Constitutional Revolution and the upward trend of the impact of modernization, which in various ways had influenced most aspects of the life of the Iranian people, was began professionally by Kamal ol-Molk's students. Modernism, which first set foot in Western philosophy, economics, politics, and literature, and then found its way into the arts, arrived in Iran decades after its inception. But the process of aligning a traditional society with a modern society remained flawed due to the lack of necessary social contexts and the use of incorrect methods. Westernization and social, political and cultural modernization in Iran in the name of social reform was done by Reza Khan. He sought a model that included European-style educational institutions, modern women

working outside the home, Western-style men and women dressing, de-religionization, a departure from popular social and cultural customs and traditions, and a new economic structure. Reach out to government factories, communications networks, investment banks and chain stores, etc. all caused Iranian intellectuals and artists to react differently to modernity and the West. Therefore, fascination, imitation, criticism and even negation of the West appeared one after another and sometimes even simultaneously (Parvizi, 2003, 8).

In fact, modernism can be considered as an attempt to align works of art with new styles and methods and a smart effort to keep up to date and to find identity in works. This view is consistent with the view of many scholars who considered the beginning of Iranian modernism from the time of "Mazin al-Dawlah" and "Kamal al-Molk" and his school. But on the other hand, there is a consensus about the emergence of artistic modernism in Iran.

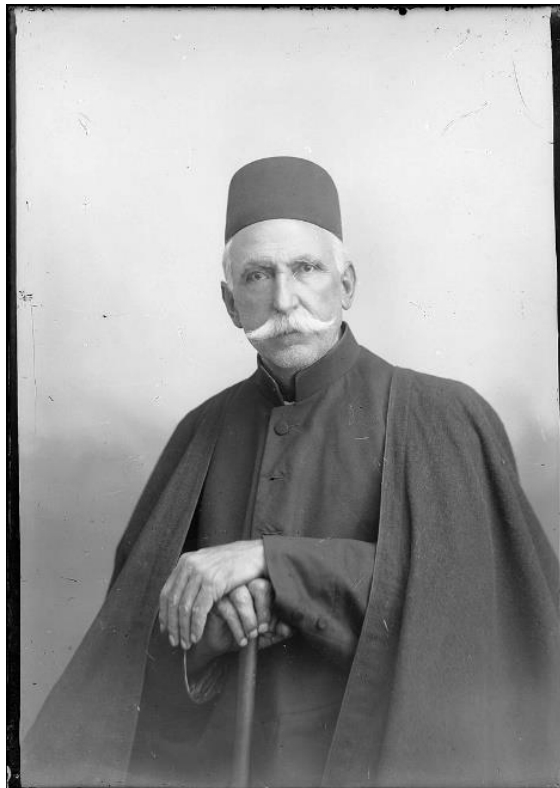


Image 2.1 *Studio portrait of Kamal al-Molk*

The beginning of the modern art movement in Iran should be considered the year 1941, which coincided with the fall of Reza Shah's government and the occupation of Iran by foreign forces. Events in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century, including World War I and the independence and anti-colonial movements, also highlighted the need for change in the social, economic and cultural structures of traditional societies. Traditional societies, including Iran, modeled the new manifestations of Western industrialized countries. In Iran, this logging was done without considering the real conditions and needs of society. Many Iranian cultural agents and intellectuals imitated Western achievements to compensate for the country's backwardness. Thus, modernism was superficially penetrated Iranian society. Before the arrival of cultural and artistic manifestations of modernism in Iran, the school of Kamal al-Molk was considered the official art of the country (Amirshahi, 1974).



Image 2.2 *A painting by Mahmoud Olia (one of Kamal Al-Molk's students)*

But the establishment of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran undermined the absolute dominance of the Kamal al-Molk school to some extent. Andre Godard, a

French Iranologist, and several other foreign teachers, along with some of Kamal al-Molk's followers, including Ali Mohammad Heydarian, began working at the Faculty of Fine Arts. With the presence of people who believed in naturalism in art, the atmosphere of this school changed. Impressionist tendencies in the Faculty of Fine Arts, with the work of painters such as Ahmad Esfandiari, Abdullah Ameri, Mehdi Vishkaei, Manouchehr Yektaei and Hossein Kazemi took a post-impressionist form.



Image 2.3 *A painting by Ahmad Esfandiari*

During these years, painters such as Javad Hamidi, Hossein Kazemi, Jalil Ziapour, Mahmoud Javadipour, moved to Europe to continue their education. Jalil Ziapour became acquainted with modern Western art, especially Cubism, in the workshop of Andre Olut in Paris. After returning to Iran, he started an association, and a publication called "Fighting Rooster" (Figure 2.3) in which he enthusiastically promoted modern painting and denounced reactionary tendencies. Thus began the struggle between modernity and antiquity in the field of art and literature. Among the literary figures that collaborated with Ziapour was Nima Yoshij, the father of modern Iranian poetry (Zaipour, 1949).



Image 2.4 *Fighting Rooster Magazine*

Coinciding with this trend, the first gallery in Tehran named Apadana was opened during 1940s. In this place, newcomers such as Javadipour, Kazemi, Hamidi and Houshang Pezeshknia exhibited their works. The artistic movements that emerged in the 1920s continued during the oil nationalization movement and in the years after the 1943 coup. In 1958, with the holding of the first biennial of Tehran, which was the most important official action of the government in endorsing the modernization movement, a dispute broke out between the followers of Kamal al-Molk and the followers of modern art.



Image 2.5 *A painting by Jalil Ziapour*

Jalil Ziapour was known as a staunch leader and defender of modernism and its representative. But he later turned to personalism by abandoning the fanatical imitation of Cubism. He achieved this method by simplifying the forms and application of themes inspired by Qajar art and ethnic and rural art. Therefore, Ziapour was one of the first innovators to use the elements of ancient traditional art to find an Iranian identity for his works. Such a tendency has appeared in the works of other artists such as Nasser Oveisi and Jazeh Tabatabai. Another influential painter in the development of contemporary Iranian art is Marco Gregorian. Having studied at the Roman School of Art, he returned to Iran to try to somehow promote the achievements of Italian Expressionist art in Iran. Marco established the Aesthetic Gallery in 1943 and was involved in the establishment of the first biennial in Tehran. At the beginning of his artistic career, he embodied the mental states of human beings and catastrophic subjects. His last work in this period of artistic activity was a work entitled "Auschwitz". After these experiments, he turned to working

with native Iranian materials and combining them with new materials such as polyester. He had studied in the United States and after returning to Iran in 1960, he began to train students at the University of Tehran (Iranpour, 2003).

During this period, Hossein Kazemi, after leaving behind various artistic experiences, achieved a concise and personal method. In his later works, we encounter the theme of confrontation and harmonization of opposites. Kazemi became a great teacher for the next generations (Figure 2.4).



Image 2.6 *Bazm*, Hossein Kazemi

In fact, the Iranian modernization movement grew under the guidance of teachers such as Kazemi and created various tendencies. In 1961, the modern art movement took on a more formal form. The General Directorate of Fine Arts, later renamed the Ministry of Culture and Arts, employed many modern artists. During this time a court-based art foundation was established, obliging government departments to support modernist artists. Holding biennials and giving awards and art scholarships and providing the possibility of communication with international art associations were on the agenda of the government. One of the influential events in the development of modern Iranian art is the establishment of the Faculty of Decorative Arts in 1960. Foreign teachers were hired at the school, which was affiliated with the Department of Culture and Arts. In fact, this school complemented the activities of the School of Fine Arts. At the Faculty of Fine Arts, an academic method was implemented based on the teaching methods of the

University of the Beaux-Arts in Paris, while at the Faculty of Decorative Arts, students were taught according to the methods of the Paris Deco. Among the college's foreign instructors were Monsieur Girard and Alain Bayash. The facilities the government provided for Iranian artists to spread modern art greatly provided the modern art movement with government policies. But artists and intellectuals who called for a profound and fundamental change in contemporary Iranian art reacted in various ways to the flow of official and dictated art by the government. One of the most significant of these movements was the activity of the “Iran Hall”, which was renamed the “Qandriz Hall” after the death of Mansour Qandriz to honor his name. Artists such as Mohammad Reza Judat, Rovin Pakbaz, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Farshid Maleki were active in this hall, and in addition to works of art, they also discussed theoretical topics. These individuals later continued their intellectual and theoretical activities separately (Afsarian, 2010).

During this period, modern painters each sought their own personal styles. Mansour Qandriz after a period of experience in the field of painting, turned to semi-abstract painting and in this process tried to find a way to deepen the ethnic memories of his environment. Sohrab Sepehri, having a background in "Zen aesthetics", achieved a kind of brevity in the representation of nature and while presenting his visual works, he made poetic discoveries with the world and objects. Sepehri's experiences were reflected in his completely abstract paintings. Abolghasem Saeedi also tried to portray the spirit of an ancient culture in this period by emphasizing traditional elements.



Image 2.7 *a painting by Sohrab Sepehri*

This effort was manifested in the form of a display of deciduous trees with decorative elements. The activity of modern Iranian formal art in this period can be classified into two main branches, which are the branch of abstractionism and the branch of neo-traditionalism. Continuing the art of modern pioneers, there were artists who were more inclined to aspects of modern Western art, following in the footsteps of artists such as Marco Gregorian. Among the artists who tended to combine traditional elements with modern art methods, we can mention Parviz Tanavoli and Jazeh Tabatabai, some of whom later became Saqakhaneh painters (Davis, 2010).

The origin of the active painters of this school was the Faculty of Decorative Arts. The activities of these painters were considered by the government. They tried to somehow reconstruct the legacy of the past in its present form. This method, due to gaining points in international art forums in terms of having an Iranian identity, was considered by cultural agents of the time. In the fourth biennial held in 1964, this group of painters won awards. Although in recent years some modern artists have turned to traditional art subjects and materials, this trend has taken on a formal and governmental aspect in the fourth biennial, with the support of agents. In the following years, the artists of the Saqakhaneh school distanced themselves from their previous activities and turned to other methods. Hossein Zandaroudi, after leaving for Paris, puts aside folk and charming motifs and creates his works in a completely different way in order to present visual qualities. This indicates that the approach of some artists who initially paid attention to categories such as tradition and identity, was not associated with theoretical and doctrinal aspects. In the royal designs and paintings, some ancient motifs such as elements of Persepolis buildings can be seen. With a penchant for murals, he gives a constructivist character to his art and creates works with materials such as pottery, copper and concrete. Faramarz Pilaram is also one of the artists whose work began at the same time as the formation of the Saqakhaneh school. He combined his paintings with calligraphy and typography. Other activists in the field of calligraphy include Mohammad Ehsaei, who uses the formal features of calligraphy in his works.



Image 2.8 *Artwork by Mohammad Ehsaei*

The use of indigenous and traditional subjects and materials has been reflected in the works of many artists, a clear example of which is the works that are formed using the texture of rural architecture (Hamidian, 2006).

With the advent of the Islamic Revolution, the activity of formal art as it was common in the previous era and the influence of Western art was questioned. Artists active in this field saw themselves in the face of a great event. Some artists, who had the support of the previous government, emigrated abroad, some gave up work altogether, but some, under the influence of new circumstances, changed their work style and created works centered on current issues. After the revolution, along with the social changes and necessities, artists formed their activities in different categories and created many works with themes related to the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. However, the formation of new groups lacks strong intellectual and theoretical support, because putting people together in these groups has been based more on closeness of taste and friendship, not on artistic thinking. New generation painters and sculptors are aware that a real transformation in the field of art requires a rethinking and reflection on the artistic experiences of previous generations (Balaghi, 2002).

Modern art is characterized by extreme formalism and distance from the world of meaning, and is a current against traditional and classical arts, and explicitly rejects the

ideology of realism. The ideas that govern the current of modernity can be explained as follows: The use of indigenous and traditional subjects and materials has been reflected in the works of many painters, a clear example of which is the works that are formed using the texture of rural architecture. After the revolution, along with the social changes and necessities, artists formed their activities in different categories and created many works with themes related to the revolution and the Iran-Iraq war. However, the formation of new groups lacks strong intellectual and theoretical support, because putting people together in these groups has been based more on closeness of taste and friendship, not on artistic thinking. A new generation of painters and sculptors are aware that a real transformation in the field of art requires a rethinking and reflection on the artistic experiences of previous generations. Modern art is characterized by extreme formalism and distance from the world of meaning, and is a current against traditional and classical arts, and explicitly rejects the ideology of realism. The ideas that govern the current of modernity can be explained as follows:

Humanism: means believing in the power of human thought.

Materialism: In the modern worldview, spiritual needs are denied, and only emotional needs are raised.

Rationalism: Belief in a rational worldview based on reason and reasoning (Hoodshnian, 2003; Sheikh Mehdi, 2011).



Image 2.9 *A painting by Nasser Oveisi*

2.3. The disappearance of the border of art

The artist of the modern age, based on new values and the importance of the process of making his visual transitions, focuses on cognition and shows his overt and covert experiences. The scope of this cognition found meaning in space and its different angles and functions. By this approach, the arrangements of the components of the works of art in relation to space were studied. In other words, visual elements were defined and perceived in space (Hosseini, 2011). The art of this period, during its evolutionary process, relies mainly on the perceptible overall coherence of the universe and, unlike in the past, reflections and individuals are not seen in works of art, but the process of creation has become important, tending to simplify and summarize visual elements. The material nature of sculpture was also questioned due to the physical presence of the form in a specific space, in such a way that coincidence occurred in the type of form, place and materials of the sculpture, on the other hand, sometimes the works appeared without any sign of beauty and elegance (Khalili, 2006). The collaboration of sculptors with other branches of art also had a great impact on the transformation of sculpture. Painting was the most important category in modernism, in which other arts, such as sculpture, were subject to change. In the continuation of this chapter, we will introduce three of the most prominent contemporary Iranian sculptors who have been very influential in the process of artistic developments in contemporary Iran and the course of art developments influenced by modernism:

2.3.1. Jazeh Tabatabai (1930-2007)

Jazeh Tabatabai is a thematic artist. Most of his paintings and statues are inspired by the culture of the people of his country. The influence of the atmosphere of myths and rituals of the people is evident in most of his works, a lasting impact from childhood. Looking at Jazeh's works, we discover a treasure trove of Iranian folk poetry, proverbs, legends and myths, a structure familiar with a native theme.



Image 2.10 *Portrait of Jazeh Tabatabaee*

Jazeh is a painter and sculptor who was also involved in writing, cinema, theater and poetry. He was born in 1930 in a family, most of whom were artists, especially music and painting. His grandfather, "Moftah Rang", was a trusted painter and designer and weaver of carpets, and Jazeh found the first inspirations and lessons from him. His military member father was more inclined to pursue a political and administrative career with his son, but Jazeh turned to writing, painting, and sculpture at an early age with an involuntary passion. He created it at the same time. The encouragement of a talented grandfather and a tasteful mother made this enthusiastic and curious teenager an artist who does not distinguish between fields of art because he considers creativity to be the soul of all arts. Now he sometimes paints and sometimes writes and sometimes makes and sometimes composes, and according to him, whenever he gets tired of one, he goes to the other (Etemadi, 1998).



Image 2.11 *Graphical design, Jazeh Tabatabaee*

As a teenager, he made his first college-style Barley hidden from his father's eyes until midnight. It is the time of World War II, the fear of mass murder and his hatred of violence make him react emotionally. He returns the wooden bed on which he sleeps at night, and the lower surface, to the innocent imaginary force, becomes a battlefield. On which war machines depict the face of planet Earth, the flat boards are covered with black and red streaks and the red and white crosses, in the corner of the head and hands and feet of broken plastic dolls. There is blood, on the other side of the wrecked jeeps and trucks, a wrecked plane and broken combat equipment, on the right side of the work, a

small skull is a sign of the presence of a test Mars. The nightmare of war, which is heard on the newly used radio, does not wake the teenager at night, and in the morning the bed returns to normal, and the daily routine continues (Hamed, 2007).

At the same time, the teenage painter encounters a work in his grandfather's house that inspires a new era in his work. Mofteh Rang hung his daughter's wedding bouquet on the wall of the house as a decorative painting. Sangaki bread was glued to a wooden tray with glue and was decorated with Esfand and frankincense seeds and colorful paper flowers around it. Objects installed on the Khanche had lost their original color and shape over time and had found a special identity. The element of antiquity gave unwanted unity and unexpected beauty to heterogeneous objects.

Seeing this work, the artist realizes that everyday objects such as wedding knobs and household tools can have another function and with a new composition serve different purposes than their usual utility. He receives several diplomas by attending various courses. He goes from a music conservatory to an acting conservatory. Graduated from the Conservatory of Arts, he opened "Lux Film" in Lalehzar without official permission. He presents his first exhibition of paintings, which he has made in the style of "New Miniature". In the same year, he received his dissertation from the Balt Conservatory. At the same time, he graduated from Daraei High School. He goes to law school with a degree in finance, which he leaves in the middle of course. In the first year of the course, he published the story of the lizard tooth, in the second year he became the first student in the field of directing and the basics of theater at the Faculty of Literature and staged the play "Sailor Shirt". With a diploma from the Academy of Performing Arts, he went to the Faculty of Fine Arts to study sculpture (Mojabi, 2007).

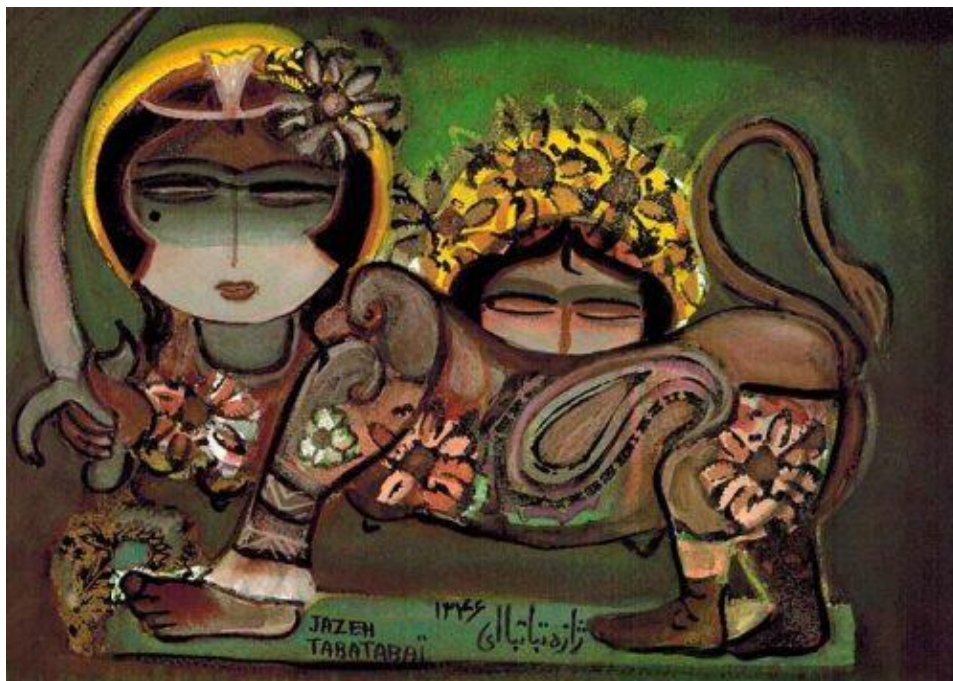


Image 2.12 *A painting, Jazeh Tabatabaee, 1967*

Being graduates from the Faculty of Fine Arts, he published the book “Chess of Life” while he had already set up a "new art gallery" in the year 3, in an atmosphere where the art gallery in Tehran did not yet have a proper function. The Apadana Gallery was established in 1949 during the period when the gallery had not yet established its position as a cultural institution. The next art gallery was formed first on Bahar Street and then in its current house on Paez Alley. This gallery was a gathering place for painters, sculptors, poets, musicians and artists who each long for innovation. Next to art exhibitions, the first nights of new poetry were held in the hall of this gallery. Jazeh's painting had different forms with a common chapter, which was the "culture of the people" or to be more precise about him, "folk rituals and customs".

Jazeh is an innovative traditional artist in the field of painting. He has chosen indigenous culture as a springboard for conveying his sense and perception, thus distinguishing himself from innovative freelance artists who seek universal expression, regardless of indigenous characteristics. The roots of this choice go back not only to his upbringing in a traditional family, but also to the period when he began his artistic activity, when the thinkers of the society focused on recognizing the cultural identity of our ancient country;

a view that had an overt and covert conflict with the new Western civilization (Asadi Kiaras, 2008).

The artist's influence on the heritage of Iranian art is evident in the first paintings of his youth. The space of Jazeh sequences and its statues are fairly divided between humans and animals. In this space, sometimes humans and animals come together and sometimes each alone. In his animal world, there are mythical creatures such as demons and bird-humans to gazelles and magical horses, vultures and lions, spiders and snakes and ants. Jazeh first made it in the classical style, but after the 1940s he began to make iron sculptures in earnest. He presented his metal sculptures by welding iron blocks and twisting rods.

Jazeh Tabatabai is one of the hard-working and powerful artists in the field of visual arts who, with his continuous and effective presence in four decades of contemporary painting and sculpture, has made a valuable contribution to the flourishing and richness of today's Iranian art. He has written books on ethnic myths, novels and poetry, art criticism and playwriting, and before entering university he ran two journals, Jazeh and Tooti which both are bilingual. After graduating from university, he received his diplomas in directing and performing arts from the Academy of Fine Arts, Painting and Sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts. For more than three decades, Jazeh has had an international reputation as one of the most brilliant and skilled artists ahead and his works are on display in many countries such as France, England and Greece, Germany, Sweden, Spain, India, Australia, USA, Turkey, Yugoslavia., Monaco, China and Iran. His works also shone brightly in the biennials of Paris, Venice, Sao Paulo and Tehran. Jazeh has won more than a dozen international awards, and his work has been collected and preserved in Daniel's private collections and large museums (Olduz, 2006).

Diesel bearings, clamps and bolts, pipes and metal plates are welded to form a set that resembles a natural or artificial volume of surrounding objects. Most of these statues are diagrams of specific people and types. The metal volumes are interconnected in such a way that the viewer recognizes the curvy old woman, Cheraghali, Cleopatra, the ostrich, the stork, the village man, the tambourine, and the like. Jazeh has applied two different perspectives in making his sculptures. In some of his works, which are in the minority, he

has remained faithful to the modern sculpture of the world, and in others, which constitute most of his works, he has emphasized the natural relations of sculptures and their resemblance to objective and mental patterns.



Image 2.13 *Sculpture “Coming back from farm”, Jazeh Tabatabaee*

In fact, he belongs to a group of Iranian artists who have been called "traditionalist innovative artists" and their distinctive feature is that they have chosen indigenous culture as a springboard to convey their sense and perception of the world around them. This

attitude distinguishes them from the "free innovator" group, who, regardless of their indigenous characteristics, seek a universal expression in a language whose belief stems from the inherent function of the visual arts. In the 1930s, he made various attempts to achieve personal expression. The artist's influence on the heritage of Iranian painting is evident in most of his works. He tries to reach a new understanding of Iranian aesthetic vision by reflecting on the elements and compositions of miniatures and handicrafts of local industry and recognizing folk arts. The traditionalist teachings of the faculty support this effort (Tabatabaei, 1959).

Jazeh made several demons in different periods. But most of them were built between the years 1955 and 1957. The making and polishing of his demon curtains is largely influenced by folk paintings: from lithographs to pen curtains and coffee house curtains. However, the effect of children's painting on these curtains cannot be ignored.

"For me, the pomegranate is a symbol of the world, which has multiple curtains in it in a package, and in each layer, there are many seeds that can be humans or planets in a galaxy. This world is closed and in most of my paintings, this pomegranate is depicted as unbroken and gassed, except in one painting, in which a Varza splits it into teeth and its rewards are found in a bloody death." Jazeh Says.

The creature that Jazeh calls "not a bird, not a man" is created in the 60s, although later, like "Ghazalan", it becomes the dominant element of the curtains of the 70s and 80s. In the "Bazban" curtain, in a puppet-like composition, it looks like a little girl, because she is again in the hands of a prince. But the main characteristics of this creature are completed in the early sixties. In the curtain of "Ash Sparrow" we find a creature with a history that was previously seen in folk motifs, especially in "porcelain" plates or bronze bird statues mounted on "mourning" symbols. Jazeh gradually transforms this traditional creature into an "angel bird" that becomes one of the mythological elements of his work.

A quick look at the work of the 1930s reveals that he generally tries to present the hasty design of his imaginary world with the least number of lines and colors. Later, this method culminates in its "coils". The coils, whose "five hundred" numbers are printed in a notebook, have a simple structure and are a rebellious reaction to figurative paintings. This means that the background here is in perfect harmony with the main text of the

painting and the central volumes of the composition. Second, the artist succeeds in recording his feelings with more recklessness and freedom by deviating from dealing with human and animal figures. Thirdly, he gets rid of the traditional constraints of symmetry and similarity with the past and dealing with social issues and tries to rely on the flow of imagination by resorting to the method of spontaneous creation, leaving Annan with his hands and mind to the subconscious rather than what "At the time of creation" and "passion for creativity" need to be revealed (Sattari, 2007).

The 1940s were a prosperous decade not only for Jazeh but also for many artists and writers, because at this time: the explosive economic prosperity of Iran, the transformation of Tehran into a metropolis, the facilitation of global relations, and the consequent expansion of culture and the flourishing of arts, especially poetry, painting and cinema, takes place. Existence of five biennials and recognition of modern art by cultural policy makers and serious consideration of visual arts by mass media, art critics and audiences and the emergence of a market for painting and sculpture and the presence of private and public collectors at the same time, are all effective. Galleries and museums had become a thriving market for paintings, and painters and sculptors had the opportunity to make the most of this seemingly thriving market for their work. Although Jazeh loves his diversity, he admits that his circumstances and possibilities have led him to work in various fields. Because the conditions for writing, drawing, and painting are better in the winter, he writes more poetry, pursues his notes on the work of artists and his stories, makes his paintings in small pieces, and in favorable seasons. When the weather is mild, he spends more time making bigger curtains and sculptures. However, this seemingly sensible method is so exceptionally due to its spiritual outbursts that it becomes the rule (Sirus Tahabaz, March 26). In the field of painting, Jazeh recognizes, refines, and strives for its harmonious expression and artistic language, which he had previously invented spontaneously and eloquently. He consciously uses the scattered elements that were occasionally seen in some of his works, and with appropriate and new techniques, relying on his growing understanding in the field of knowledge and artistic aesthetics, combines them in a balanced and artistic way. In this way, Jazeh paintings move away from the diversity of appearances such as collages and abstract coils, nominators, Khanchehs and barrels, which were all black exercises to achieve his special

artistic expression, and approach the atmosphere of harmony, which preserves diversity and leads the way, while grows towards homogeneity in style. The unity of his method of production distinguishes his paintings, which are immediately distinguished from the work of others by their special compositions, the type of use of color and line, their concise and specific expression, and their specific themes. But the most important and famous work of Jazeh is his metal volumes, which he has made using disposable materials and iron to make disposable scraps, and this tough and hard material has become a soft bed for resting many national and folk symbols of Iran, The perfect combination of contradictions. (Musivand, 2012)

"Time is not the time for marble and wood and mud and pottery. Time is not the time for stone. Our time is the time for the movement of iron filings and the metals that flow in our blood. It is natural for me to use these materials," he said. I do this to express the words of these materials, and this is the best way for cold metal to be able to say the warmest words, it is art to be able to say the warmest and freshest words with this coldness.

Disposable irons and scraps, beads and screws, etc., formed in the hands of Jazeh, like soft wax, and by creating unique works, recreated many concepts, myths and legends of Iran. In spite of the modern look that was formed in him due to his education and European travels and face-to-face acquaintance with many stylistic artists such as Julio Gonzalez, and of course his desire for heresy, but unlike many modernists, He never forgot the popular people and the original culture of his war, but his volumes can be considered as a poem written for the people of his land with the words scrap iron, bolts, welds, etc. . It is as if these iron and worn-out words are as old as the content and subject matter of his works, which are abandoned in the other contemporary world.

However, in the meantime, Mubarak's contradiction and paradox is evident in the expression of those ancient concepts in the form of materials and products of the modern world and the age of mechanism and technology. Jazeh himself says, "The man of our time is fragile and unbreakable, and that is why my sculptures, my words and my colors are heavy and strong and show the anxious weight of human beings" (Lima, 1972).

The themes of the Jazeh works are rooted in the myths and customs of the people of this land; the stories that Jazeh grew up with. He is the only Iranian artist who has created sculptures from the materials and remnants of modern machines, sculptures that have Jazeh legends with them instead of the ugliness and obsession of these scraps (Kamrani, 2007). : 26) Works of this kind begin in Iran for the first time with Jazeh, and later others, including a self-taught artist such as Ismail Tavakoli (Mash Ismail), create unique volumes with this method.



Image 2.14 *A sculpture, Ismail Tavakoli (Mash Ismail)*

Before making sculptures with machine parts, Jazeh experimented with making iron sculptures with metal wires. In all these sculptures, he mixed humor and jokes with the suffering of inanimate beings. He saw the living as a humorous and lifeless creature suffering in this world. With iron, he made ridiculous people who suffered with metal bodies (Asadi Kiars, 2008, 4).

The art of Jazeh introduces the specific expression of Jazeh and includes important culture and symbols that are subject to its special figurative and popular expression. His works are considered among the works of Saqakhaneh school, especially in terms of the way of using elements and themes of the past and the use of some traditional motifs as

well as calligraphy. Most of these works have been formed by using imaginary spaces and the combined use of familiar lines, colors and patterns, as well as emotional and non-paid blows of the brush on the canvas surface; That is, the use and coordination between slang form, and not necessarily professional and specific payment with slang content and symbols. The presence of culture themes and Jazeh symbols is also evident in the paintings.

Jazeh Tabatabai was a hard-working and curious artist. During a lifetime of continuous and fruitful activity, he played an important role in the development of contemporary Iranian art who also had literature, poetry, music and theater in his repertoire. His methods are unique in their kind. Although this method of using scrap and ironwork had already begun in the West, Jazeh's method of work was of a different kind and was the result of his creative power. With an approach to topics such as traditional roles, visual effects of people's culture, myths and poetry and the manifestation of urban life, he has intelligently reviewed contemporary social life and has been able to recreate it in the field of image and visualization (Mir Emadi, 2000).

His efforts to be stylish and exaggerated can be seen in most of his statues. He is considered a leading artist who based his innovations on ancient Iranian traditions. (Mojabi, 1997).

Among the notable cases in the works of Jazeh Tabatabai is the great variety of forms, even if the theme of similarity is chosen. Paying attention to the form and using scrapping machines in such a way that they are in line with the artist's predetermined design is one of the characteristics of his works.



Image 2.15 *Sculpture*, Jazeh Tabatabaei

The next point is that the artist, in addition to dealing with the integrity of the work and its totality, has also been very sensitive to details, and this feature has also contributed to the diversity of his works. On the other hand, most of the sculptures, regardless of the base, rely on their end surfaces and are located directly on the ground and this feature has been used to complement the aesthetic aspects of the form. These mythical accents, however small, have been very effective in identifying parts of the statues, such as the colored species of female statues. The pieces have been collected and put together with great care and time (although, of course in some cases the artist may have come up with some conclusions).

The importance of this issue is doubled when we know that his personal expression on this issue is by working with hard materials such as scrap metal. Hardness does not mean the physical problems with this material, which of course is also important, but the compulsion that this material has in terms of prefabricated forms and somehow limits the sculptor in designing and developing a new idea, at least for the human subject. (Akbari, 1386,)

2.3.2. Parviz Tanavoli (1937 – con.)

Parviz Tanavoli was born in Tehran and about Darvazeh Shemiran in a middle-class family. From the age of ten to eleven, he started his artistic activity by playing the violin under the supervision of masters such as Nik Nawaz and Abolhassan Saba. Tanavoli continued his education at Adib High School. When high school was closed, he went to Kamal al-Molk Conservatory. In 1953, the Conservatory of Fine Arts was established in Tehran, and he was enrolled in the field of sculpture. After completing a three-year sculpture course at the Conservatory of Fine Arts, he went to Italy to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Carrara. After two years, the amount of money he had saved by teaching music and financial support from his family ran out and in 1953 he was forced to return to Iran. "Returning to Tehran, although due to the need to provide money or perhaps get a scholarship, actually created good opportunities for me," he said. During the few months I stayed in Tehran, I did a lot of work and organized two exhibitions. In the first exhibition, I showed the designs and engravings that I had done mainly in Italy. I had drawn most of these designs from the model, but I also displayed several designs that

I had prepared in Tehran from busts. The subject of the engravings was mainly public baths or traveling musicians. In addition, the works of poet and painter Manouchehr Sheibani were displayed there.

In January 1957, Tanavoli exhibited completely different works, including engravings, pottery sculptures, and sculptures made of scrap metal. This was the first time in Iran that a collection of works by a sculptor was displayed. Going back to Italy, this time he went to Milan and studied for almost two years at the Brera Academy with Marino Marini, a prominent Italian sculptor. In 1959, he received his first diploma in terms of academic excellence from the Barra Academy, and sixteen of his works were exhibited as the best works of a sculptor graduate of that year at the Re Magl Gallery in Milan (Safvat, 1977).

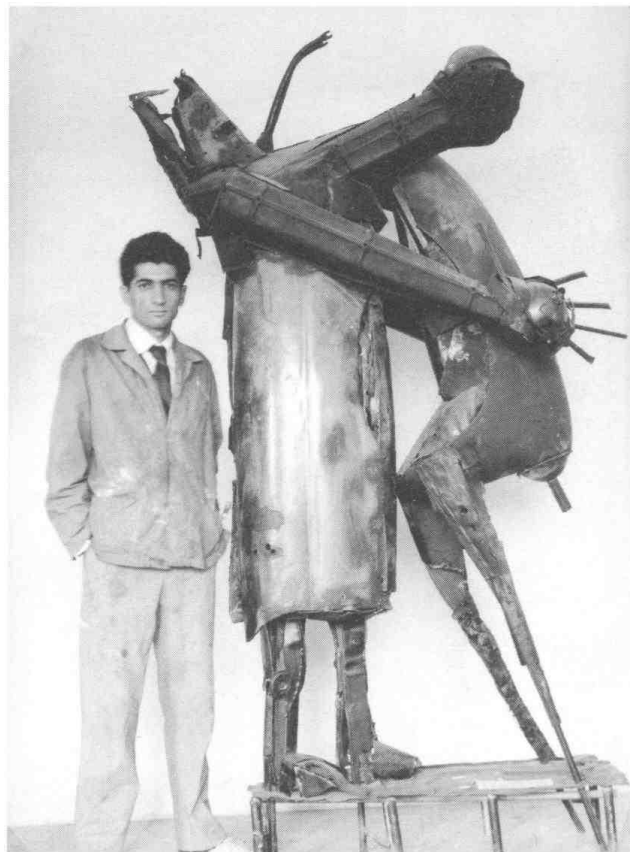


Image 2.16 *Photo of Parviz Tanavoli*

n this regard, Ronato Guzzoni wrote about him: "Sculptor Parviz Tanavoli is a gift of self-recognition that not everyone has. His story of inspiration has its roots in ancient Iranian anecdotes. It was replaced by decorative art such as carpet weaving, bedding,

tiling, etc. Although these arts reached their utmost delicacy, they could not fill the place of sculpture. Parviz has filled the vacancy of a thousand years..."

Tanavoli is a real craftsman who leads European and American artists in traditional goldsmithing and silversmithing. His works date back to traditional applied arts and have a close connection with national arts and crafts, especially Iranian-Islamic industries. Although he is a staunch supporter of modernism, the reconstruction of metaphors of classical Persian and Islamic literature, indigenous art, and calligraphy have been the motivating factors for him to blend the style and content of his works. Relying on form and space is one of the characteristics of Parviz Tanavoli's works. In evaluating the elements used in his works, special visual aspects are emphasized, and the artist has created new visual manifestations to describe his mentality by using meaningful symbols and signs.



Image 2.17 A sample of *"Nothing"*, Parviz Tanavoli

These themes are hidden in the architectural capabilities of the statues. In every way, the masterpieces of Islamic architecture, including mosques and shrines and similar buildings are comparable to components such as simplification, use of repetitive geometric

elements, arches. Inscriptions and tiles decorated with Islamic lines and motifs can be seen in an abstract way. In all the fruitful periods of Iranian art, this abstraction can be seen, which appears in the form of flowers, plants, animals, and even writings. Pure architecture in the form of huge buildings was a combination of simple elements such as cubes, octagons, hemispheres, cones, pyramids, polygons, framed arches and the like, but sometimes these buildings with geometric and repetitive decorative motifs. It found a special texture, or inscriptions were used in them. The same tendency to abstract forms can easily be found in Tanavoli's works (Ettinghausen, 2002).

It is obvious that the distribution of signs and lines on the figures has been in a direction consistent with their formal and spatial organization and emphasized spatial communication



Image 2.18 *Cage set*, Parviz Tanavoli

On the other hand, the statues are a re-creation of Islamic architectural motifs, an archive of Islamic ornaments and motifs. Despite all the decorative aspects of recumbent figures, simplicity is their most important quality. Reconstructive structural experiences are a mixture of volume and light. As he himself says, his statues were created based on an architectural structure, so there was a need for windows to transmit light into them. The

components of a recumbent body are generally "subject to a particular geometric order." He often made extensive use of grid and uniform patterns in a geometric pattern. These lattice surfaces, in addition to the artist's poetic view on the transmission of light, make it possible for the audience to continue their vision and remember the space of the shrines. These shrines are usually the tombs of Imamzadehs.

A shrine has been installed around the tomb, which at the same time prevents sight and access (direct) to the grave, and through the stones it can be seen. Whether it is a tombstone or a feeling of happiness, they skillfully cover it. In the same way, Tanavoli expresses his feelings and thoughts only by making his sculpture and internal display, but at the same time, he covers this expression in the veil of abstraction (Chikouki, 2002, 8).

Tanavoli sculptures are a collection of organized visual elements that confirm the talent of their creator and have the ability to sensually and spiritually move the Iranian observer due to the artist's use of indigenous and cultural elements. Admirable reactions of individuals are due to factors such as skillful use of materials, techniques and a wide range of visual cues in the figures.



Image 2.19 *Tanavoli works*

Tanavoli works are reminiscent of the industrial and modern world, in which individual characteristics are also considered. Although similarities can be found in the general form

of some of the sculptures, their obvious differences in detail are the artist's mark for creating original elements. The abstraction and generalization of Tanavoli's works, especially in human statues, has continued until simple and geometric forms have been reached, and the artist has used cubes, cones, circles, and other geometric shapes by dividing the figures into three parts. Other components of these statues are the lack of distinctive facial expressions and various shapes of the head and upper torso.

2.3.2.1. The role of Parviz Tanavoli in the modern sculpture movement

For the first time in 1958, he builds a sculpture in memory of Farhad Koohkan. This statue, which shows Farhad after falling from a mountain, becomes the basis for the "Poet" collection. During these years, Tanavoli studied at the Academy of Milan and was a student of Marino Marini, and in his own words, "my work had not yet been influenced by my teacher." Parviz Tanavoli says in his book about the "Poet" collection: "Before 1961 and the trip to America, everything I made and painted was in Farhad's memory and their titles were woven in his name." In the winter of 1961, he received an invitation from the Art College of Minneapolis. In the invitation, the college invited him as a "guest artist" for six months. After arriving in Minneapolis, he worked in a college sculpture workshop, beginning with a continuation of copper work.



Image 2.20 *Farhad*, Parviz Tanavoli

After graduating, he went to England for a while but returned to Iran after completing his work at the Venice Biennial and winning the second Tehran Biennial. At the same time, Tanavoli established Kaboud Atelier on Valiasr Street of Tehran, Iran with the support of the government, which became a gathering place for artists. One of the events that took place in this studio was the formation of one of the first groups of modern artists called contemporary artists who actively participated in the development and improvement of contemporary Iranian art and published a statement and letter to the heads and held an exhibition. It was held due to its novelty and publicity, but the group's critical statement about supporting artists cut off government support for Tanavoli. Another current event in the Blue Atelier was the formation of the Saqakhaneh school, which was formed for the first time from the works of Zendebrudi and Tanavoli. The use of lines and patterns of traditional motifs, locks and lattice windows and in general a combination of traditional and indigenous elements with modern forms were the characteristics of this method (Soltanzadeh, 2008).

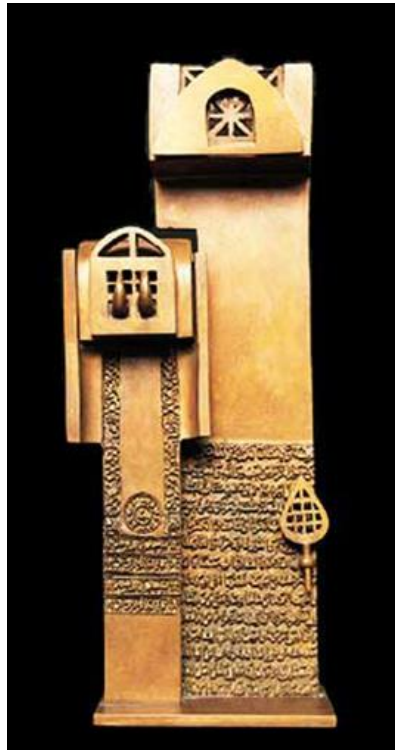


Figure 2.21 Lovers (Saqakhaneh School), Parviz Tanavoli

The teaching period in USA was extended to three years. Numerous exhibitions of young Iranian artists and holding lectures and discussions introduced contemporary Iranian art. In Minneapolis, he turned to the themes of poet, prophet, and dual combinations. At the end of his stay in the United States, Tanavoli returned to Iran and started the first complete workshop of sculpture and bronze, metal and ceramic kilns with all its equipment with the help of the foundation at the University of Fine Arts (1965). It was in this workshop that Ismail Tavakol created his admirable works. The sculptures were the result of his tireless efforts in that workshop. So that after the opening of the first exhibition of Mash Ismail's works, more attention was paid to others and some of them were bought by Abby Gray and taken to America. In the same year, Tanavoli opened a new studio called Zal Zar on Zarabkhaneh Street and held an exhibition of his new works at the Burgess Gallery. This exhibition provoked strong opposition and criticism from the artistic community of that time and caused the exhibition to be dismantled after a few days and its paintings and sculptures to be transferred to a warehouse. These works later included the wear and tear of time and left no trace of them. Among the works on display at the Burgess Gallery was a painting above which, in the middle of a plastic circle, the word “Hich (nothing)” no was written in cursive. This painting became the end point of Tanavoli structural works and the beginning of a new and fruitful period in his activity (Mir Emadi 64, 1999) (Figure 2.19)



Image 2.22 *Sculpture*, Parviz Tanavoli

This period of his work lasted ten years, and Tanavoli created various sculptures with the beautiful form of this word in mind. Tanavoli has said about this word: on the other side of the borders and in the great artistic capitals, some painters had reached nothing. Although they did not follow the word, it was nothing in their work. Even the works of other artists such as Warhol, who ostensibly adorned with images of soup cans, campels, or the faces of stars such as Monroe, were nothing more than nothing, as he called them the essence of nothing a decade after they were created. (Tanavoli, 1384).



Image 2.23 *Artwork, Andy Warhol*

Tanavoli formed The Fifth group (Panj) in 1968 with Bahman Mohasses, Sohrab Sepehri, Saeedi and Zandehrudi. He considers his works to be a mixture of the influence of Islamic architecture and poetry. The windows and latticework of its statues, like the windows of the Saqakhaneh, are networks for transmitting light, and the cages are reminiscent of the shrines of the Imamzadeh. He expresses his interest in geometry by assembling volumes, cubes and cylinders in different sizes to create a statue, and by decorating the surfaces of the volumes with Islamic motifs and lines, he decorates his sculptures like Islamic buildings, paying attention to familiar symbols. Derived from folklore, it forms the basis of his work, such as the faucet, which is a symbol of the Saqakhaneh, and the cage, which is an allegory of the chest or shrine. Among Tanavoli's favorite themes, in addition to Farhad, we can mention the poet, prophet, king, deer and

bird. In his works, the lock plays an important role, so that in many of his statues, he has become a permanent member of them. He is an artist who, in addition to form, pays great attention to the content of his works. Tanavoli believes that most people only pay attention to the safety aspect of the lock and do not understand the depth of its meaning in his works. He refers to the ideological, ritual and therapeutic aspects of the lock and believes that with the locks that he hung on the body of his statues, he contributed to the conflicts and problems of the time. After ten years of working on the word Hich (nothing), Tanavoli finally chose a new subject called the walls of Iran in 1976 and exhibited very valuable works (Shans, 2008).

2.3.3. Bahman Mohasses (1931-2010)

He was born on March 30, 1931, in Rasht. His family was rich in that region. The title of the family name comes from the part meaning forgiveness and mercy. At the age of nine, on the way to school, he stands behind a shop window and looks at the hands of a man who draws his brush like a cane on a canvas. He is Habib Mohammadi. Many know Habib Mohammadi from his students, Bahman Mohasses and Aydin Aghdashloo, who were educated with him during his childhood and adolescence. When he came to the capital in 1948, he became abstract. He hated nature and natural things. He lived single for seventy-nine years. He never used women as role models. The model for him was a man with all the masculinity. He was fascinated by creating color rhythms. As he turned to abstraction, these colorful rhythms spread across the work. In the first exhibition of works, following the classical composition was evident. The raw appearance of the hand and the combination of the fish head with the man, the smooth and polished surfaces with the prominent grains of sand give color to his work. His work sets him apart from others. His generation is a period of the collapse of dictatorial statues. This generation is afraid of Hitler and becomes a fascist for fear of fascism. Bahman is a perfect example of man after the world war. He considered war as the basis of human ignorance. In his time, the world had neither a prophet nor a philosopher! Friends in Tehran teach him that he also has "art" and "philosophy" which tends to read "philosophy of art". In the first issue of Art Thought Magazine, he wrote an article entitled "New Art in Georges Brack's Painting." He became interested in Greek and Roman mythology, and a decade later, myths pervaded all his work. The canvas was insufficient to recognize the grandeur of the

myth and thus turned into sculpture. He blooms on "Bu Ali Sina Millennium" in the General Directorate of Fine Arts, along with Nasser Assar and Sohrab Sepehri. This year, he decided to leave Iran to study sculpture in Italy. He makes carvings and deals with watercolor and oil paint. His works are no longer those of an Iranian painter. Rome is a springboard from which to jump into the world. The people in his works are naked (Kiaras, 2010).

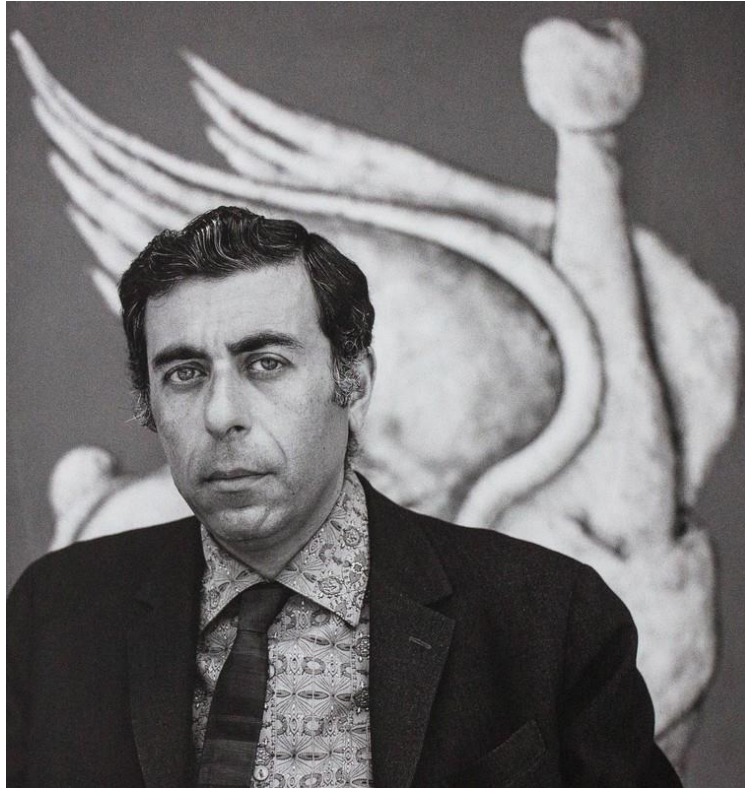


Image 2.24 *Portrait of Bahman Mohasses*

In fact, he chooses between the visible and the invisible to show or mark. His compositions are filled with nostalgia. In Italy he became acquainted with the Brooke school. In this school, although everyone painted landscapes, fear, loneliness and aggression were their main principles.

Mohasses was the forerunner of the exhaustion and grief of homelessness of the world war-torn generation. In elementary steps in Rome, he uses free backgrounds. It shows the sea, the sky and the beach by displaying a bed of two colors. His Icarus painting is a perfect example of a free background. For the first time, he learns to abandon the

conventional linear perspective and tries to create and induce a sense of space and depth with color. From the first year of his presence in Italy, his perception becomes very personal and comes from the mentality of Mohammadi and the induction of Hossein Ziapour. Fascinated by the technique of "aerial sculptures"; That is, sculptures whose interior and exterior space is as important as itself. For this reason, in his work, the composition of the space, the volume of mode and the lighting are of fundamental importance. In sculptures, it freezes a moment of human nature. "My work is biographical" he said. In fact, every sculpture he made, every painting he painted, etched himself. Tehran, however, no longer has room for his wishes as a protesting man. Like Jean Futier, he shows humanity with thick cream colors such as oppression and fear. Under the influence of color in Futriye's work, harsh expressions are found in his work.



Image 2.25 *Sculpture*, Mohasses, 1977

The year Mohasses arrived in Rome, the Italians were in search of European quality in painting, sculpture and architecture. The margins of his life were small, but what he did, the moral code he showed, was that man was hurt. It shone in Venice 1956 and Paris 1962. He often worked in exhibitions in Rome, Milan, Florence and François and translated Italian literature into Persian. Apart from being a painter and sculptor, he is also called a translator. During 1963, in which he returns to Iran, "Goethe Institute" and "Kandriz Hall" display his works. Tragic satire has taken him to grotesque spaces. Characters such as Icarus (feathered wax), Ishtar (queen of the hellish lands), Minotaurs

(a giant with a human body and a bull's head) depict Leda and other myths. The vertical form in his work makes this period special. Cold and soulless atmospheres emphasize the humanistic aspect of the work. He had few friends. For every reason, he disrupted friendship. In the presence of the queen, he cursed the king. When he received the statue of the royal family from the special office, he showed the loss of the human soul in the face of the king and queen, and a terrible stupidity in the face of the crown prince. When the queen asked him about the look on his face with that worried look, Mohasses replied that you are afraid your son will never sit on the king seat. Mohasses himself said that he made the king in the form of a monster holding his coat, which is a sign of his rule. The king did not like this statue and ordered its destruction (Momayez, 2009).

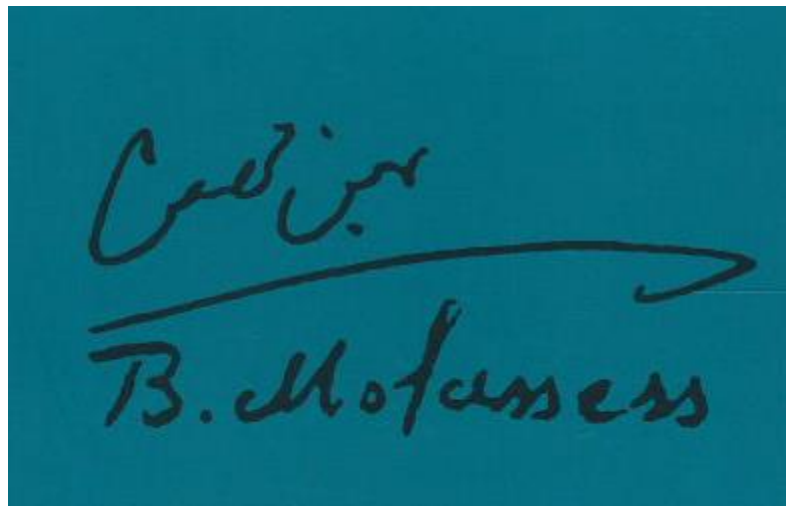


Image 2.26 *Signature of Bahman Mohasses*

Mohasses also used a kind of creativity in theater; That is, here too you saw yourself in front of the white curtain. The people in his plays were close to each other! Just like the composition of a painting. He is an example of a person about whom it should be said that no one becomes an artist, but an artist is born. Now his philosophical view of the world diminishes, and he changes the mythical atmosphere in favor of his desires. Has no regard for society and time. For him, art is not the art of the masses. Mohasses openly sought the lost honor of life. The 1940s, when he came to Iran, were not so difficult, lonely and without friends. He himself had said that the need to make a connection draws the artist to the theater! His sculptures seem to have captured the soul in the body. He transformed the decorative property of an organ into a visual property. A kind of sensory

attraction in the artificial spaces of his sculptures took him away from what we thought he was. Later, instead of hitting the brush, he used a hatchet.

He made a clear example of this kind of work in "Shiraz Art Festival"; A large painting about forty meters that showed the fear of man and the victims of modern life. In "The Fall of Icarus", Icarus looks at a man and a woman who sin on the beach. Flat space of earth and sky, shown in two colors; He is on Icarus with his mouth open to sin. It is as if he is paying the penalty for man's sin. The coagulation of the paint and a kind of sand texture, which is an example of the product, has had a special effect on the work. In fact, his work is a collection on the study of ugly aesthetics. Rather than go to the extreme in ugliness, it considers the evil side. Although masculinity is pleasing to him, wherever he shows it, he has a kind of aesthetic dissatisfaction. His love of frescoes and murals came to him in Italy. Apart from "Fishes", "Phi Phi" and "birds", from the second half of the 1940s onwards, the forms in his work are narrow and their outlook is often closed. We see the culmination of this complexity of perspective in the Seyhoun Gallery exhibition. He came to Iran in the 1970s. He brought sculptures and paintings from Italy to Iran. He sold his house in Tehran and went to live like a prince in a big house in Siahkal; but he could not. He did not find anyone for friendship. He hired one or two relatives and fell on the statues and paintings with a hammer, ax and sharp knife. He crashed and kneaded everything. He destroyed everything that was a relic and souvenir and moved to Rome to die there. Few Iranian artists like him have lived alone in the world. Loneliness for him did not come only from the body or nostalgia; Mohasses' reputation as a great painter and sculptor in Iranian art, as well as his remarkable record in the field of translation, despite its small number, all testify to this point. The attempt to bring to the stage many theaters, of which he managed to perform only three examples, is a testament to the mind of his seeker, among whom at least two examples had a remarkable level. The narrations of the artist's friends and relatives about him as a comprehensive person with deep knowledge in fields such as cinema practically create a different face from other visual artists (More, 2006).

In any case, the efforts of all artists following the modernism movement between the 1930s and 1950s have been based on presenting a style of Iranian visual arts in new forms. In the first half of the 1950s, they faced a kind of turmoil in Iranian art. On the one

hand, the imitation and reflection of Western art is very prominent, and the tendency to paint art in market and popular methods is prevalent. In both respects, we are faced with blind imitation and, of course, vulgar art. But these currents provide the basis for the emergence of intellectual tendencies opposed to the currents of formal art. Many students on this course tend to social realism and protest popular art. These people often tried to display some kind of revolutionary art on a large scale and on a wall. However, in the background of these works, some kind of protest attitudes can still be sought. The modern artist puts more emphasis on his mind, and this mindset leads to abstraction. As a result, the physical reality of objects is negated and space and time become abstract concepts (Pakbaz, 209, 2005). Meanwhile, Saqakhaneh school is one of the most important schools of art in the process of artistic modernization in Iran. The Saqakhaneh school borrows from both modernism and postmodernism. It is as if the artists of this era, after tasting modernism and enjoying the freedom of action gained through it, turned into postmodernism. Modernism is noticed in terms of innovation in the use of tools and materials and postmodernism also due to the return of these artists to the past of Iran and its symbolic and decorative use.

Chapter III

A window on knowing Bahman Mohasses and his works



3.1. Introduction

Bahman Mohasses was a pioneering Iranian painter, sculptor, and translator, widely regarded as one of the most significant figures in the development of modern Iranian art. His avant-garde approach, marked by bold experimentation and deep intellectual engagement, produced paintings and sculptures that are now considered cornerstone works in the history of Iranian modernism. Mohasses was a complex and enigmatic figure—an artist whose layered personality and multifaceted artistic output resist simple categorization. His work not only reflected his personal visions and existential anxieties but also offered sharp critiques of political, cultural, and aesthetic conventions.

Given the depth and breadth of his influence, as well as the intricate nature of his thoughts and creations, a comprehensive exploration of all dimensions of Mohasses' life and work would extend beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, in the following section, we will offer a focused overview of his artistic evolution, examining key moments in his career and the thematic and stylistic characteristics that distinguish his contribution to Iranian and global art.

Thus, this chapter aims to focus on comparative analysis of the evolution of his work across different periods: This entails tracing the transformation of his artistic expression before and after emigration from Iran, analyzing changes in technique, subject matter, color usage, and audience engagement, and exploring the possible causes of these transformations considering his personal life and socio-historical position.

3.2. Biography and life events

Bahman Mohasses was born in Rasht on March,1, 1931 and his family was rich in that region. The Mohasses family belonged to the famous and prosperous families of Lahijan and was famous in the rice and silk trade. On the way to school, while he was nine years old, standing behind a shop window and looking at the hands of a man who was drawing his brush like a cane on a canvas, he met Habib Mohammadi. Many know Habib Mohammadi through his students such as Bahman Mohasses, who was educated by him during his childhood and adolescence. Mohammadi strongly follows the rational method of painting; But color had no rational origin for him. Mohammadi was the ideologue of Gilani painters. Excited heads, teary-eyed, the nature of Van Gogh in the north, and the

sternness of the lines of his face were not the case in Rasht. He was a Caucasian immigrant who had lived in Azerbaijan. When he left, he came to Rasht and learned the method of Russian realism. At the age of fourteen, Bahman was his dear student. However, he gave up Habib Mohammadi's natural style very soon. When Habib died, Bahman sent gifts to his master's wife every month until the last years he was in Iran (Rozbahani, 2010).

He was appreciative. Following the teachings of the master, Bahman was also a painter at a young age and after his family emigrated to Tehran, his tendency to admire Ziapur from Picasso and the school of Cubism was evident in the first half of 1940. His first exhibition in Tehran as a teenager was the Inanimate Nature Exhibition. During this period, he drew flowers, bottles, and populist and mass-oriented objects. He then placed the same subjects in a period called "Fishes." Of course, in the period of fish in his works, in addition to face and content, there was also a trick and therefore he overcame the gaze (Kiares, 2010).

Mohasses says about this period of his life: I had a strange urge for expression, and that expression was very violent, but this expression was not very knowledgeable either. It was a natural and instinctive desire. He became abstract in this period, hated nature and natural things, and in his early exhibition the adherence to the classical composition was quite evident. The embossing of sand of color gave originality to his work and separated his work from others. It was a space, in which his technique was a magical technique (Tahabaz and Dadkhah, 1964).

At the age of twenty-one, Mohasses exhibits at the Third Force Club. Nima Yoshij and Jalal Al-Ahmad are on his left and right on the opening night. He collaborates with failed magazines published by Ziapour. His generation is in the period of the collapse of dictatorial statues. This generation is afraid of Hitler and becomes a fascist for fear of fascism. Bahman is a perfect example of man after the world war. He considered war to be the basis of human ignorance. In his time, the world had neither a prophet nor a philosopher! Friends in Tehran teach him that he also has "art" and "philosophy". In this period, he tends to read "philosophy of art" (Mojabi, 1999).

In the first issue of Art Thought Magazine, he wrote an article entitled "New Art in Georges Brack's Painting." He became interested in Greek and Roman mythology, and a decade later, myths pervaded all of his work. The canvas was insufficient to recognize the grandeur of the myth. So, he turned to sculpture. On "Millennium of Bou Ali Sina" in the General Directorate of Fine Arts, along with Nasser Assar and Sohrab Sepehri are blooming. In that time, he decided to leave Iran to study sculpture in Italy. In 1954, he entered Rome to study sculpture. Mohasses is one of the first Iranian artists to travel to Italy. His studies in Italy marked a turning point in Mohasses' worldview on many issues. It was there that he was able to create, read, see and, most importantly, to think and find his own artistic characters in the fields of literature, culture, painting, sculpture and theater (Dehbashi, 2008).

The year Mohasses arrived in Rome the Italians were in search of European quality in painting, sculpture and architecture. The margins of his life were small, but what he did and the moral code he presented showed that man was hurt. In Italy he became acquainted with the Brooke school. In this school, although everyone painted landscapes, fear, loneliness and aggression were their main principles. Mohasses was the forerunner of the exhaustion and grief of homelessness of the world war-torn generation. In the beginning year of study in Rome, he uses free backgrounds. It shows the sea, the sky and the beach by displaying a bed of two colors. His Icarus painting is a perfect example of a free background. For the first time, he learns to abandon the conventional linear perspective and try to create and induce a sense of space and depth with color. From the first year of his presence in Italy, his perception becomes very personal and comes from the mentality of Mohammadi and the induction of Hossein Ziapour. He gets fascinated by the technique of "aerial sculptures"; That is, sculptures whose interior and exterior space is as important as itself. For this reason, in his work, the composition of space, volume, mode and lighting are essential. In sculptures, it freezes a moment of human nature. "My work is biographical," he said (Dadkhah, 1964).

In fact, every sculpture he makes, every painting he draws, sculpts himself into a figurehead and it seems he does carve, while dealing with watercolor and oil paint. His works are no longer those of an Iranian painter. Rome is a springboard from which to jump into the world. The results of this period of his life are several group and solo

exhibitions inside and outside Italy. He regularly exhibits his work at the Venice Biennale in 1956 and 1958 in various exhibitions in Paris. In the same years, he participates in the second and third biennials of Tehran in 1960 and 1961. He shone in Venice 1956 and Paris 1962. He often works in exhibitions in Rome, Milan, Florence and François. He also translates Italian literature into Persian. Apart from being a painter and sculptor, he is also called a translator. The same as many other young Iranian artists who returned to Iran after study in the West to create a new wave in Iranian art, he left for Iran. When he returned in 1957, he had an exhibition in Gilan with Habib Mohammadi and his students. Now Bahman Mohasses is universal. Tehran, however, has no place for his demands. He protests in the position of a human being. The people in his works are naked. In fact, he chooses between the visible and the invisible to show or mark. His compositions are filled with nostalgia. In 1963, when he returned to Iran, the Goethe Institute and the Kandriz Hall exhibited his works. Tragic satire has taken him to grotesque spaces. Characters such as Icarus (feathered wax), Ishtar (queen of the hellish lands), Minotaurs (a giant with a human body and a bull's head) depict Leda and other myths. The vertical form in his work makes this period special. Cold and soulless atmospheres emphasize the humanistic aspect of the work. He makes few friends, and for every reason, disrupts friendship.

In the presence of the queen, he curses the king. When he receives the order for statue of the royal family from the special office, he shows the loss of the human soul in the face of the king and queen, and a terrible stupidity in the face of the crown prince! When the queen asks him about the look on his face with that worried look, Mohasses replies that you are afraid your son will never sit on the bed. Mohasses himself says that he made the king in the form of a monster holding his coat, which is a sign of his rule. The king did not like this statue and ordered its destruction (Aghdashloo,2008).

During his years of residence in Iran, his works are exhibited at the Goethe Institute, Kandriz Hall and several other places, and he participates in several group exhibitions. But in general, he is not a fan of exhibitions and he sells his works very professionally without the need for public display, and this story itself added to his fame (Mahjoubi, 2008).



Image 3.1 *The Royal family*, Mohasses, Bronze, 1972

During these years, in addition to painting and sculpture, he also showed interest in the field of theater and literature. In addition to translating *The Skin*, Mohasses translated works by Luigi Pirandello, Cesare Pavese, Eugene Unesco, Jean Genet, and Salvatore Quasimodo into Persian, and also staged several plays, including *Henry IV* by Pirandello and *The Chair* by Eugene Unesco. For this reason, he was also associated with literature, and this played a significant role in introducing him as an artist. His works have not entered the world art market due to being Iranian. In a letter to Sepehri from Rome, he writes: "In March and April, I arranged my work for fifteen days. I did not sell anything. The collectors said he was a foreigner and it was unclear whether he would pursue his work in Rome. "Wherever we are, we must be harmed by it!" (Mohasses, 1958).

In 1964, after participating in the joint exhibition of the Iran-Italy Association, Mohasses organized a sensational exhibition in the Iran Hall, known as "Phi Phi Shouts". In this exhibition, he exhibits sixteen paintings in a terrifying and emerging way. Faces and limbs metamorphosed with thick colors on the rough and embossed texture, which had astonished most of the spectators at that time (Mojabi, 2008).

This was an exhibition that introduced Mohasses as an emerging artistic figure in Iran, and it was after this exhibition that Mohasses was introduced as one of the most famous Iranian painters and was considered by the artists. The only period of his serious activity in Iran was in the 1960s. Later, he decides to bring theater to the stage in Tehran. For the first time in 1966, the chairs brought the Unesco work to the stage with its translation. A year later, on the occasion of Pirandello's 100th birthday, Henry IV transformed the stage in Tehran. The "Stadium" hall, in collaboration with the "Cultural Institute of Iran and Italy", created completely literary and artistic conditions to impress Tehran's intellectuals. The dress was made by the artist himself and the decor was by Dr. Vincenzo Bianchini. The play was also a tribute to the Shah of Iran. "Henry IV is Pirandello's greatest work, and in my opinion it can be adapted to different times and places," he said. "And I implemented it away from any Freudian allusions and only as an individual tragedy that this person might not be an empire but me and you."

Mohasses also uses a kind of creativity in theater; That is, here too you saw yourself in front of the white curtain. The people in his plays were intertwined, just like the composition of a painting. Giuseppe Salvagi also looks at Mohasses' works in relation to his interest in theater: "When I hear about Mohasses' interest in theater, this mathematical balance in his works becomes clearer to me because, as theater is artistic In the end, accuracy and correctness are completely innovative to exhibit art (Selvaji, 2010). Mohasses is an example of people who, it should be said, no one becomes an artist, but an artist is born. Now his philosophical view of the world diminishes and he changes the mythical atmosphere in favor of his desires. He has no regard for society and time. For him, art is not the art of the masses. When a magazine reporter asked him, is it possible to give a mission to today's art? "My dear, I am not a telegraph artist," he said. Nineteenth-century man was a man of hope. A world had changed; And another world was emerging and had not yet reached its present decline. And inevitably he had his own aesthetics and

philosophy that made him feel like a messenger. Why Adam today? For a blind and deaf person, a dumb prophet is needed. "In art, there is only communication." (Dadkhah, 1964).

Mohasses openly sought the lost honor of life. The translations he made were also in line with the mentality he followed. When he translated Mallart work's skin into Persian, he wanted to show the sufferings of World War II in a different way. Vikent's translation was also about the futility of war! He was now also a theater director in the 1960s. Translated your villages from Cesare Pavhzezh. "The late Matthias Pascal" was sold to a publisher, but he was not captured by the empty man after the war. Every pumice needs to be mummified to stay. He tried to embalm the emptiness in all the sculptures he made of man. His works are real examples of post-war human mummies. He himself had said that the need to make a connection draws the artist to the theater! They organized a play called "Small Group" that performed the Unesco Chairs. He wanted to stage Pirandello's play on March 26, 1967, which he had translated, but failed; He had also translated the genes of Jean Genet and Pirandello for performance, which failed; Thus he got upset and returned to Italy. After him, everything that was said about him had nothing to do with him. Later, instead of hitting the brush, he uses a hatchet. He made a clear example of this kind of work in "Shiraz Art Festival"; A large painting about forty meters that showed the fear of man and the victims of modern life.

His love of frescoes and murals came to him in Italy. Apart from "Fishes", "Phi Phi" and "Chickens", ie from the second half of the 1960s onwards, the forms in his work are narrow. The outlook is often closed. We see the culmination of this complexity of perspective in his works. Mehrdad Samadi says: "Everyone's work is tight; Canvases are narrow for forms are for volumes. He goes from one side of his office to the other. The room is cramped and full of paintings on the wall. The room is suffocatingly cramped and has its usual routine: I was born late. "I had to work hard." He showed us the dull landscape of nature. In this period, open and expansive compositions in a closed space and limited to one or two colors, is his special style. Between 1963 and 1969, Mohasses tried to have an active participation in launching a progressive artistic movement in Iran, which was called the "Group of Five". A movement that faced many cultural and political problems at that time and ended unsuccessfully (Crispoletti, 1990).

During his return from Italy, he shows humanity with thick cream colors such as oppression and fear, and in these years, under the influence of color in Futriye's work, harsh expressions become more prominent in his work. Mohasses, although he belongs to the group of prolific artists in this period, is in contact with few people and prefers seclusion to presence in artistic circles. Finally, in 1969, he left Iran with the permanent intention of migrating to Italy. But for several years he had not completely severed ties with Iran, where he carried out several orders for sculptures to be delivered in Tehran. One of his most famous sculptures was the "Reed Man", which was for installation in the city theater (Kiars, 2010).

He lived in Italy for five decades and in the seventies he decided to return to Iran after many years and bring his sculptures and paintings with him from Italy. He sold his house in Tehran and went to live like a prince in a big house in Siahkal; But he could not. He did not find anyone for friendship. He hired one or two relatives and fell on the statues and paintings with a hammer, ax and sharp knife. He crushed and kneaded everything. With his arrival, he got lung cancer and the grief of losing one of his close friends caused him to spit on every memento and memorial and went to Rome to die there. Few Iranian artists like him have lived alone in the world. Loneliness for him did not come only from the body or nostalgia; I think the secretary he made for himself was one of Nima Yoshij's recommendations.



Image 3.2 *Flute player*, Mohasses, Bronze, 1973

In a letter to Bahman, Nima writes: "I only say these things to you. Get in touch with people as much as it takes time. There are many things that man later teaches people and he has already learned from their own lives and the people themselves do not know. Rest assured, the suffering of travel is seen by one who imagines a home. Only the so-called meditation time is necessary. It must perish in order to survive. This kind of living is special living. "They give this life to man with its real benefits, they are very expensive and they take it back soon." (Yooshij,1955). If Mohasses is not known in his true dimensions and his power is not known, it goes back to several factors, the most important of which was his self-imposed isolation during the last few decades. "I started living in exile when I left the province," he said. Tehran was a foreign city to me and later became an enemy city. Elsewhere in the description of the artist, it is believed that: to create a painting, one must become alienated from oneself, escape, separate. Perhaps the definition of art can be doubt, rejection and even death. Considering these sentences that have been uttered by the artist, it may be possible to get a little closer to the isolation of his will and its relation to his works. A kind of torment for the birth of art, avoiding at the

cost of deepening the motives that result in nothing but the creation of works at their highest level. In fact, living and working in Europe could never force Mohasses to lose his sense of belonging to his own culture and to embrace modernism without local identity. On the contrary, it led him to seek a deeper and at the same time more personal identity. "My work may be a northern minority or it may be close to nations that are more closely related to us in terms of vision, philosophy, etc., but it is never Iranian or anywhere else," he said. I belong to this part of the world and this kind of seeing is part of my blood. But it is not only blood that is at work, knowledge is also involved and my knowledge is French. So I say it is Western, but at the same time I have a "vision" of my own race (Dadkhah, Azad, 1964).

Bahman Mohasses was a leading Iranian painter, sculptor and translator. His avant-garde paintings are considered as valid works of modern Iranian painting. Mohasses was a special artist, who did not discover the various dimensions of his art and personality during his lifetime. Bahman Mohasses was able to focus the mind of a part of the society; He believed it was a historical character, and that was a key phrase about his character that he could develop, certainly any story or scene could be made for a historical character (Faruqi, 1967).

Indicative features of this artist's works; Headlessness is physical conflict and physical problems and afflictions. The characters in his work include people with small heads and fat bodies. The influence of Mediterranean art was also seen in his works and he created mythical works. This modern artist has participated in numerous exhibitions and conferences and his works are kept in Italy, America and Iran. Mohasses along with painting and sculpture; He was one of the pioneers of theater stage design in Iran and used a number of decorative and expressive chairs in the performance, which, when put together, evoked an abstract forest. He had few friends during his lifetime and in a few cases corresponded with Sohrab Sepehri. He lived single for seventy-nine years. He never used women as role models. The model for him was a man with all the masculinity. He was fascinated by creating color rhythms. As he turned to abstraction, these colorful rhythms spread throughout the work. In the first exhibition of works, following the classical composition was evident. The raw appearance of the hand and the combination of the fish head with the man, the smooth and polished surfaces with the prominent grains

of sand give color to his work. His work set him apart from others. In his paintings, he has used mythical creatures and human-animals (Minotaurs = with rotten, rotten and frozen limbs, with muscles that are thick in one part of the body and narrow in other parts, and sometimes his pictorial elements). In particular, his human beings turn into a potato-like volume, which are seen as expressions of bitter protest and humorous metaphors, not of the "living-dead" who are overshadowed by filth and filthiness. The embodiment of a damaged, deformed, burnt, and rotten human being is waiting for the apocalypse, and in this way he has achieved a universal language, without wanting to make his work popular. Bahman Mohasses' works had no effect on Iranian art visually and genre, but Mohasses has the protagonist image that contemporary artists have and shows in his behavior, takes a stand, opposes and is stubborn, and from this point of view, he is a very important artist. . The image of a modern Iranian artist is made with the image of Mohasses. Mohasses is one of the modernist stars in the history of Iran, the role that Mohasses plays in the visual arts is not so prominent in other aspects such as theater and translation. Although Bahman Mohasses is one of the many people who were in the field of theater and translation; ahead and leading. Mohasses was from a social class that did not have in common with the artists of that period and had an aristocratic character. He was from a social class that was not close to the middle class of society and in many cases the reactions that show the result. "I am an art worker (Craftsman) but when asked why one of the works at Jundishapur University was destroyed, he said:" People; They are the common people. This contradiction was seen in his behavior, while he knew himself from the people but did not know his works for the people (Dadkhah, 1964).

Bahman Mohasses had very few friends, very limited contacts with some people, including Sohrab, and letters were exchanged between them. In fact, the people with whom Mohasses was in contact; The artists were isolated, meaning that his friends were just like him. Mohasses had spent most of his life outside Iran and had no students. Also, Mohasses' works in the public arena were either eliminated or destroyed. He praises his character, not his works.

3.3. The work courses of Mohasses

Dividing the work record of artists into different periods, it is possible to study the evolution of his thoughts and work. Regarding Bahman Mohasses, due to many events of

the artist's work in a location far from Iran and beyond the reach of this artist, research in this matter is not easily possible. It has been recognized that it should be noted that it is wrong to assign a definite boundary between the artist's periods of work, hence only the characteristics of each period and its approximate boundaries.

3.3.1. The first period: Habib Mohammadi Workshop

The first coherent period of Mohasses' work can be considered as Habib Mohammadi's workshop and about 14 and 15 years old as an artist (around 1945). In various interviews, the artist introduces a serious look at painting and the beginning of this period. Based on the works published from this historical period, the works of this period are mostly an attempt to learn the principles of painting and generally do not have special artistic or ideological features. Most of these works include subjects such as the still life of landscapes and portraits, which were in the style of Habib Mohammadi's Russian realism and were influenced by the intellectual atmosphere prevailing in Rasht at that time (Tajdini,2013).

Views of the nature of northern Iran with rural spaces, which can be seen to some extent in the type of writers of Impressionist tendencies, and the influence of the works and teachings of the master, is evident in them. The format of these works has been signed under the name of "Bahman Mohassesi"(Roozbahani,2010).

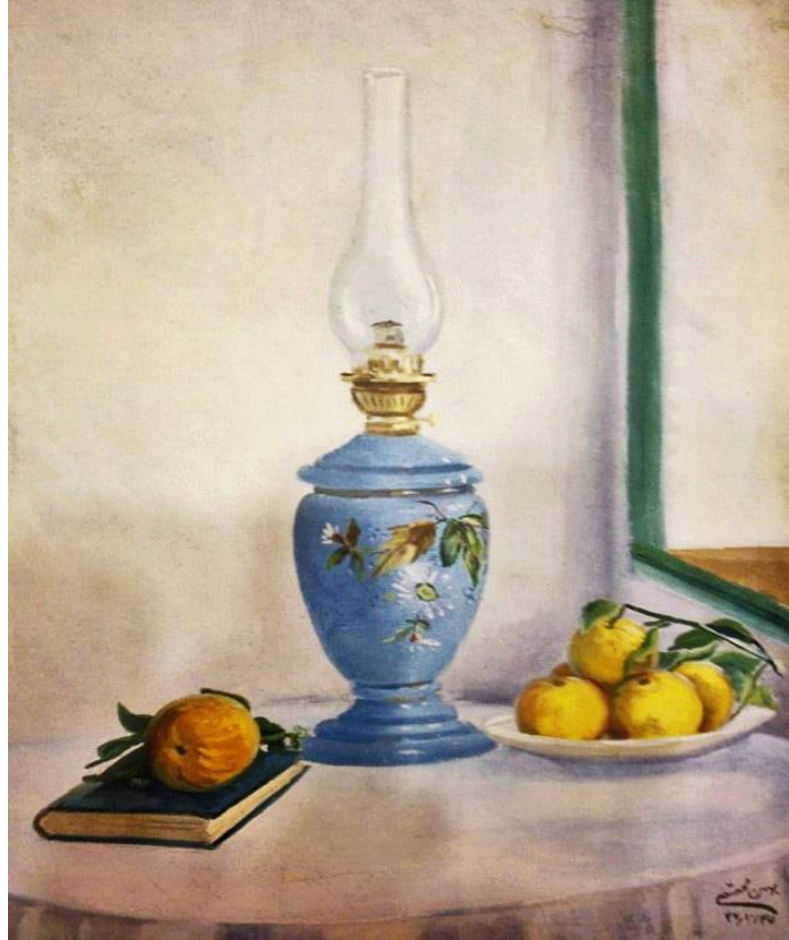


Image 3.3 *Inanimate nature*, Mohasses, 1948

3.3.2. The second period: Arrival in Tehran, Jalil Ziapour, new experiences and politics

The arrival of Bahman Mohasses in Tehran around 1948 brought about fundamental changes in his works. The inflammatory atmosphere of those years in Tehran was the basis for change in every way. Political events, along with cultural developments, created a dynamic environment. Associating with prominent cultural personalities and activists in this field along with getting acquainted with contemporary art trends and learning more about it with Jalil Ziapour, as well as associating and collaborating with the "War Rooster Association" and magazines such as Rooster Claw. Painting was no longer just a simple drawing of a face or a scene (Ziapour,1949).

The increase of technical skill can be seen in the works of artists such as Mossadegh and Khalil Maleki. At the same time, trying to understand the subject psychologically becomes more important. Mohasses is a young man in this period who is affected by the

social and political conditions prevailing in Tehran, as well as communication and acquaintance with some art and culture activists and entering political circles, experiencing fundamental changes in his works. The formation of Bahman's special political tendencies can be considered from this period. Many of these ideas are rooted in the distant past and go back to his childhood, which later, influenced by the atmosphere of Tehran in the 1960s, found a definite appearance. Rasht at that time was considered a dynamic and progressive environment due to its special geographical conditions and proximity to the Soviet Union, as well as the presence of political, revolutionary and cultural currents. The direct influence of the political thought and ideological atmosphere of that time should not be sought in the works of the artist. His political artistic activity is the creation of Tudeh Party propaganda placards as well as portraits of some political figures such as Mossadegh or Khalil Maleki. But behind many of his works, especially those that exist from the fifth period onwards, there is a special look at society and man that can be considered influenced by his social ideas and the influences that he accepted from the atmosphere of Iran at that time.



Image 3.4 *Portrait of Dr. Mossadegh, Mohasses, 1951*

The flow of modern art in Iran intensifies in the 1960s with the activities of people like Ziapour. The works of this period of the artist's career do not necessarily fall into a general category. Especially since at this stage of his work, Mohasses was searching for and achieving his personal style as well as understanding modern art. In this period, compared to previous works, Mohasses has a more psychological understanding of the subject. In addition, more realistic works have been made with more payment, such as Mossadegh's portrait. On the other hand, the artist's research in the field of modern art causes him to gain experience in modern styles as well, such as Cubist works inspired by Ziapour's teachings, one of the examples of which is Ziapour's own portrait. Mohasses' Cubist experiences were largely limited to this period, inspired by Ziapour's context, and

naturally left unrelated to the ontology of Cubism. After this period, Mohasses took another path in modern art, but his interest in Picasso always remained with him (Pakbaz,2002).

Picasso's influence on him took on a different form and was expressed in the continuance of the inanimate nature of the product. Another range of the artist's works in this period is abstract experiences. It also has different experiences, so much so that in later periods we sometimes see works outside the original style of the artist, such as some abstract paintings and other experiences, which are generally influenced by current customs in Italy at that time. Because of this, Mohasses has long been known as an artist with a high diversity of work. In this regard, he says in an interview with Arash Magazine, November 1964: I am not afraid to say like a painter that I have a blue color, and I should take the coffin with me like a sob and howler to say that this is my painting. I have no fear (Dadkhah,1964).

Mohasses' second period of work continues until his departure from Iran in 1954.

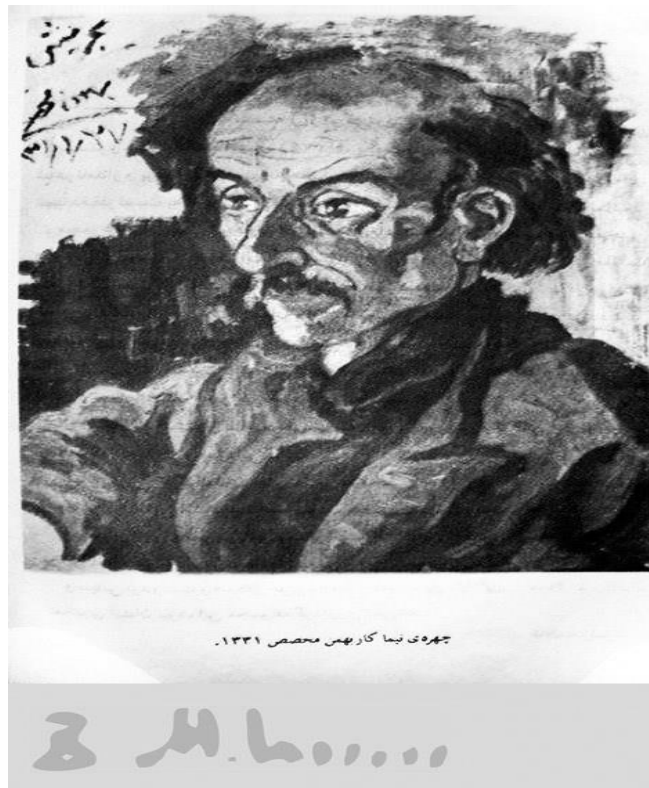


Image 3.5 *Portrait of Nima Yushij, Mohasses, 1952*

3.3.3. Third period: Rome Meeting Hall Exhibition

Mohasses' exploration of the art world, among other factors, eventually paved the way for a trip to Italy. Little is known about his activities during this period. A brief description of one of the artist's exhibitions in Italy in one of the Iranian newspapers of that time, as well as a few pictures left along with a brief description of the artist in this field, are among the most important information, available about paintings of that era.

Regarding training in Italy, internship and several months of activity in Ferruccio Fratzzi's workshop and dealing with acid work in one of the workshops in Rome and working in dubbing groups of Iranians living in Italy, are the available information about him. The possibility of learning sculpture in the workshops of Rome during this trip or his subsequent income to Italy is not far from the mind. The works of this period can be considered as a continuation of the previous period of work and the continuation of Mohasses' research, but nevertheless, and considering the few works left from this period and his interview in Arash magazine, it can be concluded that this part of life, the artist himself includes a special period of his career(Dadkhah,1964).

The lifeless nature of this period shows differences in comparison with the artist's previous works that have provided the basis for such a division. Previous works have more individuality.

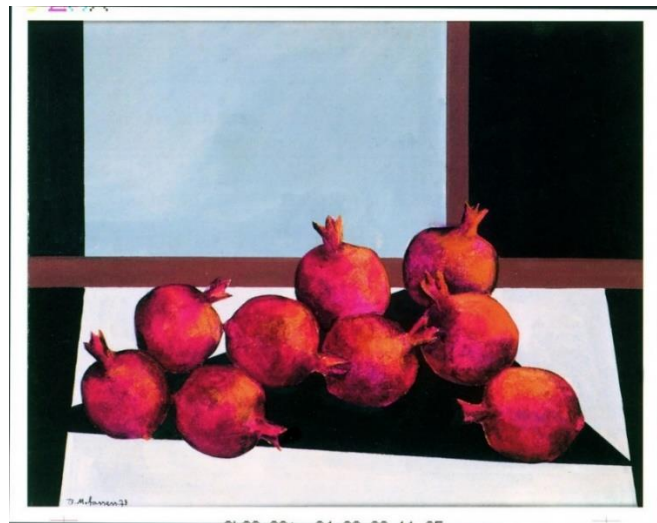


Image 3.6 *Pomegranate*, Mohasses, 1979

3.3.4. Fourth period: Roam in abstraction

Approximately around the "Rome Meeting Room" exhibition, a new chapter begins in Mohasses' portfolio, which is based more on abstract experiences than anything else. Spatial abstracts that also evoked the underwater world. These wanderings lead to changes in works such as the works of the second and third biennials of Tehran and then end up in the paintings of the exhibition "Iranian painters educated in Italy". Part of this conflict will continue until the next period. Many of these works can be considered inspired by the current of abstract expressionism and artists such as Jackson Pollack. In addition to these influences, one can see signs of Italian painters of that time (especially painters of the fifties) in the method of painting and techniques (Pakbaz,2002).



Image 3.7 *Untitled*, Mohasses, 1980

3.3.5. The fifth period: Phi Phi howls with joy

Assigning the works of an exhibition to a specific period in an artist's artistic portfolio is not uncommon, but this phenomenon applies to Mohasses' works and portfolio, for some reason, about the "Iran" Hall exhibition. The first reason for this choice can be considered as the significant difference between the works of the artist before and after the works of this exhibition. It seems that the creation of such works has lasted for some time and is not limited to the exhibition. From this exhibition, a critical look at Mohasses' works can be found. The above exhibition made Mohasses more famous in Iran. In Iran, the reactions of the art community take place in the face of the work and personality of this artist, and the beginning of many of the artist's special preparations and techniques should be followed in this period. His personal interpretation of it, along with the deformation of the human face and limbs, are all among these cases. Many of Mohasses' personal characteristics and behaviors also become more apparent from this time (Masoudi,1966).

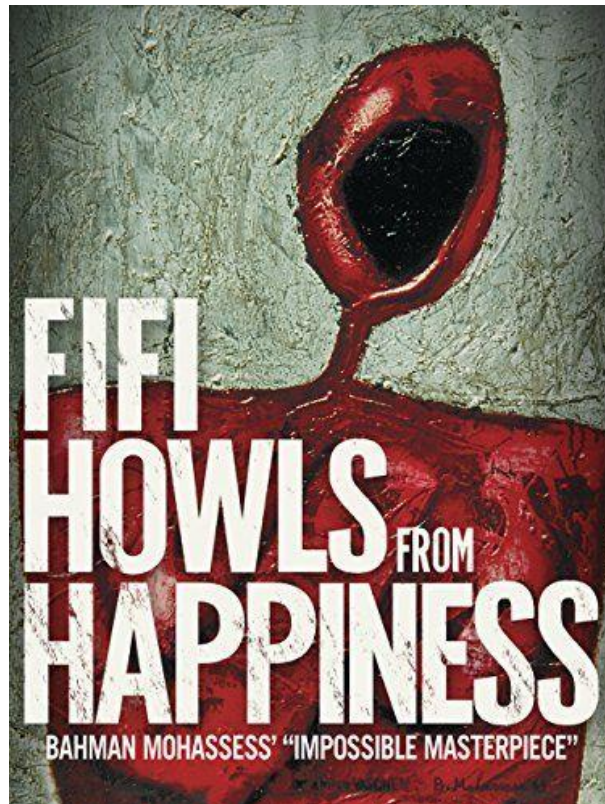


Image 3.8 *Phi Phi howls with joy*, Mohasses, 1964

3.3.6. The sixth period: The peak in silence

From Seyhoun Gallery Exhibition in 1966, we witness the formation of a new era and in a sense the most famous and successful period of Mohasses' work, which continues until about the middle of the seventies. In this period, in addition to painting, he also sculpts. Shortly before that, he translated books and also directed theater. In this period, Mohasses created his works with various subjects, which in a general division including fish, birds, mythical creatures, inanimate nature, and human beings become metamorphosed into machine life or apocalyptic spaces and some other subjects. Despite the high quality of the works of this period and also the fame and prestige of Mohasses currently, we still see few exhibitions of him. Of course, many of his artistic activities in Iran, especially painting exhibitions, were met with news coverage, which testifies to the great importance and fame of the artist in his time (Mojabi,1991).

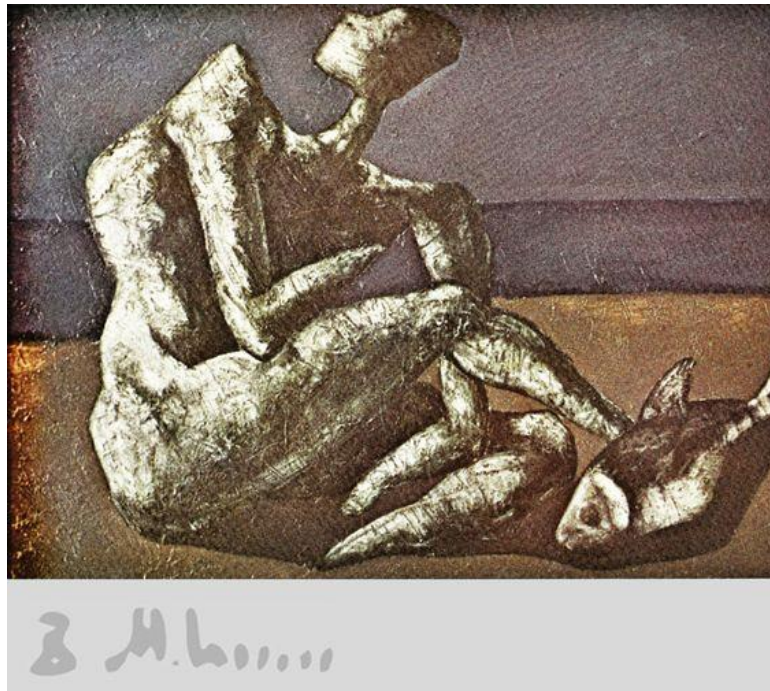


Image 3.9 *A man by the beach*, Mohasses, 1967



Image 3.10 *Public Mourning - Death of Martin Luther King*, Mohasses,1966



Image 3.11 *Minotaur Scares People Well*, Mohasses,1965

3.3.7. Seventh period: Ground subjects

Mohasses' last period of work began in the mid-1970s. He spent a long time without any special exhibitions, despite his isolation for years and his reputation for holding a few exhibitions. The beginning of his last period of work, according to the history of some of these works, is in the years when he is still traveling between Iran and Italy. But because he did not exhibit works from that period in those years, and due to leaving Iran in 1978 and staying in Italy for a long time, many of his audiences in Iran were unaware of these works for many years (Pakbaz,2008).

Over the years, it gradually distances itself from the themes of the previous period, and its subjects once again step on the ground with a look like the past. New topics such as tourists and rich women who spend their money in misery.

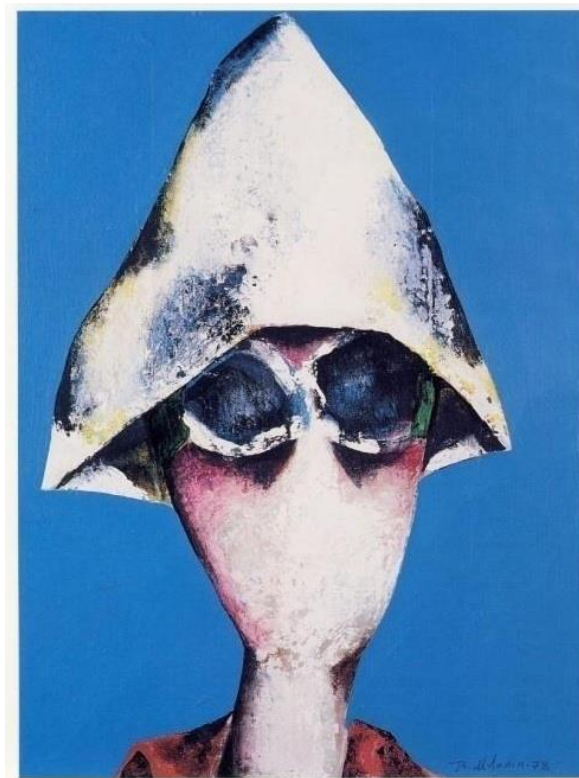


Image 3.12 *Tourist*, Mohasses, 1978

Also, works inspired by the bitter events of that time, such as the story of Halabcha, the Persian Gulf War and the like, are among the most common of these.



Image 3.13 *Bay Bird*, Mohasses, 1991



Image 3.14 *Halabja goat*, Mohasses, 1991

Some of these works also show the artist's great nostalgia for the geography of his birthplace. The biting humor of many of them is somewhat reminiscent of the fifth period of the artist's "Phi Phi" collection. During this period, the colors became more diverse and

there was no longer any need for pus colors and special textures. In the last years of the artist's life and for various reasons such as illness, we see collages of him more than anything.

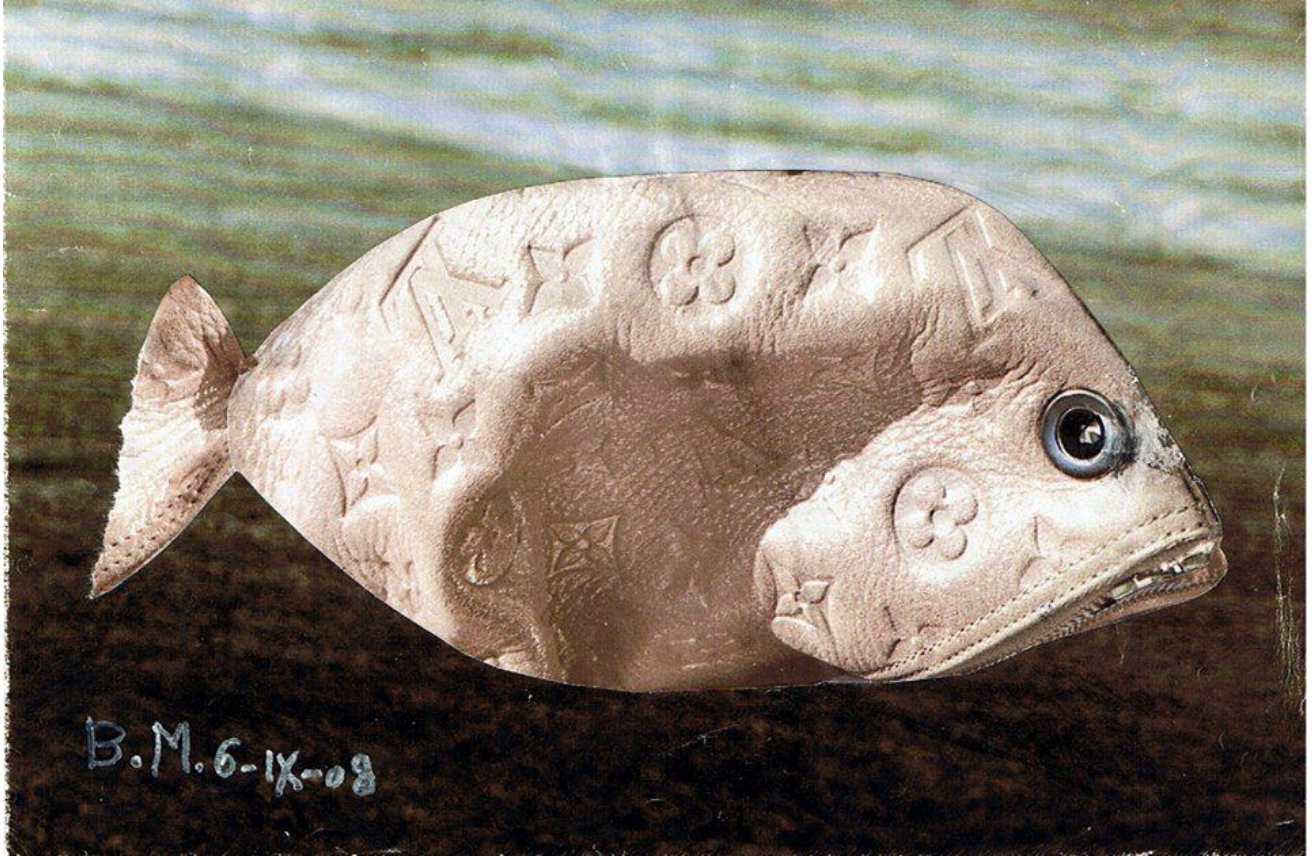


Image 3.15 *Fish*, Mohasses, 1994

All these works are not qualitatively on par with their predecessors, some of them sometimes side with stereotypes. According to the works published by the artist, his latest collection of sculptures was created around 1993. The above factors, along with the disease of the last years of his life, prevented the creation of other sculptures. Aging, the severity of the disease, as well as excessive isolation, have prevented the creation of paintings and more sculpture.

Table 3.1. Characteristics of Mohasses' work periods¹

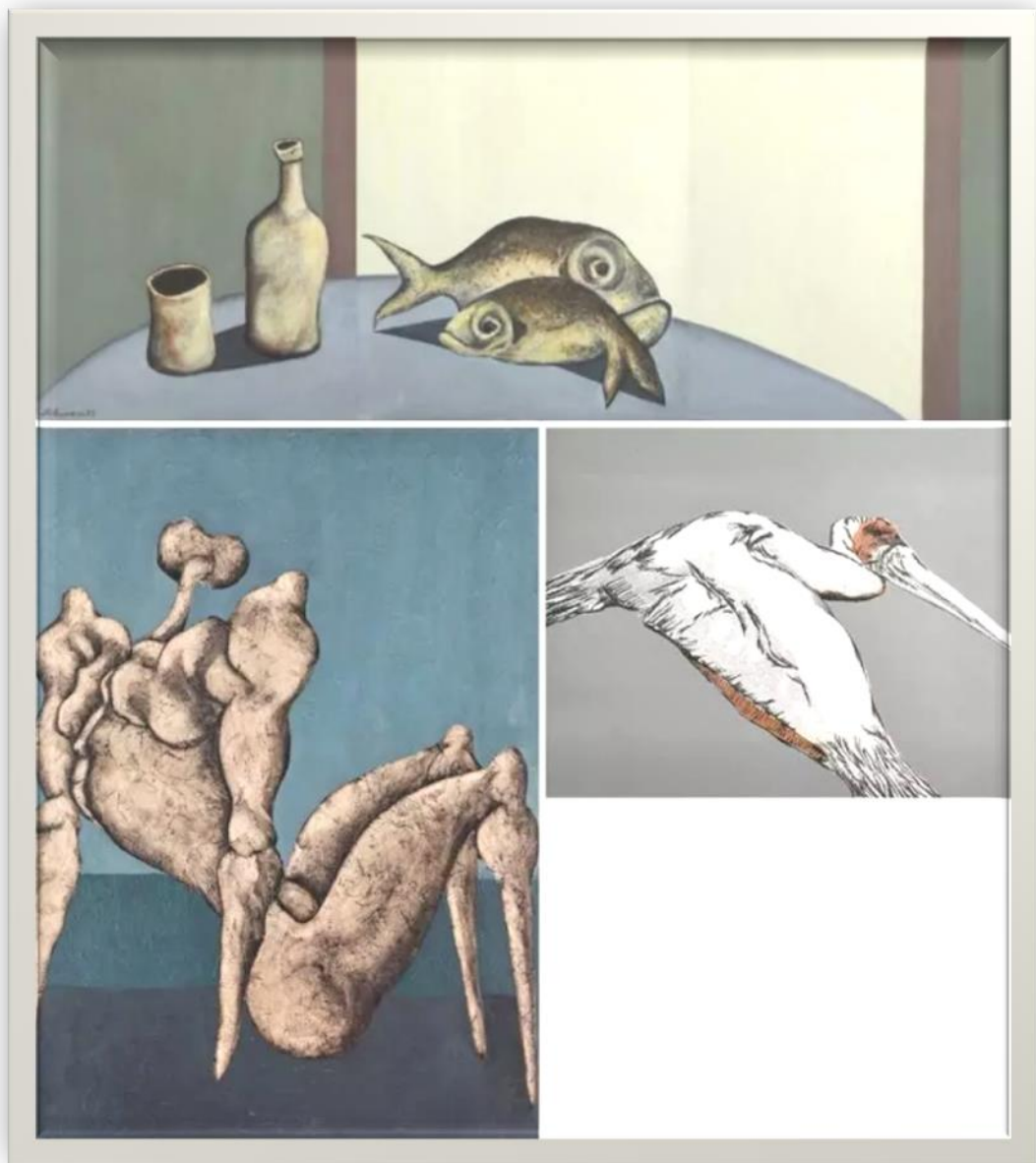
The Period	The Period Characteristics
1. Habib Mohammadi Workshop	about 14-15 years old artist most works include subjects such as the still life
2. Jalil Ziapour 1948-1954	arrival in Tehran around 1948 prominent cultural personalities and activists learning more with Jalil Ziapour more psychological understanding of the subject gaining experience in modern styles getting interested in Picasso
3. Rome Meeting Hall Exhibition	trip to Italy continuation of the previous period more individuality and individuality.
4. Abstraction period	more abstract experiences than anything else signs of Italian painters of that time
5. Phi Phi howls with joy	dedicated to the works of an exhibition significant difference between the works before and after marked the background of most of Mohasses' fame in Iran human body and its personal interpretation deformation of the human face and limbs
6. The peak in silence	formation of a new era in addition to painting, he also sculpted translated books and directed theater fish, birds, mythical creatures, inanimate nature metamorphosed humans in machine life
7. Earth subjects	does not exhibit works from this period works inspired by the bitter events of their time reminiscent of the fifth period of the artist's "Phi Phi" collection colors became more diverse creation of paintings and more sculpture.

¹ More Details in Appendix A

Bahman Mohassess stands as a towering figure in the modernist era of Iranian art—an artist whose true greatness is not always fully grasped through his works alone, but rather through an understanding of his complex and enigmatic character. A leading avant-garde force, Mohassess lived much of his life in self-imposed exile, spending nearly half a century outside Iran. He passed away on the evening of Wednesday, July 28, 2010, in his home in Rome. For many years, Mohassess remained largely forgotten by the public, yet he continued to linger in the minds of artists across a range of stylistic and ideological spectrums. He was known not only for his bold artistic expression but also for his rebellious, anarchist spirit—an attitude that was often more visible in his personality than in his artworks. His identity as an artist was shaped by contradictions: discipline paired with recklessness; refinement fused with raw emotion. A master of metaphor and symbolism, Mohassess skillfully wove visual and conceptual layers into his works, often drawing from both Eastern and Western traditions. His art reflects a dual heritage—a synthesis of the tangible realism of European classical forms with the abstract and mystical aesthetics of the East. This fusion granted his work a unique and powerful voice in modern Iranian art, making him both a product of his cultural milieu and a relentless challenger of its boundaries.

Chapter IV

The classification& Features of works of Bahman Mohasses



4.1. Introduction

In addition to expressing his worldview through the most powerful and recurring motif in his work, the human figure—Bahman Mohasses also employed a range of other visual forms that recur across his oeuvre. These elements, used alternately throughout his artistic career, allow for a thematic and structural classification of his works that goes beyond chronological order. Instead of focusing on the time of creation, this classification is based on the recurrence and symbolic significance of certain forms and figures in his body of work. This chapter tries to examine the visual elements in his works: Through this lens, Mohasses' paintings and sculptures can be grouped into five major categories, each reflecting a distinct thematic and visual structure:

I- Human figure

II- Fishes

III- Birds

IV- Historical events and social conditions

V- Mythical characters and mythological stories.

VI- Inanimate objects and inanimate nature in general

VII- Background and landscaping

I- Human figure

The first category of specific works, which includes most of his works; And he has used them continuously in all his artistic periods, it is the human figure. The human characters created by him seem to be metamorphosing. They are powerful phenomena, with muscles that are paralyzed. This is the description of the people that Mohasses was inclined to in the early period of his work, after returning to Iran in the 40s. During this period, he drew his human figures, who were mostly men, alone in deserts, or together with elements of modernity such as motorcycles and cars, or he drew them next to birds. But all of them in that period of work were muscular, headless or without arms and legs and were worked in monochrome or with limited colors.

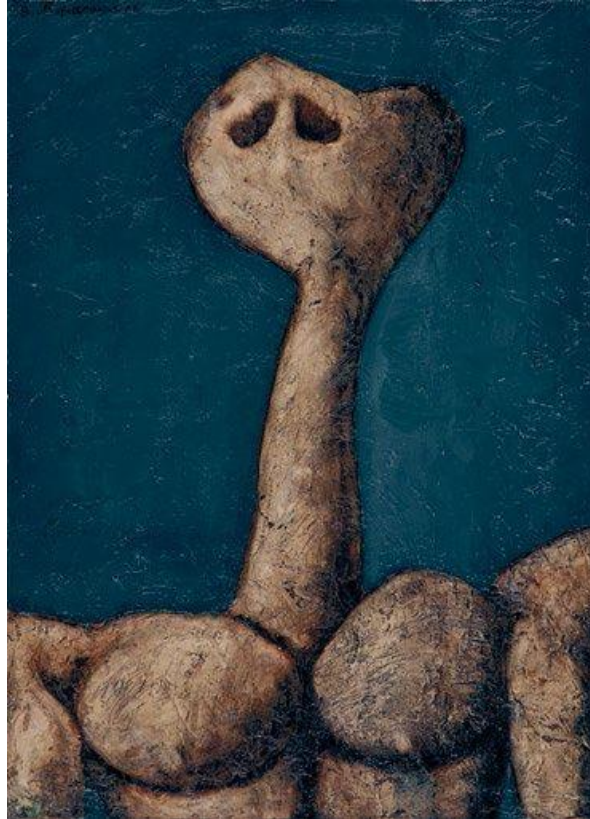


Image 4.1 *Man*, Mohassess, 1966

However, after returning to Italy, Mohassess took his subjects with him, but he completely changed his work technique, and the coloring of his works became brighter after leaving Iran. Especially at the end, he drew his people as fat and short, and with the collage technique, he distorted their faces, and used crowded backgrounds, usually the interior of a house, with a deformed figure in front of him. It was supposed to be shown. During this period, the use of women in his works increased, but he still painted his people very expressionistically. Human figures are very visible in his sculptures, the most important of which are "Man playing reeds", "Wrestlers", "Royal Family", and "Spring Awakening".

Bahman Mohassess' sculptures mostly show the problem of contemporary human disfigurement and deal with the change of human body shape in abnormal conditions. The artistic quality was inconsistent. From within this norm-breaking inconsistency, in the field of private and public life, he has been able to present his most difficult interpretation of man, as a physical thing and minus attention to the invisibility of the

soul, in an artistic and creative way. Despite the cultural belief of an ancient civilization that accepts the humiliation of the body for the sake of exalting the soul, he was a demonstrator of the fact that human rights of love and freedom, security and death belong to this body, and by knowing more, we can be citizens. Let's be real in this city world." (Mojabi, 2010).

In the paintings, first the lone figures appear, and then from the depths of the myths that are related to the present time, we witness the discovery of intermingled pairs such as Mehrgiah. Then robots will appear on the surface of the canvas, which are engaged in machine work. (Mojabi, 2013).

II- Fishes

The second category of the structural and thematic division of Mohasses works is fish. Fish is the favorite subject of this artist, which is very present in his works, whether at the beginning of his artistic career or in the last years of his life. Special fish are sometimes drawn alone and sometimes inside paintings with the theme of inanimate nature. In fact, Mohasses has painted many paintings with different techniques: mixed media, collage and oil paint. He even made sculptures with this theme. Sometimes the fish is shown dead on a table next to other inanimate objects such as a bottle, fruit, etc. (Varham, 2008).



Image 4.2 *Fish*, Mohasses, 1973

In fact, his fishes have set aside their peaceful movement in the water and their throbbing in the air. They do not ask for sympathy. They have passed this stage and next to them, you feel safe against the fragility of their nakedness, against the power of their honesty, and their fossilization in their early works has as much to say as the whole of history.

Obviously, Mohasses fish are among his most symbolic works. From this group of specific works, we can mention his still life, which were executed with oil paint technique on canvas in the 1960s. And he also mentioned some of his works with the subject or title of fish in the 1970s, which were depicted with oil paint or collage technique on canvas. Even in the last decade of his life, Mohasses did not give up fish and painted extraordinary fish on the canvas with a mixed media technique. Also, his fish sculptures, such as the bronze sculpture made in 1973, are very famous.

III-Birds

In his works, Bahman Mohasses paid particular attention to the bodies of animals. The bird is one of Bahman Mohasses' favorite subjects. This interest is clearly visible in both his paintings and sculptures. His birds include crows, vultures, eagles, pigeons and owls. (Dadkhah, 1964).



Image 4.3 *Bird*, Mohasses, 1978

The third category of Mohasses' works is his birds. Just as Mohasses has many works with the theme of fish, he has also shown different species of birds in his works. He has depicted birds sometimes alone, and sometimes together with human figures. However, in both cases, special birds do not have flight feathers, just like dead and lifeless fish. Although the bird may be a symbol of flight and freedom, and its superior element and characteristic compared to a person is its wings, none of the specific birds show this characteristic. On the contrary, "His birds are scavengers who eat scavengers, which are entwined because of the pain of their lives" (Hazavei,2010).

It shows large and sinister birds, such as scavengers, owls, crows and sometimes eagles. Birds are a symbol of evil and bad omen in most societies. Sepehr Khalili considers the vultures-crows in Mohasses' works to be illustrations of nature that have a Kafkaesque color and smell and reflect evil, the evil that is hidden in nature. Among his works with the subject of birds, we can mention a series of specific paintings from the 60s, many of which are vultures, owls and eagles. Such as "Owl" with the collage technique of 1957, oil paintings "Bird by the sea", "Boy and Bird" in 1966 and "Blind Eagle" in 1968. His bird-themed sculptures such as "Birds" in bronze in 1971 and "Oil Spill" in 1967 are also examples of the artist's voluminous works from the subject is a bird.



Image 4.4 *Owl*, Mohasses, 1957

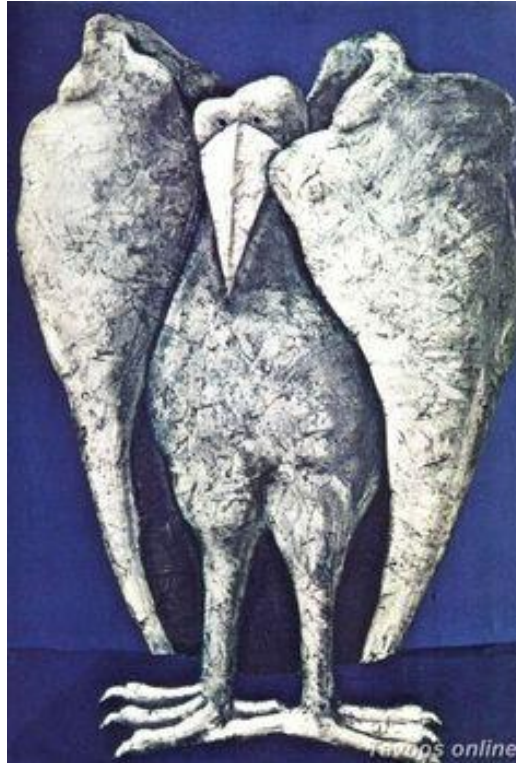


Image 4.5 *Bird*, Mohasses, 1966

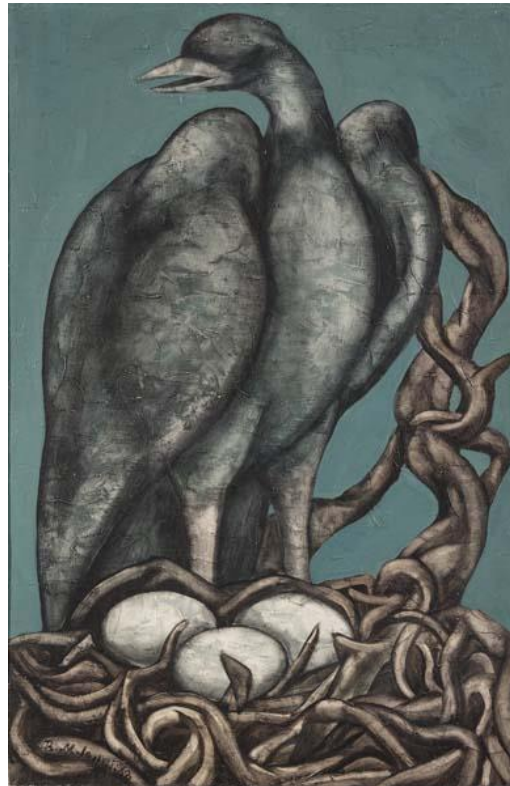


Image 4.6 *Blind Eagle*, Mohasses, 1968

IV- Historical and social issues

The fourth category of Mohasses works is a division based on the subjects used by this artist of historical events and social conditions during his life. Mohasses himself says in this regard: "Generally, the artist takes things from the environment and gives things to it. If our artists become poor, their work will die much sooner than the death of the body." (Mojabi, 2010).

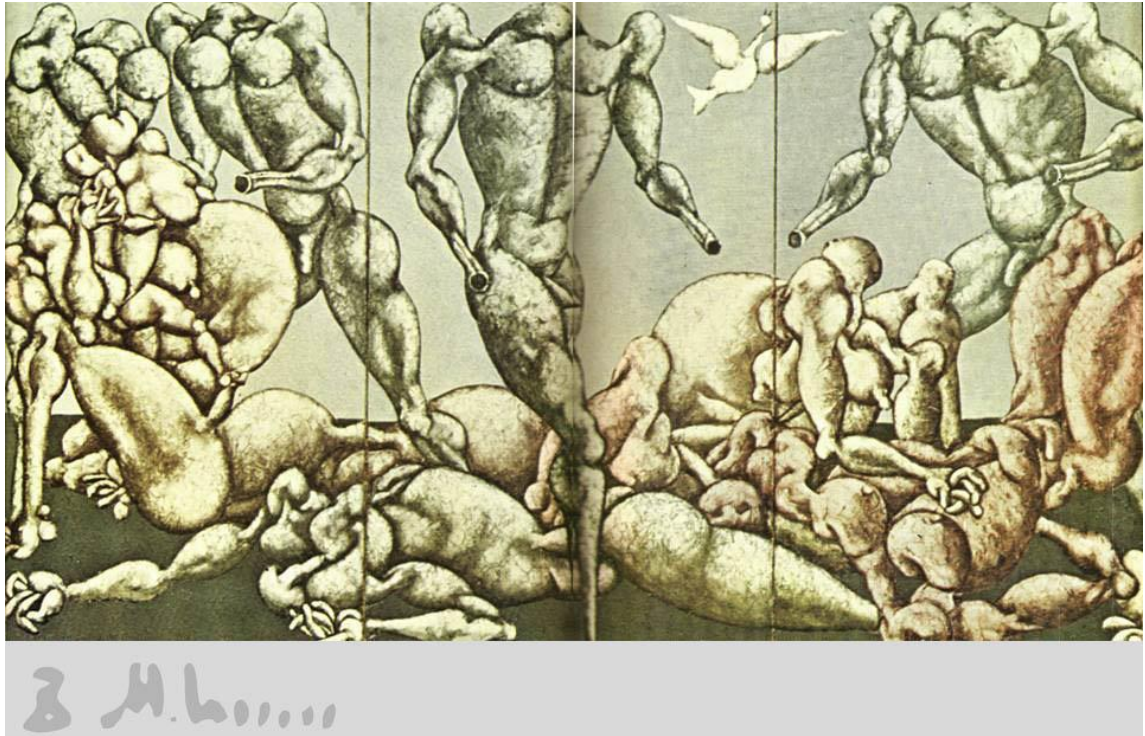


Image 4.7 *Massacre in Vietnam*, Mohasses, 1968

He considers criticism of every artist's era to be inseparable from the works of great artists, and in his interview with "Arash" magazine in 1343, he makes many references to Picasso's *Guernica* and considers it as his main source. An artist who "makes his art a vision" He knows history." He will not be indifferent to the social and political developments around him. Dehbashi is of the opinion: "The vigilance and specific protesting view of the world around him made him an artist who sometimes appears as a very advanced political theoretician. (Dehbashi, 2008).

From this point of view, many of Mohasses' works can be read as sharp and critical symbolic representations of humanity and modernity; But he specifically has works with

titles taken from historical events, such as: "Elegy for Martin Luther King", "Massacre in Vietnam" and collages inspired by historical tragedies of the 20th century, such as the invasion of Iraq.

V- Mythical stories and characters



Image 4.8 *Seated Minotaur*, Mohasses, 1976

The fifth category is the specific division related to his use of stories and mythological characters in his works. The dominant part of this group is related to the human-animals created by Mohasses, and most of them are human beings with the head of a cow, which are reminiscent of minotaur, and of course some of these paintings also have the same title. Bahman's figures are reserved for monsters. A monster with a kind of asymmetry that deliberately disrupts beauty or proportion in his eyes. In a sense, Mohasses displays something monstrous with his figures. The protrusions, as if the bony protrusions, are figures that no longer fit into human forms and casts. A small head, with hollow eyes, symmetrical arms, made of exaggerated muscles that end in cut wrists, and ankle-less legs. And the middle finger and the middle of the body from the chest and navel depict a

monster with sunken eyes. When this creature is sitting, it is as if it is molded in an invisible cube; And in other committees, it has an exciting state" (Mojabi, 2013).

Among the characters used by the artist, we can mention Pegasus, Icarus, Tiersia, Leda, Danae and Faun. Mohasses has many paintings and statues of the minotaur alone and sometimes sitting and looking sad and sometimes dancing and stomping. In some others, he has depicted minotaurs together with human figures. Examples of these topics include "The Fall of Icarus", "The Winged Horse" and "Tiersia Knows Nothing About the Future", "The Minotaur Scares People for Good".

VI. Inanimate objects and inanimate nature in general



Image 4.9 *Inanimate nature*, Mohasses, 1977

As Bahman Mohasses depicts human muscles, he also depicted a crooked and distorted bottle. A bottle is a solid object, not made of glass or plastic or wood, but is drawn like a specific person with broad shoulders and a narrow waist. The bottle seems to have a neck and is full-bodied. The texture of objects such as bottles, jars, boats, and fruits in inanimate objects are like the texture of muscles, as if they were derived from muscles. Also, the boat is not like a boat made of wood or any other solid material. The rower and his boat seem to be of the same species and live together in general continuity. It is as if the boat is a continuation of the rower's body. Continuity of man and tool is especially visible in the image called motorcycle. In this image, a human is riveted to his tool, a motorcycle; Especially the motorcycle has become a part of the man's body next to his thigh and stomach and seems to be integrated into the man's body. (Saber, 2007).

VII- Background and landscaping



Image 4.10 *Untitled*, Mohasses, 1978

In specific works, the background of the work is the Mediterranean nature of the Caspian Sea. In a statistical analysis of 31 specific works in which a specific place can be seen, about 90% of the images are the image of the seashore (Mojabi, 1999).

Table 4.1. Features of Mohasses' works

No	classification of works	Features used to express content
1	human figure	Humans always have defects, unusual shape, skin color is an expressive factor
2	Fish	Mohasses fishes are among his most symbolic works.
3	birds	The bird is one of Bahman Mohasses' favorite subjects. This interest is clearly visible in both his paintings and sculptures. His birds include crows, vultures, eagles, pigeons, and owls.
4	Historical events and social conditions	He called many of Mohasses' works sharp and critical symbolic representations of humanity and modernity; But he clearly has works with titles taken from historical events
5	Mythological characters and mythological stories	Ritual and drama, narrative aspects, difference from dominant models; A combination of human and animal, doing human things, scary
6	Inanimate objects and inanimate nature in general	Paying attention to the object, variety and variety, inanimate nature, paying attention to tools and practical objects in industrial and daily affairs, objects used in ritual and performance affairs, the continuity of the object and the human body.
7	Background and landscaping	In specific works, the background of the work is the Mediterranean nature of the Caspian Sea.

4.2. Features of Bahman Mohasses works



Image 4.11 *Artist at work, 1967*

In the early 1960s, like many other young Iranian artists, who returned home after studying in the West with the intention of starting a new wave in Iranian art, Mohasses went to Iran. But those years were not suitable conditions for artists who intended to innovate in Iranian art; Iran's closed society rejected many of these artists, including Bahman Mohasses. Many of them did not last more than a few years and left Iran forever (Pakbaz,2000).

Either they continued their work in a corner while emigrating, or they did not overcome the problems faced by a self-exiled artist and were erased from their minds. Although Mohasses belonged to the group of prolific immigrant artists, he was in contact with few people and preferred seclusion to attending artistic circles, especially Iranian ones; On the other hand, we are faced with the feeling of fighting and fighting in Bahman, which led to leaving his homeland; Because the understanding of the intellectual community of the era

with Banyan, who had a disability, is behind their avant-garde and completely personal thought. (Mojabi, 1991).

The characteristics of Bahman Mohasses' works into several categories: intellectual and conceptual approach, technique and form, visual elements, and content and emotional expression. The characteristics are presented in the following categories:

1. Conceptual and intellectual approach.
2. Technique, form and structure approach
3. The image of humans and the characteristics of figures

4.2.1. Conceptual and intellectual approach

1. *The desire to convey meaning*: His attempt is to visualize a damaged, deformed, burnt and rotten human who is waiting for the apocalypse. And in this way, he has achieved a common and universal language without trying to popularize and understand his work.
2. *Using metaphorical language*: Sometimes his visual elements, especially his people, turn into a potato-like volume, which has been considered as an expression of bitter protest and humorous metaphors.
3. *Mythological approach*: In specific works, half-human-half-animal monsters or minotaurs are also seen, which are inspired by Greek mythology.
4. *Crossing the decorative aspect*: Mohasses leaves no room for decoration in his works.
5. *Hidden humor*: In terms of content, hidden humor is a characteristic of Mohasses' works; The humor that had family roots and reflected the bitterness and difficulties that Mohasses faced. He avoided his society, they mocked him in his works, and he did not see himself as homogenous with that society (Roozbahani, 2010).
6. *His dark and bitter look in the works*: He considers tragedy as the source of inspiration for his paintings and sculptures, and with this pessimism, he has brought another energy to Iran's modernism. A tragic seriousness that either comes from his bitter personality, or from his Aristotelian perception of art. These figures screamed human pain and loneliness with their empty faces.
7. *Visualization of pain*: Mohasses reached a level of mastery in his artistic style that he was able to portray human pain, not his personal and human pain. The special

characters of his works continued and became a prominent feature of his works. The collection of birds shows vultures and owls in strange and closed positions. These birds are depicted fighting as if they are in an invisible prison.

8. *Expression in works*: A lot of tension in the expression, which is a harsh expression. He himself says: "This expression was not very knowledgeable. It was a request. A natural and instinctive desire (Dadkhah and Azad,1964).

4.2.2. Technique, form and structure approach

1. *Unique technique*: Mohasses understands the language of Eastern and Western art and portrays it well with European technique. Few Iranian artists benefit from these two categories. Many of his early works are technically like the works of Nordic European painters of the twenties and thirties, and traces of the works of Picasso and other cubist painters can be seen in his works. Perhaps for this reason, many Iranian painters and artists consider him the most complete Iranian painter with European standards. Over four decades he has achieved his personal style.
2. *Abstract approach to form*: The artist's emphasis has been on the overall composition of the volumes, which have been displayed in the form of simplified figures.
3. *Form, space, and movement are important components of the work*: The best sign of using spatial and form capabilities and motion induction can be seen in specific binary figures. With the rotation of the figures, in binary combinations, Mohasses directs the audience's attention to spatial relations and movement instead of the absolute rule of volume. These sometimes-interwoven collections present an organized abstraction in front of the viewer.
4. *Changing the shape and form in figures (exaggerating)*: Mohasses figures are generally presented very differently from other artists. Playing with the forms of exaggerated figures in the form of deformation, enlarging part of the organs against the reduction of some parts, is one of the components of the works. In his paintings, he has used mythological creatures, humans, animals, and minotaurs with rotten and rotten and frozen limbs, with muscles that are stiff in one part of the body and narrowed in other parts.

5. Removal of events in the depiction of people and animals and overview: Mohasses statues lack any details in the faces, hands and feet are removed from the wrist. This way of showing humans and animals gradually became the signature of his works.
6. Use dark and gray colors: In his works, the combination of dark and gray colors can be seen next to sharp colors to indicate struggle.

4.2.3. The image of humans and the characteristics of figures approach

1. Lack of realism in the human image: Mohasses clearly displays his fear and distaste for people, and this can include anyone, even his mother or lover. But if he portrays himself, this image is insulting, and he does it on purpose.
2. Deformity and horrible image of people: What he gives to his employer, whether they are kings or rich people, is their horrible self-image. It is characterized by their bloody hands, claw-like nails, eyes and small skulls.
3. Selective depiction of people's faces based on devotion: In those places where he really depicted a dear person (rarely), this reframing is removed: for example, in the portraits he drew of Mosaddegh, Khalil Maleki, Nima, his nephews or even the infirm elderly woman who sells flowers on the street.
4. Effects of hands and eyes: The hands and eyes of this painter and sculptor leave such a mark in all his works, as if his own eyes were staring at us throughout his career as the most penetrating point in his works. These eyes have the authority of the creator of light, and they can be seen as representing the effect that the world has on the artist's eyes at first sight. The first touch of the hands with the work of art is the birthplace of an artist. He creates a work with a first look and tactile experience and portrays his individual interpretations of life. We want to break open the world that Mohasses discovered and understand what he had to offer us. Hands and eyes are the truth that is perceived tactilely, and its visual course is created with analytical aspects in ideas and in a work of art (Selvaji, 2010). Despite his absence from Iran, the name "Bahman Mohasses" has continued to cast a long and undeniable shadow over generations of artists who emerged after the 1979 revolution. His works with existential anxiety, biting irony, and symbolic complexity remained deeply relevant to the new sociopolitical context of post-

revolutionary Iran. Even in exile, Mohasses' voice echoed through the corridors of Iranian art, literature, and intellectual thought. For many contemporary artists, he became a symbol of uncompromising individuality and artistic integrity in the face of censorship, political upheaval, and cultural transformation. His refusal to conform, his skepticism toward authority, and his persistent engagement with Western and classical references gave younger artists a model for how to grapple with identity, tradition, and modernity in a fractured world. In this way, Mohasses remained a haunting yet vital presence in the Iranian art scene—a figure whose absence became, paradoxically, a powerful form of presence.

Chapter V

Form and content analysis of Bahman Mohasses' artworks



5.1. Introduction

Bahman Mohasses was a multifaceted artist—what might today be called a truly multidimensional figure—whose influence spans across various disciplines, most notably painting and sculpture. With a distinctive voice and vision, he carved out a unique position in the modern art landscape of Iran and beyond. His works reflect a rare synthesis of intellectual depth, emotional intensity, and formal innovation. Mohasses was not merely a creator of images but a thinker who infused each piece with complex layers of meaning drawn from mythology, politics, philosophy, and personal experience. In this chapter, we will explore the key characteristics of his sculptures and paintings, examining how form, content, and symbolism converge in his visual language. By closely analyzing selected works, we aim to uncover the recurring themes, aesthetic strategies, and ideological undercurrents that define his singular contribution to modern Iranian art. Thus, it has been tried to analyze the style, form, and content of Bahman Mohasses' paintings and sculptures from aesthetic and conceptual perspective, seeking to investigate the artist's distinctive mode of expression and unique visual language, while offering a theoretical reflection on the hidden meanings and deeper layers of his works. Attention to form, composition, color, subject matter, and the relationships among visual elements—alongside the intellectual and historical contexts of the artworks— will provide us with a foundation for interpreting Mohasses' oeuvre.

5.2. The Statues of Bahman Mohasses

Since the late 1960s and especially in the first half of the 1970s, sculpture has also considered one of Bahman's main works along with painting. The characteristics of Bahman Mohasses' sculptures are presented in the following categories:

- I. Medium and Artistic Evolution: Since the late 1960s and especially in the first half of the 1970s, sculpture is also considered one of Bahman's main works along with painting.
- II. Style and Formal Characteristics: Although the sculptures are strongly expressionist, they present figurative forms. In the sculptures of Mohasses, the images are long and narrow and intermingled and intertwined with soft rhythms in space. These images sometimes clearly show dance movements

(which itself is a direct take from the myth) and human, animal and plant forms are used in it.

- III. Art Historical Context and Influences: In this very innovative and innovative type of sculpture, the most flexible European reference, which has the same complexity in forms through synthesis and with exaggerated and extreme forms, is the English sculpture tradition of the school after Henry Moore and the European followers of that school. (Crispoletti, 1990).
- IV. Emphasis on Form and Structure: Specific sculptures show the fundamental value of form, which is a kind of geometric arrangement in figures, which is spectacular. The figure does not have any additional decoration. His crude imitation of reality keeps him away from the things people want.
- V. Spatial Philosophy (Aerial Sculpture): He is fascinated by the aerial sculpture technique, that is, a sculpture whose interior and exterior space is as important as itself. For this reason, in his work, composition, space, volume, mood and lighting are of fundamental importance. (Kiars, 2010).
- VI. Transition from Model to Monumental: Slowly, the sculptures give up their resemblance to large-scale paintings and reach unknown but parallel combinations. Like many artists, Mohasses has designed and made many of his small sculptures with the intention of making them in large sizes if the right conditions are met.
- VII. Constraints and Adaptation in Scale: But due to various reasons such as the theme of the works, the type of look, the independence of far away from Iran and some other issues, it was not possible to create many of his works in large dimensions. From the comparison of his large sculptures with their small examples, we can see that during this size change, many components of the work have undergone many changes.
- VIII. Artistic Consistency and Identity: For example, the replica of the statue of the royal family has many differences with its more detailed example in large dimensions. Of course, the intellectual foundations of the artist have been the same in all these works.

- IX. Technical Mastery in Miniatures: In addition to that, due to the conditions faced by the artist and his compulsion to make smaller sculptures, we see that the artist has achieved a special style in these dimensions and with these conditions. Smaller sculptures make it possible for the artist to create the work with his high mastery and take advantage of facilities such as fingerprints on the work and other preparations.
- X. Independent Value of Small Works: Therefore, it does not matter what would happen to the new version if the samples in question were enlarged. The small example of the statue itself has the necessary identification.
- XI. Thematic Focus: Mohasses sculptures mostly show the problem of contemporary human disfigurement and deal with the transformation of the human body in abnormal conditions. The artistic quality was inconsistent.
- XII. Existential Expression: From within this norm-breaking incompatibility, in the field of private and public life, he has been able to present his most difficult interpretation of man, as a physical thing and minus attention to the invisibility of the soul, in an artistic and creative way. (Mojabi, 2010).
- XIII. Symbolism of Constraint: Mohasses has tied the hands and feet of his works on the base stone of the statue. His fish and bird sculptures are like this. The foundation stone is bare and hard, and the bird with its open wings cannot be torn from it, so to speak, it cannot be separated from this earth and this world.
- XIV. Metaphorical Representations: In the oil spill statue, a severed hand is holding a dead bird, or maybe it is a dead bird. Mohasses has put his hand on a shiny metal pole, like the head that is put on a spear as a sign of pride and victory; But the hand and the bird, both lifeless, have fallen from the floor.
- XV. Formal-Pictorial Transition: Qualifier turns the decorative feature of an organ into a pictorial feature. A kind of sensory attraction in artificial spaces, takes his sculptures away from what is supposed to be.
- XVI. Repetition of Style and Motion: In the specific sculptures, the images become long and narrow and intertwine with soft rhythms in the space. Sometimes these pictures even openly show dance movements, which in a way show the moment of direct perception of the myth. Human, animal and plant forms are

used in his sculptures, all of which have the same expressive power for the artist. (Crispoletti, 1990).

- XVII. Re-emphasis on Spatial Concerns: He is fascinated by the "aerial sculpture" technique, that is, a sculpture whose interior and exterior space is as important as its size. For this reason, in his work, composition, space, volume, mood, and lighting are more important.
- XVIII. Site-specific Interaction: Like the statue of wrestlers, the hole between the bodies of two wrestlers in the square where it was installed, every morning and evening should contain the light of the sun.
- XIX. Artistic Lineage: In specific sculpting, exaggerated forms and direct work on materials to produce images, it recalls the English sculpting tradition of the school after Henry Moore and its European followers. This adherence to Moore's style can be seen even in his small sculptures, which are simpler and more immediate.
- XX. Thematic Duality: In the 1970s, in sculpture and perhaps more clearly in painting, two absorbing themes (*Myth and History*) match the dramatic tension in the artist's works: the first, the direct return of myths to a kind of lost classical art; And second, a return to the contemporary historical events of that era, such as the "Massacre in Vietnam".
- XXI. Temporal Symbolism: In fact, in his sculpture, Mohasses makes reality visible in a time dimension free from history and in the mind of myths and beginnings, in the form of a lost past. Images of heroes and nations, mythological images in continuation of the initial myth, of a highly dramatic tension that has passed away from any personal identity (Crispoletti, 1990).

5.2.1. Royal Family



Image 5.1 *The Royal family*, Mohasses, Bronze, 1972

One of the characteristics of sculpture is its general nature. Except for architecture, statues are more than other forms of art in public space, and when the statue is placed in important squares or areas, it will be available to all those who use that environment. Therefore, sculpting is one of the arts that sometimes serve different strata that are considered as the creators of the sphere of governance (Gaut and Iverloops, 2010).

Throughout history, a part of art has always been used in the hands of kings as a tool to show their glory, power, and most importantly, the sanctity of their decrees. Among the characteristics of this type of painting and sculpture, we can mention their very large dimensions, so that the observer looks like a small and humble creature in front of them, and this sense of power shows itself in a bolder way. Also, in these works, the ruler's gaze is upward, as if he is looking to the future, and in a way, it is a sign of his intelligence and

foresight. In these pictures, according to artistic periods and different countries, kings are sometimes depicted next to saints, angels, or prophets to confirm their rule and the sanctity of their rule. This attitude has always existed in such paintings. Even in Iran, even before the Pahlavi era, despite having a native and different view of art, such works can be seen. For example, in the Sassanid period, the main theme in all reliefs was the glorification of the king. Either with the presentation of the awarding of the king's emblem by Ahura Mazda to the king or in the scene of the king's victory in the fight and hunting. And in all of them, the character of the king is depicted on a larger scale than the subordinates. Such as the relief of Naghsh e Rostam or Taq Bostan (Pakbaz,2008).

The question is why are these points used in the creation of such works in the same way everywhere in the world? Perhaps it should be said in answer to such a question: since the purpose of creating such works is to give a mythological dimension to it in history (Gaut and Iverloops, 2010). In fact, governments have power and authority, but this power is certainly associated with tyranny, domination, and to a lesser extent perhaps with poverty, lack of justice, and inequality, but in mythologizing the government, the meaning becomes so small that only It captures the power and then embeds itself in completely specific and predetermined forms (very large dimensions) to make the concept of the historical nature of the governments appear natural, and this kind of king myth is formed.

But the statue of the Royal Family by Mohasses has interestingly demystified this matter. The statue of the royal family was a title that was assigned to Bahman in 1972 by the special office that ordered its construction. This bronze statue shows the king, queen and crown prince holding a goat. In this work, Mohasses continues the same style as Moore's school of art, the figures have emerged from the heart of the tool itself, as a result, in some places, they have been left without any polishing. Also, humans have been completely reduced and minimally worked, or in other words, they have been abandoned. But the important point of the work is that there is no ideal dimension and the concept desired by the client is not consistent with the artist's form; Therefore, the signification, which is a representation of the myth of the kingdom and the continuity of this family, disappears:

Aghdashloo says in the book "Of joys and sorrows" in the description of this work: The group sculpture of the former king and his family that he commissioned turned out to be such a horrible collection that the painting of Charles IV and his royal family was a very mild work in comparison. It became an example of pure grotesque. No matter how much they tried to make it clear that this collection cannot be sold, it did not work. He believed that this is perfect work of art and if someone doesn't like it, then he probably doesn't have the right understanding and judgment (Aghdashloo,2015).

In making this work, Mohasses acted in accordance with Barthes' point of view of mythology and demythologize. According to the opinion of Barthes Bourgeois (which means the ruling power here), he wants to make the historical phenomena that are his creation appear natural by using mythmaking, and by this means he introduces the contradictions he created as natural. The duty of the mythologist is to discover the mystery of this process (Abazari,2001).

In Aghdashloo's words, this similarity between the work of the royal family of Mohasses and Barth's point of view is evident. Because in the eyes of the viewer, this statue does not evoke what it should. That is, it does not show the glory, sanctity, and continuity of the royal family, and that is why it did not satisfy the client. Meaning is the form-meaning of the work itself. The concept is consistent with the name of the work, the royal family! This name means the continuation of the monarchy. That is, not only the king but also the wife and the crown prince must be present in the statue to show the survival of this monarchy. But this concept does not fit in the form. Because Mohasses has created a form that not only does not diminish the meaning, but also makes power, domination and dullness appear more. As a result, the concept is lost and the implication loses its mythological character, and the opposite works, that is, it destroys naturalness. But what are the characteristics of this specific deconstructive form that shines such an interpretation.

In the images that are created of the rulers, the only thing that is obvious is the type of representation full of their glory and power, which sometimes even show it with gigantic dimensions. In this work, the figure of the king does not show such power for two reasons:

1- The fact that the king's face does not have two very important parts, i.e., two eyes, which should show his vision and acuity; Because it creates an empty cavity, leaving the formal part of the mouth as an open cavity emphasizes this ignorance and lack of awareness.

2- The cut of the king's pants, which is shown folded on his shoes, creates a kind of mental error of shortness in the eyes of the observer, because it seems that the length of the pants is long for him, and this shortness is exactly the opposite of the use of his organs. It is huge and will certainly have a negative effect on the viewer's mind. Next to the king, the queen has her head down; It is as if she is looking at the ground and a kind of sadness is visible on her face. It is said that when the queen saw this work, she asked the artist: Why did you depict me sad?

In response to this question, Mohasses says because you are worried that your eldest son will never reach the throne. Even if this sentence is false and sarcastic, it still does not remove the effect and power of creating such an impression in the mind of the audience. Considering that the queen has placed her hand on her child's shoulder, and this causes the audience to look down at the queen's head and look at her hand, and then the eye movement turns towards the boy, and this is where this idea comes from. It increases by looking at the crown prince who has obvious stupidity on his face. Because explicit symbols such as holding and looking at the goat, as well as the standing form of the boy, do not depict any signs of stability and power. Also, if he considers the goat as a safe coder, which is shown as a subject in the hands of the shepherd (i.e., the crown prince), again this shepherd does not induce any kind of security. It shows a kind of instability in a distorted and caricature-like form and causes a paradox in the audience's mind, which results in nothing but the denaturalization of historical affairs. In creating the statue of the royal family, Mohasses questions the myth of power by deforming the figures and using bitter and metaphorical humor.

5.2.2. *The flute player*²



Image 5.2 *The flute player*, Mohasses, Bronze, 1973

Flute player is a unique statue of Mohasses that was installed in the city theater, and its published image can also be seen on the cover of Fontonella Borghede's catalog. The flute player sculpture which was commissioned by the royal family in the 1970s and was one of the first modern works that was installed in the public space of Tehran city and in the city theater area. This statue was built in 1974, which is four meters long and made of bronze. After the revolution, under the pretext of reconstruction, it was removed from its place and was not installed again. The flute player sculpture shows a cow-headed man who is dancing and playing the flute. The balance of this statue is on one leg, and the other leg is gently raised and with the rotation seen in the body of the statue, it somehow evokes dance in the mind.

² Also known as "The Piper"

It should be remembered that modernity entered life slowly in Iran in the sixties and seventies. It became the daily life of the people, but the presence of modern art may not have much space among the public. In fact, the public still views art either from a mystical point of view and based on abstract art, or in the western view, they measure it in terms of realistic aesthetics and representation of reality. Therefore, they were not familiar with the thinking of modern art, especially expressive and expressionist art. This matter was certainly present in other aspects of art, such as theater, except for painting. Therefore, because on the other hand, according to the opinion of his contemporaries, he was a literate and progressive artist as well as an enlightened person who was aware of his artistic dignity. And on the other hand, he was under the influence of Western modernist artists (especially Picasso), whose expression in their works became more important from an aesthetic point of view, he tried to express and wake up in society in his own way. In some of his works, like the flute player statue, Mohasses was against traditionalism and popular taste. He criticizes this taste that made people unable to progress and find deep insight in his works (Mojabi, 2010).

Mohasses uses deconstruction here to historicize the art that has become natural in people's minds and add a section called modern Iranian art in that history. If this order was followed in its traditional form, from a mythological point of view, the work of Mohasses, i.e., the flute player sculpture, would become a form-meaning in the myth system that is supposed to contain the concept of defining art in people's minds. and in this way introduce the art of pure representation as the ultimate art and show this historical definition, natural and eternal. But the artist takes a reverse move to enlighten the common mind of the people, and that's why he uses the art of primitive people and myths. Not from Iranian myths, but a myth from the society where the structure of Western civilization was founded. To introduce the art of this land to its people, he uses the Minotaur in his sculpture from Greek mythology. Minotaur is not only a symbol of divine perfection or a human ideal, but it is the exact opposite of it. He is a man-eating monster of the island of Crete, but in a clever contrast, he puts a flute from the heart of Iranian stories in the hands of this monster of western myths. The flute player, which reminds the model of belonging, the culture and history of this land, and precisely with its magical rhythm, has been able to tame this western form, a taming that may be

possible only in art. And in another look at these symbols, the flute in Minotaur's mouth is reminiscent of a shepherd who is taming his inner beast. From a specific point of view, the shepherd can be considered an artist who can influence society with his art. That is, by combining the two primitive forms of the East and the West, Mohasses tries to show a form that is alien to the definition of art from the popular point of view and does not fit into it. He emphasized this contradiction by using the name of the work. That is, when one hears the name of flute player, it reminds of Iranian stories, and the viewer expects to see a picture that matches this theme. While the opposite happens. The form does not agree with the subject and postpones the concept. In the minds of the mass of people, watching this statue dancing and playing the flute, native memories come alive, but the unusual naked human form with two horns on the head and ears on the hands and feet erases that memory. This is the contradiction that Mohasses' demythologizing viewpoint is looking for.

In terms of content, hidden humor is characteristic of Mohasses' works. A satire that has family roots and reflects the bitterness and difficulties which has experienced. The four-meter statue of the man who plays flute is one of the most famous works of Bahman Mohasses the statue is derived from the mythological figure of the Roman "Faun" or the Greek "Satyr". In Roman mythology, fauns are horned creatures with the upper body of a human and the lower body of a goat, and many European artists, including Paul Rubens, Nicolas Poussin, and Pablo Picasso, have made this mythological theme the theme of their works. Paying attention to myths and human-animal idol images is one of the features of Bahman Mohasses' works, which is also manifested in the present sculpture. Referring to this figure of classical art dancers, he applies the same approach as modernist artists such as Picasso in using local myths and arts to create a modern and contemporary work. The sinewy, muscular figure of the flute playing man, with slender legs and pointed forearms, evokes the continuity of dramatic tension from myth to reality. The form left in the space freely twists and creates a dance-like movement. In this work, like many of his other sculptures, Mohasses tries to make the bronze statue appear weightless. He has balanced the figure on only one leg by disrupting the property of gravity.

The erotic works of Bahman Mohasses have not been shown publicly in the country for many years. After the revolution, no solo exhibition of his was held in Iran. Only some of his works have been seen in group exhibitions. After many years, the statue was handed over to Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art for restoration. The head of the museum at the time wanted to ask Bahman Mohasses to cover the naked parts of the statue with material. A work that Mohasses never agreed to do. Bahman Mohasses' fallen statue remains in the basement of the Museum of Contemporary Arts until today. The mutilated flute player, devoid of his past grandeur, is reminiscent of the specimens on the dissection table in a mortuary setting. At one time, in response to the news of the dismemberment of a man who was cutting a straw, he said: "I made this work for Iran, the people themselves should take care of it, not me."

5.2.3. The Rope Walker



Image 5.3 *Rope Walker Statue*, Mohasses, 1978

The “Rope Walker” statue was especially dear to Bahman Mohasses. At the end of the Pahlavi period, this bronze statue was moved to the Niavaran Palace for display, which

was not possible with the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and it was kept in the central warehouse of the palace. This work is in two parts, a human body with a height of 5 meters, an open rope skeleton with a height of 3 meters and a metal strap of 1.5 meters, made of bronze.

In the movie "Phi Phi is howling with happiness", he says: "Who can tell where the sculpture of the rope walker that I made for the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is?" That work did not belong to anyone; it belonged to a country. In this work, I had kept the volume in space. Three meters from the ground, a two-meter figure is standing on a point. If they had intelligence, they could have mastered all of this." But the specialness of this work is not only due to the craftsmanship used in its construction (there were suspended and even moving sculptures before Mohasses). This work should be considered a romantic work. For many reasons, this statue can be related to Jean Genet. Mohasses was one of the first translators of Genet's works and loved Genet not only as a writer but also as a way of life. He writes in a letter that he always has his photo on the wall of his workshop; Genet, who was gay, fell in love with a 20-year-old Algerian/German Muslim man named Abdallah Bentaga in 1955, and after a few years of not writing anything, he began to write works about Rembrandt and Giacometti. Bentaga had worked in the circus since he was a child and was responsible for training the horses. Acquaintance with Bentaga influenced Genet's writing for nine years. From 1957, he almost gave up writing and devoted himself to Bentaga's career. He paid the cost of Bentaga to be trained by expert rope walkers and he himself became the program manager and designer of Bentaga's performances. Performances for Bentaga became more exciting and dangerous day by day. At this time, Bentaga was called to serve in the Algerian war, and Genet encouraged him to escape from the service. Bentaga could no longer legally live in France, and the two traveled constantly. While practicing Bentaga, Genet planned many authoring projects, including a multi-volume collection on death. In March 1957, Genet wrote a text addressed to Bentaga called "Rope walker". In part of this text, we read: "This love—almost desperate but tender—of yours is as strong as the rope that supports your weight. I know things: their precision, their brutality, and their appreciation. The rope was dead before you, it was silent and mute, now it will live and speak... You are showing a lot of talent, but it is certain that in a short time you will be

disappointed with the rope, circus, dancing and jumping. You will experience a bitter period, a hell, and only when you pass through this dark forest will you emerge as a master of your art. This is the most shocking secret: after a period of brilliance, a period of depression awaits every artist, and there is a danger that he will lose his wits and skills. But if he emerges victorious from this battle! Bentaga never experienced the victory that Genet predicted for him. In Kuwait, in a performance designed by Genet, he fell off the rope and injured his legs. In Italy, with the help of Gene, he tried to regain his former ability, but his legs were permanently disabled. Bentaga committed suicide in 1964, and after his death Genet destroyed many of his writings and committed suicide himself in 1967. The sculpture he made bears a resemblance to this photo of Bentaga. With the same fascination with danger, balance, elegance, and death.

5.2.4. *The Birds*



Image 5.4 *The Birds*, Mohasses, 1972

This work belongs to a prestigious collection. The present work was offered at Bonhams London auction in October 2010.

Unlike many of Bahman Mohasses' sculptures, especially his human figures, which are taken from myths, in the sculptures he made of animals and birds, more than ever, he refers to images of his hometown, the north, and his relationship with the poet of that

region, the father of Iranian new poetry, Nima Youshij. The birds sometimes have a symbolic load and sometimes, like the present work, they are a living and dynamic representation of happy and singing birds.

Two pigeons sitting on a branch of a tree can be imagined anywhere, in the middle of the forest, by the beach, in the garden or on a flowerpot in a house; They have opened their wings and are busy singing. The birds are made in their natural size and although they are made of bronze and are based on a branch, they do not look rigid and hard. The texture of the work is like the strokes of the painting pens, and it has removed the work from a decorative sculpture and given it an expressive state.

It should be noted that a similar example of the present work was exhibited in the "Autumn Hall" exhibition in Paris in 1973, which is now kept in the Niavaran Jahan Nama Museum.

5.2.5. Two "Oil Spill" sculptures



Image 5.5 *Oil Spill*, Mohasses, 1976

Bahman Mohasses never lived in the oil cities of southern Iran, and his artworks have nothing to do with oil installations. However, he made sculptures that use Petroleum as the core concept, with a critical viewpoint.

The oil spill statue was made of bronze in 1977, and at that time Mohasses had emigrated from the country, but the concern of seeking power still played an important role for him. Like the creation of the statue of the royal family, Mohasses criticizes the same mythic implication in another form. As a signifier, it can have different signifiers, all of which only represent a concept. Mohasses also evokes the concept of power, this time in a different form, and this repetition of the concept in different forms gives more help to the mythologist in deciphering that myth. The oil spill statue, unlike most works of art, does not have abstract figures. This work has completely real details, which its naturalness itself has caused a kind of freshness in the sculpture. The point of interest in this sculpture is the use of a stick that shows a severed hand with a dead bird in it. The use of a stick and detailing in the show of a single hand from the wrist with a dead bird in it has given a symbolic dimension to the work. Since Mohasses always emphasized having a clear vision and goal when creating the work, the use of such a name, oil spill, cannot be inappropriate with the historical events in his lifetime. From a historical point of view, Mohasses is one of those artists who were present during the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran. He himself says about this: "In those days, the nationalization of the oil industry was the talk of the day in our house, and my grandmother vowed sheep to Dr. Mossadegh (Dehbashi, 2008).

Using the historical memory of the people and the process of nationalization of the oil industry and the events after that, Mohasses intends to reconstruct the concept of power in the mind of his audience in a new form. It should be noted that the sign (form-meaning) is inherently multi-meaning and can have different meanings depending on the type of text it is included in and the historical and cultural conditions of the viewer. Therefore, one can look at a single image from different perspectives. Here, the artist makes smart use of the word "oil" along with the word "leak" because it depicts a double meaning in the mind. In a global view of this work: the image of a dead seagull and the name Oil spill, these two together do not need to be explained, because it refers to an explicit code, a meaning that is presented through obvious and prominent signs (Barthes, 1971).

The black substance of oil has been contaminated, and this has caused his death. But in the mind of the Iranian audience, the name of oil is associated with a long history. This

name is a reminder of wealth, power, colonialism, and the struggle to nationalize this industry. This name is full of life. People are tied, so it is like a loose meaning without regard to d Province and obvious meaning works. Oil spill means the penetration of this substance in every place of history and life. Here, the dead sea chicken finds a symbolic form and moves away from its original meaning. The artist cleverly uses a title that carries a lot of historical burdens and thus adds political history to the concept of pollution that the oil industry brings and causes destruction and damage to animals and the environment. Long shafts above the hand showing a dead seagull. This bar causes not only the bird to be exposed, but also the hand that holds it. In fact, this smooth rod doubles the emphasis not only on the bird but also on the hand. In this work, Mohasses takes the movement of the photograph, this time by showing society as unimportant in the eyes of power, he tries to interpret the mythological meaning of power with the concept of exploitation in the audience's mind. By displaying this work, Mohasses reminds us of the exploitation that was removed from the concept of power and in this way demythologizes. The dead bird due to the pollution of the sea is a reminder of the people whose lives not only did not benefited the oil spoil (until the creation of this work) but also caused their death through the war between the powers. The Iranian audience in this work is an insider. He sees that he is in danger and the hand that is responsible for this crime reminds him of power. As a result, the myth of power in his mind turns into a force that exploits his people for the sake of oil wealth.

These sculptures are the mental world of Bahman Mohasses, which is clearly expressed with an emotional obsession with the environmental disasters around him. As he himself has said in his selection of subjects: In the end, what is the meaning of a painter, in a world where the sky is devoid of birds, the sea is devoid of fish, and the forest is devoid of animals? It seems that disaster is lurking nearby... "Oil spill" sculptures that are fish or birds that the oil has petrified and brought to the brink of absurdity (Montazemi,2015).

These sculptures show the environmental concern of Bahman Mohasses in a cold and emotionless way. In these sculptures, "fish and bird" have come to life in the unfinished hands of man. It is as if the artist intends to say in a symbolic way That, everything is at the disposal of these hands, hands that are both constructive and destructive. The bitterness of Bahman Mohasses' gaze leaves no room for the audience's positive thinking.

As if oil is the source of transformation and has changed the face of the world, it has seriously damaged the living environment of its inhabitants.

5.2.6. *The Figures 1 & 2, and The Lady*



Image 5.6 *The Figure 1*, Mohasses, 1979



Image 5.7 *The lady*, Mohasses, 1980

“The figure 1 and the lady” are examples of escaping from human volumes and has reached an abstraction that, while reminding the shapes of nature such as broken bones and stone slabs - can be seen with more precision, in the most concise form, it represents the human body without being caught in the trap of similarity. In fact, at this stage, the individual has entered the world of "signs" in which the "body" is an ironic expression of its origin and explicitly based on its new function, which draws strength from its new form and not from the association of a known form and concept. In this defamiliarization, the figure approaches the abstract without completely drowning in formlessness.



Image 5.8 *The Figure 2*, Mohasses, 1977

"The Figure 2" shows the noticeable struggle of the sculpture to get rid of the conventional form it had in the paintings. Gradually, the sculptures abandon the familiar form that made them resemble bulky paintings and reach unknown but balanced compositions in a free and unexpected behavior.

5.2.7. *The wrestlers*



Image 5.9 *Wrestler 1*, Mohasses, 1977



Image 5.10 *Wrestler 2*, Mohasses, 1977

Before the revolution, Mohasses was ordered some wrestler statues to be installed at the entrance of Azadi Stadium. The important point in these works is that although the statues are always imagined to be fixed somewhere in our mind and it is based on a flat place, but he does the exact opposite and in both statues of wrestlers we are faced with the curvature of two entangled limbs, the only point of support of which is the hand of one of these wrestlers. So, it seems that anxiety can be seen even in the form of his works. It is as if the audience is always faced with the concern that these sculptures do not fall apart. There is also a statue of him in which there is a turtle that has fallen in the opposite direction and is trying to turn itself around. The point of support of this statue with the ground is only the nail of the turtle, a breathtaking situation. This was the situation of Bahman himself, who never found a stable position in his world.

Specific sculptures of Mohasses appear with repeated but growing geometric proportions. Most Bahman Mohasses works between 1965 and 1976 have a cube-like volume, which is made from the combination of two opposite pyramids. By twisting around themselves or each other, these human beings seek to establish a balance to avoid instability. Their symmetry is more visible in the tension of the figures and the shape balance of the statues. The arms and legs, which are made of similar muscles, rotate around the rotating axis of the body as if they make a circle around their destined rotation. We find the culmination of this allegorical movement in the statue of the wrestler - which is creatively reminiscent of Tintoretto's Antheus and Hercules wrestling. Exaggerated bodies of these creatures with their expressive manifestation are as modern as they can be considered legendary and mythological, and they are as much made of painting essence as the birds and fish jumped out of imaginary reality. His figures, with their small series and rough bodies, are a breeding ground for the brush, which shows muscles with colors and halftones, which take on a regular geometric shape in each painting, and this muscular geometry, twisting around itself and each other, seeks to create a symmetrical balance. This symmetry is more visible in the stretching of the figures and the shape balance of the couple statues.

The arms and legs, which are made of similar muscles, rotate around the rotating axis of the body as they sometimes make a complete circle. We find the peak of this analogical movement in the statue of wrestler 1, which is creatively reminiscent of the wrestling of Antheus and Hercules by Tintoretto. This entanglement has become more complete in "Wrestler 2". Exaggerated bodies of these creatures with their expressive manifestation, with unexpected proportions and positions, are as modern as they can be considered prehistoric. They are as natural as they are nightmarish. With his frequent rebellion, Mohasses always risks from the concept to the form and from the familiar form to the beyond experience.

5.2.8. Helmet



Image 5.11 *The Helmet*, Mohasses, 1975

The Helmet is another masterpiece of Mohasses, a bitter taunt to the whole and nature of the subject, this work has no weight and intelligence, an empty and light container that has reached stability with the smallest point of support, Mohasses has even mocked original material of The Helmet. Poor and aggressive people who must protect themselves, while there is nothing under their protection, like a warrior who has a shield that does not cover anywhere. His special helmet is the lack of brain. This sculpture is not a figure: the body is subtracted from it. Instead of showing the solidity of a warrior, it relies on the smallest point as if the weight of this helmet is nothing. If you consider its base, it can be a hat for this statue.

5.2.9. Tomb of Reza Shah



Image 5.12 *Tomb of Reza Shah*, Mohasses, 1971

King Pahlavi (Mohammad Reza Shah) had ordered a statue for Reza Shah's (his father and the founder of Pahlavi Kingdom) mausoleum. Mohasses had told the Shah that Reza Shah was like a whale to me that has just dived into the water, but its tail is sticking out and this statue is the embodiment of that tail sticking out. Image 12 shows the statue built by Bahman Mohasses for the tomb of Reza Shah in Ray city and was inaugurated in October 1971; A delicate sculpture that is one of the few dedicated works that has more color of life than death. According to the mayor of that time, this "statue" (and not the fountain) "in a special way, with the movement of water, embodies life in two worlds"; The explanation that the artist probably gave to the commission. The fact that Mohasses decided to create a water feature for this order (a sculpture whose volume is a curtain of water that falls inside) and not a solid body, adds to this sense of being alive. On the one

hand, he sings with his fish and seascapes, and on the other hand, with the elegance and visual style of his other sculptures, which have small points of support with the ground; It has a delicate balance.

Perhaps, in accepting this order, he considered Reza Shah as one of the "destroying greats" and did not allow himself to feel so bad. "The 20th century was the century of the great destructive ones: Gandhi, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, Einstein, Stravinsky, Duchamp, Genet and Picasso. Being great is different from being good and bad; So, who has the right to determine good and bad? (Mohasses,2000).

It is not huge, sprawling, and regal volume. It is the opposite. A small, delicate, and curved volume with feminine aspects. Like the tail of a fish whose head is submerged in water.

Perhaps for this small volume, which is like a necklace, this temporality and emphasis on the present moment was historically more appropriate than embodying a heavy eternity; A ring that later became destroyed the entire tomb, in a country that, according to Mohasses, suffers from a lack of history more than anywhere else.

5.3. The paintings of Bahman Mohasses

Bahman Mohasses is widely recognized as a comprehensive and multidimensional artist whose contributions span several disciplines, most notably painting and sculpture. His early paintings reveal a pronounced technical and stylistic affinity with European modernists of the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, the influence of Pablo Picasso and other Cubist figures is clearly discernible in his work. This aesthetic proximity to European artistic movements has led numerous Iranian art historians and critics to regard Mohasses as one of the most complete and accomplished Iranian painters by European standards. His oeuvre exemplifies a unique synthesis of Western modernist principles and personal expression, positioning him as a pivotal figure in the development of twentieth-century Iranian art.

Bahman Mohasses was a leading painter, thinker and thinker and he always tried to interpret his mental themes in connection with philosophical, mythological and phenomenological insight on the canvas. He, who is one of the most important Iranian

modernist artists, was influenced by the expressionism school in his work style, and in the visual narrative of his works, he was strongly anti-traditional and avoided dealing with local themes and decorative aspects. Maybe because of this, he was able to achieve an independent artistic language and a universal identity very soon.

The characteristics of special paintings are:

I. Temporal and Conceptual Context: Bahman Mohasses' paintings have a very historical spirit and therefore are inherently historicist. This means that everything happens in the context of the past; even "A Bird on the Edge of a Lake"; a bird sits on the edge of an eternal and timeless lake, the edge of a lake of history.

II. Metaphysical and Symbolic Dimensions: History itself, which is the main element of that time, is timeless. History is timeless because it is history. Like a dead person who has become timeless.

III. Mood and Atmosphere: The historical characteristic of Mohasses' paintings is the timelessness and placelessness and the death-oriented face and color of the paintings.

IV. Vitality and Animation of Figures: In his works, he seems to revive people or make them dead and give life to his paintings. In the paintings, most of the characters are struggling with life and overcoming it, or they are instilling the life of the dead in themselves.

V. Philosophical Core: Bahman Mohasses' paintings are the life of the history of the dead. A feature that Bahman Mohasses himself now has in his paintings, and now he and the paintings have become the same. That is, they have become the owners of the lives of the dead.

VI. Art Historical Influence: Having more in common with German expressionism than with general trends in Iranian painting, Mohasses' works provide an acceptable example of complete abstraction and difference (Pakbaz, 2000).

VII. Artist's Temporal Vision and Reception: Those who can know the future earlier than others demand a greater share of their time, and of course, in all cases, they are not given dignity and respect in their time. Bahman Mohasses is like this.

VIII. Biographical Connection and Contemporary Insight: He found the opportunity to recognize, evaluate, and have contemporary taste on many levels earlier than his compatriots. In his youth, he hangs out with celebrities of his time, paints portraits of Nima Yushij, Khalil Maleki, and Dr. Mossadegh in the same years...

IX. Thematic Consistency and Depth: He criticizes the times with a decorative seriousness of escape in his paintings.

X. Tragic Foundation: Bahman Mohasses also begins and ends with tragedy. I have not seen any work of his that shows a little irony, hope, or decoration in it. A tragic seriousness that either comes from his bitter personality or from his Aristotelian understanding of art.

XI. Artistic Philosophy and Modernism: The important thing is that he considers tragedy to be the source of inspiration for his paintings and sculptures. He has brought another fever to Iranian modernism.

XII. Exile, Identity, and Emotional Expression: His angry works are the cry of the same man who lives in self-imposed exile all over the world...

XIII. Personal Legacy: All those who know him are more subdued by his personality than they are enchanted by his works.

5.3.1. Portrait of Nima Youshij

A drawing of Nima Yoshij's face can be seen in Bahman Mohasses treasure. This design was created in 1952. On this date, he leaves Iran to study painting seriously and works in the workshop. Four years later, he suggested Nima Yoshij to translate Nima's poems from Persian to Italian and publish them as a book. This project will not be carried out, but Nima writes in response to Mohasses: "Don't bother yourself that somet text by me will be published in this unfamiliar land. My life has passed... instead, many times are ahead (Yooshij, 1955).

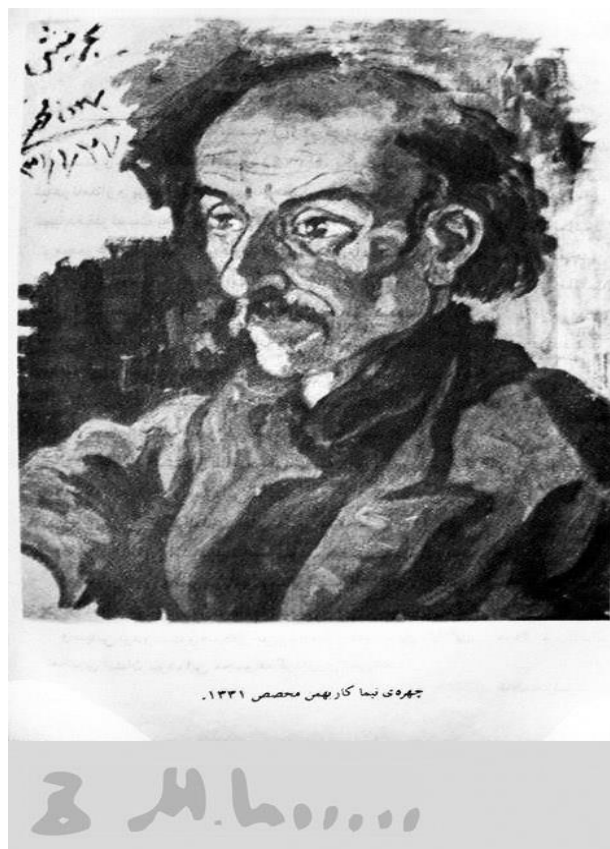


Image 5.13 *Portrait of Nima Youshij*, Mohasses, 1962

Full of many people who will walk on this land after us, and perhaps no less than us will drink this bitter cup as the sweetest of sweet syrups.“ This letter will be published later in Nima's books. We can see some works, in which he has painted for Nima Yoshij's poems. Watercolor paintings with the titles of the statue chicken, crow, Mr. Tooka, the sad night, Ghooghooli³ and Old Owl. The specific spiritual connection with Nima's works is well felt in the depiction of these paintings. In these works, for the first time, we see the specific Farsi signature of Bahman.

5.3.2. *Phi Phi is howling with happiness*

If you search for the biography of Bahman Mohasses, in most of the results, the sentence is repeated that he became a prominent figure in the field of Iranian painting in the 1960 with the work " *Phi Phi* is howling with happiness" was introduced.

³ Rooster voice

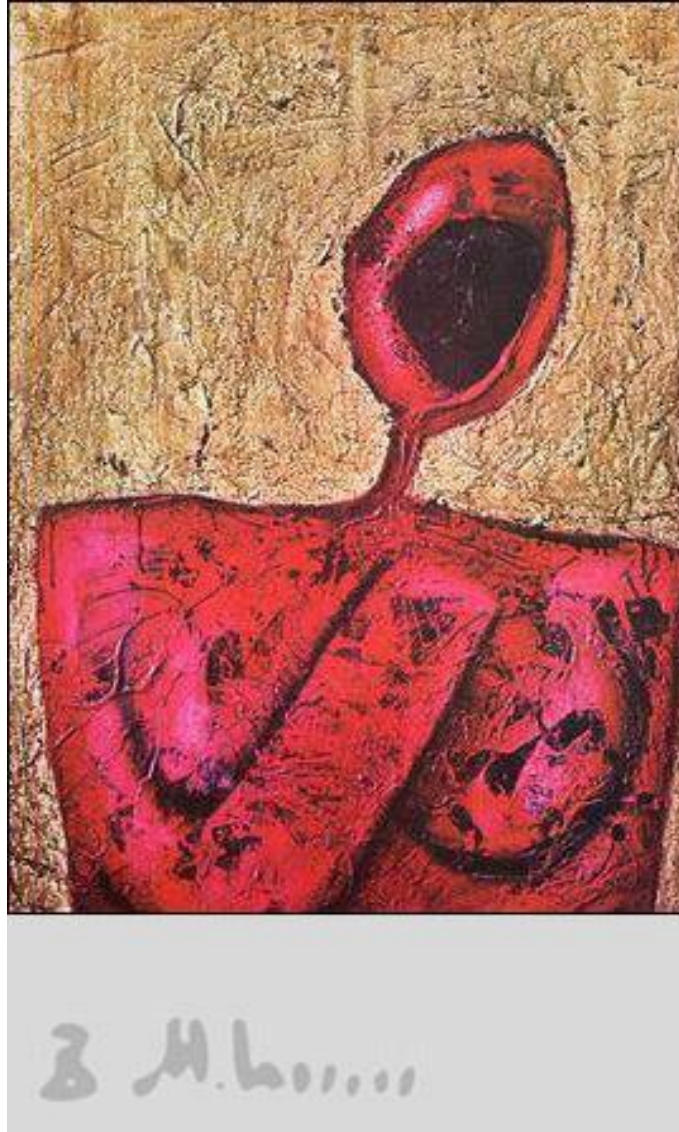


Image 5.14 *Phi Phi is howling with happiness*, Mohasses, 1964

But who is this pink creature that has only one big open mouth on its head, which is the painter's special moment of birth and is the only work that will not be separated from him until the moment of death? He looks at it forever and participates in all the exhibitions. He calls his inseparable mysterious Phi Phi Da Vinci's Mona Lisa and considers her a person born from his earlier expressive abstracts. Phi Phi in a dead bed like dried skin, in nothing. It is in this death that his sad song reaches the bone marrow. His cry is not familiar. It is like blood in the color of his body. Bloodless blood that does not spill; It scabs and gets stuck somewhere in between. According to his own words, Mohasses *Phi Phi* is "dying" from happiness. In Schopenhauer's view, dedicated to happiness and

suffering and even to the creation of art, man is looking for an antidote to sadness and can even die from happiness. *Phi Phi* is a human symbol. It is self-specific. I am the audience.

Phi Phi howls with happiness, it talks about the protest of the human condition. So that it can even be introduced with existentialist goals in art. Mohasses carried this painting with him during his travels, exhibitions and places of residence from the time of its creation, i.e. 1343 AH (1964), until his death.

It should be mentioned that *Phi Phi* is howling with happiness, the name of the documentary film that reports on the last days of Bahman Mohasses' life. Watching this movie provides quite good information about his life and art. In fact, if we know the life of the painter, it explains everything about painting, Because the painter's life and his works are related. In this report, Mohasses hung the *Phi Phi* sign on the wall of the hotel where he was staying. In this documentary film, the director asks the expert what does the cry of *Phi Phi* mean? And Mohasses answers with a kind expression, it is like what people say in our culture: I am happy. But the above phrase does not describe this work as it should and maybe. In fact, this female figure, her whole head and face with an open mouth and a dark hole that shows the cry, is a clear scream from the depths of darkness. The specific expression in this cry is not unlike the *Scream* painting by Edvard Munch. The cry in Munch's painting was a clear description of the expressionism of the 20th century in Germany, and the cry of *Phi Phi* in Mohasses painting can be a cry against all the bitter tragedies and tragedies that happen at the hands of humans all over the world.

These works show that apart from historical concerns, the painter has his own personality, anxiety and concerns, because he is placed in the world as a living being. It creates a visible connection and realizes itself. Therefore, the painter is a creative subject, and this situation creates uniqueness in the expression of the painter. The painter does not consider any end point or boundary objects and between them. In fact, he walks in a suspended world, a world that reveals his lived experience and speaks of his conflict with other elements and objects. For this reason, when we look at a painting like *Phi Phi*, our habit of thinking about the portrait, which is certain due to the habit of certain things, is suspended. The *Phi Phi* painting is a strange and unusual portrait and looks more like an object. In *Phi Phi*'s face, there are no organs except for the mouth, and his upper body

explains the same simple and distorted composition of the human body, like the previous works. This suspension of the human face is a representation of the cold and inhuman nature of the contemporary human way of life. Suspension in this work is another concept that can be used by painting to reveal the invisible like birth.

Another important point in this painting is the use of red color for the portrait on the green background. In this way, from the point of view of color, it shows the greatest effect of contrast. In the psychology of colors, red is associated with fire and blood; Therefore, it is associated with released energy, war, strong emotions and love. This color evokes intense emotions and in this expressive effect strengthens the cry.

Color is the place where our brain and the world meet. Color can provide our primary and fundamental contact with the world. The important point here is that when the red color is placed against its complement, i.e. green, it appears more intense and powerful. This power comes from our sensory structure and through this the sensory perception of the audience is also affected. This is a special ability to hold the audience's gaze and make visible something that has been the focus of attention so far. Although the whole of this painting is not like anyone else's, the sensory perception recognizes human condition even if in some parts nature is hidden or distorted. Therefore, the human in this painting acts like a living organism. Phi Phi is always present, a symbol and a sign of people who scream. Screams of pain, happiness or even happiness and unhappiness are always heard.

Phi Phi is like a living reality for the audience. What makes this feeling possible is the sensory perception of the audience, that is, what is shared between the painter and the audience. The painter brings his vision and perceptive experience of the world to the fore in his artistic work and makes the meanings hidden in the world visible and visible with his individual expression and special style.

5.3.3. *The blind Eagle*

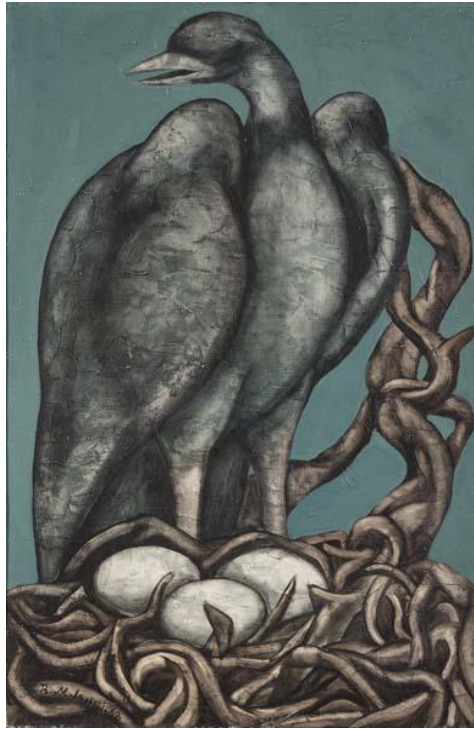


Image 5.15 *Blind Eagle*, Oil on canvas, Mohasses, 1967

The scary birds that surround the space of some of his paintings are hard and stone vultures, as they say. In this particular painting called "Blind Eagle", the bird is depicted without eyes. He does not see, but he is watching over his eggs, waiting for them. The painting is saturated with grays. The motherly sense of the eagle gives way to an image of mechanical and continuous life and being forced to live. The blind bird is a metaphor for largely instinctive human behavior, although the bird is free, we feel it in the cage (see how the closed corners of the frame press against it). It seems doubtful that if the eggs hatch, there will be no place left for life. Even his small nest wrapped around his life like a snake. The sky is muffled and dark: an illusion that Mohasses had felt in his life; City life and a lot of lonely vultures. He extends his bitterness to life: the birds he kills are the same patient killers who wait until the last moment of his destruction, heavy and silent, and after him they attack the silence and stillness of his death. This time, not to remove it from durability and life, but to read it to be and be seen. Now the works of someone who never wanted to be among us are sitting heavy and hard among us.

5.3.4. *Pegasus*



Image 5.16 *Pegasus (The winged horse)*, Mohasses, oil on canvas

Dimensions: 100x150 cm, 1966

Mohasses' work named "Pegasus (the winged Horse)" at first glance is reminiscent of a mythological story of Pegasus or the Greek winged horse. He was familiar with the mythology, culture and history of the West and the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the creator of the work knows the mythological position of Pegasus very well. But in this work, we are faced with a headless winged horse that has lost its identity throughout history. From

the point of view of gender (erotic), this horse can be both male and female or not present a specific gender. The facelessness of the winged creature and the intersection of two dark and light blue colors in the background turn the whole of this painting into a space. It obscures and obscures. Ambiguity in painting with relatively familiar elements is not something that can be achieved by mere theoretical reflections.

If the winged horse in this painting is the mythical Pegasus, then the artist is probably aware of creativity and artistic genius and has clearly experienced it. On the other hand, the winged horse in this painting is unidentified. It is as if the painter, while being aware of his talent and creativity, sees it as a product of a situation that has distanced itself from the perfectionism and splendor of past artistic eras (Selvaji, 1977).

So, the Pegasus that appears on the map is the product of the painter's historical situation. With a little reflection on the act of painting, ambiguity is revealed to us, and we are on the path of searching for meaning. If everything was represented in the painting according to the presuppositions and the ambiguity became a clear matter, no meaning would be created. In this painting, a facet of meaning is opened for us that we can experience being present in the work. The winged horse in a paradoxical way empties its meaning and at the same time puts the audience on the path of searching for meaning. The winged horse in this specific painting is no longer a mythical Pegasus but is initially a vague mystery that requires the two-way perception of the audience and the artist.

From Lascaux's cave painting to the present day, the painting celebrates the mystery of the visibility of things. The mystery of painting is thus the same as the mystery of sensory perception because sensory perception is a new contact with the world. Therefore, the winged horse in Mohasses' painting is separated from its original meaning and is the product of a new situation in which it was appointed. In any case, searching for meaning is one of the ways to make people happy, and here the body is involved in it.

5.3.5. *The fall of Icarus*

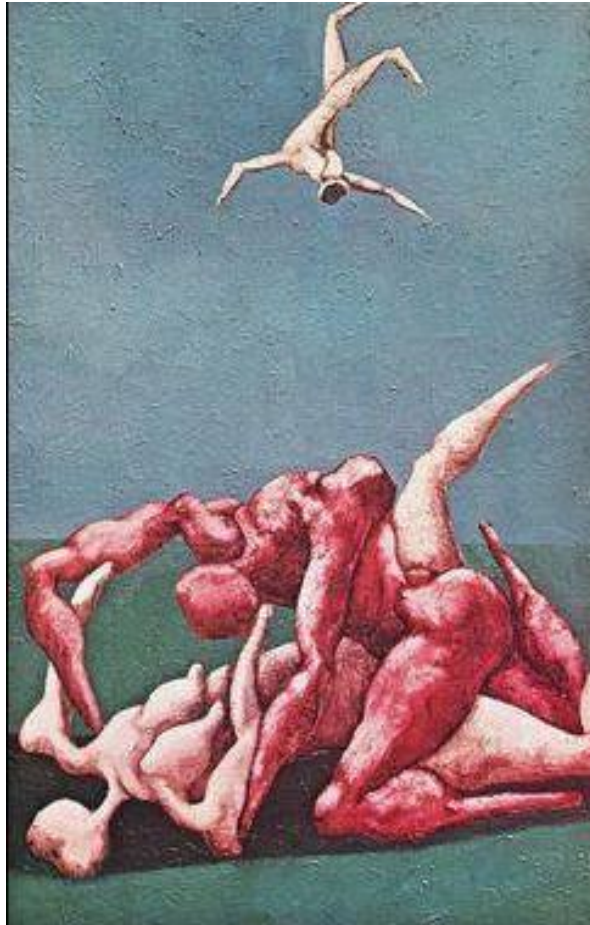


Image 5.17 *The fall of Icarus*, Mohasses, oil on canvas, 1966

The painting of the fall of Icarus is included in the collection of paintings by Mohasses, which he created based on the stories of Greek myths. In Greek mythology, an inventor named Daedalus built a labyrinth called the Labyrinth for the king of Crete so that the king could imprison the Minotaur in it. While he himself and his son Icarus are caught in it. Daedalus makes wax wings for his son so that he can use them to escape from the clutches of the Minotaur. Icarus flies with wings to the sun and escapes. But due to the melting of the waxes, it falls into the Aegean Sea. In Western culture, Icarus is considered a manifestation of selfishness. In the West, this story was the subject of paintings by artists such as Bruegel and Picasso (Pakbaz, 2008).

The myth of Icarus tells the story of two people who are imprisoned in a labyrinth created by their own minds but fly by using knowledge and by making artificial wings. In the meantime, the pride of the younger man and his excessive flight towards the sun melts his artificial wings and leads to his fall. This story narrates the myth of people who are too proud of their abilities and lead to their own destruction. However, Mohasses has no interest in describing the main story in his work, and in fact, there is little evidence of Icarus in the work except for the name of the work. The board cannot be found. Like Bruegel's painting of this story, Mohasses' work shows Icarus in the background with a neutral color and in small dimensions, while in the foreground Mohasses has drawn such harsh and violent forms of expression that, in a way, erases the main character of the story makes In the background, two colors separate the space of the sky and the earth. In front of the painting, a man and a woman are shown mixing with colors of red tone. In the background, a person with a lot of fear and a mouth that is open as if from a loud cry, while his eyes are towards the man and woman, is falling towards the ground, which is Icarus. In Mohasses painting, the emphasis is on the couple who are in front, and this is not consistent with the title of the work (Durant, 1999).

The name of the work is The Fall of Icarus, which reminds of a story of human pride and an object, it is a painting that, at first glance, may remind the fall of man and material life rather than the story of Icarus. The two people in the foreground who are shown mixing, their movement is strongly expressive, a harsh and dark expression that shows evil, the bodies in which there is no human sign and only their visible forms. It reminds people. A man who, according to his own words, was a multi-faceted human artist and is no more, and as if he is a symbol of all human beings in history. The sharp color that can be seen only in the front bodies has added to this excitement and evil. Icarus is looking at them while falling and shouting. Icarus, who tried to escape the life of this place with his artificial wings, could not and is falling and coming back again. Returning to a world where the most expressive sign of materiality can be shown by mixing and continuing the generation, and perhaps in the words of the artist himself, by using physical expression! Here, by using the story of people who were the symbol of wise people in the history of human civilization, who had the ability to build and create (from Plato's point of view, the

craftsman is at the highest level because he is far from imitation) exactly now of It shows their fall and failure.

Mohasses examines the story of this past myth until it reaches today's world in two ways.

1- Through the form, which should be motivating and specific, by using softer colors in the background and sharper colors in the foreground, and by using completely violent and excited states in the front figures, the motive of the constant human question in the mind of the audience.

2- In the second step, the bolder concept in the painting or form is searched in history. As a result, in the contemporary study of this ancient myth, it comes close to the myth of modernity and the fall of modern man. Mohasses has progressed by using some of the myths of yesterday until reaching their present form. It refers to the myth of the industrial man, because he, like his predecessor, Picasso, is heavily involved with the modern world and the human immersed in the modern world. And therefore, in his painting, he depicts the result of modern life as a vicious circle, although in a moment the artificial wings of this glamorous life take you to the top, but this flight and this peak is not permanent. Mohasses connects the naturalized image of a human immersed in the materialism of the modern world to a historical story to condemn his existence in this world by showing anxiety (in the expressionistic form of figures and choice of colors), which is one of the first emotions of a modern human being. It should be remembered, and, in this way, it challenges the myth of modernity.

In "The Fall of Icarus", Icarus looks at a man and a woman who are sinning on the beach. The flat space of the earth and the sky, shown with two colors; On Icarus, he faces sin with his mouth open. It is as if he pays for the sin of man. The dullness of the color and a kind of sand texture, which is an example of the special effect, has given the work a special effect. In fact, Mohasses' works are a collection about studying the aesthetics of ugliness. Rather than going towards the end of ugliness, it considers the direction of the devil. Even though male is pleasant and handsome for him, wherever he shows it, he has a kind of aesthetic dissatisfaction in mind.

Depicting death, catastrophic, apocalyptic, ... these are the words that are generally used to describe the works of Bahman Mohasses. both in the visual description of the rot,

ugliness, bite and destruction that he puts before the eyes, and in the concept; In the use of myths such as "Icarus" who, in the euphoria of freedom, in his joyful flight, become the liberating wings of his death trap. Death is the closest concept to the specific "man". His view of death is not based on the Eastern mysticism of life-avoidance, which is based on the Western concept of the will to live, even if the drive of death drives this life. Death is as important as life. He considers death to be the most important "act" in life and is not afraid of it. But the huge specter of death casts a shadow on his works not only in appearance and concept, but also in essence. In the 1990, he carried his paintings and sculptures and came to Iran; for the people but not from the government, which got tired of these people and announced the death of its works; The death of Bahman Mohasses. Each one of these works created existence, saw their boasting, heard their stories and finally, like a mother/creator who cannot bear the pain of her sick/defective child, provided for their glorious death. killing them in time; euthanasia in honor of the death of an animal. He could not imagine a fate other than this in his historical situation. He considered leaving on time as important as entering. Finally, when and how he chose to leave.

5.3.6. *Fishes*

Mohasses was born in Gilan and the Caspian coast and migrated to Italy and the Mediterranean coast, which had a tremendous impact on his art. The representation of signs from the sea and sometimes specifically Mediterranean myths that give a symbolic and thoughtful style to his works, undoubtedly have their roots in these migrations. When we look at the collection of fishes, it seems that over the years they have changed from metaphorical fishes that simply refer to fishes, to prominent sculptural figures that are specific fishes and no one else.

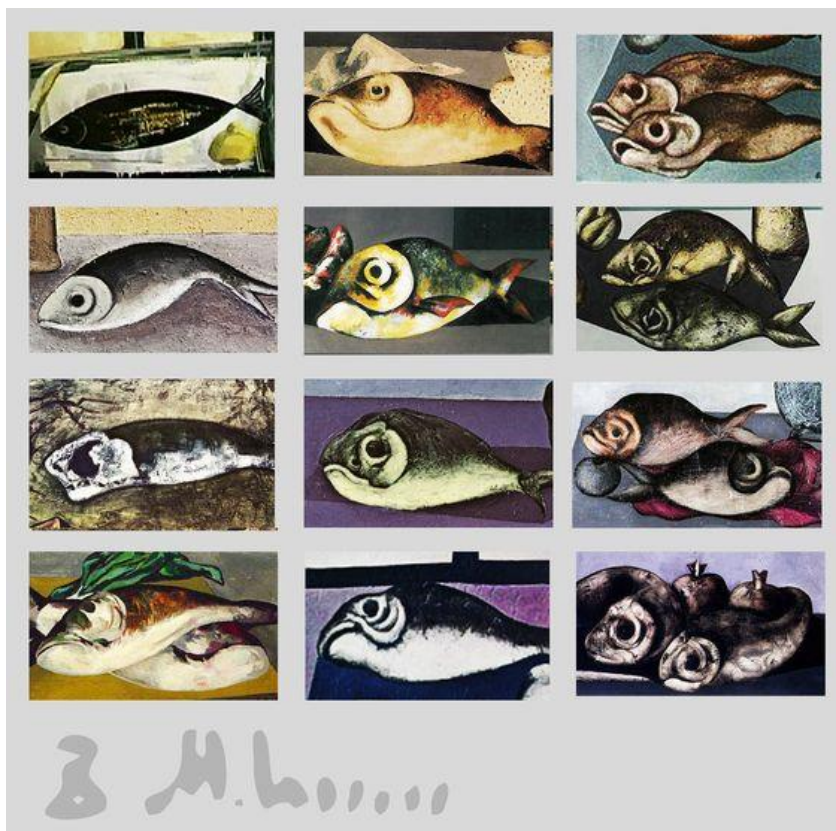


Image 5.18 *Fishes*, Mohasses, 1976

5.3.7. *Untitled* (1966)

In the present work, the entanglement of reality and mind are defamiliarized with the development of an emotional and emotional interpretation in the context of the arrangement of objects in a surprising way, and with this arrangement, things separate from their apparent meaning and take on a symbolic meaning in a specific situation. Here, the painter has shown angles of everyday life where there is no sign of life; But this silent arrangement of dead fish and anthropomorphic bottles, in addition to being a lament for decay, is a tribute to the nostalgia of life in Rasht and a reminder of special childhood memories.

Here, Mohasses has depicted a deep space in everyday life by using mature and thick colors. In the present work, repeated elements in his works such as bottles, fish, garlic and pomegranates are represented, selected and highlighted in a compact arrangement and as if they have sheltered each other from the heaviness of the prevailing empty space.



Image 5.19 *Untitled*, Mohasses, Oil paint on canvas - Dimensions: 72 * 100 cm, 1966

Of course, this representation is not realistic, and these materials of the visible world cannot be studied without mediation. For this reason, the predominant presence of the objects arranged on the table, even though they are reminiscent of the tradition of still life - they directly link the artist with the history of art - have become a unique narrative and a kind of perceptual-cognitive process under the influence of the artist's way of seeing. Among the elements in the work, the figures of two dead fish carry a metaphor of the sense of death; It is as if the painter here considers the elements of the still life painting to be alive and then paints and represents them again as the incarnation of the dead. In the overall composition of the work, different levels of signs can be seen, and these levels create meaning in the work.

In this visual representation board, it essentially loses its natural aspect and becomes a timeless and placeless function. The organization of flat motifs and single-point

perspective, instead of being the result of the objective realization of the three-dimensional space system on the two-dimensional surface, is a form of space treatment that has undergone significant changes; The elements at the bottom of the image (fishes) in the center, in a dynamic combination with long and elongated elements (a deformed bottle) on the left side of the canvas, create a frame similar to the English letter "L", which creates an ideal balance against the vertical and horizontal lines of the background has had effect. Mohasses follows the same wonderful world of his figurative paintings in a way, because the object has the same necessity for him as the human figure. The presence of a bottle standing next to two fishes shows the balance and symmetry of the nightmarish figures. The exaggerated bodies of these objects and creatures can connect the viewer to the ancient world with their expressive manifestation as much as they refer to the unexpected situation of today.

In this painting, the rough texture and thick volume of pure colors have given a symbolic aspect to the arrangement of objects in the still life painting, which reminds of the bitterness of the concept of death and the difficulty of living in a troubled world.

5.3.8. *Untitled (1968)*

As can be seen in the present work, the thick and curved blue line marks the border of the beach and the sea, at the bottom of which two fish are lying on the beach. This picture is reminiscent of the poem "Ai Adamha" by Nima Yoshij (Yoshij, 1946).

In the painting, it is these fish that are dying. The colors in this work have a physical and heavy nature. Blue, gray and white colors, rather than evoking the bright sea, they reflect the coldness of death. The strong pen strokes and the cross-section of the fish's body have given them a sculptural appearance. The present painting is unique. This painting belongs to the collection of Ahmadreza Ahmadi, a contemporary Iranian poet who had a long-standing friendship with Bahman Mohasses. Ahmadreza Ahmadi writes about Mohasses: "The fire from Mohasses paintings spread to the history of our painting. We already had a fearless painter whose great attribute was the loneliness and anonymity of the human soul.



Image 5.20 *Untitled*, Mohasses, Oil paint on cardboard - Dimensions:54 x 36 cm, 1968

Our history of painting needed him, maybe with a delay of fifty years. The same need that Persian poetry had for a great, honorable and zealous half. The attribute of these two zealous ones is loneliness, isolation, and a fire that burns even wet and wet logs, and it was a luxurious and awakening annihilation. It was a youth in one of the He had passed the difficult passages of our contemporary history: the passage of the days of oil nationalization. The days that later became an example and left for the struggles of the people of the East. He taught them that you can close your eyes alone and wander and cry in solitude and make history silently and without anyone in winter of solitude. The heat of the years of nationalization of oil may have become the criterion of being and not being qualified for the rest of our lives. All the awakening of his soul has the fragrance of those years. This awakening of the soul gave birth to an insolent and boisterous language from him, which came to life in paintings that were the knowledge of people whose screams were buried in their throats, and these people were always lost in endless sorrow and loneliness. These people were always the guests of death, or he depicted fishes who had lost their way to the sea and were looking at the world with an eternal smile lying on the beach with worried eyes. He is a proud and protesting observer who always gets rid of observation and comes to the context of life. (Ahmadi, 1998).

5.3.9. *Untitled* (1969)



Image 5.21 *Untitled*, Mohasses, Oil paint on fiber - 70 x 100 cm, 1969

In the symbology of most countries, especially the climate in which Mohasses grew and lived, fish is a sign of salvation, life, fertility, circulation and the earth's arc, which in this work is placed next to garlic bushes and an apparently empty bottle. The hidden freshness in the personal space creation of the artist, due to the unusual qualities and moods of the color and form of the elements, soon reveals the contradictory behavior of the subject. The present work clearly shows that Mohasses has followed a specific path in choosing and paying for the subject and appropriate to his intellectual space. Water, sea and references of this kind always imply concepts of life and the presence of living nature, however, seeing fishes and sage bushes that seem to have dried up for thousands of years

and a wrinkled bottle that is waiting for the days of hope. draws, countless questions are raised about the condition of contemporary man and his tension in the multidimensional worlds of nature and existence. The sea cannot be separated from his specific and unconscious worldview. The relationship between the sea and the coast forms the main compositions of his works; So that in this painting, the linear separation of foreground and background evokes a symbolic image of land and sea. In this painting, the fishes lying on the beach with a cold and fleshy color have become a statue and a monument that more than anything else reminds of the challenging relationship between man and nature. In fact, by using such textured, rough and thick colors, which are usually painted with a broad pen, Bahman Mohasses has depicted his questioning view of life and authenticity with shocking and impressive signs.

5.3.10. Iran – still

The "Untitled" painting from 1975 depicts a person who is completely isolated against a background without special features. This effect is intensified by the twisting of the figure, which prevents it from shaking. The person's face and body have been abstracted and any personal signs have been removed. Communication with the viewer is not possible at all, because the figure's eyes are only two empty holes and its glued mouth is condemned to silence. In contrast to the faded and unstructured background, the dull colors of the folds of the fabric make the male body softer and give it a more tangible appearance, but at the same time, it does not create a connection and a feeling of empathy with the audience.



Image 5.22 *Iran - still*, Mohasses, 1975

It is as if he is trapped in such a situation by his own will. Some people believe that the coloring and the image of the victim in the chain shows the atmosphere of corruption and destruction. But in a way, this painting can be considered as the artist's self-portrait, whose implacability caused him to be marginalized. It is as if he himself is sitting there. calm, with closed shoulders and mouth and an angular gaze on the ground; Maybe after a fruitless effort. Trapped figure, band made of cloth, garment made of cloth. A body that is enclosed in itself, with a weak tongue and a helpless hand, in silence and eternal waiting. "He won't hurt anyone anymore"⁴(Beckett, 1951).

The indomitable presence and potential ferocity of the psycho body that has become an organic destructive machine. A machine that is even prone to destroy its own parts and therefore its autonomy is negated. Passive of any kind of movement, he is only an observer of what is happening, what is happening to him, and everything whose presence

⁴ From Malone Dies, Samuel Beckett.

is felt outside the painting. Facing the witness who is always aware of his existence, "you" who sees him and himself.⁵ (Farooqi, 1967).

In its empty space, this figure even lacks Maloney's curious cane, which Beckett provides to the half-dead character suffering from syphilis in his story. There is no opening. He is only allowed to see whatever is exposed to him, without any manipulation or alteration. In a space that is even more insignificant than Malone's room. Everything that should be is assumed to be off the table. That which is placed outside the figure's unblinking eyes. The eyes that mediate between the calm space outside and the untamable inside, the mind that is destroying everything: "with his hammer or with his pencil, with his cane or with his fist or in thought, in dream".⁶(Beckett, 1951).

Looking at the lonely creatures of Bahman Mohasses, reminds the men, women, and children depicted in the documentary " The House Is Black" by Forugh Farrokhzad (1962) in a leper house in Azerbaijan (Farrokhzad, 1962).

Mohasses did not shy away from showing the isolation, illness, and ugliness that society fears. Whether it is local or global, the "Untitled" painting can be considered a self-portrait of the artist, whose intransigence has caused him to be marginalized. The formless and lonely creatures of Bahman remind us of modern European artists such as Francis Bacon or Pablo Picasso with their aesthetics.

5.3.11. The sitting man

The most important feature of Mohasses' paintings is expression or individual expression, as well as the change of form and shape in natural faces, which we examine by looking at his work called The Sitting Man.

At first glance, we encounter this work with a human figure who rests his hands on his knees and sits. Although it is clear that the owner of this figure is a man, but he has no hair and face, and the muscles of the arms and legs in the claw part are distorted. In the next view, it is as if this sitting man is an isolated stone or statue that is displayed on the canvas with the help of design and color.

⁵ Referring to the sentence that Mohasses writes on one of his panels in the movie "The Eye That Hears": "Viewer, this is you."

⁶ From Malone Dies, Samuel Beckett



Image 5.23 *The sitting man*, Mohasses, oil on canvas, 100x70 cm, 1966

This isolation is seen as one of the main components of Mohasses works in some way in most of his works. The reasons for the presence of isolation in Mohasses works can be examined from two internal and external aspects. The social and family position of the artist, the conditions of the surrounding society and the contemporary world, along with internal and psychological factors, are effective factors in the formation of this view" (Roozbahani, 2010).

This way of describing the figures, i.e. muscular bodies, unidentified heads and wasted limbs, can be seen in most of Mohasses works, and therefore any audience can identify his individual expression as the signature of his works. Mohasses tries to describe the phenomena with his individual expression and perspective.

Mohasses wants to show the figures of his paintings to the audience through their spontaneous and inherent coherence. He wants to receive the figure that appeared to him and turn it into a living object that is the center of participation of human and world sensory perceptions. What appeared to him is not the real appearance of man, but the concept and place of man in the world that he experiences.

In this world, Mohasses perceives people confused and separated from each other. In the horizon of his vision, the individual identity has lost color and the claws have disappeared, or in other words, the ability to manipulate has been lost. It is as if fear, despair and sadness are the most common part of human beings from the modern industrialized and violent age. In this way, one can even see his works as a special literature that criticizes contemporary industrial or machine culture. Mohasses focuses on the human position in the world in his works; Therefore, the body in his painting is not a representation of the human appearance, but all the meanings that have appeared in his mind about the human being and he tries to make the same appearance visible to the audience on the canvas with the help of his hand, pen, color and mind. In this way, in his work, subject and object are intertwined and play an equally decisive role.

5.3.12. Motorcyclist

A strong and muscular man is revealed, which fully emerges in the "motorcyclist" painting. It has the perfect geometry: a small head with hollow eyes, symmetrical arms made of exaggerated muscles that end in cut wrists, and feet without wrists and fingers, and the middle of the body from the sternum to the navel, embodies a monster with sunken eyes. When this creature is sitting, it is as if it is molded in an invisible cube. In other boards, it has an excited state.

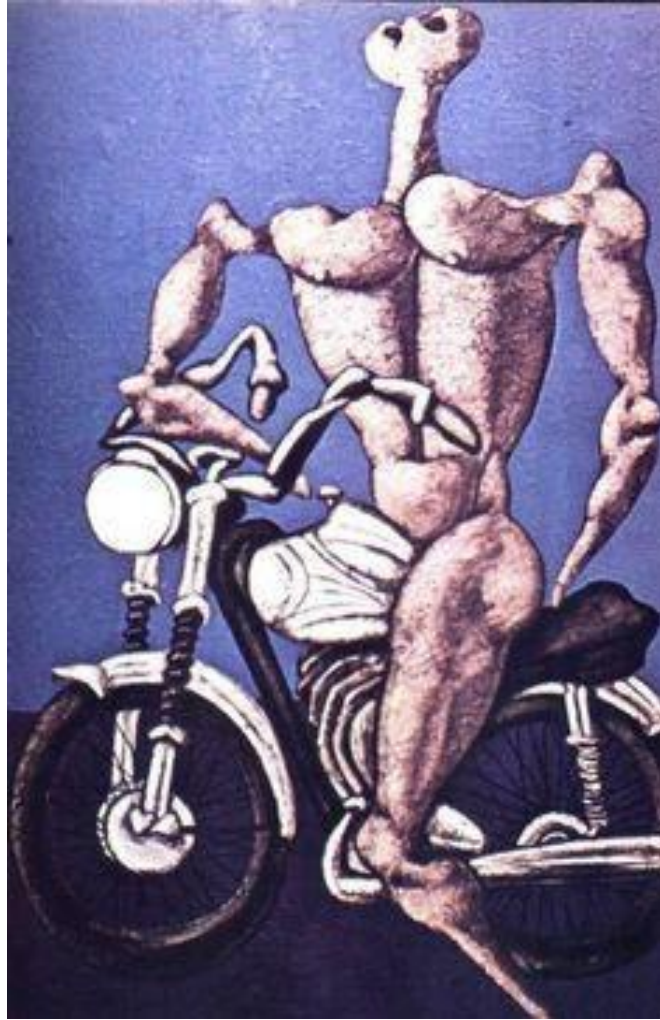


Image 5.24 *Motorcyclist*, Mohasses, oil on canvas - dimensions: 100x150 cm, 1966

A person with strong and trained muscles, straight shoulders, an elongated neck and a small head with two dark holes instead of eyes. Compared to the body, the visualization of the motorcycle has a realistic appearance. Dark and deep hollows are drawn on the face of the figure as eyes. Why the eyes stand out among the facial features can be questionable. The eye is considered the most important part of sensory perception and therefore our ability to perceive the world. With the help of vision, we can be absent from ourselves and at the same time we can mentally and from the inside open to the world and watch the absence. Vision establishes a game between the absent subject and the present object, and the product of this game is the production of meaning. For this reason, the eye in this painting explains a part of understanding and the world of human experiences. The eye is a window that is always directed towards the meaning. What this

figure looks at in the painting with his whole head and face or with his whole body is a description of his position in the contemporary world, along with other new phenomena and tools such as motorcycles. Although the figure sitting on the motorcycle is larger than usual, or the ratio of the motorcycle to his frame is inconsistent, the relationship between the motorcycle as an industrial object and the transformed figure of the painting in this painting attracts the attention of the audience. There is an alignment relationship between the figure and the motorcycle in the painting.

If a person watches the objects around him, the objects are also watching the man. In other words, in order to see, the viewer must also have the ability to be seen. (Johnson, 1993).

A dialectical relationship is established between the subject and the object. Man produces in the new era and rises to dominate the environment. On the other hand, industrial productions have a destructive effect on human relationships, on the air of man and on the gentle nature of man and make him isolated and separated from his nature. The relationship between man and the phenomena and tools of industry is the mood of daily life. This occasion is hidden from our eyes in our daily life or we don't pay attention to its proximity. In this work, Mohasses reveals the relevance of man with his new products and tries to open the absent relationships between them with his individual expression. . (Selvaji, 2010)

Muscles and bones are so intertwined that it cannot be said that it is a bone that can be seen behind the skin or that a muscle at the end of its muscle power has turned into a hard bone due to excessive contraction and pressure. Colors do not help in recognition. The joints have been reduced to the minimum required for a connection, like screws or rivets that sew the limbs of a robot together; Without any volume, elegance and cartilage.

5.3.13. *Tirezia no longer knows anything about the future*



Image 5.25 *Tirezia no longer knows anything about the future*, Mohasses, 1965

Tirezia is noteworthy for three reasons:

- 1- Due to the fact that he lived in the form of a woman for seven years due to upsetting Hera.
- 2- Due to his being blinded by Athena.
- 3- Which is most important because of his clairvoyance and insight, he is considered a special human being.

Mohasses painted the painting of Tirezia in the form of three panels. In terms of visual style, this painting is not similar to his previous mythological works. But due to the high power of expression that is present in this painting and also the title of the painting, which is in the form of a news sentence, this work has attracted attention. The three-layered painting "Tirezia no longer knows anything about the future" has many exciting signs in terms of composition. Since this painting has a smooth background with a soft and bright color, it draws the viewer's attention to the foreground with warm colors and many textured forms. The figures with highly expressive faces are considered as another motivating sign of this painting. At first, the viewer is drawn into the painting on the left side of the picture and through the person who has his back to the painting, and then the

frightened eyes of the horse on the left side of the picture, the bird in the middle of the picture and the human on the right side of the picture cause the viewer's eyes to move. It becomes a whole board. After that, other forms such as circles, the old man who is in the center of the painting and in the background create more accuracy in the audience. The title of the painting is another sign that creates motivation and action in the audience, because contrary to the sentence that was chosen as the name of the work, Tirezia no longer knows anything about the future of mankind, but it is as if the artist is fully aware of this future. and its tragedies are depicted in the most expressive way possible, that is, by using the style of surrealism. And as he brings the texts painted in the surrealism style to life for viewing, by using it, he can easily create an action in his audience, which will be the first step to establish a relationship with the painting.

The title of the work is reminiscent of one of the ancient Greek myths. Therefore, the audience can make a connection with Greek dramas through the title of the painting. And from watching the signifiers in this work, such as the large dimensions of the canvas, its title, or the simple background in front of which the figures are placed, to develop the performance of the play and the theater scene in his mind. Perhaps the viewer of this work will remember Thirsea in Sophocles' play and when she encounters Oedipus, who reveals some truths about the future of this king and compares it in her mind with the future that Mohases has depicted. Read these two simultaneously. In that play, Tirzia knew everything, but in the scene that Mohass has depicted from the contemporary world, the insightful and prophetic Tirzia no longer knows what is waiting for the people in the future.

On the other hand, by showing people in modern clothes and with breathing masks on their faces, this painting reminds the audience of today's life full of violence in the contemporary world where war and its resulting disasters are present everywhere in the world. And the last issue is the presence of a horse with a scowl that is scared. In this three-layer painting, which coincidentally emphasizes a sign of war, Picasso's painting *Guernica* appears in the viewer's mind. *Guernica* is a painting in which a bombardment in a Spanish village is mentioned, but in fact it also refers to the devastation and violence of war all over the world, just like Moshes's work. Fear can be seen in the figures of this picture, both in the humans and in the birds and horses. This work is very reminiscent of

Picasso's *Guernica*. The face of the horse, which gave a loud sneer of fear, is strongly reminiscent of the horse that is present in *Guernica*. Mohasses himself has spoken about this painting by Picasso and considers it the reason for the artist's awareness of the issues of his time and his social role, and he also believes that the artist, due to having a brain higher than the mass, should do what causes It is possible to express intellectualism in the society in his works. (Dadkhah, 1964).

In terms of style, this painting is not similar to his paintings of the previous decade. The negative and weighty state of the previous paintings is gone. Paintings in which Mohass used sand. Even the colors used have changed and it has taken on a darker but thinner look. There is no background in this work. The painting is more surreal than expressionist. Unlike the usual use of humanoid figures, Mohasses has drawn at least one real human face in this work. But the matter still stands.

At the same time, the artist's distaste for war, his lack of confidence in the modern world, and the destruction of human life by the contemporary world and modernity can be seen in reading this work. This board has many signs, some of which show clearer meanings, but others contain more incomprehensible codes. For example, the presence of a bird in the center of the painting and below it a circle-like shape, or next to it the presence of a human who has his back to the viewer and seems to be fading with horizontal lines, or a red circle-like shape on the left side of the picture and even a human presence with an ancient appearance in the background; All these are signs that have created a kind of mystery in this painting. Based on the codes of action in the image, the artist has used a kind of surreal style in this painting, and according to this style, the presence of all these animals and figures can be said to express a form in its harshest state. But on the other hand, the presence of a horse whose mane seems to have jumped in the wind, together with the horizontal lines on it, somehow evokes speed and movement. Bring the pre-modern world. On the other hand, in the middle of the painting, from the background to the front of the painting, an old man, a bird and a circle-like shape can be seen, as if there is a shadow like design of an embryo inside it. In fact, this circular shape can be considered as a womb and it refers to the passage of life from the old man to this fetus, and the head of a scavenger-like bird, which is present in the heart of this circle, can be generalized to life and death. Therefore, this painting shows a series of binary contrasts.

Even the choice of background and foreground colors helps this association. It is as if Mohass refers to contrasts of life and death, modernity and antiquity, war and peace in this work. In terms of visual style, this painting is not similar to his previous mythological works. But due to the high power of expression that is present in this painting and also the title of the painting, which is in the form of a news sentence, this work has attracted attention.

The title of this painting refers to a myth from ancient Greece. Mohasses may have tried to evoke a meaning in the mind of his audience by using this title, and then make it bolder with the form of painting, and thus change the concept of the future and the modern world, and the resulting myth is the myth of the modern man. In Greek mythology, Tirezia has a special character. He is a thinker from Thebes, where he held the position of advisor to the king for seven generations. There are several human figures in the displayed form of Mohasses, some of which are not clear and are faded in the background colors. Some of them have masks on their faces, and one of them is clearly drawn with details, showing a frightened face with round eyes and an open mouth. Masks are reminders of war and bombings. The sharp and warm colors in the foreground, all of which have a red tone, add to the fear and anxiety. In the center of the painting and at the end, i.e. in the background, the half face of an old man with gray color is visible, whose color and dimensions distinguish him from other figures. As if this is the same Tirezia. The half-face of his face against all the other faces that are all three-faced or mixed in colors adds to the emphasis of the news title of the panel. Since he is mostly in harmony with the blue background and does not look at the events happening in front of the picture. Another thing is the horizontal lines that draw the colors and evoke speed and movement in the mind. The speed that has been very compatible with the industrial world of the 20th century. In this painting, Mohasses shows mischievous surrealism. According to him, evil, totem, nature, isolation, fear, violence, and speed are the results of life in the world of progress and development of that era and later. By using this expressive sign (painting), he tries to challenge the concept of modernity in the mind of his audience and in this way show that the myth of modernization will never be a natural thing and by creating tragedies such as the bombing of Hiroshima and from this the hand is forever linked with history.

5.3.14. *Minotaur scares people for good*

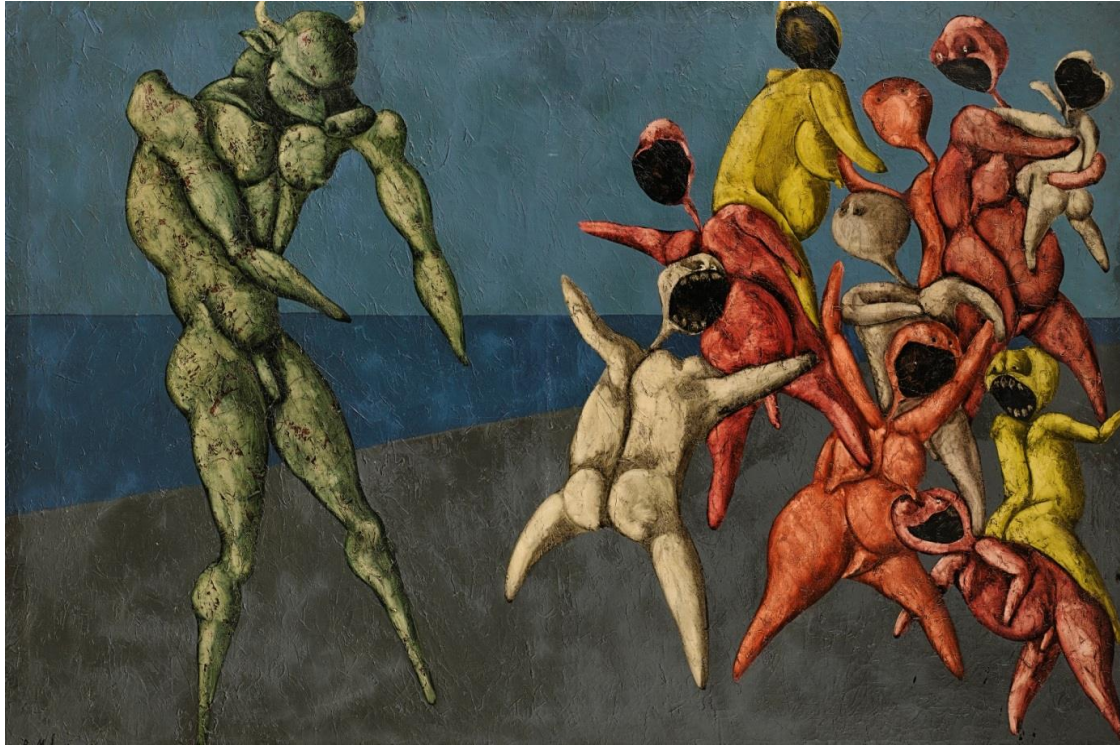


Image 5.26 *Minotaur scares people for good*, Mohasses, 1965

Mohasses has created many works, mainly sculptures and paintings with the title of Minotaur. In most of his works, the Minotaur is shown alone, but in this painting, he shows the subject of a cow-headed human being next to other humans. Barthes was also of the opinion that choosing a specific name for works is important because it includes many safe meanings from both a social and a symbolic point of view (Ahmadi, 2010).

In his painting "The Minotaur scares people for good", Mohasses examines this fear and anxiety more closely this time and makes it the subject of his work. In Greek mythology, Minotaur was the name of a giant that had the head and neck of a cow and a human body. Minos, the king of Crete, kept him in the corridors of the labyrinth, and from the Athenians, who were his tribute, he sent ten Athenian youths as Minotaur's food every year. In the end, this giant was killed by the king of Athens. In many of his works, Picasso used the subject of the minotaur with symbolic meanings (Pakbaz, 2007).

Mohasses also adds to the interest of this work by choosing a title that has contradictions and strangeness. Therefore, one should pay close attention to the relationship between

form and meaning in this painting. Since, just like the mythologist, Mohasses constantly oscillates between the object and its decoding, he establishes a connection of sarcasm and ridicule with the world around him (Abazari, 2001).

In this sense, he uses a contradictory title within himself, i.e. a cannibal giant who scares people, but this scare is to do good and not to hurt them; And besides that, he defamiliarizes the concept of power in the mind of his audience by relying on a shape-breaking form. In fact, in this work, by relying on the form, along with the meaning, Mohasses gives a new shape to the concept, exactly the opposite of what myth does.

Minotaur's hand raised by Minos, his duty was to create fear in the people of Crete for the continuation of the king's rule. In other words, the Minotaur's duty is to create fear and anxiety in people. A tool that is sometimes used in governments as a tool to suppress and show power. In this work, Mohasses intends to defamiliarize the myth of power in the mind of the audience and tie this normalized concept with history. If the minotaur is the power of fear of the ruling force, then the title minotaur scares people for good, it is a completely sarcastic title and with humor here it will mean "good" because it needs to be scared for its survival and this word is safe. Because it will have a historical and cultural burden (Barthes, 1971).

Now this meaning of irony is placed next to the specific form (painting) which is deconstructive and challenges the concept of power that was embedded in the minds of the people with the benevolence of the nation and demythologizes it. The empty background is covered with tones of blue and gray colors so that the figures in front look completely expressive. The background with three colors separates the sky, the sea and the earth. In a way, by showing all three of these, it refers to all It exists. That is, a fear that may exist equally everywhere in the world. In the foreground, the minotaur is on the left side with a large body that covers the entire length of this side of the picture. This minotaur is also drawn like all other specific minotaurs. It is a gigantic awe but there is no sign of anger and rebellion on its face. While on the other side is the image of the people. The people are dwarfed and terrified while screaming in fear and running away from the Minotaur. with very large mouths and very small eyes, sometimes in some of them the mouth hole covers the whole face, and it cannot be given away. The signs all

emphasize stupidity. Now of seeing the picture, the viewer asks himself what the reason for all this fear is, while this giant is not depicted as scary. Therefore, in his mind, the constant fear of mankind, that is, the fear caused by ignorance and lack of sufficient knowledge, comes to life. A fear that has taken on a natural form throughout history, the reason for which is not clear, and only the powers that be take advantage of it. The title of the work examines the concept of fear in people's minds by emphasizing the theme depicted in the painting and highlights the power that brings terror and fear along with it. As a father, Minotaur is the main threat to man and the cause of his losses in all ages. which in the painting becomes explicit and naked like an obscene object such as anxiety, and by using it, Mohasses refers to the myth of power.

In the structural analysis of the work in terms of form, the sum of the small forms gives us a right meridian form of the work, in the second and third degree, plus a form that is perpendicular, plays a role, which is the most important division of this work, which is in the degree The fourth horizontal line that is in the frame.

In terms of color, cold color and warm color are used, which means that they have a color contrast, which is one of the contrasts above this work, which is a darker color from the set, which creates a circular form on the top and right side of the work, which means the same darkness. is drawn for the head of each of the figures, and the connection of these forms together creates a state of a circular circle that creates movement and intensifies it, and there is a contradiction between stillness and movement. Stillness in verticality and movement in right circular form.

The choice of cream color can be due to creating a focus in the middle of the work, or the more important reason is that it creates a connection between the forms on both sides.

The figure that is almost isolated in the right corner shows the state of mother and child and a few children who are all in a state of terror and fear due to being victimized. A mother holding her child and running away, and the rest of the figures are screaming, so that most of the face space is taken up by the mouth, and the minotaur has chosen the closest figure, which is shown in cream color.

In terms of space, one person is against a group, and it has established a balance. The clutter of the forms on the right shows the mess that has thrown their community into

disarray. Especially in this work, the color used for the minotaur is a mythological color, and the reason for using warm red and yellow colors can be to show fear so that it can be symbolized more easily.

This image can represent the story of the Minotaur in the Greek myth, in which Zeus, the king of Crete, took a number of girls and boys as tribute every year, and they were sacrificed to the Minotaur in the labyrinth. Theseus sacrificed himself and with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of Zeus. He goes to destroy the minotaur's coat. The middle figure, which is placed in cream color, can be the symbol of Theseus, which the minotaur chose and that is why it is placed in the middle.

Minotaur has a complex personality; It is a symbol of perverse human nature and at the same time a very powerful and wild creature that is also strangely powerless. Trapped in the labyrinth of his own mind, the Minotaur may be pitied, but he, born of man's lust and greed, is ultimately man's destroyer. It is an endless and irreparable suffering that is created by human hands and there is no escape from it. For Bahman Mohasses, Minotaur was a totemic character; An ancient symbol of carnality and desperate power, it linked the introverted artist's personality with a theme that would continue and be popular in the history of ancient Greek art until the 20th century. Perhaps it was because of this global approach and the use of modern forms that Mohasses works became so popular in the world in the last decade.

Mohasses says from the mouth of every human being aware of his fate: "An animal dies in life; Man lives in death. The animal in me is dear to me. Yes, I really want to die with the dignity of an animal (Mohasses, 1964).

5.3.15. *Minotaur sitting on the seashore*

In the formal analysis of this work, it can be said that this work has a single element in its first plan. In the second plan and behind this element, we see a flat background covered with gray (blue-purple).



Image 5.27 *Minotaur sitting on the seashore*, Mohasses, 1976

In the body part of this element-the body-we see familiar forms that are reminiscent of the muscles and bones of the human body; The figure has a deformation in the proportions and shape of the human body. This deformation reaches its peak in the head and in this part we see a stout neck with an animal-shaped head on it. In this painting, the minotaur sits in the center of the picture and dominates the entire canvas. Its red eyes and mouth convey an uncontrollable and deep anger to the audience, and its protruding and contracted muscles are a sign of the great power of this creature. Like many of Mohasses works, this minotaur is depicted naked, which shows him in a primitive and far from civilization state and is a sign of his rebellious and animal nature. The minimal khaki background contrasts with the sculptural form of the Minotaur's body, and this treatment of form links the painting to both ancient and modern art. Mohasses has succeeded in creating a work that refers both to the ancient images of this creature and to the works of

modern era artists. The Minotaur is depicted on the seashore in a hopelessly defeated manner. He pointed to the vast space behind the minotaur. The space is divided into three parts along with the horizon line and the beach.

Pakbaz believes that in Mohasses painting, especially this painting, "the horizon line in the configurations is an element that separates the background and the foreground. He uses these measures to express the general and symbolic concepts of the contemporary situation" (Pakbaz, 2015).

Almost all the paintings form a patchwork bed where the sky, the sea and the seashore meet. This may be deeply rooted in the unconscious mind of the individual and his birthplace. Mohasses was born in the north of Iran (Rasht) and chose Italy to live, where the sea is an important part of nature. As a result, the depiction of the sea element is a very important component in Mohasses paintings, which can be attributed to his subconscious and is related to the predominance of the sea element in his mental images, especially in relation to his childhood memories. Although Mohasses considers any type of attribution to any part of the world as random, he confirms the relationship between the image of the sea and his subconscious mind (Tajdini, 2013).

He considers the sea as an endless space full of questions, fear and life. So it can be said that his look at the sea is a mythological look that is based on the unconscious knowledge as Jung pointed out and the possibility of the artist's communication. According to everything that is suspicious and scary in life, they have created the myth. Among human fears and questions, there are great natural elements. But in this painting, it can be seen that by turning a natural element like the sea into a myth, Muhass attacks the questions and fears of life in a double way. In other words, in this painting, he uses the myth in an inverse way and compared to the view of the mythologists, he presents an inverse definition of the myth. This inverted mythological image of the sea in the background, especially in the background of the Minotaur painting, makes sense with the above analysis.

In this painting, Mohasses turns his life into a myth. A myth that neither answers questions nor fear, but raises the fears and questions of life and makes them appear much more frightening and ambiguous in front of the eyes of the audience. Mohasses admits in

an interview that he has claustrophobia. He considers painting as "indeterminate representation in a limited space". He tried to overcome his fear of closed spaces by showing the unknown in a limited space (Pakbaz, 2015).

Therefore, it can be said that by depicting the Minotaur in the mentioned painting, Mohasses imagined the mazes that Theseus had entered to defeat him and his fear of such a closed and scary space that led to the encounter with the Minotaur. be reminded. He tries to overcome such fear by depicting the sea as an open and vast space. It could be argued that the reason for his particular interest in the Minotaur myth was the commonality he imagined between himself and the Minotaur: being trapped in the closed space and maze of life. This is despite the fact that the head, which has been the place of thought and wisdom since ancient times, is smaller than the normal size in Mohasses paintings. The metal space with dark and gray colors depicts the individual ideology of the artist as well as an image of the world involved in the disaster.

Depicting the catastrophic situations of contemporary man in specific works or the violent execution of transformed beings isolated in the middle of nowhere is the main feature of his paintings (Kashmir Shakan, 2014).

As a result, the sea behind the Minotaur may have the same function as the mythologist intended. That is, with the sign of the sea, vastness overcomes the sign of the Minotaur, which indicates closed space. In other words, the sea as a myth responds to the artist's fears of depicting life in the Minotaur. On the other hand, the minotaur fills the foreground and does not allow the sea to show itself in the background. This shows that such an attempt by the artist to overcome his questions and fears has not been successful.

In general, it can be said that, the myth finds an identity in this work of art, because the artist in search of his individuality tries to restore the roots of his questions and fears in order to survive in this work.

as a result, it can be said that the minotaur and the sea are a shadow for the painter in such a way that in his painting he tries to show the effort to overcome the shadow in the process of individuality.

5.3.16. The minotaur is sitting

In the structural analysis of the work, it can be said that the subject has a certain philosophical weight and emphasizes a certain subject. Mohasses has considered a heavy mode in depicting this work, so we see a triangle inside this frame, which has a lot of emphasis on it. That is, it shows the human form in the form of a triangle, in addition, it created a contrast in the middle of the work, so that the two did not fall apart, and this contrast was created by the color, of course, the orange color was used, creating a contrast that came out of the gray stagnation.



Image 5.28 *The minotaur is sitting*, Mohasses, 1976

to be at the same time, he created a kind of silence with gray and heaviness with the form and contrast with orange color between blue, black, green and orange colors and these oranges create an aspect of focus in the work and different from what is in the frame. The shape of the figure and anatomy has changed and is more normal, and it is as if he is doing something and as if he is holding a thread in his hand and pulling it, which can

represent the thread that Theseus used to avoid getting lost on the way to the labyrinth. He used it and killed the minotaur the head cow and then returned by means of that thread. The shape of the hands has changed a bit, and they no longer have the shape of a wing, as if tired of the times, it is sitting quietly and calmly in a corner, giving a more human form.

In the structural analysis of this specific work, it is a semantic property that a bust of the Minotaur, in the style of classical painting figures, is depicted from behind, turned from the waist, and its hands are hidden, and its face is three-sided, and its direction is towards us. This minotaur is set against a cold, gray, almost flat background. The green-yellow color of his body is caught in a gray halo, and the surface of his rough skin is full of layers of red-brown cheek scratches. His facial expression is cold and soulless and slightly angry; Are the wounds bothering him or is he annoyed by the fact that he is standing in front of us this tired and wounded? Or maybe none of these. It's as if this minotaur, which was killed many times by the gods in history, has now surrendered to its fate and the bitter nature of mankind, and stopped trying to free itself, standing listlessly and tiredly at the end of the world and contented itself with a bitter look. As a result, it has moved towards mythical colors. Side by side grays plus a powerful vertical form that shows the strength of this figure and it covers the vertical frame. Mohasses has full awareness in creating forms because the position of the hands is such that it creates a triangle and in the lower part it creates a square shape. It has a rigid romantic expression that conveys a kind of bitter myth. The specific minotaur is not a minotaur monster, the human minotaur has suffered and induces the feeling of human suffering and decay. Mohasses knows Greek humanism and wanted to convey the importance of human beings with this work.

A strange illusion has cast a shadow on the canvas of his paintings. It is as if all the imaginative power of the work depends on this dreamlike illusion. It is possible to go further and say that this illusion has even permeated the texture of the colors of the work, a texture that can draw a kind of poetic, mythic or even scary veil on the frame of his painting; An illusion that creates the meaning and subject of his painting. In fact, the poetry hidden in the work of Bahman Mohasses creates the logic of the work; Naked poetry that depicts everything in a very small frame or even with a tonality of green

colors as a sign of nature. Primitiveness as simplicity shows itself in his paintings in the form of reduced colors and in another way in his figures. Therefore, maybe he can be placed next to someone like Sohrab Sepehri, with the difference that he paints illusions; A color illusion whose horror is intensified in its simplicity. Mohasses, as if he has chosen the first way of thinking about painting as Van Gogh says: how not to paint.

5.4. The relationship between specific paintings and sculptures

As Mohasses progressed, he reduced the dramatic spirit of his paintings and intensified the physical nature of his sculptures. By removing the impromptu effects of stains and stains, Mohasses realizes a calculated structure in the borders of his figures; He draws the initial design as if he is carving a volume and moves the color of the solid volumes to gray. He prefers to think of himself as a sculptor and craftsman and even considering the associations of the artist in the eyes of the people, or as he says, "what has become today", he does not like the word artist.



Image 5.29 *Personage*, Mohasses, 1965

On the other hand, his paintings have a deeper similarity with sculptures, and that is that the background of his works has less organic relationship with the figure in the

foreground. Its backgrounds are more than anything else, the fixed position of the figure and act as the base of a sculpture. His prioritization of sculpture and craftsmanship is an important key to understanding the fundamental concepts manifested in his art. Modern trends can have a creative fascination with local image traditions and extend the spirit of tradition even in the new body language. In this case, the new trend, in order to be understood by the audience, defines itself in the adherence to the language of tradition. Mohasses is opposed in form and content maker. We can see how it comes back to the sculpture that has been marked in the visual history of Iran, and it is not so much in terms of symbolism and meaning, but in its rigid and heavy dimensions, we encounter the improvisation of matter. On the one hand, the body has given up its role as an example and has been separated from the fixed background of its worldview that was manifested in the vastness of nature. In the next step, the "body" loses the order of the organism, which is important in realistic representation, and the idea of order and function gives its place to the blind force of life and the physical limits of huge muscles. For example, the figure lacks eyes but is not blind; It has a mouth but does not speak. By being empty of self-awareness, instincts and acts are highlighted and the solid matter of the body is stimulated by the force of instinct; In the movement transformation of matter, an indistinguishable figure has been created between human and animal, which are common in instinct and bodily actions, which the painter found his ideal example in the image of the minotaur. While his works bring the human being down to the "body" and the earth (which does not mean degradation or descent), he also deprives the painting of the beauty of the dramatic effects. The figures and the paintings have a mournful color, but this is not necessarily a sign of an apocalyptic ruin; They have lost their faces, but the "conscious matter" of their bodies is very much alive.

Chapter VI

Elemental Analysis of Bahman Mohasses' Artworks



6.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the elemental analysis of Bahman Mohasses' artistic language, focusing on the most frequently recurring elements that define his visual and conceptual universe. Mohasses' works, whether in painting or sculpture, are constructed through a deliberate selection of forms, symbols, and motifs that serve as carriers of meaning beyond their aesthetic appearance. This chapter is devoted to identifying and analyzing components such as color, line, texture, light, composition, and spatial dynamics, all of which shape the formal structure of the artworks and indicate the artist's stylistic evolution over time. By identifying and analyzing these elements, we gain insight into the psychological, philosophical, and socio-political layers embedded within his art. In what follows, we will examine recurring themes such as fragmented human figures, hybrid mythological creatures, monumental animals like fish and birds, as well as the frequent use of voids and barren landscapes. These elements are not merely stylistic choices, but reflections of Mohasses' inner world and critical engagement with the world around him.

The elements of Bahman Mohasses' works that we will examine in this chapter include the following visual components:

1. Birds
2. Fishes
3. Inanimate nature
4. Human in the works of Bahman Mohasses
5. The Human Body

6.2. Birds

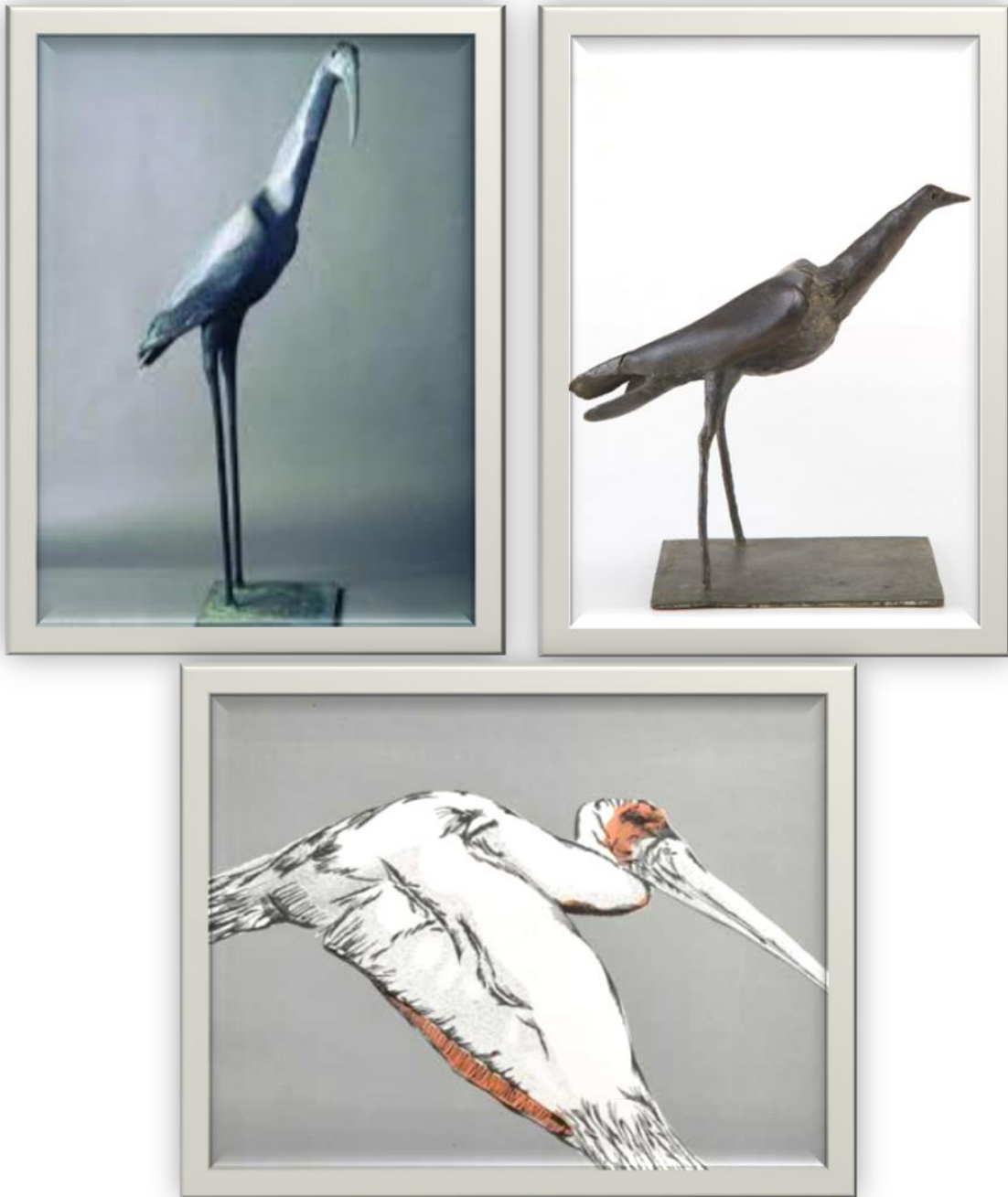


Image 6.1 *Birds*, Mohasses, 1970

In ancient cultures, birds have always been among the most respected and respected creatures. Ancient people considered birds to be otherworldly creatures. That is why birds have a high place in mythological symbols and some of them relate to gods and superior forces (Kazazi, 2001).

The bird belongs to the role of the constant elements of Bahman's works and is not separated from his mental space. The first birds appeared in his drawings and paintings and were closely linked with a deep and eternal friendship with Nima Yoshij. The bird is a symbol of originality, pride, migration or crossing the borders, and in his paintings, Mohasses sometimes shows them by the beach, or in his sculptures, such as the present work, you can follow the path of the bird's gaze to the horizon on the other side of the beach, but his birds are as if The embodied form of this poem is Nima: "No eyes are wide from him, no wings from him / Head to toe, dry and unmoved / Its beak is fire, its feathers are gold / It looks like a statue / Another chicken. The one whose whole job is to read / everyone trembles from head to toe / he does not want to stay in the shade of that pine tree / he does not have the strength to grow from that heartbreaking place (Yooshij,1939).

The birds in Bahman Mohasses' works can be classified:

1. Symbolic
2. Visual
3. Emotional
4. Cultural characteristics
5. Artistic Style & Visual Technique

6.2.1. Symbolic Role of Birds: These birds are not mere representations of nature; they carry layered meanings:

	Symbol	Meaning in Mohasses' Work
1	Bird	Originality, pride, migration, transcendence—but ironically trapped, static, unable to fly.
2	Owl	Death, darkness, mystery (possibly referencing <i>Hedayat's "The Blind</i>

		<i>Owl</i> ").
3	Vulture	Decay, death, Zoroastrian sky burial rituals, lifeless waiting.
4	Eagle	Traditional symbol of power—but depicted <i>blind</i> , thus stripped of vision, pride and dominance.
5	Seagull (Butimar)	Eternal sorrow, futility, and cultural myth of a bird afraid to drink from the sea it lives beside.

6.2.2. Physical/Formal Characteristics of the Birds: These traits emphasize emotional weight and symbolic contradiction:

	Feature	Interpretation
1	Closed, heavy wings	Birds are incapable of flight, representing stagnation or psychological weight.
2	Bronze material, heavy volume	Implies burden, immobility and statuesque stillness.
3	No feathers / no mouth / no ears	Denial of life's sensory features; suggesting silence, incompleteness, trauma.
4	Thin legs / raised necks	Suggest tension, frozenness or fragile endurance.
5	Large, never-used wings	Wasted potential; a being made to fly but grounded permanently.

6.2.3. Emotional/Psychological Expression: The birds express deep, often tragic emotional states

	Emotion or State	How It Is Conveyed
1	Despair / Depression	Static poses, absence of movement, symbolic use of vultures and owls
2	Fear / Futility	Butimar's eternal anxiety; birds on long legs unable to escape.
3	Contradiction / Duality	Birds appear noble (e.g., eagles), yet they are blind, muted, or broken.
4	Isolation / Silence	Monochrome backgrounds, lack of interaction, birds

nailed to their base.

6.2.4. Cultural and Intertextual References: Mohasses' birds carry rich intertextual links

	Reference	Connection
1	Nima Yooshij's poetry	Expressed in the bird's poetic yet tragic stillness.
2	Sadegh Hedayat's "The Blind Owl"	Reflected in the blind owls, themes of death, insanity, isolation.
3	Zoroastrian vultures	Religious rituals of corpse consumption; themes of spiritual decay.
4	Cultural myths (Butimar)	Monochrome backgrounds, lack of interaction, birds nailed to their base.

6.2.5. Artistic Style & Visual Technique: Even visual language deepens the characterization

	Artistic Trait	Effect
1	Monochrome or limited color palette	Emphasizes emotional austerity and psychological burden.
2	Added sand in painting	Creates texture and heaviness to sculptural form.
3	Cubist and Expressionist echoes	Reminiscent of Modigliani and Henry Moore, but ultimately distinctively personal.

6.3. Fishes

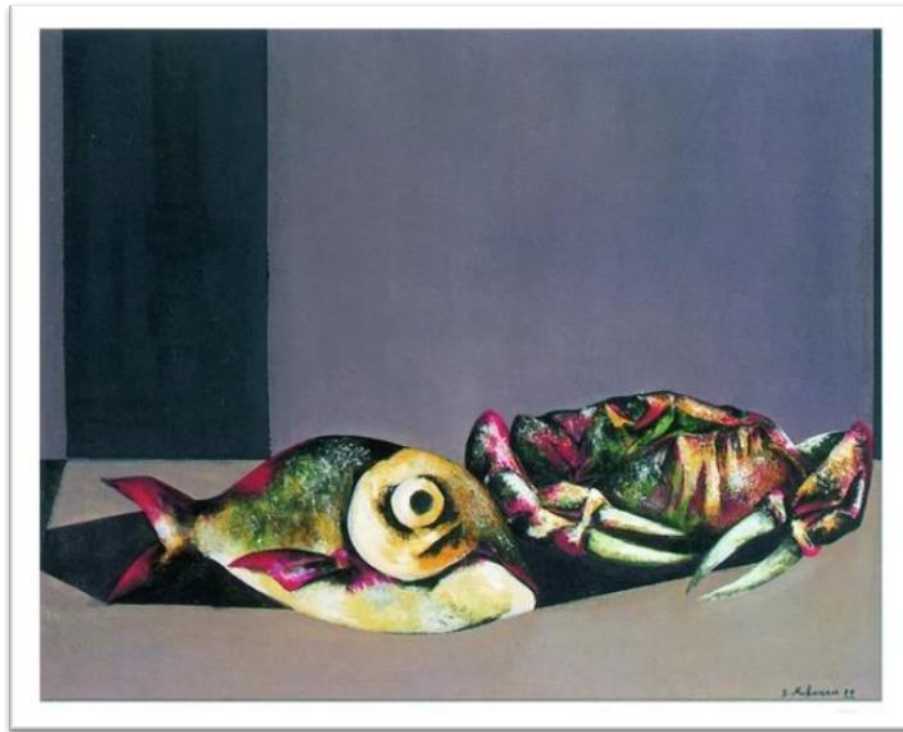


Image 6.2 *Still life with crab*, Mohasses, 1977



Image 6.3 *Fish*, Mohasses, 1978

Fishes have a special place in the works of Bahman Mohasses. This element was seen in his works from the early years of his work. It may be interpreted that they have existed in his subconscious since his birth; Maybe because of his birthplace. The fish in his works is the fish that was taken out of the water, it breathes and its mouth opens and closes in begging, it looks at us with those black eyes with fear and asks us for a drop of water; His body is slimy and does not stay in anyone's hands, he slips and goes, it is difficult to hold him, if the water is taken away from him, he dies and until the moment of death, he tries his best to reach the water, but it is rare. water taken, return to water; If he returns, he will become the prey of "other" again. That's when he might go into a shark's mouth and his life will end. Fish is the influence and presence of the text of the city where the artist was born in his works. A city that is full of fish and sea and these two elements are abundantly present in Mohass works

The fish in Bahman Mohasses' works can be classified across several dimensions:

1. 1. Symbolic Role of Fish
2. Physical/Formal Characteristics of the Fishes
3. Emotional/Psychological Expression
4. Cultural and Intertextual References
5. Artistic Style & Visual Technique
6. Narrative Function of Fish

6.3.1. Symbolic Role of Fish: These fish are deeply metaphorical, reflecting existential and cultural themes:

	Symbol	Meaning in Mohasses' Work
1	Fish (in general)	Life, origins, cultural memory, but paradoxically lifeless, exiled and dying.
2	Out of water fish	Symbol of displacement, helpless struggle, futility, and inevitable death.
3	Dried/flat/fossilized fish	Represents historical stagnation, cultural decay, or forgotten vitality.
4	Fish on the table	still-life, mortality, and ritualistic distance from life.

6.3.2. Physical/Formal Characteristics of the Fishes: Form is used deliberately to convey death, heaviness, and artificial preservation:

	Feature	Interpretation
1	Flat and fossil-like	Implies death, permanence, and objectification.
2	Drawn from the front	Emphasizes a direct confrontation with the viewer forces recognition of decay.
3	Slimy / slippery surface	Suggests impermanence, elusiveness, but also inability to escape fate.
4	Black, hollow eyes and open mouth	Evoke suffering, desperation, and begging for life (water).
5	Gray, stripped, dry coloring	Aesthetic of monotony, inanimation, and emotional weight.

6.3.3. Emotional/Psychological Expression: The fish embody an internal struggle, mirroring human alienation and helplessness

	Emotion or State	How It Is Conveyed
1	Despair / Helplessness	The fish's mouth gasping for air, their dislocation from water.
2	Decay / Futility	Dead forms preserved unnaturally on a table life drained and irreversible.
3	Absurdity	Contrasts between fish, bottles, and fruits evoke a sense of existential contradiction.
4	Loneliness / Disconnection	Like the artist, the fish are far from their roots, isolated and still.

6.3.4. Cultural and Intertextual References: Fish are dense with symbolic associations in Persian and European traditions:

	Reference	Connection
1	Rasht (artist's birthplace)	A place of sea and fish, fish signify cultural roots and nostalgia.
2	Symbol of fish in Iranian culture	Traditionally life and fertility are now rendered lifeless, broken.
3	Baroque still life painting	Like 17th-century, fish become signs of mortality and decay.
4	Cubist references	Deformation, broken perspectives add to alienation and abstraction.
5	German Expressionism	Stylistic resemblance in grotesque and suffering figures.

6.3.5. Artistic Style & Visual Technique: The fish become expressive carriers of visual and metaphorical weight:

	Artistic Trait	Effect
1	Paired with anthropomorphic bottles	Enhances the human-animal connection, showing a world of confused roles.
2	Shadow and curves on the table	Implies fluidity turned absurd, a gesture toward absurdism.
3	Use of northern Iranian motifs	Items like smoked fish and pomegranate cloth evoke local identity.

6.3.6. Narrative Function of Fish: Fish serve as protagonists of a silent tragedy

	Function	Narrative or Symbolic Meaning
1	Victim / martyr figure	Always dying, gasping, stripped from their world, condemned to slow erasure.
2	Mirror of the artist himself	Like Mohasses, they are cut off from origin, displaced, and observant.
3	Symbol of modernity's failure	A metaphor for incomplete, decaying modernity in Iranian context.
4	Cultural object in a ritual table	Conveys distance from meaning, creating a ceremonial yet lifeless setting.

6.4. Inanimate nature



Image 6.4 *Inanimate nature*, Mohassess, 1976

In his works, Bahman Mohass has a series of paintings with the theme of inanimate nature. This collection of works is mostly related to the early period of his works. These works are drawn with oil paint on canvas and are usually a collection of bottles, fruits and fishes that are completely isolated on one surface. But as it can be seen in all his works, even in his lifeless nature, despite the simplicity of the subject, deep sadness can still be seen in the work. (Dabiri, 2010).



Image 6.5 *Still life with fish and bottle*, Mohasses, 1969

The "Inanimate Nature" in Bahman Mohasses' works can be classified across several dimensions:

1. Formal Features
2. Stylistic Classification
3. Thematic / Conceptual Classification
4. Symbolic Elements
5. Cultural & Psychological Classification
6. Comparative Art Context
7. Emotive Impact

6.4.1. Formal Features:

	Aspect	Details
1	Medium	Oil on canvas
2	Subjects	Bottles, fruits (often apples or pomegranate), fish
3	Composition	Objects are isolated on a flat surface, often with no clear spatial depth
4	Color Palette	Limited shades of blue, green, gray with rare warm colors (muted reds, or ochres)
5	Texture	Rough, dense, heavy adds to emotional gravity

6.4.2. Stylistic Classification

	Feature	Details
1	Art Movement	Expressionism, with conceptual ties to Cubism (especially in palette)
2	Deformation	Bottles and fishes are distorted anthropomorphic, emotive
3	Influences	Picasso, but diverges via emotional expressiveness
4	Symbolic Style	Each object acts as a cipher for a deeper psychological or cultural meaning

6.4.3. Thematic / Conceptual Classification

	Theme	Explanation
1	Melancholy & Displacement	Rooted in personal exile, detachment from homeland, cultural dislocation
2	Silence and Stagnation	Stillness is not peaceful it signals decay, death, and existential pause
3	Cultural Memory	Use of Iranian elements (fish, pomegranate, cashew fabric) as symbolic texts
4	Struggle of Meaning	Paintings function as visual riddles “complex ciphers”

6.4.4. Symbolic Elements

	Object	Symbolic Role
1	Fish	Life → Death; isolation from water = exile, desperation, decay
2	Bottle	Anthropomorphized — often human-like posture, representing emotional confinement
3	Fruit (pomegranate)	Fertility, cultural ritual, now muted and rough — symbol of lost vitality
4	Table surface	Isolating platform — a metaphorical stage for existential theater

6.4.5. Cultural & Psychological Classification

	Cultural Anchor	Explanation
1	Rasht (hometown)	Sea, fish, cashew cloth — symbols of origin and loss
2	Migration experience	Early move to Italy; emotional alienation shown in spatial and chromatic coldness
3	Iranian Modernism	Mohasses serious contribution to still life genre in Iran
4	Collective memory	Native viewers experience these as symbols of broken continuity

6.4.6. Comparative Art Context

	Compared to	Difference
1	Western Cubism	Similar limited palette but Cubists focus on form analysis not emotion
2	Contemporary Iranian artists	Avoided still life as "outdated" Mohasses made it relevant and intense again
3	His own mythological works	Still life(s) are equally powerful in emotion and form (e.g., compared to Minotaur works)

6.4.7. Emotive Impact

Type		Feature
1	Silence	Dominant cool tones, shades of blue, gray, and green evoke a deep, meditative quietness, like the depth of the sea.
2	Emotional Density Form and Color	Objects (fish, bottles, fruit) blend with their background, losing individual identity.
3	Tension through Contrast	The rare inclusion of warm tones creates visual tension within the overall cool palette. These warm colors carry a rough, heavy texture, expressing emotional rawness, like pain or unresolved passion.
4	Living Emotion in Inanimate Forms	Apples, fish, or bottles become surrogates for human figures, carrying the same anxiety, fear, and despair.
5	Cultural Memory and Nostalgia	For viewers, these still life trigger a deep emotional connection to homeland and identity.
6	Strangeness and Anxiety	Although the genre is traditional (still life), Mohasses turns it into a cipher of unease and psychological complexity.

6.5. Human in the works of Bahman Mohasses



Image 6.6 *The man and the bird*, Mohasses, 1966



Image 6.7 *Untitled*, Mohasses, 1967

In most of the works of Bahman Mohasses, man has a central role, Human who is often depicted with a defect in his organs and his body, or clumsy, or without eyes and face. In his works, "being headless" or physical conflicts and physical problems and afflictions are seen, and his works include people who have "small heads and fat bodies", and in his works, the conflicts of the human body are very prominent.

Although he depicts a series of types with their purity and brevity, he has a complete emphasis on human individuality - beyond its "ideal and statistical average". Something that comes from the "conscious self" of a person or is left in his unconsciousness. A point that Carl Gustav Jung - the greatest psychoanalyst of the 20th century - recounts in the article "The Complicated Situation of the Individual in the Modern Society" as follows: "But it is not everyone and the conventional public that determine the characteristics of an individual, but individual individuals are the determinants. The individual is not like A reversible unit, but it can be understood as something unique and unique, which in the final analysis is neither known nor can be compared with anything else. At the same time, a human being as a member of a species can and should be described as a statistical unit. Otherwise, nothing general can be said about it." (Jung1957).

The "Man" in Bahman Mohasses works can be classified across several dimensions:

1. The Deformed Body as a Symbol of Crisis
2. Man, as Individual, Not Archetype
3. Man-Animal Hybrids (Animalized Humanity)
4. Man, as Existential Witness
5. Man as Expression of Protest
6. The Silenced, Fragmented Human
7. Man as a Ruin Awaiting Apocalypse

The works of Mohasses show a warning bitter world which is also a reflection of the contradictory personality of the artist himself, a personality that is the sum of opposites, A collection of genius and greed, calculation and recklessness.

6.5.1. The Deformed Body as a Symbol of Crisis

Aspect	Details
1 Visual Traits	Headless figures, clumsy limbs, exaggerated muscles, sunken or absent faces.
2 Symbolic Impact	These bodies reflect existential decay, post-war trauma, and the breakdown of humanity.
3 Texture & Tone	Bodies rendered like stone or rubble, evoking destruction, dehumanization, and fossilized suffering.
4 Interpretation	Man as a ruin, both physically and spiritually — a commentary on violence, loss, and disintegration.

6.5.2. Man, as Individual, Not Archetype

Aspect	Details
1 Psychological Root	Draws on Jungian and Freudian psychoanalysis — the tension between the individual self and the statistical average.
2 Key Insight	Mohasses portrays unique individuals, not idealized.
3 Impact	His figures are visual expressions of interior states, revealing personal history, mental conflict, and emotional isolation.

6.5.3. Man-Animal Hybrids (Animalized Humanity)

Aspect	Details
1 Figures	Animal faces with human expressions.
2 Emotive Force	Embody fear, alienation, and silenced suffering.
3 Interpretation	A grotesque mirror to humanity — exposing our primitive drives and vulnerabilities.

6.5.4. Man, as Existential Witness

Aspect	Details
1 Mood	Eternal fear, sadness, anxiety.
2 Positioning	Figures appear collapsed, folded, or buried.
3 Metaphysical Role	Not heroic or redemptive — they are mute spectators of decline.
4 Connection	Like Francis Bacon’s screaming popes Mohasses paints man as the wounded witness of his time.

6.5.5. Man as Expression of Protest

Aspect	Details
1 Technique	Use of exaggeration, abstraction, and deformation as tools of critique.
2 Target	Rejects idealized, decorative images of man in Iranian art.
3 Message	The human figure becomes a site of resistance, a canvas of pain.
4 Tone	Political without slogans, rebellion through form.

6.5.6. The Silenced, Fragmented Human

Aspect	Details
1 Visual Sign	Dislocated heads, headless bodies, fractured anatomy.
2 Meaning	Suggests the collapse of speech, identity, and social order.
3 Cultural Context	Reflects exile, censorship, and the crushing of individuality in both personal and collective memory.
4 Effect	Deep emotive disquiet, challenging the viewer’s sense of empathy.

6.5.7. Man as a Ruin Awaiting Apocalypse

Aspect	Details
1 Philosophical Layer	His figures are not only damaged, but waiting to anticipate an end, an unfolding disaster
2 Existential Tone	They are frozen in silence, marked by resignation, but not completely void of consciousness.

6.6. The Body



Image 6.8 *Head*, Mohassess, 1966

The body as an intellectual and conceptual object occupies a central place in the works of Bahman Mohassess, making him a rare and exceptional figure in Iranian modern art. Unlike other Iranian modernist artists, who often employed the human figure as a narrative device or an emotional stimulus, Mohassess treated the body as an autonomous subject worthy of deep philosophical interrogation. In his oeuvre, the body is not a

passive figure to be admired or consumed, but a critical form, both object and subject, both symbol and scream.

I. The Body as Intellectual Object: For Mohasses, the body is more than a form of it. It is an idea. He transforms the human figure into a field of conceptual inquiry, turning it into a philosophical subject rather than an aesthetic one. This distinguishes him sharply from his Iranian peers, most of whom remained within the boundaries of visual narration or symbolic gesture. Mohasses, in contrast, gives the body thought, weight, and voice making it a vessel of crisis, critique, and consciousness.

II. The Head as Site of Erasure: The head is often the first target of deformation or disappearance in Mohasses' works. In many cases, heads are missing, shrunk, or sunken into the torso, suggesting a deliberate attack on personal identity and human recognition. In this act, Mohasses underlines a deeper existential crisis: the erosion of individuality, communication, and rational order in the modern world. The head, often reduced to a void, becomes a metaphor for anonymity, fear, and psychic breakdown.

III. The Deformed Body as Ruin: Mohasses presents the body not in its ideal form, but as a fragmented, distorted, and eroded structure thick limbs, exaggerated muscles, collapsing torsos, hybrid anatomies. These bodies are not alive in a classical sense but appear as wreckage relics of trauma, violence, and history. They are post-human bodies: not sensual but wounded, not expressive but mute.

IV. The Body as Protest: By deforming and grotesquely altering the human form, Mohasses mounts a visual protest societal norms, cultural hypocrisy, and artistic complacency. His bodies do not conform to beauty, tradition, or expectation. Instead, they scream silently about oppression, displacement, and alienation. This protest is not loud, but it is deeply etched in flesh and form, turning the body into a site of resistance and political defiance.

V. The Body as Psychological Map: Starting in his second artistic period, Mohasses turns inward, his bodies become landscapes of the unconscious. Folded limbs, layered skin, cracked textures: each detail carries the weight of internal struggle and psychological pressure. The outer distortions mirror inner fractures. The body becomes not only a form but a diagnosis — a portrait of the modern mind in crisis.

VI. *The Hybrid and Mutated Body:* In many works, the human figure fuses with animals or objects, bottles take on bodily traits. These hybrids blur the boundary between the human and the non-human, echoing a surrealist vision but rooted in existential despair. These fusions question identity, evolution, and belonging, while evoking a world where human essence is unstable and undefined. These mutated bodies reflect a world of absurdity, transgression, and ontological uncertainty.

VII. *The Fragmented Body:* Mohasses often isolate and displays disconnected parts of the body as if dissected or broken apart. These partial figures are like ruins, exposing the violence of forgetting, the brutality of history, and the collapse of unity. This approach echoes post-war European expressionism, where fragmentation becomes a symbol of modern disintegration and the impossibility of wholeness.

VIII. *The Body as Universal Signifier:* Despite being deeply rooted in personal, Iranian, and post-war contexts, Mohasses' treatment of the body transcends geography and culture. Like Francis Bacon he turns the human figure into a universal metaphor of mortality, decay, and resistance. These are not portraits of specific people — they are archetypes of existential suffering, cultural collapse, and psychic rebellion.

Bahman Mohasses' human figures are not simply drawn — they are excavated. They bear the marks of memory, crisis, alienation, and revolt. In his hands, the body becomes a battlefield, a monument, a warning, and a mirror. His figures are the wreckage of modern humanity, but they are also their clearest expression. Through them, Mohasses has forged a language of form that is both deeply personal and profoundly universal.



Image 6.9 *Bust*, Mohasses, bronze, height 10.5 cm, 1973

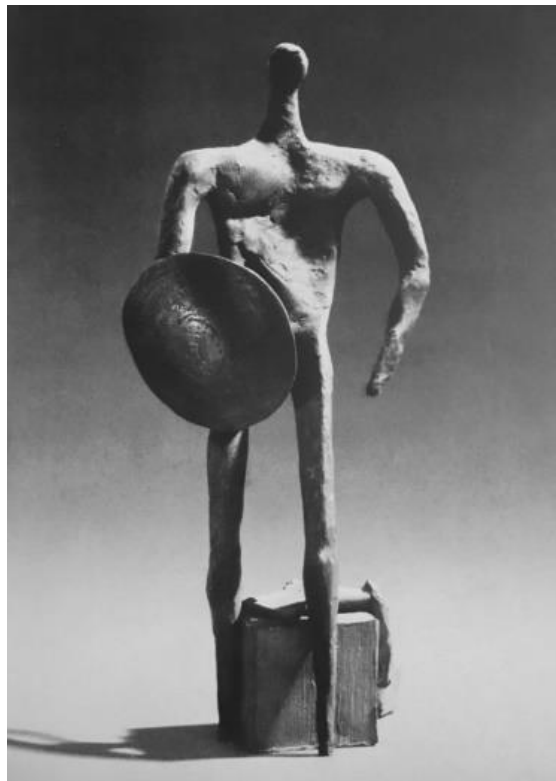


Image 6.10 *Figure*, Mohasses, bronze, height 25 cm, 1972

When we first encounter the works of Bahman Mohasses, they stir our aesthetic senses and leave us with a sense of ambiguity. Immediately, they may seem distant or enigmatic, yet they demand a second look—then a third. Over time, we begin to realize that what we are seeing is not ordinary; these are distinct, powerful, and singular works of art. Mohasses' creations do not offer immediate clarity or comfort. Instead, they provoke questions, inviting the viewer into a deeper process of reflection and discovery.

Engaging with Mohasses' art requires a certain readiness, a willingness to challenge conventional expectations. As the artist himself remarked, "Do not expect beauty that you can simply hang on your wall." His works are not decorative, they are confrontational, intellectual, and often unsettling. They speak in a visual language that resists simplification, making the act of viewing a layered and demanding experience.

Chapter VII

Mythology in the Works of Bahman Mohasses



7.1. Introduction

The works of Bahman Mohasses are relatively scarce due to his limited engagement with the Iranian art community and his infrequent exhibitions. This scarcity is particularly evident in his later works. Consequently, Mohasses' oeuvre can be categorized into two distinct periods: before and after his migration from Iran. This study primarily focuses on his early works, as they are more accessible and, in terms of thematic content, exhibit significant similarities with his later pieces. Therefore, an analysis of his early works can serve as a basis for a broader understanding of his artistic approach. The discourse embedded in Mohasses' artwork, alongside his role as the enunciator, aligns with the transformations following his migration from Iran, making the examination of his works within this framework particularly relevant.

7.2. Bahman Mohasses: An Artist Bridging Mythology and the Contemporary World

The discourse of a mythologist operates as a meta-language; its objectives remain elusive, often entangled in ethical dilemmas. As a result, the mythologist finds themselves detached from the general consumers of mythology, inevitably assuming a position of alienation from society (Barthes, 2005). This definition aptly encapsulates Bahman Mohasses' artistic stance, mirroring his personal and professional experiences. During the 1960s, a period marked by the zenith of his mythological works in Iran, Mohasses permanently emigrated to Italy, where he lived in solitude, estranged from his homeland. Reflecting on this self-imposed exile, he stated: We are late there, and we are early here. There is no market for the works of artists like me in the West because our technical experiments have become outdated. Meanwhile, in our own country, we remain unrecognized—perhaps forever (Mojabi, 2008).

This estrangement from his audience stems from the stark and unsettling nature of his works, which, in his own words, were never intended for mere aesthetic appreciation or home decoration. Rather, they serve as direct expressions of harsh realities, an approach akin to the role of the mythologist within society. A mythologist, much like Mohasses, functions as a politically engaged figure whose discourse, being a form of meta-language, places them in a precarious position of marginalization. Their work inherently exposes

underlying mythologies, necessitating an engagement with the entirety of society, as mythology permeates all aspects of life and culture (Abazari, 2001).

Mohasses' worldview reflects a similar cautious, and arguably pessimistic, perspective. In a letter to his friend Ahmadreza Ahmadi, he writes: We live in a world of words. Everyone's mouth is open in an absurd and vulgar grimace called laughter, while their fingers form the victory sign. Civilization, which has now reached its nadir, once began with poetry. Water was once a deity. But today, the river is polluted, and water tastes like fear. As a fossil of this prehistoric history, I breathe and create (Mohasses, 2007).

Mohasses perceived himself as detached from society, striving through his art to reveal the alienation and violence inherent in modern reality that many accept unquestioningly as natural. This endeavor parallels the work of the mythologist, who deconstructs prevailing narratives. Mohasses may thus be considered an artist of destruction, dismantling values much like a mythologist deconstructs myths. It is for this reason that he was ultimately cast as an outcast within his own society.

7.3. Description of Mohasses' Works

Mohasses believes that the figures and creatures in his works are so rigid, frozen, fractured and afflicted that they cannot even find a place in feverish, hallucinatory dreams (Hazavei, 2010). This encapsulates the expressive nature he sought to convey to his audience, a goal he successfully achieved. He himself states: "For me, beauty does not exist; beauty, to me, is expression. The artist creates expressions. My paintings can never serve as mere decorations for a room" (Dadkhah & Azad, 1964).

Mohasses sees himself, akin to a mythologist, as responsible for reminding humanity of its obligations. Mythology in contemporary societies serves to erase historical consciousness and present events as natural, thus erasing human responsibility. Modern myths convince individuals that they encounter natural phenomena rather than human-made, historically contingent, and ultimately mutable constructs. If we consider Mohasses' works as a manifesto intended to enlighten the public, they align closely with the role of the mythologist. The goal of mythmaking is to create a static, lifeless world that stifles human creativity, a world resembling nature, in which humanity remains

imprisoned and is subtly manipulated into recognizing itself only through an imposed image constructed by external forces and power structures.

Given this perspective on Bahman Mohasses as a contemporary mythologist, it becomes possible to analyze his works through a mythological lens.

7.4. Mythology and Deconstruction in Mohasses' Works

Modern mythology conveys a distorted message, and it is the mythologist's duty to expose this falsification. Through his paintings and sculptures messages encoded in symbols, according to Barthes Mohasses aimed to unveil these distortions. Since mythological discourse is composed of representational material that functions as a socially comprehensible mode of communication, it must be systematically and methodically demystified. This entails identifying the semiotic conventions behind seemingly natural representations (Barthes, 2005).

In a mythological reading of Mohasses' works, he dismantles this mythical signification and its totality, which appear naturalized to the public. By deconstructing form and meaning, he reconfigures them in a new structure—one that no longer accommodates the original meaning. Consequently, the supposed naturalness of these forms loses its sanctity. As Abazari states, "The process of defamiliarization in Mohasses' works leads to their demystification." (Abazari, 2001).

Mohasses, in a selection of his works, emphasizes anti-mythological forms to challenge the myths of power, modernity, and the dehumanization of society in his era. This category of his works can be interpreted as an anti-mythological reading of his contemporary society. Five artworks from the 1960s have been chosen as the sample for analysis, selected because some of them contain mythological themes and titles. The color palette in these works is extremely restrained, and their expressiveness and violent undertones are highly pronounced. The dynamics of demystification are especially evident in these pieces. Five of the selected works, based on their titles and Mohasses' critical perspective, will be analyzed through a mythological framework to reveal his mythological critique and demystifying artistic approach. The first three analyzed works will be sculptures, while the final two will be paintings.

7.5. Sculptures

7.5.1. *The Royal Family*



Image 7.1 *The Royal Family*, Bronze, height 250 300 150 cm, 1972

One of the fundamental characteristics of sculpture is its public nature. Apart from architecture, sculptures are among the most prominent art forms placed in public spaces. When positioned in city squares or significant locations, they become accessible to all individuals who interact with that environment. Sculpture, as an artistic medium, has historically been employed by various ruling classes as an instrument of power and authority (Gaut & Iyerloops, 2010).

Throughout history, rulers have consistently used art to project grandeur, majesty, power and most importantly, the sanctity of their rule. One of the defining features of such sculptures is their monumental scale, designed to make the observer feel small and insignificant in comparison, thereby reinforcing the ruler's dominance. Additionally, in

these works, the gaze of the ruler is often directed upward, symbolizing foresight and intelligence. In different historical periods and across various cultures, monarchs have been depicted alongside saints, angels, or prophets to legitimize their rule and emphasize its sacred nature.

This tradition has long existed in Iran as well. Before the Pahlavi era, despite the distinct characteristics of indigenous Iranian art, such representations were evident. For instance, during the Sassanian period, the central theme of rock reliefs was the glorification of the king, whether through the depiction of divine investiture by Ahura Mazda or in scenes of royal triumph in battle and hunting. In all these cases, the king is depicted on a significantly larger scale than subordinate figures, reinforcing his dominance, as seen in the rock reliefs of Naqsh-e Rostam and Taq-e Bostan (Pakbaz, 2008).



Image 7.2 *Bas-relief of Naqsh-e-Rostam*

The question arises: why has this visual language of monumental sculpture been consistently used across different cultures and historical periods? The answer lies in the role of these works in mythologizing history (Gaut & Iyerloops, 2010).

Governments wield power and authority, yet their rule is often accompanied by oppression, domination, and, on a smaller scale, issues such as poverty, injustice, and

inequality. Through mythmaking, the meaning of governance is reduced to a singular notion of power, which is then embedded in predetermined monumental forms. This visual strategy serves to naturalize the concept of historical rule, thus giving rise to the myth of monarchy.

Bahman Mohasses' *Royal Family* sculpture is a remarkable example of demythologization. Commissioned in 1351 by the royal office, this bronze sculpture portrays the Shah, the Queen, and the Crown Prince, who is holding a goat. In this work, Mohasses follows the artistic tradition of Henry Moore, allowing the figures to emerge from the material itself, leaving certain sections rough and unpolished. The human figures are reduced to their minimal essence—perhaps more accurately, abandoned. A critical aspect of this work is the absence of any idealized dimension; the intended symbolic meaning of the commission does not align with the artist's sculptural approach. As a result, the central subject—the glorification of monarchy and the perpetuation of the royal lineage—is subverted.

Aghdashloo, describing this work, states: “The group sculpture of the former Shah and his family turned out to be so unsettling that, in comparison, portrait of Charles IV and his royal family seemed remarkably mild. It became a pure example of grotesque. Despite repeated attempts, both subtle and explicit, to persuade him that this work was unacceptable, he refused to comply. He believed it to be a fully realized work of art, and if anyone failed to appreciate it, then they simply lacked intellect and discernment” (Aghdashloo, 2015).

Mohasses' approach to this sculpture aligns with the principles of mythological critique and demythologization. According to Roland Barthes, the bourgeoisie—representing the ruling power—utilizes mythology to naturalize historical constructs of power, presenting them as inevitable and unchangeable. The role of the mythologist is to decipher and expose these ideological constructs (Abazari, 2001).

This interpretation directly corresponds to *The Royal Family* sculpture, as the work fails to convey the intended message. Instead of exalting monarchy and its continuity, the sculpture subverts these notions, rendering them ineffective. The very title—*Royal Family*—suggests dynastic perpetuation; hence, the presence of not only the Shah but

also his wife and heir, signifying the continuation of power. However, Mohasses' treatment of form disrupts this narrative. Rather than diminishing the notion of power, his sculptural choices highlight its oppressive, decaying, and transient nature. Consequently, the intended mythological significance is lost, and instead, work challenges the very idea of the naturalization of power. The subversive formal structure of Mohasses' work allows precisely this interpretation.

In images created of rulers, the most evident aspect is their representation filled with grandeur and power, sometimes even depicted with colossal dimensions to emphasize their authority. However, in this work, the figure of the king does not exhibit such power for two reasons:

1. The king's face lacks two crucial features—his eyes symbolize his vision and sharpness. Instead, they appear as hollow cavities, while the remaining form of his mouth, depicted as an open void, further emphasizes his ignorance and lack of awareness.
2. The cut of the king's trousers, folded over his shoes, creates a visual illusion of short stature in the observer's mind, as though the length of his trousers exceeds his height. This perceived shortness is in stark contrast to the typical use of exaggeratedly large body parts and inevitably produces an inverse psychological effect on the viewer.

Beside the king, the queen has her head lowered, seemingly gazing at the ground, with an expression of distress visible on her face. It is said that upon seeing this work, the queen asked the artist why he had depicted her as sorrowful. To this, Mohasses reportedly responded: "Because you are worried that your eldest son will never ascend to the throne." Even if this statement is fictional or sarcastic, it does not diminish the impact and power of such an interpretation in the viewer's mind. This is reinforced by the queen placing her hand on her son's shoulder. The audience's gaze follows the queen's downward-facing head towards her hand and then shifts to the prince, whereupon the interpretation is further solidified by the prince's vacant and foolish expression. The prince, holding a goat and gazing at it, stands in a posture devoid of any sense of stability or power. If the goat is interpreted symbolically as the common people held in the hands

of their shepherd—the crown prince—it remains clear that this shepherd conveys no sense of security.

Mohasses' transformed form prioritizes meaning over conventional representation, as he eschews stability and authority in favor of depicting instability through distorted and caricature-like forms. This paradox in the viewer's mind ultimately results in a process of de-naturalization of historical narratives.

7.5.2. *The Flute Player*



Image 7.3 *The Flute Player*, Bronze, height 28 cm, Mohasses, 1973

Attention to mythology and anthropomorphic idol-like figures is a hallmark of Bahman Mohasses' works, a characteristic that is also evident in this sculpture. *The Flute Player* is

a sculpture commissioned by the royal family in the 1970s and was among the first modern artworks installed in Tehran's public space, specifically in the courtyard of the City Theater. Created in 1974, the sculpture stands four meters high and is cast in bronze. Following the revolution, it was removed under the pretext of restoration and was never reinstalled.

The Flute Player draws inspiration from the mythological figures of the Roman *Faun* and the Greek *Satyr*. In Roman mythology, fauns are horned creatures with the upper body of a human and the lower body of a goat, a subject that has frequently been depicted by European artists. Mohasses' sculpture portrays a bull-headed man engaged in dance while playing the flute.



Image 7.4 *Satyros, Tondo of an Attic red-figure plate, Vulci, 520–500 BCE*



Image 7.5 *Silenus and billy goat. Side A of an Attic black-figure kyathos, circa 520 BC*



Image 7.6 *Faun and Goat, Ludwig Knaus, 1868*

Influenced by Western modernist artists, particularly Picasso whose expressionism emphasized aesthetic representation, Mohasses sought to use his own artistic language as

a means of social awakening. *The Flute Player* stood in direct opposition to traditionalism, popular taste, and mass appeal. Mohasses criticized the prevailing artistic sensibilities that, in his view, prevented the public from attaining deeper insight and intellectual growth.

Barthes argued that there is always a force compelling the masses to accept the belief that the structure governing their social relations is natural and unchangeable. The dominance of such a perspective, he posited, causes individuals to remain oblivious to their vast inner potential (Alayi,1997).

From Mohasses' perspective, in Iran at that time, this force was a pervasive lack of knowledge, particularly in artistic fields. This belief drove him not only to sculpt and paint but also to translate modern Italian literary works, dub notable films of the time, and direct theater productions. Mohasses firmly adhered to the principle that public enlightenment could only be achieved through engagement with art and artists. It was with this intent that he created a sculpture intended to serve as a concise introduction to the performances to be staged in the newly established City Theater performances aimed at replacing commercial and street theater productions.

In this work, Mohasses employs deconstruction to historicize art, challenging the perception of art as a natural and timeless entity while incorporating modern Iranian art into this historical framework. If the commission followed a traditional approach, Mohasses' sculpture *The Flute Player* would have conformed to a mythological framework aimed at embedding a specific concept of art within the public consciousness. In doing so, it would have positioned art as a purely representational endeavor, reinforcing a historical narrative that presents such representation as natural and eternal. However, Mohasses deliberately pursued the opposite approach, utilizing elements of both primitive Eastern and Western art to create a form that defies conventional artistic definitions.

Instead of using Iranian mythology, Mohasses incorporates the figure of the Minotaur from Greek myths into his sculpture. The Minotaur, far from being a symbol of divine perfection or human idealism, is a man-eating beast from the island of Crete. Yet, in a

clever juxtaposition, Mohasses places in the hands of this Western mythological monster a flute an instrument deeply rooted in Iranian folklore.

The flute serves as a symbol of cultural belonging, history, and heritage, and through its mystical rhythm, it takes the Western form, something that is achievable only through art. In another interpretation, the flute in Minotaur's mouth evokes the image of a shepherd taming the beast within himself. From Mohasses' perspective, the shepherd represents the artist, whose art has the power to influence and transform society. By fusing primitive forms from both East and West, he presents a shape that contradicts popular notions of art and resists easy classification.

Mohasses reinforces this contradiction through the title of the work. Upon hearing the name *The Flute Player*, one anticipates an image rooted in Iranian storytelling traditions, yet what is encountered is the complete opposite. The form and subject are misaligned, delaying the arrival of meaning. As the masses view the sculpture of a dancing, flute-playing figure, their minds are initially filled with familiar, local memories. However, the unconventional form—a nude human with horns on its head and hooves on its hands and feet immediately erases those associations. This deliberate contradiction is central to Mohasses' myth-deconstructing approach. The form inherently carries meaning, yet it stands in complete opposition to its concept.

Art exists, but it is not the art they recognize. Art is not merely a beautiful and mimetic representation of nature; rather, it is expressive and provocative. Through this, Mohasses seeks to diminish the role of mere aestheticism in art and to challenge the historical association of the term *art* with *fine arts*, emphasizing that such classifications are neither natural nor permanent.

7.5.3. *Oil Spill*

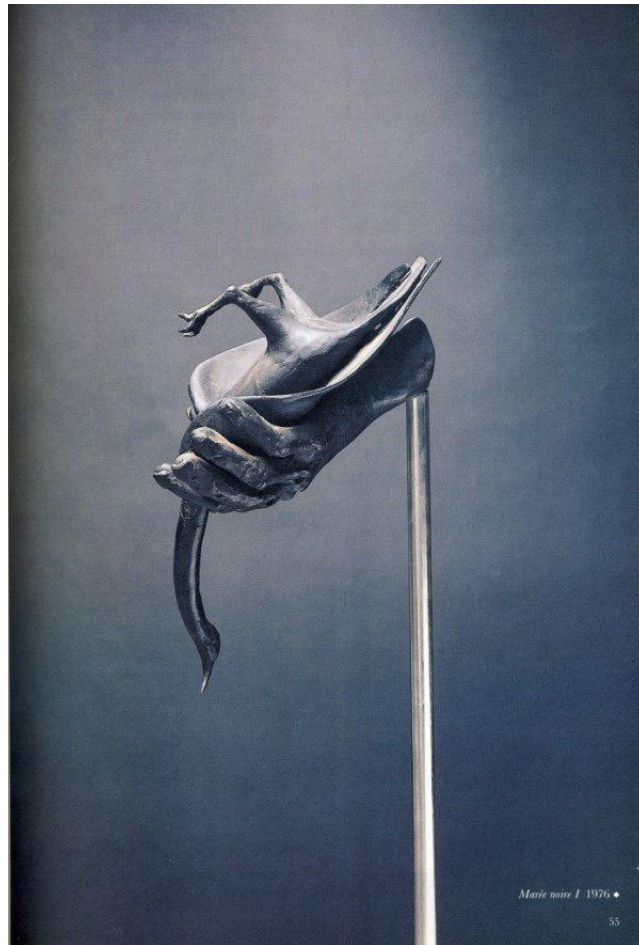


Image 7.7 *Oil Spill*, Mohasses, 1976

The expressive medium employed by Mohasses' to reinterpret the existing myths within his advancing and modernizing society is imagery whether in two-dimensional form on canvas or as three-dimensional sculptures. This medium is by no means insignificant, as imagery is undoubtedly more provocative than writing. Just as an image can impose a signification (myth) without deconstruction and analysis, it can equally convey the opposite effect (Barthes, 2015). Mohasses, by employing the most expressive visual forms, seeks to reimagine the myth of power and colonialism in a more symbolic manner. The sculpture *Oil Spill* was created in 1976 from bronze, at a time when Mohasses had already emigrated from the country. Nevertheless, the concern with power and ambition continued to play a significant role in his work. Like his creation of the royal family sculpture, in this work, he once again evokes the concept of power this time through an

alternative form. By repeating the theme of power through various forms, Mohasses' enhances the process of decoding the myth.

Mohasses never lived in the oil-rich cities of southern Iran, and his artistic works bear no direct connection to oil industry installations. However, in this piece, he critically brings the subject of oil into focus. Unlike most of Mohasses' other works, the *Oil Spill* sculpture does not feature abstract or simplified figures; rather, it is rendered with entirely realistic details, a naturalism that lends a sense of novelty to the work. The sculpture depicts a metal pole, at the top of which a severed hand holds a dead bird. The use of a pole and the detailed portrayal of only a severed wrist clutching a lifeless bird grants a symbolic dimension to the piece. Mohasses' always emphasized having a clear vision and purpose in creating art. The selection of the title *Oil Spill* is undoubtedly relevant to the historical events of his time. From a historical perspective, Mohasses' belonged to a generation of artists present during the movement for the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry. He himself stated: "In those days, the nationalization of the oil industry was the topic of daily conversation in our home, and my grandmother made a sacrificial offering of a lamb in Dr. Mossadegh " (Dehbashi,2008).

As Barthes posits, historical meaning is intentional and reconstructed through causes and effects, motivations, and intentions (Barthes, 1991). Mohasses' intends to reconstruct the concept of power in the minds of his audience by drawing upon the historical memory of the people and the events surrounding the nationalization of the oil industry, presenting it through a new form. Mohasses' use of the word "oil" alongside "spill" is an astute decision. On a global scale, the image of the dead seagull combined with the title *Oil Spill* requires no further explanation. A bird whose habitat has been contaminated by the black substance of oil has perished as a result. However, for an Iranian audience, the term "oil" is laden with historical connotations—it evokes wealth, power, colonialism, and the struggle for the nationalization of the industry. This term is intertwined with the lives of all Iranians. In this work, Mohasses' constructs a dual-layered meaning in the viewer's mind, meaning that is distinctly present through explicit signifiers (Barthes, 1971). The *Oil Spill* signifies the infiltration of this substance into every aspect of history and life. The dead seagull acquires a symbolic form and distances itself from its initial meaning. In this piece, the reciprocal relationship between form and meaning is

dismantled; meaning becomes detached from form, and this rupture is deliberately created by the artist. With calculated precision, the artist employs a title steeped in historical significance, thereby merging the concept of environmental pollution caused by the oil industry with the political history of contamination and destruction. The tall pole elevates the severed hand clutching the dead seagull, ensuring that both the bird and the hand holding it remain in full view. In effect, this vertical structure accentuates not only the presence of the bird but also draws heightened attention to the hand itself. The dead bird and fish, due to the pollution of the sea, serves as a reminder of people whose lives have been affected by oil spills—not only had they not benefited from it by the time this work was created, but it had also led to their deaths through wars among powerful entities. The Iranian audience perceives themselves in this work as being at risk, while the hand responsible for this crime symbolizes power. As a result, the myth of power in their minds transforms into a force that exploits its own people for the wealth of oil.



Image 7.8 *Oil Spill*, 50 cm height, Mohasses, 1976

7.6. Paintings

A systematic analysis of artwork, much like mythology, emphasizes the importance of signs that contribute to achieving this objective. This notion holds true in the works of Mohasses, as his process of demythologization is accomplished through attention to one of these codes. The interpretation of a text based on mythology does not imply the discovery of a definitive or ultimate meaning for the work; rather, it underscores the significance of the multiplicity of meanings inherent within it (Ahmadi, 2001).

7.6.1. *The Fall of Icarus*

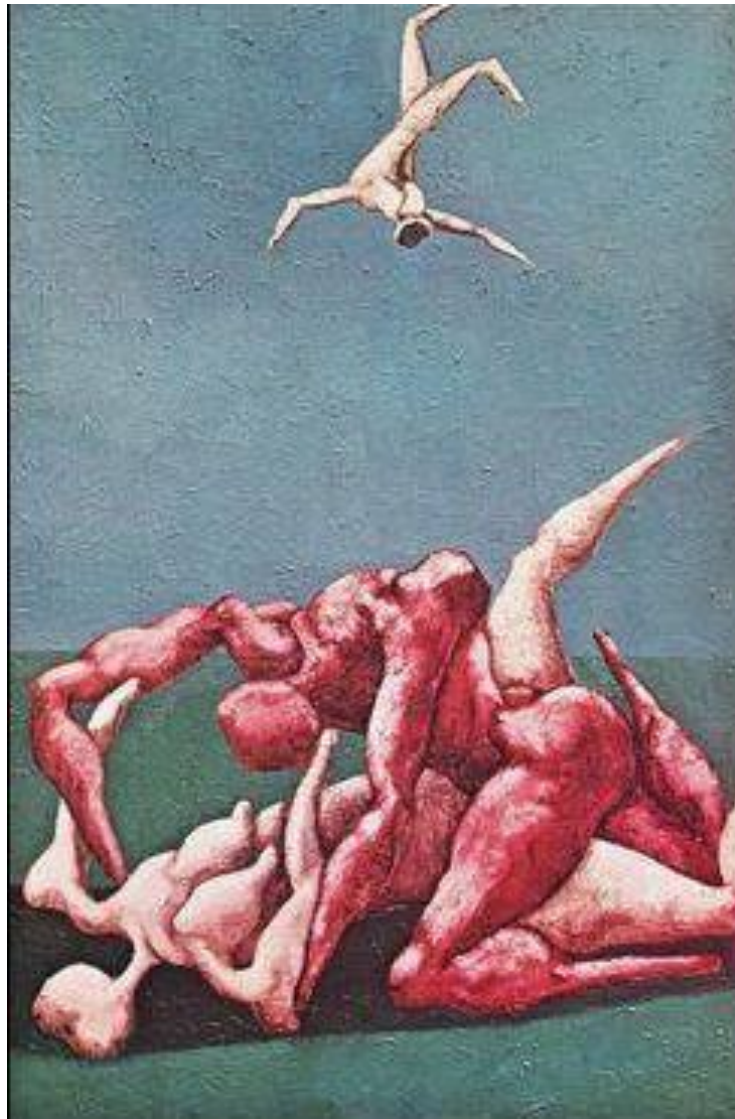


Image 7.9 *The Fall of Icarus*, Oil on canvas 100 x 150 cm, Mohasses, 1966

The painting *The Fall of Icarus* belongs to a series of artworks by Pieter Bruegel the Elder that are inspired by Greek mythological narratives. In Greek mythology, an inventor named Daedalus constructed a labyrinth called the *Labyrinth* for the King of Crete, intended to imprison the Minotaur. However, Daedalus and his son, Icarus, became trapped within it. To escape, Daedalus crafted wings from wax for his son, enabling him to flee the Minotaur. Icarus flew close to the sun, attempting to escape, but the heat melted the wax, causing him to fall into the Aegean Sea. In Western culture, Icarus is often regarded as a symbol of arrogance and hubris. This myth has been the subject of paintings by artists such as Bruegel and Picasso (Pakbaz, 2008). Pieter Bruegel, too, employs this narrative in his artwork. It might be argued that "the best weapon against myth is that myth itself becomes demythologized, thereby producing an artificial myth" (Barthes, 2005).

This approach is precisely what Pieter Bruegel undertakes in some of his works, reconstructing ancient myths in a way that renders them subject to mythological analysis. The myth of Icarus tells the story of two individuals trapped within a labyrinth of their own creation, who, through knowledge and ingenuity, construct artificial wings and take flight. However, the younger man's arrogance and excessive ambition lead him to fly too close to the sun, resulting in the melting of his wings and his ultimate downfall. This narrative conveys the myth of individuals whose overconfidence in their abilities leads to their destruction.



Image 7.10 *Landscape with The Fall of Icarus*, ca. 1590–95, Museum van Buuren, Brussels, Belgium



Image 7.11 *Icarus and the angler, A Treasury of Art Masterpieces: from the Renaissance to the Present Day.*

In his work, Mohasses exhibits no particular interest in recounting the original story. In fact, apart from the title, little indication of Icarus can be found in the painting. Like Bruegel's depiction of the event, Mohasses places Icarus in the background, portraying him in neutral colors and in a small scale. *The Fall of Icarus* represents the human condition during existence belonging to neither one extreme nor the other. Having escaped, the labyrinth using the waxen wings crafted by his father, Daedalus, Icarus, driven by arrogance and ambition, ascends so high that the sun melts his wings, ultimately causing his fall into the sea.

In the foreground of his artwork, Mohasses has depicted expressive, intense, and harsh forms that, in a sense, obscure the central character of the narrative. The background is delineated by two colors that separate the sky from the earth. In the foreground, a man and a woman are depicted engaging in intercourse, rendered in shades of red. In the background, a figure, seemingly overwhelmed by fear, with a mouth agape as if in a loud scream, is shown plummeting toward the ground while his eyes remain fixed on the

couple. This figure is undoubtedly Icarus. Mohasses places primary emphasis on the couple in the foreground, an emphasis that does not align with the title of the work.

The painting is titled "The Fall of Icarus," evoking a narrative of human pride and objectification. At first glance, the painting may suggest the fall of Adam and the materiality of existence rather than the myth of Icarus. The two figures in the foreground, depicted in the act of copulation, exhibit a movement imbued with extreme expression, one that is violent and dark, symbolizing malevolence. Their bodies lack any distinctly human characteristics, their forms merely reminiscent of human figures. This, in the artist's interpretation, represents a fragmented humanity, one that has ceased to exist in its multifaceted form, now reduced to an emblem of all humankind throughout history. The intense coloring of the bodies in the foreground further accentuates this sense of agitation and corruption. Icarus, in his descent, looks toward them, his scream echoing through the scene. Having attempted to escape this worldly existence with artificial wings, he has ultimately failed, now undergoing an inevitable fall and return. This return signifies a reentry into a world where the most explicit representation of material continuity is expressed through procreation perhaps, in the artist's view, through a bodily impulse. Icarus in Mohasses' painting symbolizes humanity's dissatisfaction with its existing condition, yet with no alternative realm to which it may escape. Thus, any attempt at transcendence leads only to downfall and ruin. The contrast between Icarus' open-mouthed expression and his descent juxtaposed against the two figures below, entirely indifferent to his fate, further intensifies the tragedy of his fall. The themes of isolation, estrangement and helplessness, prevalent in this work, are recurrent in the artist's oeuvre, extending to his depictions of hybrid creatures and other allegorical subjects.

Mohasses portrays figures from human history who have symbolized intellect and creative power, capturing them precisely now of their collapse and defeat. He examines the evolution of this ancient myth into contemporary times through two primary means: *I. Form and Composition:* The composition must be evocative. Mohasses achieves this by utilizing softer colors in the background, juxtaposed with more intense hues in the foreground. Additionally, the exaggerated expressions and aggressive gestures of the foreground figures provoke the viewer's perpetual inquiry: why?

II. Thematic Depth: This fundamental question compels the audience to seek a deeper understanding of the prominent elements within the painting, leading them to explore its historical and mythological significance. Ultimately, this ancient myth aligns with modernity's mythos the decline of modern man.

7.6.2. *Tirezia No Longer Knows the Future*

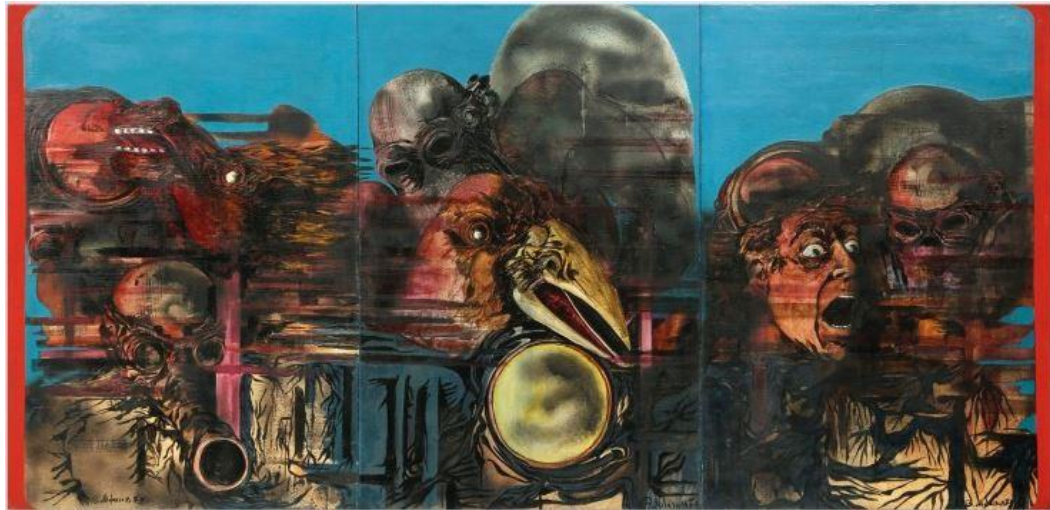


Image 7.12 *Tirezia No Longer Knows the Future*, Mohasses, 1976

(Tirezia non sapera tanto del futuro')

The title of this painting references an ancient Greek myth. Mohasses endeavors to evoke meaning within the viewer's mind through this title, subsequently intensifying that meaning through the painting's form. By doing so, he reinterprets the concept of the future and modernity, scrutinizing the resultant myth that of modern man through his artistic lens.

Rather than being strictly expressionistic, this painting takes on a surrealist quality. Unlike his habitual use of anthropomorphic figures, Mohasses has depicted at least one realistic human face in this piece. Nevertheless, the prevailing theme remains intact. Terror and fear permeate the figures both humans and animals. The imagery strongly evokes Picasso's *Guernica*. The depiction of a horse neighing in horror bears a striking resemblance to the horse in *Guernica*. Mohasses himself has commented on Picasso's painting, attributing its power to the artist's acute awareness of contemporary issues and his social responsibility. He further asserts that an artist, possessing intellectual faculties

beyond the ordinary populace, must reflect societal awareness in their work (Dadkhah & Azad, 1964).

The meaning of the declarative title *Tirezia No Longer Knows the Future* becomes evident within the painting. It conveys a deeply pessimistic perspective on the events of the artist's era, expressing concern for the trajectory of a world increasingly advancing toward modernity. Deliberately employing an ironic perspective, Mohasses highlights the existential struggles of 20th-century humanity (Dabiri, 2009).

By selecting this title, Mohasses evokes a sense of skepticism within the viewer. Even the most insightful mythological figures and archetypes have become incapable of discerning truth and the trajectory of the future in the face of a chaotic world. Myth, according to Barthes, functions best through incomplete, impoverished images that have been stripped of superfluous elements to serve as conduits of meaning (Barthes, 2005).

However, Mohasses subverts this convention. By presenting a form that intensifies the impact of the declarative title, he challenges the myth's authority. The composition features multiple human figures, some of whom lack clear representation, dissolving into background colors. Others wear masks, and one figure, rendered with precise detail, displays wide, alarmed eyes and an open mouth, conveying sheer terror. These masks recall the devastation of war and bombings. The vivid, warm colors in the foreground predominantly red further amplify the sense of fear and anxiety. In the center of the painting, and extending into the background, a blurred profile of an elderly man emerges, distinguished from the other figures by his grayish hue and distinct scale. This figure appears to embody Tirezia. His profile, in contrast to the three-quarter views of the other faces, strengthens the painting's declarative title. Moreover, his placement within the blue-toned background and his lack of engagement with the unfolding events reinforce his detachment from the present. Another notable element is the presence of horizontal lines, which extend the colors, evoking a sense of speed and movement—an aesthetic closely aligned with the industrialized world of the 20th century. In this work, Mohasses presents ferocious surrealism. Evil, totemism, nature, isolation, terror, violence, and velocity—these, in his view, are the consequences of an era of relentless progress and expansion.

7.7. The Function of Mythological Power in the Sculptures of the Royal Family, The Piper, and Oil Spill

Bahman Mohasses, through his sculptures, challenges the mythology of power by employing dark humor and a critical perspective, thereby stripping power of its symbolic stature.

7.7.1. The Royal Family Sculpture

In the creation of *The Royal Family* sculpture, Mohasses critiques power by deforming figures and employing bitter metaphors. The commission for this work, granted by Farah Pahlavi, placed the artist in a complex position: on one hand, the commission endowed him with symbolic authority; on the other, his critical stance toward the Pahlavi regime rendered the experience distasteful for him. This inherent contradiction ultimately led to the neglect and obscurity of the artwork. Mohasses' depictions of limbless figures in his paintings and sculptures stand in stark contrast to the grand and majestic representations of the Shah, implicitly critiquing power and its inevitable decay.

7.7.2. The Flute Player Sculpture

In *The Flute Player*, Mohasses synthesizes elements of Eastern and Western primitivism to create a form that deviates from traditional artistic frameworks. This piece challenges not only the conventional mythological perception of art but also the notion of pure representation within artistic discourse. Mohasses adopts an inverse approach: while the form of *The Flute Player* might initially evoke familiar and indigenous memories, unconventional elements such as the naked body, horns on the head, and hooves on the hands and feet erode this familiarity from the viewer's consciousness. This contradiction is integral to Mohasses' demystifying approach, as he aims to redefine established artistic concepts.

7.7.3. The Oil Spill Sculpture

In *Oil Spill*, Mohasses employs the mythology of power in a distinct manner, intertwining it with the concept of exploitation. By depicting power's indifference to society, he historically interrogates the subject of authority. Through visual metaphors—such as fish expelled from water, he alludes to ecological disasters and the socio-political ramifications of oil. These images recall the era of the coup d'état and the tenure of Mohammad Mosaddegh, a time when oil played a dual role as both a transformative and destructive force in history. Mohasses' bleak and pessimistic outlook leaves no room for optimism. He explicitly demonstrates that oil, while a catalyst for change and transformation, has simultaneously led to environmental devastation and human suffering. This critical perspective serves as a reminder of the exploitation and destruction that underpin his attempt to demythologize power within his works.

These three sculptures exemplify Mohasses' effort to link history, power, and mythology to contemporary concepts. His art transcends mere representation, offering a philosophical and historical critique that employs mythology to ultimately deconstruct itself.

7.8. The Function of Mythological Power in the Paintings the Fall of Icarus and Tiresias No Longer Knows the Future

Bahman Mohasses, drawing inspiration from Greek mythology, critically examines the mythology of modernity and its consequences. As Roland Barthes suggests, certain ancient myths persist, evolving into their contemporary forms (Barthes, 2005).

7.8.1. The Fall of Icarus

In *The Fall of Icarus*, Mohasses portrays the vicious cycle of modern existence, a period in which artificial wings of opulence and grandeur momentarily elevate humanity, only for such flights to inevitably culminate in descent. He artistically reinterprets the myth of Icarus, connecting it to the naturalized image of modern humanity, submerged in materialism.

Employing expressionistic and anxiety-inducing forms, as well as a color palette deeply intertwined with the fundamental emotions of modern individuals, Mohasses critiques the

existential condition of contemporary life. This interplay of visual and narrative elements underscores the instability of modernity as a myth, revealing how, despite its allure, it has entrapped and disoriented humanity.

7.8.2. *Tirezia No Longer Knows the Future*

Through the declarative title *Tirezia No Longer Knows the Future*, Mohasses establishes a significant conceptual framework for interpreting his work. This phrase not only conveys a sense of lost foresight and awareness but also calls into question the mythology of modernization itself.

By integrating imagery with narrative, Mohasses illustrates that modernity, contrary to its prevailing myths, is neither natural nor inevitable. Historical catastrophes—such as the bombing of Hiroshima—serve as lasting reminders that modernization is inextricably linked to a legacy of human crises and suffering. Through the combination of visual form and narrative content, Mohasses challenges the audience to reconsider their assumptions regarding the mythology of modernization.

In both paintings, Mohasses reinterprets Greek mythology, merging it with contemporary concepts to critique and deconstruct the myths of modernity and modernization. Through expressionistic forms, historical narration, and mythological deconstruction, he transforms his works into a platform for reflection and inquiry, urging the viewer to reassess the role of modern humanity and the very notion of modernity. These works encapsulate Mohasses' critical and multi-layered perspective on contemporary life and its inherent crises.

7.9. The Role of Mythology, History, and Collective Unconscious in the Works of Bahman Mohasses

Bahman Mohasses, through the integration of mythology, history, and the collective unconscious, created artworks that reflect the complexities of his time and the challenges faced by modern humanity. His works offer a rich and multilayered analysis of various aspects of his artistic practice, which can be examined through several key themes:

7.9.1. Relationship with Antiquity and Mythology

Mohasses maintained a profound connection with mythology and ancient art, particularly that of Greece. This influence is evident in the muscular structures, mythological figures, and philosophical references within his works. However, rather than merely reconstructing antiquity, he reinterpreted it within a contemporary framework. His approach parallels that of Botticelli during the Renaissance, who linked ancient myths with contemporary concerns.

7.9.2. Critical Perspective on Humanity and Modernity

As an artist who lived amidst modernization, Mohasses paradoxically adopted an anti-modernist stance. By depicting fragmented, limbless, and fragile human figures, he conveyed a vision of the decline and disintegration of modern humanity. This aesthetic sharply contrasts with the classical ideals of bodily beauty in ancient art. Mohasses employed these distorted bodies to evoke emotional responses from his audience, emphasizing the fragility of the human condition in the modern era.

7.9.3. Relationship with Power and Iranian History

Mohasses' relationship with power, particularly the Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty, was complex and contradictory. On one hand, he gained symbolic authority through commissions from the royal court; on the other, his works critically examined power and its inevitable decline. His depictions of limbless figures, juxtaposed with the opulent and grandiose imagery of the Shah, served as symbols of impotence and collapse in the face of authority.

7.9.4. Symbolism and Contemporary Catastrophes

One of the most striking symbols in Mohasses' works is that of fish expelled from water, a motif imbued with multilayered meanings. These fish serve as references both to environmental disasters—such as oil spills—and to the pervasive feelings of alienation, despair, and rupture in the modern world. Such imagery is also closely tied to Iran's contemporary history, particularly the 1953 coup d'état and its lasting repercussions.

7.9.5. Mohasses as a Global Artist

Mohasses embedded his own identity within his works while simultaneously disseminating them across Iran and the world, conveying a sense of displacement. His engagement with both Iranian and Greek traditions reflect a confluence of cultures and historical periods. This aspect of his art exemplifies a form of "reflective modernity," which simultaneously draws from the past while critically engaging with the present.

Bahman Mohasses can be regarded as a symbol of the dilemmas faced by contemporary artists, an individual navigating the tensions between tradition, modernity, and power. His works, both aesthetically and conceptually, remain intellectually provocative and multidimensional. They continue to serve as a bridge between mythology and contemporary human concerns, preserving their symbolic and critical potency.



Image 7.13 *The Artist's portrait*

Mohasses stands as a distinctive figure in the realm of contemporary painting and sculpture, embodying the notion that those who anticipate the future ahead of others demand a greater share of their era, yet their rightful recognition is often deferred. He was, in many respects, ahead of his compatriots in acquiring an understanding, assessment, and refined contemporary sensibility. His profound engagement with antiquity, particularly Greek culture, is evident in the presence of mythological figures

throughout his works. This interest in antiquity also manifests as a philosophy of history within his art. Rather than reconstructing ancient cultures, Mohasses sought to explore their narratives within the context of the present, much like Botticelli's reinterpretation of classical myths during the Renaissance to address contemporary concerns. He appropriated mythological spaces to align with his own artistic vision, reshaping stories and myths to fit his conceptual framework. His distinctiveness lies in his ability to transform historical remnants into contemporary events, forging a personal artistic style in a world where originality is increasingly elusive. Mohasses' art serves as a bridge between Renaissance Italy, ancient Greece, and modern Iran, positioning his work as a crucial point of reference in the discourse on the relationship between Eastern and Western art history and international modernism. His artistic practice embodies a multidimensional awareness of history and global civilizations, rejecting a rigid chronological sequence of historical periods in favor of a dynamic and evolving perception of history. Mohasses engages with a history that continuously regenerates itself in the present, drawing upon the layers and remnants of past eras. No other Iranian artist has pursued or reflected this fluid conception of history as distinctly as Mohasses. He played a significant and influential role in both Iranian and European modernity, emerging as a pivotal figure in the history of modern and contemporary Iranian art. Despite his immense contributions, he has remained somewhat in the shadows, much like the enigmatic nature of the myths he engaged with inviting continuous rediscovery and interpretation. The growing interest in recovering his artistic legacy is evident, although obstacles such as limited access to his works persist. Ultimately, Bahman Mohasses was a global artist who stood above his contemporaries in both Iran and beyond.

7.10. Thematic Analysis of Bahman Mohasses' Works Featuring the Minotaur Myth from a Mythological Perspective

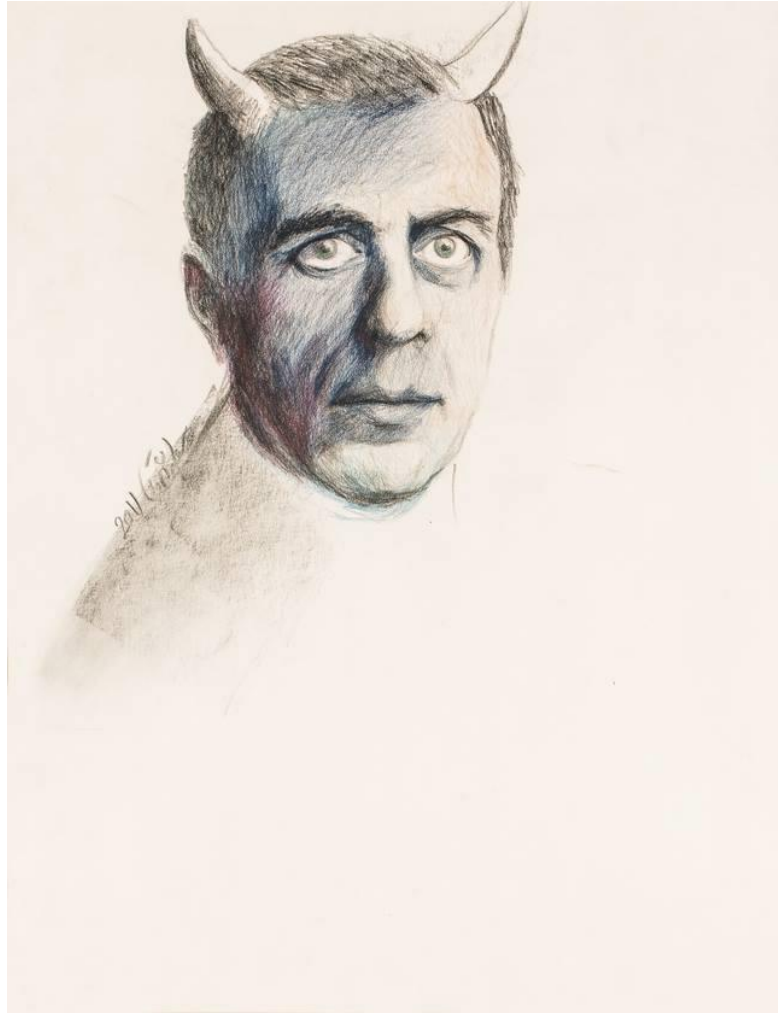


Image 7.14 *The Artist's portrait*

The mythological understanding of a work of art refers to comprehending its central and core elements. By decoding this element, one can grasp the most crucial and fundamental aspect of the artwork. One of the effective methods in the critique of artistic works is mythological criticism, which examines works containing mythological themes. Analyzing Bahman Mohasses' works from a mythological standpoint, particularly his engagement with Greek myths, including that of the Minotaur, provides an opportunity to unravel the complex layers of his art.

7.10.1. The Influence of Minotaur and Cultural-Psychological Connections

In several of Mohasses' works, the myth of the Minotaur, a creature with the body of a man and the head and neck of a bull, which is central to Greek mythology, especially in Crete, plays a pivotal role. This myth, also seen in Picasso's works, has become a symbol of contradiction, violence, and captivity in the modern world. Mohasses draws upon this mythological figure to reflect his intricate and questioning worldview.

7.10.2. Living Environment and Cultural Influences

A key issue in critiquing Mohasses' works is examining the influence of the environment and culture of the society in which he lived. The central question is whether Mohasses' time in Italy, a country considered the cradle of Western mythological studies and classical arts, impacted the creation of these works. If Mohasses had never traveled to Italy and had remained in his homeland like many Iranian artists, would he still have been influenced by the Minotaur myth? Answering this question may depend on the extent of Mohasses' connection to global myths and his understanding of them within the context of Iranian native culture.

7.10.3. The Continuity or Temporality of Minotaur's Presence in Mohasses' Works

Another significant issue is determining whether the Minotaur myth appears across all periods of Mohasses' career or is limited to a specific period. To address this, one can examine the different periods of his artistic career from the perspective of mythological themes and trace the evolution of his engagement with this myth.

7.10.4. The Artist's Psychology through the Lens of His Personal Myth

An important layer in the mythological critique of Mohasses' works lies in exploring his internal psychoanalysis through his personal myth. The Minotaur myth in Mohasses' art not only reflects environmental and cultural influences but also conveys the artist's inner search. This mythological figure, with its inherent contradictions and conflicts, can symbolize Mohasses' inner struggles in confronting the modern world, captivity within societal structures, or even the search for identity.

Through the lens of the Minotaur myth, Bahman Mohasses' works create a bridge between the mythological realm and the contemporary world. Analyzing these works

from a mythological perspective not only aids in a better understanding of their content but also provides a foundation for a deeper insight into the mental and psychological space of this prominent artist. Specifically, examining the influence of Mohasses' living culture in Italy, the continuity or temporality of the Minotaur's presence in his works, and the reflection of the artist's psychology within this myth can provide a comprehensive approach to critiquing Mohasses' art.

7.11. The Greek Myth of the Minotaur:

The Minotaur, a mythological creature with the body of a man and the head of a bull, is one of the prominent characters in Greek mythology. It lived in the center of a labyrinth, a complex prison designed by the famous architect Daedalus and his son Icarus. The Minotaur was ultimately slain by Theseus with the help of Ariadne, the daughter of the king of Crete.

To better understand the Minotaur and its relation to Bahman Mohasses' works, it is necessary to consider the background of this myth in Greek texts. The Minotaur, a hybrid monster of man and bull, plays a special role in Greek mythology. Lucilla Burn, in her book *Greek Myths*, writes: "In Greek mythology, the Minotaur is a monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull. He was the offspring of Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and a bull that Poseidon, the god of the seas, had sent to Minos as a punishment. Pasiphae fell in love with this bull, and the Minotaur was the result of their union. At the command of Minos, a master architect named Daedalus created an intricate labyrinth to house the creature, a maze with winding paths and deceptive entrances. The Minotaur became a source of shame and fear for the inhabitants of the palace. The monster, part human and part bull, required an annual tribute of ten young men from Athens, who were sacrificed to feed him." (Lucilla Burn, 1990).

7.11.1. Myth of Theseus and the Minotaur and Its Artistic and Mythological Significance

This segment of the mythological story of Theseus and the Minotaur beautifully narrates multiple concepts that hold a significant place in both art and mythology. Two central themes are clearly visible in this narrative:



Image 7.15 *The Minotaur on an Attic kylix tondo* from c. 515 BC with a kalos inscription

I. Theseus' Heroic Decision

After returning to Athens from exile, Theseus, faced with the oppression imposed on the people of Athens, voluntarily decides to journey to the island of Crete to confront the Minotaur. This part of the story illustrates Theseus' spirit of sacrifice and courage, as he is ready to give his life for his people and to transcend the people's disdain for his father.



Image 7.16 *Theseus in Battle with the Minotaur*, Debra Kelly, Listverse, 2013

II. Ariadne's Assistance and the Use of the Thread for Guidance

Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, helps Theseus with her kindness and wisdom. She provides him with a thread to navigate his way through the labyrinth and escape the dangers ahead. The element of the thread and the labyrinth symbolize the complexities and difficult paths of life, which can only be understood and traversed through guidance and wisdom. The story concludes tragically with the death of Aegeus, caused by the failure to change the sails from black to white, leading to the naming of the Aegean Sea. These concepts have played a fundamental role in the history of Greek mythology, especially in visual arts and literature.



Image 7.17 *Minotaurus*, MAFFEI, P. A. "Gemmae Antiche," 1709



Image 7.18 *Bacchus and Ariadne*, between 1520 and 1523, National Gallery

III. The Greek Myth of Theseus

The myth of Theseus serves as a symbol of the power of mythology as an allegory for human life. The name "Theseus," meaning "entrusted," is indicative of the challenges and trials he faces in his life. Before confronting the greatest challenge of his life, the slaying of the Minotaur in the middle of a vast labyrinth—Theseus must undergo numerous trials. These trials serve as preparation for his ultimate destiny. In this myth, Theseus, with full awareness of his situation and understanding of his environment, manages to find a way out of the labyrinth. Using Ariadne's thread, he can navigate through the complex and dark passageways and eventually engage in battle with Minotaur, defeating it. From the perspective of the modern human, myths serve as one of the ways through which individuals can understand their place and confront both internal and external challenges. The modern person, surrounded by the "labyrinth" of existence, can draw upon mythological patterns, such as the story of Theseus, to find a way out of the problems and crises of life. This myth demonstrates that, in the face of the complexities of human existence, there is a path to resolving confusion and discovering truth (Campbell, 1949).



Image 7.19 *Theseus and the Minotaur*; Photograph by Gregory E. Dean, 2016

IV.The Bull's Head: A Symbol of Death and Vital Force

In mythology, the bull's head is one of the most significant symbols in many ancient cultures and rites, representing both death and rebirth. Specifically, the bull's head is recognized as a symbol of vital force and sacrifice. This symbol is used in various myths, including Greek mythology, to represent power and creative energy. During New Year's rituals and agricultural festivals, the slaughtering of the bull was not only a religious ceremony but also a symbol of the death of winter and the birth of life in the spring. In this context, the sacrifice of the bull at the start of the New Year symbolized the transition from a cold and lifeless period to one filled with life and growth (Kerenyi, 1951).

These rituals have their roots in early human beliefs about natural cycles, where death and life are continually intertwined and recreated. As seen in Greek mythology, the bull's head functions as both a symbol of life force and a sacrificial victim, whose death is required to begin new life. In fact, these myths reflect the natural processes of human life and are deeply connected to themes of regeneration, birth, and death. Furthermore, in some cultures, the killing of the bull is seen as the continuation of an ancient tradition, still observed in certain agricultural rituals and seasonal celebrations (Frazer, 1922). In ancient Greece, the bull's head symbolized power, fertility, and, as mentioned earlier, both death and rebirth, which, alongside religious traditions, defined and perpetuated cultural identity.

In Mythology, the Bull is an important figure, often appearing as a symbol of strength, vitality, and sacrifice. Here's a detailed analysis of the symbolism and themes related to the bull in mythology, particularly within the context of the Minotaur myth, as well as its influence on the works of the Iranian artist Bahman Mohasses.

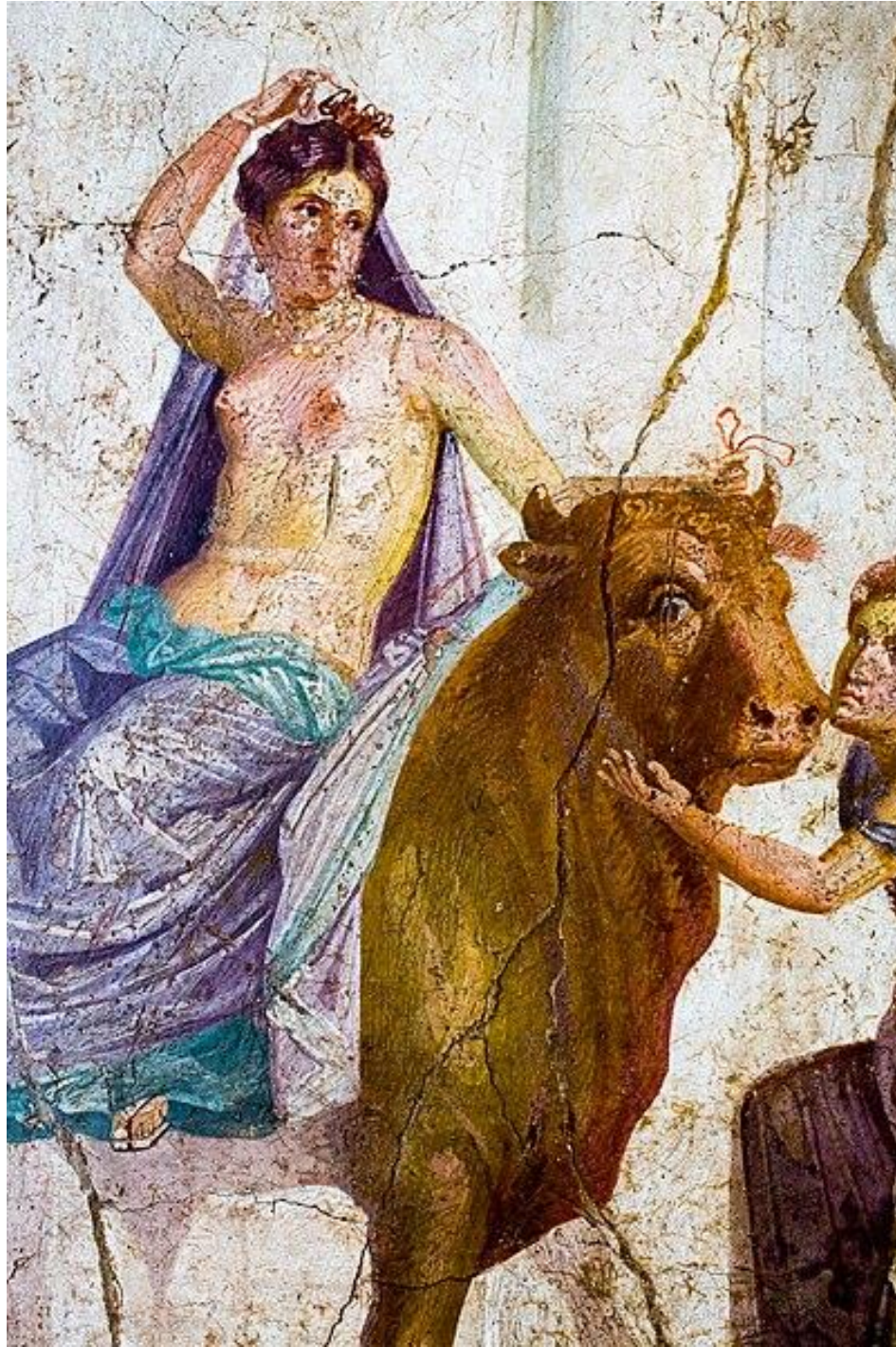


Image 7.20 *Europa and the bull*, height: 125 cm - width: 99 cm - findspot:
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The bull often represents the beginning of a new cycle, where its death symbolizes the end of an era and the start of something new. In the creation myths, the bull is frequently depicted as the first animal sacrificed by the forces of darkness, marking the birth of new

life from its sacrifice. The blood of the bull nurtures the creation of future beings, emphasizing the importance of sacrifice as a source of vitality and regeneration. The bull's death represents the necessary end of a period to allow for the emergence of life and vitality (Kerenyi, 1951).



Image 7.21 *Mithras sacrificing the bull*, NYPL Digital Collections, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art

7.12. Minotaur Myth and the Symbol of the Bull

The Minotaur, a creature that is part-human and part-bull, embodies the conflict between life and death, as well as the coexistence of both. The bull's death, which initiates the creation of life, transforms within the Minotaur myth into a creature that simultaneously represents life and death. The Minotaur, as a hybrid being, mirrors humanity's internal struggle with death and vitality. This internal struggle between life and death plays a significant role in shaping the Minotaur as one of the most symbolic and intricate figures in mythology and art.



Image 7.22 *Statue of the Minotaur*; 1664. National Archaeological Museum of Athens. Athens, Greece

7.13. The Minotaur's Duality: Human and Animal Nature

Minotaur's hybrid nature symbolizes the contradictions within humanity. The creature is born from the union between queen Pasiphae and a bull, a union created by divine forces. From birth, the Minotaur is associated with death and torment. It is imprisoned within a labyrinth, where its purpose is to consume human sacrifices. As an emblem of human instincts and desires, the Minotaur shows how suppressed human urges can surface unexpectedly, reflecting the darker side of humanity. The Minotaur is not just a mythical creature; it is a metaphor for the primal, often repressed instincts within the human

psyche. It symbolizes humanity's struggle to reconcile its animalistic desires with its higher, civilized nature.



Image 7.23 *Pasiphaë nursing the infant Minotaur*; red-figure kylix from Etruscan Vulci, 4th century BCE

7.14. Minotaur in Bahman Mohasses' Art



Image 7.24 *The Flute Player*, Bronze, height 28 cm, 1973

Bahman Mohasses, a prominent Iranian artist, created a series of works centered around the Minotaur, both in sculpture and painting. These works, dating back to the 1960s, feature large, imposing figures made of bronze, conveying strength, brutality, and the intensity of the Minotaur's symbolism. The bronze's rough texture and unpolished parts add to the raw and violent imagery associated with the creature (dehbashi,2010). In Mohasses' works, the Minotaur appears in unexpected settings, creating a paradox between its mythical nature and its connection to human emotions and suffering. Unlike traditional representations of the Minotaur as an aggressive beast, Mohasses' Minotaur often adopts human-like poses, reflecting vulnerability and anguish. The figures may be seated, contemplative, or engaged in quiet, dance-like movements, adding a layer of complexity and emotion to the beastly figure. These Minotaur sculptures seem to convey an expression of human suffering, emphasizing the emotional weight carried by the creature (Pakbaz,2010).

7.14.1. Psychological and Philosophical Implications

The Minotaur in Mohasses' works carries a strong psychological and existential dimension. The artist uses the figure of the Minotaur to explore themes of alienation, suffering, and the paradoxes of the human condition. The Minotaur, while physically powerful, is a tragic figure that embodies the struggles of the human soul. It is an image of a creature born from instinct and desire yet caught in a labyrinth of its own making.

Mohasses' Minotaur figures are characterized by expressions of pain and despair, which reflect a Nietzschean worldview, where the experience of suffering and loss is central to human existence. The Minotaur in his works becomes a symbol of the human struggle against the forces of darkness, both external and internal. The work explores the inevitability of suffering, where the Minotaur serves as a reminder of the inescapable anguish and the existential dilemma that humans face(Gaut, Berys: 1956).

7.14.2. Cultural and Symbolic Influence

The Minotaur, as portrayed by Mohasses, reflects his broader existential and nihilistic concerns. These works carry deep philosophical weight, drawing on the French intellectual movements of the 1960s, such as existentialism and nihilism. Mohasses was influenced by the despair and disillusionment of these movements, using symbols like Minotaur to express his pessimism about humanity's ability to control its fate.

The recurring theme of suffering in Mohasses' works underscores his belief that life is inextricably linked with pain and loss. His Minotaur, both as a mythological and artistic symbol, confronts the viewer with the uncomfortable reality of the human condition, where self-destruction and existential crisis are unavoidable. Through the symbolism of the Minotaur, Mohasses captured the complexities of human nature its dark impulses, its vulnerability, and its perpetual struggle with the forces of life and death. The Minotaur in his art is not just a creature from Greek mythology but a powerful metaphor for the contradictions and inner turmoil inherent in the human experience.

7.14.3. The characteristics of Minotaurs in Bahman Mohasses' works

1. Minotaurs are a prominent part of Mohasses' art.
2. The Minotaurs are depicted in painting and sculpture.

3. The title of these Minotaurs is inspired by ancient Greek mythology.
4. Before Mohasses, artists like Pablo Picasso also portrayed the Minotaur character, drawing from the same mythology.
5. Mohasses focuses on the symbolic dimensions of this mythical creature in his works.
6. His Minotaurs, in terms of visual expression and artistic form, are considered thought-provoking and impactful.
7. Mohasses' bronze Minotaur sculptures are often large. These large dimensions, combined with the deliberate lack of polish on certain parts of the sculptures, highlight violence, power, and strength.
8. Mohasses creates textures on the bodies of these creatures that convey latent violence. These textures, along with red streaks resembling old wounds, effectively evoke a sense of suffering and pain.
9. Mohasses has been very selective with color in his works. The limited color choices and simple or monochromatic backgrounds make the Minotaurs stand out with greater emphasis.
10. Minotaur works with a single-colored background make the audience recall identification photos and personal photos, invoking a sense of identification or a unique identity.
11. In Mohasses' framing, great importance is given to the background of the artwork. In fact, the background is so empty that the entire painting seems to be taken over by the Minotaur.
12. The Minotaur represents reversed evolution. Mohasses' Minotaurs are humans who have become bulls, not bulls that have turned into humans. Unlike other Minotaur depictions, no animalistic pose is visible in them.
13. Mohasses' Minotaurs possess entirely human postures. These bull-like beings, contrary to expectations, do not display animalistic gestures but instead exhibit human-like movements and stances. Sometimes they bow their heads, sometimes

stand with their hands clasped, and at other times they engage in soft and calm dances.

14. These human-like postures, filled with mystery and ambiguity, challenge the viewer's mind and create an enigmatic atmosphere.
15. Unlike the form of other Minotaurs that display violence or savagery, Mohasses' Minotaurs do not express any form of violence or brutality in their shape.
16. Mohasses' Minotaurs carry the heavy burden of suffering and sadness. With their gaze, they transfer this suffering to the viewer. Their bodies, depicted with wounds and scabs in the paintings and unpolished textures in the sculptures, evoke human suffering.
17. From Mohasses' perspective, human beings themselves are the ones who bear this suffering. His Minotaurs symbolize humans caught between rational and emotional aspects, or between tradition and modernity.
18. The contrasts and paradoxes in Mohasses' Minotaur sculptures astonish the viewer and transfer a sense of responsibility to the audience.
19. Although Mohasses' sculptures are inspired by Greek mythology, traces of ancient Iranian civilization can also be found in them. In the Marlik civilization and in Persian literary texts like the Shahnameh, the golden bull is portrayed as a sacred symbol. The image of the bull on the helmets of Iranian warriors also reflects a human figure with the head of a bull. This cultural parallel may occur to the viewer, adding a layer of cultural meaning to Mohasses' works.
20. In his sculpture "The Flute Player," elements of Iranian culture are present.
21. Mohasses' Minotaurs not only reflect the suffering and inner contradictions of humanity but also carry deep messages in a global and cultural context. Through Mohasses' unique perspective, these mythical creatures transcend their origins as purely mythical beings and become symbols of the psychological and social conflicts of contemporary humans.



Image 7.25 *The Sitting Minotaur*, Mohasses, bronze on plexiglass, height 12 cm, 1971

7.14.4. The Minotaur Myth and Its Influence on Bahman Mohasses' Works: A Mythological Approach

The life story of the Minotaur, a mysterious myth from Greece, can be summarized in three key parts:

1.**Birth:** Minotaur is born from an unusual union between a human and a bull; this birth symbolizes the conflict between human and animal nature, rooted in deep human myths.

2.**Life:** This mythical being resides in a mysterious labyrinth, symbolizing the complexities of the mind, confusion, and inner contradictions.

3.**Death:** The Minotaur is eventually defeated by a hero; its death symbolizes liberation or triumph over darkness.

A key question in analyzing Mohasses' works is which part of Minotaur's life story has most influenced his spirit and art? Mohasses' works, particularly his use of deformed figures and the influence of the Minotaur figure, often reflect the confusion and complexities of modern life. It seems that the period of Minotaur's life in the labyrinth is

most connected to Mohasses' worldview. The labyrinth, with its mysterious and confusing aspects, closely mirrors the modern human psyche and the socio-political situation during Mohasses' lifetime. At the same time, the unusual birth of the Minotaur might symbolize Mohasses' view on the existential contradictions of humanity. The conflict between human and animal in the Minotaur, much like the conflict between tradition and modernity or the individual and society, is visible in many of Mohasses' works.

This research, through a mythological lens, explores Mohasses' works to decode the influence of the Greek Minotaur myth on his figures. Mohasses uses mythological themes to offer a critique of the confusion and complexities of the modern age. Analyzing these influences through the layers of myth provides not only an insight into his artistic mindset but also a deeper understanding of the psychology of his era. The Minotaur myth's influence on Mohasses' works, especially in terms of concepts such as abnormal birth, confusion in the labyrinth, and death at the hands of a hero, offers a way to better understand his art and philosophy. Mohasses transformed mythical creatures into contemporary art while maintaining an Iranian perspective. When he moved to Italy, he engaged with the Greek Minotaur myth, yet his overarching approach remained Iranian, drawing inspiration from Iranian myths that were once part of Mithraic rituals.

7.14.5. Analysis of the Minotaur Theme through a Mythological Approach

To analyze any work, it is crucial to begin with the geographic origin of the artist born in a place where the first cries for breaking conventional molds were uttered. This origin serves as an initial guide for understanding the significance of an artist. In today's world, many things are undergoing transformation. The art of Bahman Mohasses arises from the inescapable convergence of civilization and human history. The geographical affiliation of the artist is part of this law, a marker that remains constant. In fact, an artist who possesses sincerity alongside this framework is one who, like Mohasses, allows himself to be free within it, yet simultaneously shapes it according to his own dimensions. Mohasses possesses such a mysterious quality that, as a result, culture and technique transform into mythology, yielding imagination and, in turn, profession and ideological interaction (Selvaggi, 1985).

In Greek mythology, the Minotaur is a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a human. It encompasses elements of freedom, drama, mockery, and even joy. When engaging with Mohasses' Minotaurs, what matters is not who they are, what they represent, or what they narrate; it is we, the viewers, who are tasked with interpreting them. We become the translators of these figures. Mohasses' works represent the emotional and psychological states of his characters. They reveal both the tenderness and savagery, the pain, and the delicate sensation of touching and living, the exploration, and possession.

In his works, Mohasses has drawn the ears and eyes of a cow for the Minotaur, emphasizing a sense of helplessness. The Minotaur, in this interpretation, is an inversion of evolution. It is the head of a rational human being with the powerful body of a bull, more fitting for the gods especially when one is alone and worshiped. As a result, everything that signifies awareness is denied to the victims whose work is made easier for them; the less they can do, the less they understand. Mohasses knows this well, is certain of it, and has seen it: they have nothing, no life at all.

The Minotaurs of Mohasses can be interpreted and understood as a product of a culture borne out of a well-organized and structuring mind. We are faced with an artist who, as he says, knows their craft and possesses a superior cultural framework. Mohasses himself believes that he wears a "persona" or mask psychological archetype (Faruqi, 1964).

The Persona archetype provides an individual with the means to embody someone else's identity that is not necessarily their true self, or rather, it is the outward appearance one presents to the public. The inflation of the identity of the ego is called the inflation of the Persona. On the one hand, a person may develop an exaggerated sense of self-importance; on the other hand, when this person feels incapable of living up to the societal standards they expect, they may experience alienation and feelings of loneliness and disillusionment. This is precisely why Mohasses never returned to Iran. His return to Italy prompted him to adopt the archetype of the hero from the Minotaur myth (Jung, 1964).

The term "Persona" or "mask" refers to a face that one puts on to act in a particular role, enabling them to present themselves in a manner that allows them to fit into society.

Other terms derived from this root include "person" and "personality." The Persona archetype is used in a similar context, allowing individuals to introduce themselves in a way that leaves a positive impression and enables society to accept them. The existence of the Persona is essential for survival and social engagement, allowing us to act amicably even with people we may not necessarily like, and it helps us achieve personal goals and positions. Moreover, the Persona forms the foundation of our shared life. However, a person dominated by their Persona becomes estranged from their true self and lives in a state of crisis due to the tension between the overly developed Persona and the undeveloped parts of their inner personality.

The Minotaurs in Mohasses' works serve as an introspection of his own character. The term "introspection" in English, derived from the Latin root, means to look carefully inward, to gain insight into one's personal experiences and mental processes. Mohasses displayed antisocial behavior in relation to Iran, exhibiting sexual desires and aggressive tendencies, which often surface through symbols in his dreams. In Mohasses' works, one could imagine a man who has an inferiority complex about his masculinity, overcompensating by developing and displaying his body in a manner that emphasizes his virility and sexual prowess. He boasts about his masculinity and rejects anything that suggests femininity or womanhood. Such a man would likely criticize and degrade men who are softer or more effeminate, as they remind him of his own perceived shortcomings.

According to Jung's theory, Mohasses has returned therefore, utilizes the archetype of the hero in the Minotaur myth, as this archetype triggers racial knowledge into activity. In this study, we will examine several works of Mohasses that focus on the Minotaur, and we will attempt to explore the various dimensions of these works from a visual, conceptual, and semiotic perspective. Mohasses' sculptures and paintings are not only a manifestation of his ability to reinterpret ancient mythologies, but also convey profound messages about human suffering, the conflict between reason and instinct, and social and cultural contradictions through their forms, textures, colors, and human-like postures. This analysis seeks to answer the question of how Mohasses, by employing the symbol of the Minotaur, has represented complex and multifaceted concepts in his works.

7.15. The Minotaur Seated on the Shore of the Sea (Minotauro sulla riva del mare)



Image 7.26 *The Minotaur Seated on the Shore of the Sea*, Mohasses, 1977

Among the artworks created by Mohasses featuring the theme of the Minotaur, the painting *"The Minotaur Seated on the Shore of the Sea"* stands as a remarkable masterpiece, which was sold at an impressive price during Sotheby's auction on March 25, 2021. A formalist analysis of this work reveals that the piece features a dominant singular element in its foreground. Behind this primary element, the second plane presents a flat background composed of a greyish tone with a hint of purple blue. The body of the figure in the painting exhibits familiar forms that evoke the musculature and skeletal structure of the human body. However, the proportions and shape of the limbs are distorted, with the deformation reaching its peak in the depiction of the head. Here, the figure is shown with a robust neck and a head resembling that of an animal.

In this composition, the Minotaur is seated at the center of the image, exuding a commanding presence that dominates the entire canvas. Its red eyes and mouth convey an uncontrollable and deep anger to the viewer, while the protruding and contracted muscles of the creature are indicative of immense strength. As is characteristic of Mohasses' works, the Minotaur is depicted in a state of nudity, emphasizing a primitive, uncivilized state and a reflection of its wild, animalistic nature. The minimal, earthy-toned background contrasts with the sculptural form of the Minotaur's body, effectively linking

ancient art with modernist expressions. Mohasses successfully creates a piece that references both the ancient imagery of this mythical creature and the works of modern artists. In this portrayal, the Minotaur is shown in a state of despair, as if defeated, and the vast space behind it suggests a division into three distinct areas: the sky, the sea, and the shore. According to Pakbaz, in Mohasses' painting, particularly in this piece, "the horizon line functions as an element that separates the background from the foreground. He uses such devices to express general and symbolic concepts about contemporary conditions" (Pakbaz,2015).

Nearly all Mohasses' paintings create a fragmented setting where the sky, the sea, and the shoreline merge. This connection may be deeply rooted in Mohasses' subconscious and his place of origin. Born in Rasht, northern Iran, and having chosen Italy as his place of residence, a country where the sea plays a significant role in nature, Mohasses' depictions of the sea are an important element in his artwork. These portrayals can be linked to his subconscious, reflecting the predominance of the sea in his mental imagery, particularly as it relates to his childhood memories. Although Mohasses does not consider any geographical associations as purely accidental, he affirms the link between the sea's representation and his subconscious (Tajdini, 2014).

The sea, to him, represents an endless space full of questions, fear, and life. It can be argued that his perception of the sea is mythological, rooted in an unconscious understanding, thereby facilitating a connection between the artist and his work. Most mythologists believe that humans create myths to address their questions and mask their fears concerning anything mysterious or terrifying in life. Among these fears and questions, great natural elements feature prominently. However, in this painting, Mohasses transforms a natural element such as the sea into a myth, amplifying the questions and fears of life in a compounded manner. In other words, he employs myth in a reversed manner in this painting, offering an inverse definition of myth compared to the views held by mythologists. This reverse mythical image of the sea in the background, particularly in the *Minotaur* painting, takes on additional meaning when analyzed in the context of the interpretation.

In this work, Mohasses metaphorically converts aspects of his own life into myth, a myth that neither answers questions nor alleviates fear, but instead evokes these very fears and questions and presents them in a manner that is more frightening and ambiguous. Mohasses admits to suffering from claustrophobia, considering his paintings as expressions of the uncertain within confined spaces. By portraying ambiguity in a constrained environment, he attempts to confront his fear of enclosed spaces (Pakbaz,2015).

In the painting at hand, Mohasses imagines the labyrinthine journey that Theseus undertook to defeat the Minotaur, recalling his own fear of such a confined and terrifying space that ultimately leads to the confrontation with the Minotaur. By depicting the sea as a vast, open space, he attempts to overcome this fear. His particular interest in the Minotaur myth stems from the shared characteristic he perceives between himself and the Minotaur being trapped within the confines and complexities of life. The metallic, dark grey tones in the painting reflect the artist's personal ideology, as well as an image of a world enmeshed in catastrophe. Depictions of contemporary human disaster or the violent portrayal of isolated, mutated creatures in desolate landscapes are hallmark features of Mohasses' works. The sea in the background of the *Minotaur* painting may serve as a symbolic function intended by the artist. Through the sign of the sea, the vastness overtakes the figure of the Minotaur, which implies a sense of enclosed space. In other words, the sea as a myth responds to the artist's fears associated with portraying life through Minotaur. On the other hand, the Minotaur fills the foreground, preventing the sea from being visible in the background, indicating that the artist's attempt to overcome his questions and fears has not been successful. From a Jungian perspective, myth in this artwork takes on an identity-shaping role. The artist, in his quest for individuality, interacts with his surroundings to trace the origins of his questions and fears, seeking to survive within this work. As such, Minotaur and the sea in the painting become shadows to the artist, who attempts to display the effort to overcome these shadows in the process of individuation.

7.16. Minotaur Scares People Well



Image 7.27 *Minotaur Scares People Well*, Mohasses, oil on canvas, 100 × 150 cm, 1965

Mohasses created numerous works in both sculpture and painting featuring the Minotaur as a central theme. In most of his works, the Minotaur is depicted alone, but in this piece, the creature is portrayed alongside other human figures. The primary emotional response elicited by this artwork is anxiety, a profound sense of unease triggered by the sight of deformed, limbless bodies, either in states of fear or postures resembling decaying corpses. One reason for this anxiety lies in the proximity of the viewer to the threatening object, which resonates within the observer and is powerfully highlighted by Mohasses. In *The Minotaur Scares People Well*, the artist scrutinizes and dissects this fear and anxiety, making it the central subject of the work.

By choosing a title that itself embodies contradiction and strangeness, Mohasses intensifies the focus on the painting. The relationship between form and meaning in this piece requires significant attention. Like a mythologist, he oscillates between object and its deconstruction, creating a kind of irony and sarcasm in his interaction with the surrounding world (Abazari, 2001).

The title, “The Minotaur Scares People Well,” is particularly intriguing as it presents a paradox: the man eating giant scares people, but this fear is not for the purpose of harm, but for some form of good. Alongside this, Mohasses uses form to challenge conventional notions of power, distancing the viewer from familiar concepts of authority through a new, unorthodox approach. Thus, Mohasses redefines the concept of form by merging it with meaning. In Formalist Analysis of the Work: Firstly, a combination of small forms converges to create a circular shape in the right section of the work. Secondly, a vertical form divides the composition, which is the most significant element in the work’s structural organization. The third degree consists of a horizontal line within the frame. In terms of color, the painting utilizes both warm and cool tones, creating a stark contrast. One key contrast lies in the darker color at the top right of the canvas, forming a circular, almost spherical shape. This darkness is applied to the heads of the figures, and the connection between these forms generates a circular motion, emphasizing movement while simultaneously introducing a tension between stillness (represented by the vertical alignment) and motion (represented by the round form on the right). The use of a cream color may be intended to focus attention at the center of the painting or to create a visual connection between the forms on either side. The figure positioned apart in the right corner suggests a mother-child dynamic, with the mother holding her child while attempting to flee, while the other figures are depicted in states of screaming and terror, possibly victims of an impending sacrifice. The figure selected by the Minotaur, shown in a light cream hue, is the most prominent, indicating its central importance in the composition. The space of the face is dominated by the mouth, which serves as the focal point in this chaotic depiction.

The color palette used by Mohasses for the Minotaur in this piece evokes mythological symbolism. The use of warm tones—reds and yellows—seems to heighten the sense of terror, aligning with the symbolic use of color to intensify emotion.

In Greek mythology, the Minotaur was the creation of King Minos, a tool of terror used to instill fear in the people of Crete to maintain the monarch’s reign. The Minotaur’s role, therefore, was to elicit fear and anxiety. This creature, often used by rulers as a tool of repression and a display of power, reflects a naturalized form of tyranny. In this painting, Mohasses again challenges the myth of power, subverting its typical associations and

linking it to historical context. If the Minotaur represents the power of fear and domination, the title *The Minotaur Scares People Well* is a clear ironic commentary. The creature does not cause harm for malicious purposes but rather uses fear for what it deems a "good" cause. This juxtaposition calls attention to the historical and cultural significance of the term "good," as it reflects the use of power to maintain authority under the guise of protection and order. As Roland Barthes notes, these symbols carry deep cultural and historical weight, often evoking past regimes that justified authoritarian control through the pervasive use of fear. This ironic and subversive interpretation is enhanced by his bold form, which deconstructs the familiar myth of benevolent power (Barthes, 1971).

The empty background of the work, washed in tones of blue and grey, further isolates the figures in the foreground, creating clarity and emphasis on the Minotaur and the surrounding humans. The background divides the space into three zones—sky, sea, and earth—each representing different existential realms, and together they evoke a universal fear, potentially shared across the globe.

In the foreground, the Minotaur occupies the left side, its colossal body stretching across the entire side of the painting. As in other works by Mohasses, the creature is imposing and monstrous in stature, yet its face bears no signs of fury or rebellion. On the other side of the image are the human figures, small, deformed, and cowering in fear, their exaggerated mouths and tiny eyes emphasizing their helplessness. The lack of visible eyes in some of these figures, replaced by gaping mouths, highlights their powerlessness and ignorance. The viewer, upon encountering this image, may ask, "Why is there so much fear when the giant itself does not appear so terrifying?" This subtle questioning taps into the perennial human fear of the unknown, of which we cannot fully understand or control. This fear has become ingrained in history, manipulated by powers that benefit from such ignorance.

The title, in conjunction with the depicted imagery, invites a reflection on the complex dynamics of power and fear. The Minotaur, as a metaphor for a threatening paternal figure, evokes the absence and loss inherent in the human condition. Mohasses uses this symbolism to criticize the concept of power, presenting it as a historically ingrained

system that thrives on the naturalized fear of the unknown. The deformed, foolish figures in the foreground embody humanity's ignorance, which ultimately gives rise to fear of the Minotaur-like powers that have shaped history. Through this work, Mohasses challenges the myth of power, forcing the viewer to reconsider its naturalized status and its relationship to fear.

Minotaur, as a complex character in this painting, represents a symbolic distortion of human nature, both an immensely powerful and savage entity, yet fundamentally impotent in its own perpetual cycle of destruction. The figure is trapped within its own labyrinthine existence, a reflection of the eternal suffering and destruction humanity has created for itself, with no escape in sight.

This painting calls to mind the Greek myth of the Minotaur, where King Minos of Crete demanded a tribute of young boys and girls who were then sacrificed to the beast in the labyrinth. Theseus, in the myth, offers himself as a sacrifice to slay the Minotaur, with the help of Ariadne, daughter of Zeus. In this artwork, the central figure, painted in cream, represents Theseus, the hero, selected by the Minotaur as a challenger. The placement of this figure in the middle of the composition further underscores its importance in the narrative.

7.17. Seated Minotaur

In the structural analysis of the artwork, from a thematic perspective, it can be stated that the work carries a distinct philosophical weight and emphasizes a particular subject matter. Mohasses, in rendering this piece, has deliberately incorporated a sense of heaviness, so much so that we observe a triangle within the frame, which is a central element with significant emphasis. The human form is depicted within the structure of this triangle. Additionally, a contrast has been created in the center of the composition, ensuring these elements do not become disjointed, with this contrast being brought about with color. Specifically, orange in the piece creates a contrast, arising from the stagnant gray tones surrounding it. A certain type of silence is evoked with gray, while contrast is achieved through orange, and the sense of weight is created through the form itself. Orange generates a focused intensity, diverging from the surrounding elements within the frame. The figure's form and anatomy have undergone a transformation, portraying an act

of action, as if the Minotaur is holding a thread and pulling it. This thread could symbolically refer to the one used by Theseus, who utilized it to navigate the labyrinth, eventually leading to the Minotaur's death. The figure of the Minotaur is portrayed as holding this thread, perhaps symbolizing a return to safety. The form of the hands has also been altered, no longer resembling wings, but instead conveying the image of a creature exhausted by time. The Minotaur is seated in a quiet corner, evoking a more human-like, exhausted demeanor.

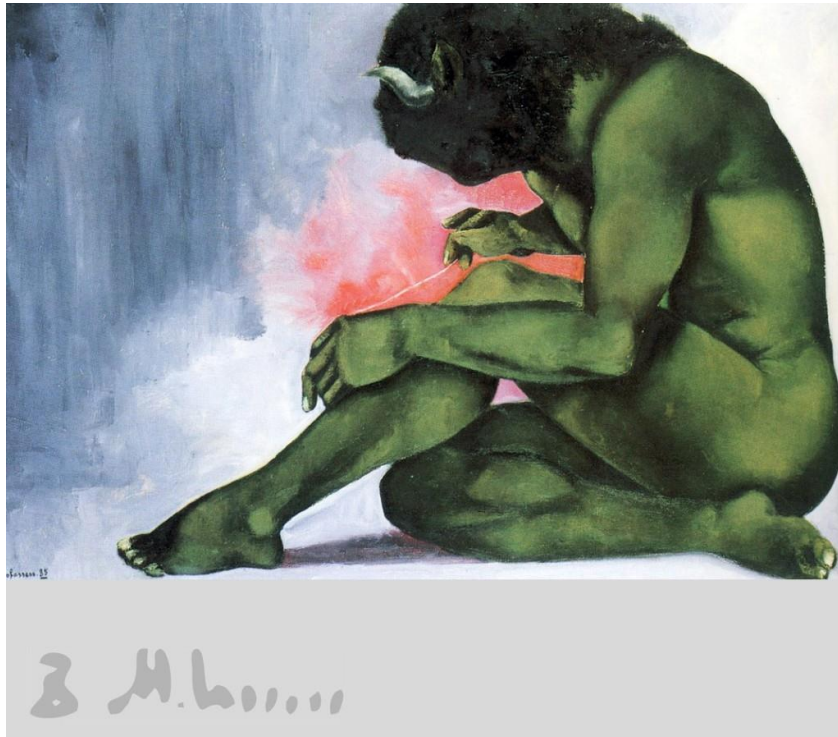


Image 7.28 *Seated Minotaur*, Mohasses, 1976

7.18. Minotaur

In the structural analysis of this work by Mohasses, the piece reveals a significant semiotic property, where the upper body of the Minotaur is depicted in a classical manner. It is shown from the back and slightly turned, with the arms obscured, and its face is presented in a three-quarter view, gazing directly at the viewer. This Minotaur is situated in a cold, grayish, and almost flat background. The greenish-yellow color of its body appears trapped in a halo of gray, and the surface of its rough skin is marked by reddish-brown scratches, suggesting wear and suffering. The expression on its face is

cold, lifeless, and slightly angry, implying that it is either in pain from its wounds or perhaps, it is discontent with being presented in such a fatigued and wounded state. Alternatively, it may not be disturbed at all, but rather resigned. It appears this Minotaur, repeatedly killed by the gods throughout history, has finally accepted its fate and the bitter nature of humanity. It stands, exhausted and worn, at the end of the world, offering only a bitter gaze in response to its existence.

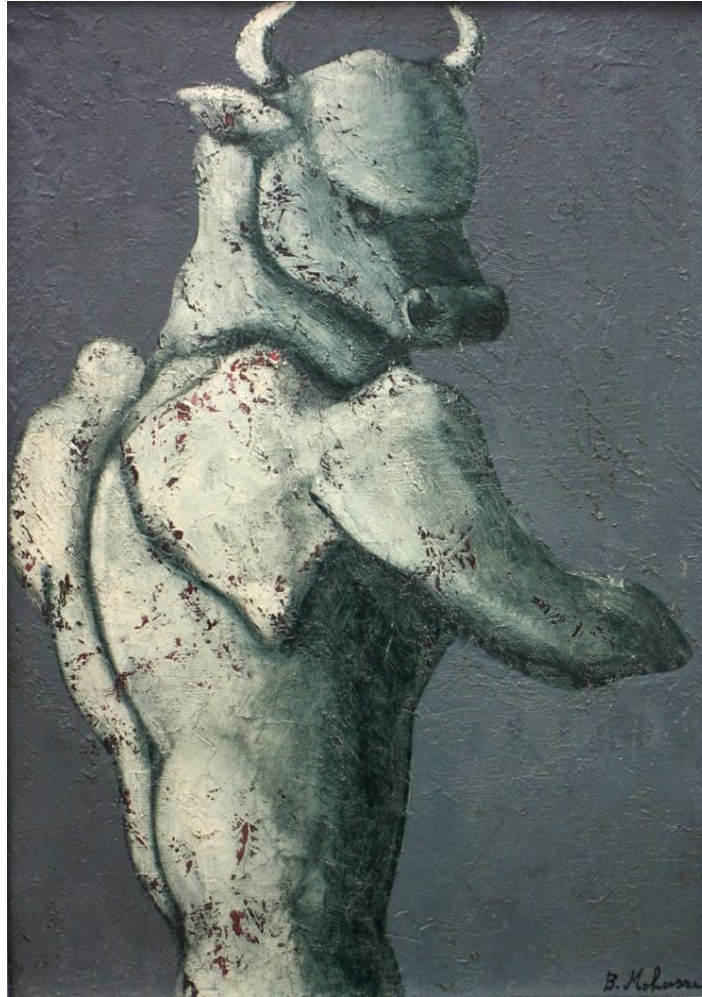


Image 7.29 *Minotaur*, Mohasses, Oil on canvas, dimensions: 70x50 cm, 1965

The composition employs a juxtaposition of grays, along with a powerful vertical form that emphasizes the Minotaur's strength. This vertical form envelopes the Minotaur, with the structure extending throughout the frame. Mohasses shows a clear awareness of form, as evidenced by the positioning of the arms that form a triangle, and lower down, a square-like shape is created. The presence of line in the work gives it an expressive

spatial quality, evoking a sense of rigidity, reminiscent of romanticism that articulates a tragic mythos. The Minotaurs in Mohasses' work convey an embodiment of human suffering and decay, evoking a powerful sense of torment and physical degradation. The artist was clearly familiar with Greek humanism and sought to highlight the human condition through these mythological representations.

The Minotaurs of Mohasses are depicted as helpless, disabled, and sometimes as fragmented figures, representing the wrath and betrayal, the twisted loves and fruitless relationships, jealousy, troubling sexual relations, war, destruction, and the continual tragedies that are a daily reality. The faces of the Minotaurs in Mohasses' works are cold, devoid of spirit, and slightly angry. Their bodies have surrendered to their fate, reflecting the bitter essence of human existence, resigned to the circumstances they face. These Minotaurs are often shown seated by the sea, observing the inevitable decay of the world. However, Mohasses is not alone in this destructive vision. The artist emphasizes the ears and eyes of the Minotaur specifically drawn with great precision, emphasizing the empathy and sorrow that the artist feels for this creature. The Minotaur, in Mohasses' interpretation, is not simply a figure of divine perfection, but rather a monstrous, cannibalistic being trapped in a labyrinth of suffering.

This Mediterranean myth, rooted in a materialistic culture that gave rise to Western civilization, symbolizes the destructive, natural, and unconscious forces within the human psyche. Mohasses, as a modernist and displaced queer migrant, found resonance in this myth, reflecting the untamed energy and chaotic instincts inherent in humanity. He identified the Minotaur not just as a symbol of primal instinct but also as an embodiment of the ongoing human struggle against fate. In Mohasses' depiction, the Minotaur is not glorified but serves as a metaphor for the fragility of human life and the confrontation with existential suffering. In this context, the Minotaur represents an archetype embedded deeply in the history of art, evolving from Greek mythology to modern interpretations. The Minotaur is not merely a mythical creature, but a figure whose torment reflects the universal human struggle with suffering, mortality, and the very nature of existence. Mohasses, through his reference to ancient myths, does not seek to resurrect a glorious past but uses these symbols to confront contemporary reality, commenting on modern life's inherent discontent. His work illustrates Minotaur not as a figure of mythical

perfection, but as a tragic symbol of the unconscious forces that govern both the human psyche and the greater existential narrative.

In Mohasses' *Minotaur*, we encounter a deeply personal interpretation of this myth, but one that simultaneously explores the universal human condition as it pertains to both history and the inevitable cycles of suffering, death, and decay that shape the essence of existence. Through his manipulation of form, color, and symbolism, Mohasses masterfully portrays the relentless human struggle in a world plagued by chaos and despair.

Chapter VIII

Semiotics in Mohasses' Works



8.1. Introduction

Semiotics is an interdisciplinary scientific field dedicated to the study and analysis of signs and symbols across various dimensions. This discipline seeks to understand the structures and meanings inherent in signs and aims to examine communicative and conceptual processes within diverse systems. In semiotics, signs are recognized not only in linguistic forms (such as spoken and written language) but also in non-linguistic forms. These non-linguistic expressions encompass physiological signs (such as body movements and facial expressions), instinctual behaviors, semantic and value systems (including myths and cultural beliefs), and even diverse worldviews reflected in human behaviors and actions. This chapter aims to analyze symbolic elements: This involves investigating the symbols, signs, and visual references present in his paintings and sculptures that convey cultural, mythological, psychological, or philosophical meanings, as well as explaining their role in the formation of Mohasses' visual language.

8.2. Definition of Semiotics

Semiotics analyzes symbols and signs that manifest in various kinetic, gestures, and situational forms. These symbols may be conscious or unconscious, tactical or strategic, and may arise either from deliberate thought or involuntary response. The significance of this science lies in revealing how each sign or symbol can carry multiple and complex messages that gain meaning within a specific social, cultural, or historical context (Fakouhi, 2004).

8.3. Semiotics in Antiquity

As a branch of human knowledge, semiotics has deep roots in the history of thought. Its origins can be traced back to the ideas of ancient Greeks, who played a fundamental role in shaping the foundational concepts of this discipline. Both Plato and Aristotle engaged seriously with the discourse around signs and their nature. Plato (circa 428-348 BC) examined the origins of language and the relationship between words and concepts in his work *Cratylus*. This text delves into the essence of language as a signifying system and reflects the ancient Greek philosophy's interest in analyzing the connection between meaning and expression. Similarly, Aristotle (384-322 BC) systematically explored the interpretation of names and their relationship to external realities in his work *Poetics*,

thereby laying the groundwork for semantic and semiotic analysis. In antiquity, Plotinus (204-270 AD) emerged as one of the most prominent figures in symbolism in art with his writings on beauty. He posited that every artistic work should embody and represent an "Idea." From his perspective, the artistic creation process signifies the manifestation of an idea that exists in the creator's mind. For instance, a "builder" transforms the idea conceived in his mind into a tangible house in the external world. Plotinus viewed this process as a bridge between the sensible world and the realm of ideas, suggesting that a work of art serves as a sign pointing to a concept that transcends itself (Penti Rouhito, 2002).

8.4. Semiotics in the Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, symbolic representation reached its pinnacle of attention. In this era, art and architecture were utilized as tools for expressing religious and divine themes. People of this period were keen to incorporate biblical concepts into the construction of churches to manifest the spirit of spirituality within architectural spaces. For instance, concepts such as "the roof of heaven," "heavenly Jerusalem," or "Solomon's Temple" were widely employed in the design and construction of churches. These churches served not only as places of worship but also as symbols of divine and ethical concepts (Chandler, 2008).

Columns, stained glass windows, and even the overall layout of churches were imbued with symbolic meanings. For example, church columns were often considered symbols of prophets or saints, serving as intermediaries between Earth and Heaven. The use of these symbols was designed to guide audiences towards deeper spiritual contemplation through visual and spatial experiences (Penti Rouhito, 2002).

This symbolic tradition influenced not only art and architecture but also other cultural and social domains, providing a basis for the formation of complex semiotic systems in subsequent civilizations.

8.5. Semiotics in Modern Thought

While semiotics has a long history that cannot be attributed to a singular moment of emergence, scholars typically trace the roots of this theory to the approaches of Ferdinand

de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure, with a technical and linguistic perspective, established the theoretical foundations of this discipline based on the structural analysis of language, paying special attention to sign systems as components of linguistic frameworks. In contrast, Peirce adopted a more flexible approach, extending the concept of the sign to broader domains, including philosophy, logic, and natural sciences. In essence, both thinkers established a novel connection between knowledge and signification, thereby integrating the intellectual approach of semiotics into the realms of scientific and philosophical studies. This achievement paved the way for the application of semiotics across various fields, ranging from linguistics to art, sociology, and even cognitive sciences (Zamiran, 2003).

Roland Barthes, a prominent French semiotician, stands out as one of the most influential thinkers in this field. In his works, he conducted a semiotic analysis of literary texts and cultural phenomena, presenting a deconstructive approach to the notion of meaning. From Barthes' perspective, every text or artwork functions as a "sign system," whose meaning is dependent not only on the creator's intent but also on the interpretation process of the audience. In works such as *Mythologies*, Barthes demonstrated how cultural and social concepts are represented through signs, illustrating how these signs convey complex and multilayered messages in painting, sculpture, and other forms of art (Barthes, 2007).

8.6. Semiotics: A New Understanding of Language and Reality

Semiotics, as a field of human knowledge, presented a novel approach to linguistics in the early decades of the twentieth century. According to this perspective, words are not absolute and specific names that definitively refer to objects or phenomena. Instead, the meanings of words are constructed conventionally and are contingent upon the relationships that differ among signs.

What we refer to as "external reality" is accessible only through pre-established structural patterns. In other words, our understanding of the world is always mediated through intermediaries; these intermediaries often operate as linguistic sign systems, serving as a framework for perceiving and interpreting the world. Thus, our knowledge of the universe is based on a virtual structure that is preconceived.

Semiotics teaches us that we live in a world teeming with signs, and there is no way to understand phenomena other than through these signs and their associated codes. One of the critical roles of semiotics is to deconstruct these structures and challenge the realities of signs to clarify which realities are elevated and which are suppressed. Additionally, semiotics is tasked with distinguishing various signs and formulating different methods to study them. This discipline aids in understanding representations not as direct reflections of reality but as entities that may require separation and examination regarding which realities they represent. Semiotic research shares a common foundation: it does not merely confront matters of fact; rather, it analyzes them and explores them as signs of the values embedded in the realms of other facts. As Roland Barthes articulates, semiotics is the study of values and enables us to comprehend the world in its deeper dimensions (Barthes, 1991).

Semiotics theorists maintain that humans can be defined as creatures that not only perceive signs but also create and interpret them. From this perspective, humans can be considered "sign-producing animals" or "interpreters of signs" (Asaberger, 2008). Aszsg's viewpoint reminds us that semiotics is not merely a scientific tool but a means of understanding human nature: beings who live, think, and interact through signs.

This definition distinguishes humans from other living beings. Although animals can also perceive signs—such as recognizing sound or odor as warnings of danger—humans have the capacity to employ signs not only to respond to their environment but also to create meaning, reflect culture, and even shape social realities.

Semiotics focuses on analyzing and studying sign systems, including language, imagery, and other communicative patterns. These systems play a crucial role in all human productions, whether artistic, intellectual, or cultural (written or visual), and shape the semantic structures of these texts. Through investigating how meaning is produced and transmitted, semiotics endeavors to identify and analyze the processes through which these associative and communicative systems are formed (Sasani, 2008).

One of the intriguing and unique aspects of semiotics is its ability to establish connections between phenomena that may initially appear unrelated. This characteristic renders semiotics an interdisciplinary and flexible science capable of analyzing a wide

range of phenomena. Semiotics allows us to identify common structures and patterns across various sign systems, including language and literature, art, media, and popular culture (Chandler, 2008).

8.7. Semiotics in Art

Semiotics is an interdisciplinary field that, within the domain of art, focuses on the study and analysis of signs, symbols, and hidden meanings embedded in artistic works. In painting and sculpture, semiotics deeply examines the signs and symbols that manifest in forms, colors, compositions, and volumes. In this regard, semiotics endeavors to identify both the explicit and implicit meanings inherent in each artistic element and to analyze their relationship with the artist's worldview, the cultural context of the era, and the audience (Zimran, 2003).

In painting, semiotics pays close attention to visual elements such as color, lines, forms, textures, and techniques. For instance, the use of warm or cool colors, symmetrical or asymmetrical compositions, and even the level of detail can reflect specific emotions, beliefs, or concepts. The symbols present in a painting, such as the use of objects, natural or human spaces, serve as narrators of diverse stories and worldviews, enriching their cultural, social, or historical context.

In sculpture, semiotics examines the three-dimensional aspects of the work, the material properties, volumetric forms, and the way the artwork interacts with space and the audience. Every volume or material in sculpture carries meaning, potentially referencing religious, political, aesthetic, or philosophical concepts. For example, the use of marble in classical works not only symbolizes durability and immortality but also reflects the cultural and spiritual values of the period in which the artist created the piece.

Semiotics in painting and sculpture also investigate the relationship between form and content. How can an abstract painting with expressive lines or a minimalist sculpture convey messages beyond their apparent simplicity? By deeply analyzing such questions, semiotics enables us to uncover hidden layers of meaning and to elucidate the intricate relationships between the artist, the artwork, and the audience. In the artistic domains of painting and sculpture, semiotics not only analyze visual and volumetric elements but also strives to link the inherent meanings of symbols and signs to their cultural, social,

and historical contexts. This approach provides viewers with a deeper and more multilayered understanding of art (Fakouhi, 2004).

8.8. The Significance of Semiotics in the Contemporary World

As an interdisciplinary science, semiotics enables us to gain a profound understanding of communication systems and the processes of meaning-making. This field serves as a powerful tool for analyzing artistic, cultural, and social texts, helping us reveal the hidden layers of meaning, ideologies, and values underlying signs. In today's world, where representations play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and cultures, semiotics serve as a guiding framework for analyzing and critiquing these representations.

8.9. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Approach in Analyzing Mohasses' Works

A fundamental question in the realm of art history and criticism is whether understanding an artwork necessitates analysis and interpretation by the critic, or if, as some believe, "the world is without standards, and each individual can attribute any meaning they desire to the artwork" (Roshani-Nejad, 2009). This perspective, which has its proponents among the general audience, addresses a central issue in comprehending the relationship between the viewer and the artwork.

However, since the early nineteenth century, when art history emerged as an academic discipline, and continuing to the present day, where artworks are interpreted in various ways, diverse methodologies have been developed for describing and analyzing artworks. This evolution led art criticism to gradually adopt a creative aspect, functioning as a dynamic tool for generating meaning. In this context, numerous critics have entered the field, playing a decisive role in expanding and deepening interpretative approaches to art (Adams, 2008).

One of the prominent figures in this domain is Roland Barthes, recognized as one of the most distinguished literary critics of the twentieth century and a pioneer in the field of semiotics. Barthes, with his innovative perspectives, introduced new approaches to analyzing art and literature that emphasize the interaction between the text, the audience, and the cultural context (Payne, 2003).

These developments in art history and criticism have transformed the inquiry into the necessity of analysis and the critic's role into a central discourse in the field, creating a meaningful connection between the understanding of art, analytical methodologies, and the audience.

The discipline of semiotics was founded on the foundational theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and, over time, through the efforts of contemporary thinkers, evolved into an interdisciplinary and pivotal field in various areas of human and social research. This discipline, focusing on analyzing the structure of signs and their role in communicative and cultural processes, has found a special place in many fields such as linguistics, art, sociology, and literature.

Among contemporary theorists, Roland Barthes was one of the most prominent individuals who became acquainted with Saussure's theories in the 1950s. He, by utilizing structuralist linguistic concepts, took a step further and extended semiotics to cultural, social, and mythological phenomena. Barthes, especially in the field of analyzing contemporary myths, made significant contributions and demonstrated how linguistic structures can serve as a basis for understanding cultural and ideological systems (Wicks, 2003).

Barthes' inclination towards a semiotic approach can be attributed to his understanding of the diversity and dynamism of linguistic terms. This linguistic capability allowed him to analyze cultural phenomena from a new perspective and study myth not merely as an ancient narrative but as a reflection of contemporary ideologies. With this viewpoint, Barthes introduced myth as a kind of "secondary sign system" in which signs transcend their primary meanings and acquire new meanings in a social or political context (Culler, 2010).

Thus, by integrating Saussure's theory with his own views on contemporary culture, Barthes played a decisive role in expanding semiotics, turning it into a powerful tool for analyzing complex cultural and social phenomena. In his works, Roland Barthes seriously engaged with semiotics as a discipline for examining the process of meaning creation in cultural and social phenomena. He believed that linguistics, as an existing science, examines meaning at the level of sounds and speech, stating that a

comprehensive discipline for studying meaning in things that "are not sound" has yet to be established (Barthes, 2005). Thus, Barthes introduces semiotics as a new framework for examining systems of meaning and communication.

He posited that semiotics assumes that wherever objects, actions, and even individuals' discourses are meaningful, we are faced with a system of distinctions and rules that create these meanings. These systems may operate consciously or unconsciously, producing multilayered and dynamic meanings. Barthes also emphasized that semiotics should comprehensively cover all aspects of meaning and transcend the boundaries of linguistics.

In an essay titled "What is Criticism?" Barthes offers a different approach to art criticism. He argues that the critic's task is not to uncover the "hidden meaning" of the work; rather, the critic should be capable of providing a reading of the work that aligns with contemporary contexts and concerns. From Barthes' perspective, criticism should be a dynamic endeavor that redefines the meaning of the artwork in relation to current issues and questions, rather than focusing solely on the past or absolute concepts (Culler, 2010).

Roland Barthes, a seminal figure in semiotics and cultural criticism, emphasized the fluidity and contextual nature of signs and meanings. He posited that signs are not inherently fixed but are shaped by cultural and historical contexts. In this framework, the role of the critic is pivotal in reinterpreting and updating meanings to align with contemporary times. Barthes advocated semiotics as an effective tool in this analytical process. Barthes and other cultural semioticians analyze objects or actions that hold significance for members of cultural groups. They examine the roles and conventions that shape the process of meaning-making within a culture. From Barthes's perspective, signs derive their meanings within social and cultural frameworks. The relationships between these signs and their associated codes determine how members of a society engage with their specific culture. Barthes's semiotic analysis aids in uncovering hidden meanings within cultural forms. What is often perceived as unconscious meaning is the result of structural relationships among signs and cultural codes, identifiable through structural analysis. This approach allows for the recognition of cultural phenomena and the revelation of hidden layers of meaning in various signs. Notably, Barthes's semiotic

project focuses on cultural signs such as clothing and other semiotic tools in contemporary culture, illustrating the pathways through which social and cultural meanings are conveyed (Chandler, 2008).

In the present study, the primary objective is to offer a novel interpretation of the works of Bahman Mohasses, one of Iran's most prominent contemporary artists, to facilitate a more precise analysis and reevaluation of his creations. This endeavor aims to deepen the understanding of his artworks and inspire contemporary artists. Employing Barthes's semiotic approach as a methodological framework enables a meticulous and scholarly examination of Mohasses' oeuvre (Wicks, 2003).

In this analysis, efforts will be made to explore the semantic layers present in Mohasses' works using Barthes's concepts. Emphasis will be placed on analyzing the cultural codes and symbolic signs within these works, considering their social and historical contexts. This method seeks to uncover hidden meanings and chart a new course for the critique and analysis of contemporary Iranian art. Mohasses, in both his paintings and sculptures, exhibits an approach to the text (artwork) that parallels Barthes's perspective. From Barthes's viewpoint, a text is not merely a representation of reality but a network of forms and discursive codes that derive meaning within a cultural context. This perspective is clear in Mohasses' works; his art is not solely intended to convey beauty or visual pleasure but serves as a platform for presenting the artist's ideas and thoughts, fostering a dialogic interaction between the work and the audience.

According to Barthes, a text (or artwork) attains meaning only when it engages with the audience. In this process, the reader or viewer plays a creative role, possessing codes that facilitate the reading and comprehension of the work. This concept is manifested in Mohasses' creations. His art requires imaginative viewers capable of uncovering the hidden meanings within the layers of the work. In other words, the audience in Mohasses' works is not merely a passive observer but is expected to act as a partner in the process of meaning-making (Barthes, 2003).

Roland Barthes, in his semiotic theories, defines a sign as a code that, at the denotative level, carries direct meaning, but at higher levels conveys connotative and cultural meanings. According to this perspective, painting and visual arts, akin to written texts,

are replete with codes that can elicit diverse and multilayered interpretations. Barthes posits that, unlike photography, painting can be deconstructed into units of signification, thereby facilitating semantic multiplicity—a characteristic evident in the works of Bahman Mohasses (Barthes,2005).

Barthes does not perceive polysemy as a source of chaos; rather, he views it as a catalyst for the continuity and dynamism of an artwork across time and space. From his standpoint, each viewer, guided by their cultural and social codes, offers a distinct interpretation of the work, and these varied interpretations endow the text with intertextual vitality. This concept is particularly pertinent in analyzing Mohasses' creations; his paintings and sculptures, both in form and content, provide a rich tapestry of codes that invite the audience to engage in multifaceted interpretations.

In his oeuvre, Mohasses portrays deformed and fragmented human figures, seemingly reflecting the crises of identity and the social and psychological tensions of contemporary life. These figures, depicted in unnatural and exaggerated postures, constitute visual codes that challenge the observer. Alongside these subjects, elements such as fish, colossal birds, and still life set against empty backgrounds emerge as prominent symbols, each bearing intricate cultural and social connotations (Barthes,2003).

Barthes asserts that a text should challenge the reader's expectations, engaging them and directing their attention to the structure of the reading process. This attribute is evident in Mohasses' art. His works, through both form and content, provoke the viewer's intellect, compelling active participation in the interpretative journey. Mohasses distances himself from conventional aesthetics, utilizing cultural and social symbols and signs to create a space for contemplation and reevaluation for the audience.

In Mohasses' creations, paralleling Barthes's perspective, the artwork is not a direct reflection of reality, but a constellation of forms shaped by cultural and discursive codes. For instance, Mohasses' incorporation of symbols like the Minotaur or indigenous elements serves not merely as decorative components but as meaningful signs that, in interaction with the viewer's cultural codes, lead to complex and layered interpretations.

Aligning with Barthes's approach, this analysis endeavors to identify the codes present in Mohasses' works and to highlight their connotative and cultural meanings. This examination encompasses:

1. **Coloration and Style:** Investigating the evolution of color and form in Mohasses' works from the inception to the culmination of his artistic career.
2. **Perspective and Composition:** Analyzing the organization of elements within the artwork and the relationship between the periphery and the center.
3. **Intratextual and Intertextual Relations:** Uncovering the latent meanings within the work and their connections to other cultural and artistic texts.

Employing a semiotic framework facilitates the analysis of the ideological meanings embedded in Mohasses' creations. His visual codes, such as deformed humans and fish, may reflect social, cultural, and ideological issues. Additionally, considering Barthes's concept of connotative signs allows for the discovery and interpretation of hidden meanings in the details of Mohasses' works.

8.10. Barthesian Semiotics and Myth Analysis in the Works of Bahman Mohasses

In his theoretical framework, Roland Barthes dismantles the boundary between the author and the work, arguing that language, as a system of signs, speaks for itself, while the author serves merely as an intermediary for representing cultural, historical, and ideological discourses. This perspective, particularly in the analysis of artistic works and visual texts, highlights the role of the audience, positioning them as active participants in the process of interpretation and meaning making (Barthes, 2003).

Within this framework, intertextuality, as one of the key concepts in Barthes' theories, transforms the artist into a member of a broader network of texts and symbols. Bahman Mohasses, a contemporary Iranian artist, utilizes cultural symbolic patterns, myths, and mythological concepts from both Iran and Europe in his works, providing a foundation for a Barthesian semiotic analysis.

Barthes defines myth as a mechanism that transforms history into nature. In other words, myths, through their ideological and cultural signification, present a historical and contingent narrative as if it were a natural and eternal phenomenon. This characteristic

renders myth an ideological tool for maintaining or reproducing the dominant order. However, Barthes does not perceive myth as a static concept but rather as a dynamic and metaphorical phenomenon that is constantly reshaping and redefining meanings (Barthes,2005).

Bahman Mohasses challenges myths and reinterprets them in a modern and contemporary context by employing distinctive forms, symbolic compositions, and meaningful titles. His works, particularly in painting and sculpture, contain signs that operate within the framework of Barthes' second-order signification system of mythology.

8.11. Analysis of Mohasses' Works Based on Barthesian Mythology

8.11.1. *Myth and the Critique of Power:* One of the central themes in Mohasses' works is the critique of power structures. His depictions of deformed, fragmented human figures and monstrous beings serve as representations of power and their distortions. By creating exaggerated forms and deconstructing conventional symbols of power, Mohasses prompts the audience to reconsider the concept of power and its consequences. This critique, particularly in an ideological context, intertwines with historical and cultural myths.

8.11.2. *Reinterpretation of Cultural Myths:* In several of his works, Mohasses engages with mythological concepts such as modernity, humanity, and freedom, presenting them in a novel form. This reinterpretation seeks to underscore the inherent contradictions within these concepts. The myths of modernity and progress, in Mohasses' works, are redefined as ideological constructs rooted in history and politics.

8.11.3. *Intertextuality in Mohasses' Works:* One of the defining characteristics of Mohasses' works is his use of intertextual codes. He establishes connections with both Eastern and Western myths through the form and content of his creations. These connections manifest not only through direct references to myths but also through the structure and composition of his works.

8.11.4. *Challenging the Myths of Art and Beauty:* Mohasses perceives art as a medium for expressing ideas and thoughts, detaching it from the traditional concept of aesthetics.

Instead of offering visual pleasure or aesthetic representation, he employs art as a means of confronting the audience with fundamental issues of life, history, and culture.

Through the application of Barthesian semiotic analysis, Mohasses' works can be understood as dynamic engagements with myth, power, and ideology, continuously redefining cultural narratives within a contemporary framework.

From a Barthesian semiotic perspective, the works of Bahman Mohasses constitute a collection of visual codes and signs that, through intertextuality and the second-order signification system, redefine cultural and historical myths. These works, not only as multilayered texts inviting the audience to participate in the meaning-making process, also provide a platform for reconsidering dominant myths by critiquing power structures, modernity, and ideological concepts.

Like Barthes, Mohasses believes that an artistic work is not a closed and static entity but a dynamic text that continuously recreates meaning through interaction with the audience. This perspective transforms his works into a site of cultural engagement and multiple interpretations that persist across time and space.

The questions surrounding the relationship between Roland Barthes' concept of myth and the works of Bahman Mohasses open pathways to a deeper understanding of the intersection between art, culture, and semiotics. In Barthes' theory, myths serve as tools that present specific historical and cultural concepts as natural and universal, making them appear as inherent to the world. This process, which Barthes terms the "naturalization of history," unconsciously instills an ideological meaning in the audience. However, what we observe in Mohasses' works seems to be a reverse movement. Instead of concealing or naturalizing ideological concepts, Mohasses explicitly exposes them. By employing deformed and deconstructive forms, he compels the viewer to reflect and reconsider cultural and social meanings. He utilizes familiar signs and titles, yet by amplifying and altering their forms, he strips them of their clichéd and mythological connotations, engaging in a process of "defamiliarization" (Barthes, 1991).

This approach, which may be termed "reverse demythologization," aligns with Barthes' theories on unveiling cultural myths. However, rather than directly representing hidden meanings, Mohasses highlights structures and forms to draw attention to the process of

meaning production. Through this method, he challenges social and cultural myths and disrupts familiar frameworks, providing the audience with a space for reconsideration and active participation in reinterpreting these concepts.

The responses to the following questions can be structured based on this analysis:

I. The Consistency of Mohasses' Titles with Barthes' Thoughts: Like Barthes, Mohasses perceives myths as cultural and historical structures. However, by employing deconstructive forms, he transforms them into open and pluralistic works that convey multiple meanings.

II. Defamiliarization of Mythological Signification: By utilizing familiar signs in unconventional and even deformed forms, Mohasses explicitly seeks to dismantle the fixed and ideological meanings of myths, inviting the audience to reconsider and explore new meanings.

III. Challenging Contemporary Ideologies: Like Barthes, Mohasses emphasizes exposing hidden layers of meaning in contemporary culture but employs visual forms to accentuate ideological contradictions and crises. This analysis demonstrates that Mohasses' works, in relation to Barthes' ideas, provide a valuable foundation for studying how myths and cultural codes are reinterpreted in contemporary art. His works invite the audience to critically reflect on social, historical, and cultural concepts.

Reading Mohasses' works through the lens of Barthesian semiotics allows for an exploration of the multiple layers of meaning embedded in his paintings and sculptures. These works are not merely representations of reality but rather networks of codes that actively engage the audience in interpretation. Thus, Mohasses' art becomes a site for intertextual engagement and the presentation of new perspectives on contemporary cultural and social meanings. With a profound and deconstructive approach to art, Bahman Mohasses creates a complex discourse between the artist, the work, and the audience, making Barthesian semiotics an effective tool for analyzing his creations. From Barthes' perspective, an artistic work, like a text, is a space where meaning emerges through interaction with the audience. This notion is particularly evident in Mohasses' works. In his paintings and sculptures, Mohasses employs signs such as deformed human figures, colossal birds, and unnatural fish, transcending mere representation. These signs,

in relation to cultural codes, challenge concepts such as power, identity, and modernity. His approach to artistic creation as a text engaged in intertextual discourse with culture and history is influenced by Barthes' theories'(Alā'I, 1997).

As Barthes argues that meaning is not only embedded in the text but also within cultural codes, Mohasses similarly utilizes these codes to transform his works into a space for myth reinvention and ideological reinterpretation. By challenging audience expectations through novel forms and compositions, he invites them to actively participate in the reading process. This dual perspective, emphasizing both artistic creativity and audience engagement, is a defining characteristic of Mohasses' art.

Like Barthes, Mohasses believes that art should not be merely a tool for visual pleasure but rather a means to prompt critical reflection on cultural and social concepts. Consequently, semiotics, by focusing on the relationships between text and cultural context, provides a precise analytical framework for uncovering the hidden layers of meaning in Mohasses' works. Ultimately, a semiotic approach to analyzing Mohasses' creations reveals that these works not only reflect the artist's ideology and intellectual framework but also embody the cultural and social discourse of their time. Through engagement with the audience, they continuously generate diverse and dynamic meanings across different temporal and spatial contexts.

8.12. The Role of Symbols and Signs in the Works of Bahman Mohasses

The role of symbols and signs in the works of Mohasses is one of the key factors contributing to his success and lasting impact in the history of contemporary Iranian and global art. Through his innovative and intelligent use of both indigenous and non-indigenous elements, Mohasses has solidified his position as an authentic and unembellished representative of modern Iranian art on an international scale (Selvaji,2010).

Questions such as “Which symbols dominate Mohasses' works?” and “How does he transform these symbols?” highlight one of the most significant dimensions of his art. His works, particularly his sculptures and paintings, occupy a unique place in modern Iranian and global art due to the presence of prominent Iranian symbols and their transformation and adaptation in the contemporary world. Understanding and analyzing these symbols

and the methods employed by Mohasses to recreate and transform them are essential for gaining deeper insight into his works.

8.13. Symbols in Mohasses' Works

8.13.1. Utilization of Indigenous Symbols: Mohasses successfully integrates traditional Iranian elements with modern artistic techniques and language, achieving an artistic expression that, while globally relevant, remains deeply rooted in Iranian culture. This fusion transforms his works into a bridge between past and future, tradition and innovation, and localism and globalism. Symbols such as fish, eagles, and birds frequently appear in his works, drawing from the depths of Iranian history and culture. Mohasses skillfully reinterprets these symbols in modern and contemporary forms. His approach to reimagining traditional elements is not bound by rigid hierarchies or conventional traditionalist frameworks; instead, he engages with the past in a liberated manner. This creative freedom allows him to incorporate living, enduring cultural elements in a personal and innovative way. Unlike traditionalists who impose normative structures and rules on cultural heritage, Mohasses reinterprets these elements in ways that both honor their authenticity and liberate them from conventional constraints.

8.13.2. Utilization of Non-Indigenous Symbols: In addition to Iranian symbols, Mohasses also incorporates philosophical and cultural signs from global artistic and intellectual traditions. These symbols, inspired by Eastern and Western philosophical and artistic discourses, are transformed into an innovative manner in his works. One of the defining characteristics of Mohasses' art is his unique approach to the transformation or metamorphosis of symbols, particularly evident in his abstract forms and modernist expressions. By employing simple yet powerful forms, he breathes new life into these symbols. His sculptures exhibit this transformation, as the forms move away from the grandeur and complexity of traditional symbols, instead focusing on simplicity, volume, and physical characteristics. By transforming and reinterpreting traditional symbols and signs, Mohasses integrates them into modern and contemporary frameworks. This synthesis allows ancient and mythological symbols to retain their traditional meanings while simultaneously aligning with contemporary artistic and social concepts.

Consequently, Mohasses successfully establishes a bridge between tradition and modernism, presenting his works to an international audience.

8.13.3. Cultural Symbols: In Bahman Mohasses' oeuvre, beyond explicit symbols, the very forms and geometric shapes he employs carry distinct cultural and philosophical connotations. These semi-abstract forms, articulated through his unique artistic language, function not only as aesthetic tools but also as mediums for conveying profound cultural narratives. Mohasses adeptly reinterprets enduring themes using his distinctive artistic lexicon, particularly evident in his sculptures and visual artworks that harmonize apparent discordances. His capacity to balance contrasting elements imparts a universal quality to his creations, transforming them into dynamic representations of the interplay between tradition and modernity. Notably, these symbols, in terms of technique and artistic expression, consciously deviate from traditional structures, integrating elements of modernism into Iranian art. This deliberate departure not only underscores Mohasses' artistic audacity but also reflects his commitment to reimagining ancient traditions within a contemporary framework.

8.13.4. Natural Symbols: Natural elements such as trees and flowers, traditionally emblematic of growth, life, and immortality in Iranian art, are also present in Mohasses' works. These symbols often appear indirectly, rendered through abstract methodologies

8.14. Indigenous Symbolism of the Fish

Mohasses maintains a profound, symbolic connection with his native culture, reimagining elements like the fish in a distinctive, emblematic manner. This authentic symbolic recreation transcends specific temporal and spatial contexts, enabling engagement with diverse audiences across various cultures and eras. In his works, fish serve not only as symbolic elements but also as direct reflections of his birthplace's environment and culture. Born in Rasht, a city characterized by its expansive sea and abundant fish, these motifs significantly influenced his artistic imagination and language. These indigenous elements, integral to the cultural and geographical fabric of the artist's homeland, are seamlessly integrated into Mohasses' unique artistic language, elevating them into symbols that surpass local boundaries (Kiaras,2010).

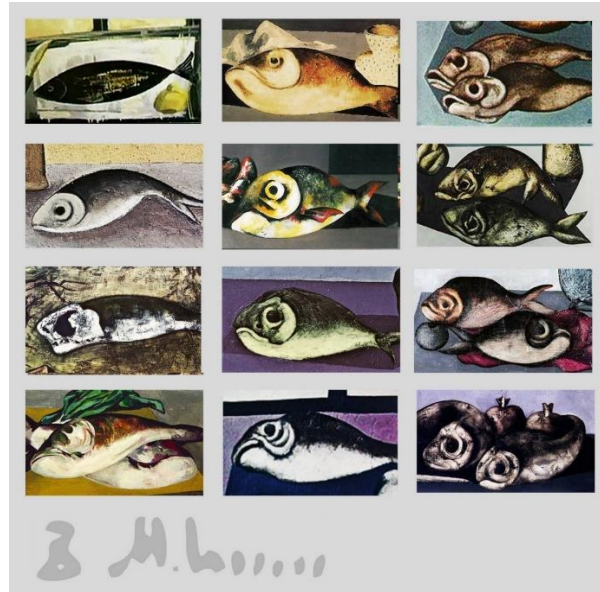


Image 8.1 *Fishes*, Mohasses, 1976

The characteristics of fish in his works include:

I. Form and Shape of the Fish: Mohasses often portray fish using simple lines and abstract forms, yet their connection to real fish remains discernible. This fusion of abstraction and realism exemplifies his distinctive artistic approach to representing this indigenous symbol. The depiction of fish in his art, in terms of shape, form, and color, evokes the smoked fish of northern Iran.

Bicolor and Texture of the Fish: Utilizing warm and gray tones, along with textures reminiscent of smoked fish skin, Mohasses conjures visual memories of markets and landscapes in northern Iran. These features imbue his works with a nostalgic yet universal quality.

III. a symbol transcending geographical confines: Beyond indigenous influences, the fish in Mohasses' art evolves into a symbol transcending geographical confine, reflecting various meanings such as dynamism, vitality, or even the fragility and precariousness of life. Its presence serves as a bridge between local elements and a universal language. By blending familiar forms with modern expression, Mohasses creates symbols deeply rooted in Iranian culture that simultaneously captivate audiences beyond these borders. These fish, reflecting both "cultural identity" and the "globalization of art," stand as prominent motifs in his body of work.

8.15. Semiotics of Fish in Mohasses' Works

I. Heaviness, Stillness, and Symbolic Connotations: In Iranian culture, the fish traditionally symbolizes life, dynamism, and fertility (Guiraud,2004). However, in Mohasses' oeuvre, these fish are depicted as detached from their natural habitat, appearing lifeless and inert. This juxtaposition between the fish's conventional symbolism as a life emblem and its lifeless portrayal in Mohasses' art creates a tension reflecting feelings of alienation, melancholy, and a quest for meaning in the contemporary world. (Aghdashloo,2008). The fish in his works are rendered with a rigid, stone-like quality, as if devoid of vitality. These dead or languid fish convey a sense of heaviness and stillness to the viewer, a sentiment further accentuated by the presence of elements such as bottles and fruits, which, with their gray hues, form part of the table setting.

II. Fish as Reflections of Identity and Separation: Mohasses' fish, while mirroring cultural identity and roots, also serve as symbols of estrangement and inertia. These artworks delve into aesthetic and symbolic concepts and critique the human condition by contrasting life and death, dynamism and stillness, addressing the modern individual's disconnection from their origins and natural environment (Nazari,2008).

III. Fish as Metaphors for the Artist's Life and Estrangement from Roots: The fish, distanced from the sea in Mohasses' pieces, symbolically alludes to the artist's own state. Separated from their natural ecosystem, these fish become lifeless and passive observers, reflecting the artist's detachment from his homeland's culture and roots. Just as the fish remain on the table, isolated from their vibrant sea, the artist has distanced himself from his initial sources of inspiration and lifeworld (Mohasses,2000).

IV. The Dichotomy of Life and Death in Mohasses' Artistic Space: The arrangement of fish, bottles, and fruits on the table creates a scene that appears static and heavy rather than lively and dynamic. The table becomes a symbol of separation from natural life and the authentic ecosystem, where the elements upon it, akin to inanimate objects, merely observe. The use of gray and matte colors reinforces this atmosphere of heaviness and stillness. In this context, nothing is

entirely alive or vibrant; instead, everything evokes a sense of suspension and stasis. Living fish within a still life serves as metaphors for the persistence of life amidst stillness, while dead fish signify a rupture from life and detachment from the natural environment (Dabiri,2010).



Image 8.2 *Fish and Bottle*, Oil on Fiber, 70×100 cm, Mohasses,1969

8.16. An Interpretation of the Dual Theme of Life and Death in Mohasses' Fish Depictions

Upon initial observation, Bahman Mohasses' fish illustrations may present an intriguing paradox; despite being situated in static and inanimate settings, the fish appear alive and observant. This distinctive portrayal accentuates the contrast between life and death. A prominent feature in Mohasses' oeuvre is the theme of life and death, which is evidently manifested in his works. In this context, the fish holds a unique and significant position,

serving as a key element in establishing this duality. Fish depicted alongside objects such as bottles, apples, or other inanimate items convey a hidden vitality through their expressions and gazes. This juxtaposition between the dynamism of the fish and the stillness of other elements invites the audience to contemplate the boundary between life and death. Placing living fish beside lifeless objects creates a conceptual contrast that challenges not only the physical state of the items but also explores the relationship between motion and stillness, life and death, within a symbolic space.

8.17. Aesthetic Analysis: Form and Color Serving Meaning

In works like "Dead Fish," which portray a lifeless fish on the shore, the symbolic nature of the fish as an emblem of life is contrasted with its deceased state. This piece challenges the viewer's interpretation, prompting a reevaluation of the meanings of life and death. Mohasses often employs neutral tones, such as gray, in his still-life compositions, enhancing the sense of heaviness and immobility. The simplistic and unadorned forms of the fish exhibit a sense of liberation and authenticity. This minimalist design encourages the audience to focus more intently on the underlying meaning and concept. These works not only reflect the artist's intellectual engagement with the concepts of life and death but also provide the viewer with an opportunity to reconsider these themes through visual elements. This motif, as a central aspect of Mohasses' art, reinforces his position in representing philosophical and symbolic concepts.



Image 8.3 *Dead fish*, 70×100 cm, Mohasses, 1968

8.18. Non-Indigenous Symbolism: The Minotaur

In Mohasses' works titled "Minotaur," traces of Iranian culture are absent, except in one exceptional instance: the flute-playing man. If we accept that the modern world creates its own myths and transforms ancient ones into new forms, this approach can be observed in Mohasses' works, especially his sculptures. Although he references past symbols and myths, he creates his own symbols with a unique and distinctive expression (Sattari,2006). Mohasses' works, with a critical approach, reflect a blend of respect for tradition and boldness in innovation. This perspective adds depth and complexity to his creations, turning them into new narratives in the reinterpretation of ancient myths (Crispoletti,2006).

The characteristics of "Minotaur," in Mohasses' works include:

I. Form and Shape of the Minotaur: Some of Mohasses' works, created under the name "Minotaur," are notable for their visual expression and form. These pieces are presented in both sculpture and painting formats.

II. Color and Texture of the Minotaur: Mohasses is very selective and restrained in his color choices for his paintings. This limitation in coloring causes the figure to become immersed in the entirety of the canvas, drawing all attention to it. This method continues in his depictions of Minotaurs. By creating textures on the body of this human-bull hybrid against a flat and uniform background, he conveys a sense of violence. These textures, sometimes accompanied by touches of red, evoke the wounds on the body of this mythical creature.



Image 8.4 *The Dying Minotaur “Minotauro Morente”*, Mohassess, 1966

8.19. Semiotics of the Minotaur in Mohassess’ Works

Bahman Mohassess recontextualizes the classical Minotaur myth, transforming it into a contemporary framework to explore the complexities of modern humanity. His depictions often present solitary Minotaurs, embodying states of confusion, anger, and sorrow.

I. Contradiction Between Body and Head Form:

The juxtaposition of an animalistic head atop a human body symbolizes the internal struggle between reason and instinct inherent in modern individuals.

II. Reflection of Loneliness, Confusion, and Isolation:

Mohassess frequently situates his Minotaurs within empty or confined spaces, amplifying themes of solitude and alienation.

III. The Minotaur as an Emblem of Anxiety, Rage, and Helplessness:

The facial expressions and postures of Mohasses' Minotaurs vividly convey human emotions through this mythological figure. Three primary elements—anxiety, anger, and helplessness—are prominently featured in the form and structure of his figures.

Anxiety: Bent postures, wandering stances, and vacant gazes illustrate psychological turmoil, symbolizing the confusion faced by individuals in the intricate and incomprehensible modern world.

Anger: The use of sharp lines, coarse textures, and contrasting colors portrays suppressed rage, reflecting the tension between primal instincts and societal constraints.

Helplessness: The Minotaurs' heavy, fragmented, or passive bodies highlight a sense of weakness and isolation, indicating an inability to confront external circumstances.

8.20. The Minotaur as a Symbol of Contemporary Humanity

Mohasses elevates the Minotaur to represent modern individuals in conflict with their social and cultural environments. His Minotaurs mirror existential crises, internal contradictions, and the struggle to control one's destiny. These characteristics render Mohasses' Minotaur a visual metaphor for contemporary humans, who, in battling external limitations and internal crises, continually strive to discover their identity, yet often encounter feelings of defeat.

8.21. An Interpretation of the Dual Themes of Fear-Fearlessness and Seriousness-Comedy in Mohasses' Minotaurs

At first glance, Bahman Mohasses' depiction of the Minotaur presents an intriguing paradox. Traditionally, the Minotaur symbolizes power and instills fear as a dominant force. However, in his work titled "The Minotaur Frightens People for Goodness," Mohasses employs irony and satire. The title paradoxically refers to a creature that needs to frighten others for its survival, yet here, "goodness" assumes a different, perhaps even benign, meaning. This term, laden with historical and cultural connotations, reveals an internal contradiction: the Minotaur, a man-eating giant that terrifies people, but whose purpose in this context is not to harm, but to "do good."



Image 8.5 *The Minotaur Frightens People for Goodness*

Oil on canvas, 100 × 150 cm, Mohasses, 1966

This deconstruction of form, alongside the underlying meaning of the work, imparts a novel and multilayered significance to the Minotaur. In essence, through the interplay of form and meaning, Mohasses not only challenges conventional notions of power and fear but also redefines them, allowing the audience to critically reconsider the concept of authority. The themes of fear-fearlessness and seriousness-comedy are evident in this work (Pakbaz,2008). In this piece, Mohasses creates a blend of irony and mockery, a hallmark of his oeuvre. This fusion is observable both in the semantic and visual layers of the work. The title directly presents a conceptual contradiction. "Minotaur" symbolizes terror and violence, whereas "goodness" carries a positive connotation. Mohasses leverages this dichotomy to satirically challenge the concept of power, which has historically been intertwined with fearmongering (Abazi,2001).

A Minotaur that "frightens for goodness" embodies regimes that claim benevolence yet employ intimidation and coercion as their tools. Through exaggerated forms, coarse textures, and the Minotaur's distinctive postures, Mohasses delivers a visual satire of power and terror. These exaggerations not only emphasize Minotaur's violence and grandeur but also, by breaking visual clichés, transform it into a creature that is simultaneously ridiculous and tragic.

8.22. Cultural Semiotics of Still Life



Image 8.6 *Still life*, oil on canvas, 65 × 99.5 cm, Mohasses, 1969

Mohasses' works, particularly his still-life paintings, serve as a platform for displaying cultural symbols derived from two primary sources: the artist's indigenous culture and the cultural texts of other civilizations. The interplay of these two categories of symbols renders Mohasses' works multilayered and thought-provoking, inviting the audience to diverse interpretations.

8.23. Semiotics of Still Life in Mohasses' Works

8.23.1. Signs Related to Indigenous Culture

A prominent cultural element in Bahman Mohasses' works is the fish. The fish depicted in his paintings directly reference the artist's birthplace in northern Iran, a region known for its proximity to the sea and abundance of fish. In these artworks, the fish's shape, form, and color evoke the smoked fish characteristic of northern Iran, symbolizing the daily life and cultural heritage of the area. The inclusion of this natural element not only recalls environmental memories but also demonstrates the artist's deep connection to his cultural roots. Beyond fish, the use of pomegranates or Termeh patterns (a type of traditional Iranian fabric used as a base for objects) serves as additional examples of indigenous semiotics. In Iranian culture, the pomegranate symbolizes fertility, life, and spirituality, while Termeh motifs, with their long-standing history in Iranian handicrafts, reflect the nation's cultural identity (Zeimaran, 2003).

8.23.2. Signs Related to Global Cultural Texts

In his works, Mohasses not only references indigenous culture but also incorporates signs and concepts from other cultures. One such reference is the term "still life," which harks back to the painting traditions of the Baroque period in Northern Europe. In Baroque paintings, still life often included hunted animals, vessels, fruits, and other objects depicted on tables. These paintings not only showcased the technical skills of the artists but also conceptually alluded to the passage of time, the decay of life, and the dynamic cycle of death and life. In these compositions, an artistic contrast between fresh, ripe fruits and dead animals highlighted the metaphorical presence of death within life. By drawing from this artistic tradition in his paintings, Mohasses creates a link between global cultures and Iran's artistic heritage. He utilizes this tradition to convey concepts such as life's impermanence and the paradox between life and death.

8.23.3. Deeper Layers of Meaning

In Mohasses' works, the combination of these two categories of signs (indigenous and global) leads to the creation of new layers of meaning. On one hand, Iranian viewers can connect with indigenous symbols like fish, pomegranates, and Termeh patterns, guiding them toward understanding the artist's cultural background. On the other hand, global

symbols such as still life refer the audience to European artistic traditions, allowing for interpretations beyond geographical boundaries (Crispoletti,2003).



Image 8.7 *Still life*, oil on canvas, 50 × 70 cm, Mohasses,1969

8.23.4. The Link Between Indigenous and Global Culture

By blending symbols from indigenous culture with global codes, Mohasses transforms his art into a platform for cultural dialogue. He demonstrates how art can simultaneously reflect individual and regional identity while also engaging in global history and art. The cultural semiotics in Mohasses' works exemplify art's ability to establish connections between cultures and civilizations. Through the intelligent use of indigenous and global symbols, he creates multilayered works that not only offer aesthetic representation but also provide a foundation for interpreting deeper concepts such as death, life, identity, and time (Selvaji,2010).

8.24. Semiotics of the Minotaur in Mohasses' Works



Image 8.8 *Minotaur*, oil on canvas, 50 × 70 cm, Mohasses, 1966

Bahman Mohasses' Minotaur representations serve as symbolic bridges between global myths and ancient Iranian cultural beliefs. Viewing these works subconsciously connects the audience to the sanctity of mythological beings in ancient Iranian civilizations. This cultural association not only enriches the interpretative depth of the artworks but also offers viewers the possibility of multilayered interpretations.

8.24.1 The Minotaur's Connection to Ancient Iranian Beliefs

In Mohasses' works, the Minotaur transcends its geographical origins, intertwining with ancient Iranian beliefs. Notably, in ancient Iranian civilizations, composite beings (half-human, half-animal) were revered in visual arts and literature. This connection is

particularly evident in the sculptures of ancient Iran and the Marlik civilization, where such composite figures symbolized power, protection, and spirituality. This association elevates Mohasses' Minotaurs beyond mere representations of a Greek myth, transforming them into platforms that reflect deeper cultural beliefs.

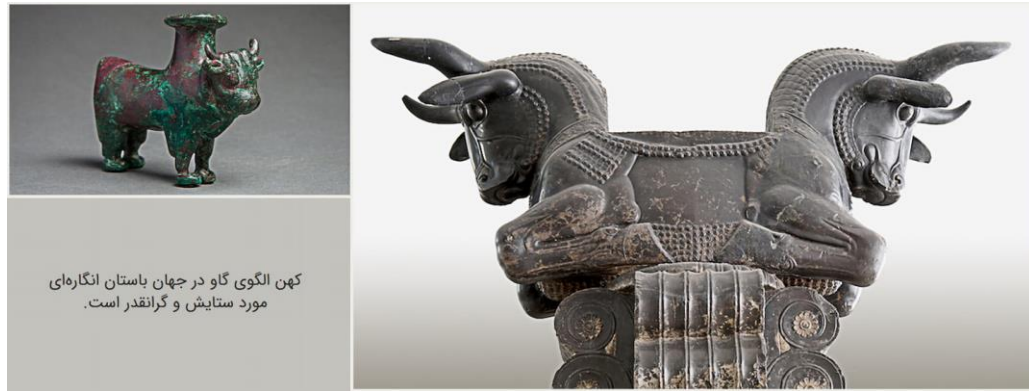


Image 8.9 *Column heads of two cows from the Apadana of the palace of Darius and Xerxes. c. 520-465 BC, Achaemenid period*

8.24.2. The Minotaur and the Concept of the "Golden Bull" in the Shahnameh

The Minotaur's link to ancient Iranian culture is also mirrored in Persian literary texts. In the Shahnameh, a symbolic entity known as the "Golden Bull" holds a sacred and esteemed position. This mythological being, representing fertility, power, and protection, occupies a special place in ancient Iranian heroic culture. Depictions of this creature in the Shahnameh and other ancient texts often present it as a combination of a human body and a bull's head.

Even in martial artifacts, such as the helmets of Iranian champions, symbols of this entity were depicted, indicating its mythological and symbolic grandeur. Such representations emphasized the protective capabilities and absolute power of these beings (Dabiri, 1966).



Image 8.10 *Fereydoun and the Cow*, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, 1568



Image 8.11 *Rostam and Sohrab*, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, 1568

8.25. Intercultural Dialogue in Mohasses' Art

Drawing inspiration from the Minotaur, rooted in Greek mythology, and its subconscious connection to Iranian beliefs, Mohasses has created art that exemplifies intercultural dialogue. This artistic approach facilitates the audience's experience and broadens their cultural perspective. In Mohasses' Minotaurs, global myths merge with symbols from ancient Iranian civilization, crafting new layers of meaning (Shairi, 2014).

8.26. Impact of Multilayered Meanings on the Audience

This cultural and symbolic fusion renders Mohasses' Minotaurs as multilayered works, open to diverse contemplations. From a global mythological perspective, the Minotaur symbolizes power and terror in Greek myths. From an Iranian cultural viewpoint, composite beings like the "Golden Bull" were symbols of sanctity, protection, and power. In contemporary art, this amalgamation reflects the anxiety, anger, and helplessness of modern humans confronting limitations and internal conflicts (Shairi, 2004).

Mohasses' Minotaurs transcend the representation of a Greek myth, showcasing art's ability to connect various cultures and meanings. By blending global myths with symbols from ancient Iranian culture, these works create new meanings relevant to the contemporary world, providing a platform to reflect on concepts such as power, wandering, and internal struggle.

8.27. The Importance of Understanding Mohasses' Works

Comprehending the various layers of meaning in Bahman Mohasses' artworks can be challenging due to the complexity of his symbols and his departure from traditional structures. However, these very characteristics contribute to the profound depth and impact of his creations. Analyzing Mohasses' symbols and signs enables a better understanding of how he engaged with the cultural and social concepts of his time. Beyond their artistic expression, these works reflect human and historical concerns (Mahjubi, 2008).

What distinguishes Mohasses' works is not only his use of Iranian symbols and his unique artistic language but also specific features such as his mode of artistic expression and distinctive forms. His works, while employing a modern and contemporary language,

maintain a deep connection with Iran's history and culture. This unique artistic language is accessible to both Iranian and international audiences, facilitating the appreciation of his works across diverse cultures (Aghdashloo,2013).

Although Mohasses utilizes complex Iranian symbols, his forms and structures are often simple and direct. This simplicity allows his works to be easily comprehended while still conveying profound meaning.

8.28. Semiotic Analysis of Mohasses' Works

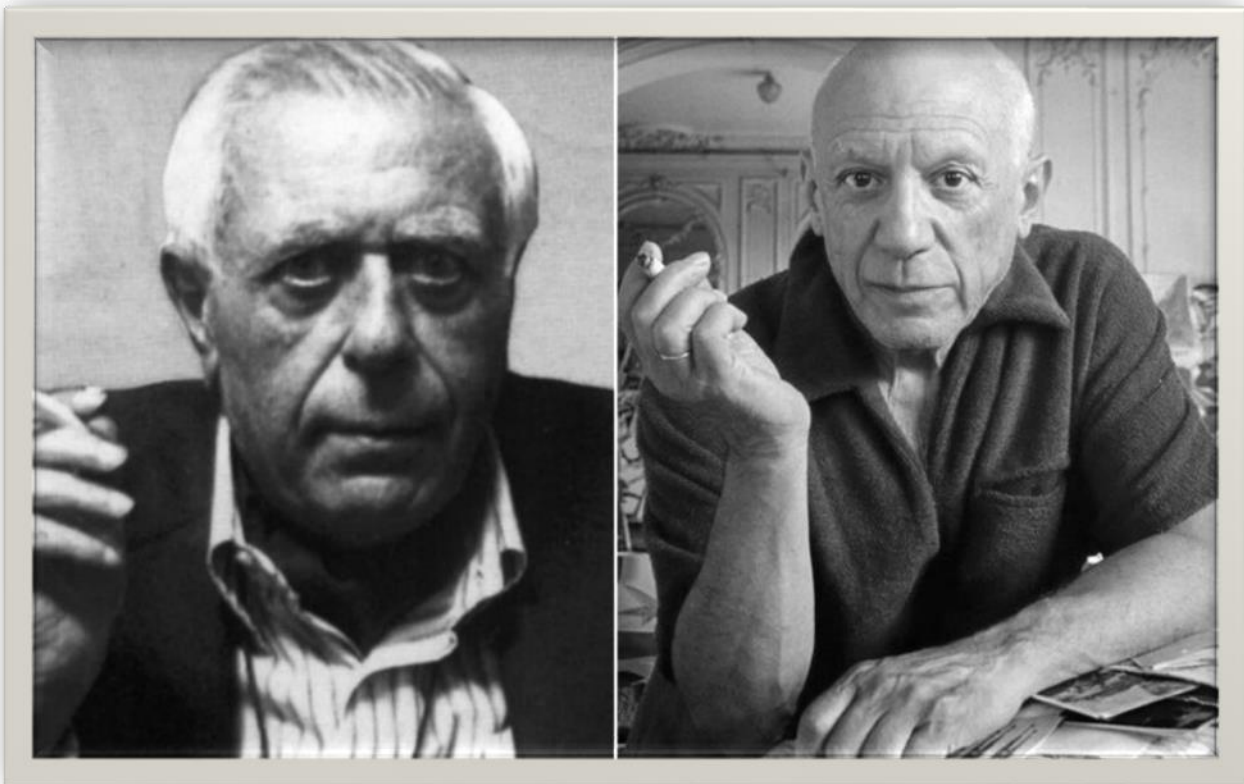
Bahman Mohasses presents a remarkable depiction of this world; everything—from fish to birds, bottles, and humans in his works—embodies a singular characteristic, all in a state of decay and decomposition. The narrator in the film "The Eye That Hears" posits that: "If his creatures have turned gray, it might be due to the creator's tumultuous life, and perhaps this is why his works are so complex, elongated, and bent. It seems that the preoccupation evident in all Mohasses' works is death. But with a decorative seriousness in his paintings, he blames the times (Farughi,1967).

Viewing his works recalls Aristotle's notion that: 'Seriousness means an action that is appropriately manifested in tragedy.' Although, from Aristotle's perspective, the action should have moral content, this does not imply a moral message, and this is precisely what is evident in Mohasses' works. For instance, in the painting 'The Fall of Icarus,' Icarus's gaze is directed towards a man and woman sinning on the shore. The flat space, both on the ground and in the sky, is depicted using two colors. Icarus, with an open mouth, faces the sin occurring on the ground (Mojabi,2010). However, the painter has portrayed his facial expression in such a way that it seems he is paying for human sin. Here, Mohasses does not seek to generate a moral meaning in the viewer, but the sharpness and bold display of violence and sin, along with the nakedness of color and a kind of sandy texture, characteristic of Mohasses' works, give the work a unique appearance; such that the audience, in the dialectic between the creator's representation and the mythological story, arrives at the painting's direct yet enigmatic expression. He begins and ends with tragedy. None of his works exhibit even a hint of humor, hope, or decoration. A tragic seriousness that aligns with his bitter personality.

Mohasses' paintings and sculptures are so distinctive that they sometimes lead to the creation of a new entity, indicating his pioneering role in this field. It can be stated that Mohasses' works reflect his favored colors and forms in his avant-garde art. The abstract signs and forms in Mohasses' paintings and sculptures (human figures, animals, inanimate objects, or entirely abstract forms) fall into various categories. Studies have shown that Bahman Mohasses' abstract forms predominantly reference human figures, fish, birds, and historical and social subjects.

Chapter IX

Comparative analysis of the works of Bahman Mohasses and Pablo Picasso based on similarities



9.1. Introduction

The comparative study of artists has long been the basis for the analysis of various aspects of their lives. Specialists in various fields, including history and philosophy of art, psychology, culture and literature, sociology and even political science, each of them has sought to understand unknown aspects in them with articles on the works, styles, approaches and thoughts of artists. In the meantime, the comparative study of artists of the same era or born in different historical periods, those who were born or lived in the same geography and those who were from different regions of the world, those who were in contact with each other or inspired each other. And cases like this, each of them has opened a window to a better understanding of their works and achievements; Or at least they have led to the derivation of new funds in the studied area.

In the analysis of modernist Iranian artists who have made a tremendous impact on Iranian contemporary art, Bahman Mohasses is an undeniable figure. A unique personality with remarkable works whose dignity becomes more apparent as time goes by. To know Bahman Mohasses and of course the works he created, the first thing that should be kept in mind is that he took a very serious influence from Picasso's personality and works, and this issue is well evident in all his works. Both when he wants to choose his subjects and, in the behavior, he does with shape and form. In addition, "Picasso" is considered the most popular artistic personality of Mohasses, and he used to express this fascination. It has been narrated about Mohasses that even in his portrait pose, he was holding a cigarette in his hand with the attitude of Picasso, and he said that no one has seen a photo of Picasso in which he is not holding a cigarette. For him, Picasso is an artisan, that is, someone who has mastered his work. From his point of view, a shoe should not only be beautiful, but it must also be functional. He considers a statue or a painting in the same way. This view also extends to literature, and a writer should have a wide vocabulary and different synonyms instead of constantly using the simplest word that comes to his mind, a skeleton to the writing. He calls this perception artisanal and criticizes literature that lacks artistic elegance and complexity. In an artistic interpretation, it says that if an artist paints with a red pencil without using other colors,

the viewer should feel that this red (even if it is pure) is the red chosen by the painter, and this interpretation is called artisan. Based on the specific attitude of the florist who has the skill to tie a bouquet beautifully, he is an artisan. The buyer only wants a bouquet, but he knows how to tie it beautifully. This is a skill, being an artisan. The authors of this research had previously done a comparative study of the personality similarities of these two artists (Goodarzparvari, 2021). This chapter tries to infer and analyze their similarities by examining the different periods of work of Picasso and Mohasses, analyzing the form and content elements and conceptual reading of the works of these two artists with a comparative perspective.

9.2. Picasso's Influence on Iranian Art

Picasso is known as an ultimate artist and an ideal combination of political dedication and formalist excellence in Iran. Hence, it seemed only natural that some Iranian artists e.g. Jalil Ziapour have been interested in the cubism style (for instance, he has designed the logo for an art association in a Cubist style)⁷. In the eyes of many Persian contemporary artists Cubism has been known as the most significant manifestation of avant-gardism. Being inspired by Picasso, some painters like Ziapour had already insisted that painting be independent from realistic or figurative representations, throwing their weight behind formalism. This new generation Iranian painters dared to go against both the Iranian Communists, with their social approach to art, and those who, although formally modernist, preferred to preserve some connection with the past (Behpoor, 2014).

A comparative study has focused on Picasso and Chanel as the most significant contemporary figures in Modern art and fashion. The outcome of this study reveals that they have both continued to reign over their respective genres, bringing about some of the most fundamental changes. They both have radically responded to the vision and needs of their times, producing work that was not only individual to themselves but answered many ubiquitous questions within their society through the media of art and fashion. Picasso and Chanel have both pursued widespread success, rather than being satisfied with personal or relatively exclusive appreciation. They both included aspects of their contemporaneous culture and personal occurrences in their work. The research concludes

⁷ The Fighting Cock

that in the past century, when artists and fashion designers' work have traversed, many of the commonalities in the approaches of Chanel and Picasso may be present. Parallel intersections in visual works, between artists and fashion designers, may happen accidentally but in the case of Picasso and Chanel, their personal affinities engendered this similitude, in their procedures and in their observable works (Froster, 2012).

Studying the concepts of styles and comparing the style, conceptual, and functional features contemporary Persian art (especially painting and architecture) shows that at the beginning introduction of modernity in contemporary Iranian art, the role of Pahlavi politics and government, popular movements of that period and Westernism has led to the formation of academic painting and Pseudo modern Iranian architecture. The trend of modernity and the conflict between tradition and modernity in contemporary Iran, both in painting and architecture, led to the formation of styles that, of course, differ in terms of time (Sattari, 2021).

While the research works in this domain have mostly focused on Picasso as the most inspiring artist of the previous century, those discussions about Mohasses has been devoted to the people, he has been inspired by. One of the artists who is connected to Mohasses is Marino Marini. In studying Mohasses' work, a specific interest in Marini is observed, which seems to be related to Marini's dialectical approach to time and the sculptural qualities of figuration versus abstraction. While Mohasses shared also thematic interests with Marini, his work reflects his nonconformity even with relation to Marini himself. Mohasses opposed the totalities of his references, which can be read as a push against totalitarianism itself – its insistence that everyone be the same for purposes of control (Mirzaei, 2021).

9.3. Form elements in the works of Picasso and Mohasses

9.3.1. Experience in different genres

Picasso's works can be divided into different periods, each period showing different influences and personal interests. Picasso gradually changed his painting style during his career, first he painted portraits and landscapes close to realism in his youth. Then, at the beginning of the 20th century, he entered a period of his life that was called the blue period, in which he depicted poverty. Picasso's early works are full of suffering and full

of gray and blue colors. From April 1904, he went to France, where he became famous for his impressionist works. After a short stay in France, changing his views and connections, he used the basic colors of red and pink. This period is called the pink period of Picasso. Pink works have their own romance, purity and intimacy. After that, his cubist works have form and texture (Hazavei, 2018) By deliberately abandoning traditional styles in 1907, Picasso created the era that resulted in modern painting as we know it today, with the creation of "The Maids of Avignon", painted with a firm and steady step. He captured the pulse of women by drawing this painting (Goamon, 1980).

The painting of the Maidens of Avignon can be considered a gateway to Cubism; An abstract style that limited the geometric style of the subjects. Until the middle of the second decade of the 20th century, Picasso collaged by pasting oil cloths, pieces of newspaper and other materials on the surfaces of his paintings. An innovative style, together with an increased emphasis on color, pushed his paintings from analytical cubism to composite cubism. Picasso painted in different forms of cubism and experienced the style of surrealism (surrealism) and in the early 1930s, he entered his classic period (which is usually referred to as the white period). In this period, his works have a sculpture-like state and tender emotions are evident in them. During his surrealist career, Picasso always kept his distance from the surrealists. Picasso and the surrealist artists of the world agreed on the fundamental principles, meaning that art can show what nature and reason cannot express, but there are many fundamental differences between Picasso and the surrealists: According to them, Picasso is very dependent on the outside world and the theme and is very far from the world of illusions and dreams (Subirana, 1980).

Table 9.1. Work periods of Picasso

Work period	Year	Naming Reason(s)	Specifications and Features	Sample work
The blue	1901-1904	The name "blue period" was given to his paintings of this period because blue is much more visible than other colors in the works of this period.	In this course, he mostly drew the faces of acrobats, tightrope walkers, beggars, and disabled people. In the blue period, he mostly used dark colors in his paintings. Most of the works of the blue period show the sad feelings of life or at least express Picasso's sensitivity to anxiety and poverty. These works show a kind of "popular poverty".	The old guitarist
The rose	1904-1906	Picasso met Fernando Olivier in 1904, who later became his wife. This familiarity had a deep impact on the artist and created a more optimistic view of the world in Picasso's soul and led to the beginning of the "Pink Period".	People working in the circus, circus actors (clowns, acrobats, and impersonators) are the main subjects in Picasso's works. Picasso's works of this period are lost in warm colors. Along with pink color, orange and red colors create an atmosphere of joy and happiness that is completely different from the atmosphere of his blue period paintings.	Family of Saltimbanques
The African art and primitiveness	1907-1909	Picasso created one of his best and most controversial works, The Maids of Avignon, during his early African art period. Picasso's work entered a new phase, which showed the	In this period, he was inspired by African artworks with their straight lines and sharp angles. Henri Matisse's African mask also had an influence on Picasso, which is reflected in his works.	The Maidens of Avignon (in French: Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O))

		influence of the art of Greece, the Iberian Peninsula and Africa on him.		
Analytical cubism	1909-1912	Picasso and the French painter Georges Braque, influenced by the French Impressionism format, used a new style in painting landscapes, which, according to several critics, consists of small cubes. This style was called cubism	The painting of this period included a range of earthy colors such as colors with a brown tone. The works depict deconstructive objects with complex geometric forms.	Fernande with a black Montilla
The mixed cubism	1912-1919	Picasso's works continued in the style of cubism, but the artist introduced a new form of art, namely collage, to the audience.	Picasso used the form of the human body in many of his paintings of this period, such as Girl with a Mandolin or My Beauty. Some of his friends left Paris to fight in World War I, but he remained in his studio during the war years.	A girl with a mandolin
The neoclassicism and surrealism	1919-1929	After Picasso's first visit to Italy and influenced by the consequences of the First World War, a form of recovery can be seen in the works of this artist. His neoclassical works have a striking contrast with his cubist style	Due to the flourishing of the French Surrealism movement in the mid-1920s, Picasso resumed his intense interest in primitive art in his surreal paintings such as Three Dancers.	Three dancers

paintings.

The last	1940-1973	During World War II, Picasso remained in German-occupied Paris and continued to create his works of art.	At this time, he was sometimes a poet. In total, he created more than 300 works between 1939 and 1959. Even from this period, he has left two plays. During this period, he focused on sculpture and participated in an international exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1961, at the age of 79, he married 27-year-old Jacqueline, and this woman has been one of his greatest professional inspirations. Picasso painted more than 70 portraits of her during the last 17 years of her life.	Portrait of Jacqueline
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Table 9.2. Sample works from different work periods of Picasso



The old guitarist



Family of Saltimbanques



The Maidens of Avignon



Fernande with a black
Montilla



A girl with a
mandolin



Three dancers



Portrait of Jacqueline

Mohasses started painting at the age of fifteen and learned it from Habib Mohammadi who studied in Russia. Of course, he also has a short history of studying art with Jalil Ziapour. He always had a strange pull for expressionism in an inflexible and very violent way. Of course, this approach is not based on knowledge but based on natural and instinctive desire. One or two works from that era that are kept in Rome are a kind of expressionist realism. He has also worked in abstract art. But with a surreal background. According to himself: he considers it a surrealism that wanted to become abstract. It should be remembered that this group of his works were not very valuable from the point of view of technique, but they had content. By passing this period, a kind of stylized figurativeism emerges in Mohasses. A clear example is the fish painting, which was one of the best works of this period. After 1957, the motif of fish (oval shape) became a motif for a kind of creation style and period that was spatial abstract. In this range of works, the elements and objects were moving in the space in an exciting and uproarious manner, and its structure and shapes had a circular form, and the space of the painting was a galactic space. Recognized. For example, the entire surface of the board was full of water waves, and any other sign was scattered on the waves. After this period, Mohasses embodies an era, according to the critics, neither painting nor plastic would be satisfying, and they even called him having a negative balance attitude towards painting. He then enters a space of time that one critic calls "material memory" and sees him "in search of lost time". The period in which painting was a combination of plastic was called design, which has its roots in the era of negative balance. After this period, the atmosphere of expressionism opens to his works, and the foundation of his continued work in Rome was this expressionism atmosphere, which turned into a kind of luminous atmosphere. "Phi Phi is howling with happiness" can be called one of the most significant achievements of this period. In the last years of his life, he also worked in collage, which is a very amazing period. At this point, he chooses the most direct form of indirect artistic expression, and the obvious example of that is "grotesque", where everything is absurd, despicable, stupid, ugly, and awkward. At this point, Bahman works masterfully but impatiently, as if collages are a pleasant pastime for him. But they are among the high points of his artistic career. His works are extremely humiliating and insulting, as if he is touching or insulting the world he is portraying.

Table 9.3. Work periods of Bahman Mohasses

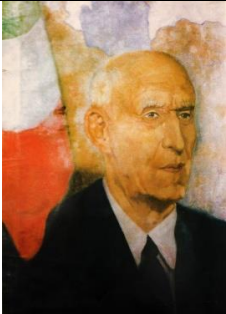
Work period	Year	Naming Reason(s)	Specifications and Features	Sample work
Habib Mohammadi workshop	Around 1935	The works of this period were in the Russian realism style of Habib Mohammadi and were influenced by the intellectual atmosphere ruling Rasht at that time.	The works of this period are mostly an attempt to learn the principles of painting and generally lack specific artistic or ideological features. Most of these works include subjects such as still life, landscape, and portrait. The format of these works is signed with the name "Bahman Mohassesi".	Views of the nature of northern Iran and still life
Jalil Ziapour	1948-1954	Associating with prominent cultural figures and activists in this field, along with learning about contemporary art trends and learning more about them, opened a new chapter in Jalil Ziapour's work life and	Compared to previous works, the subjects have more psychological understanding. An increase in technical skills has been seen. Realist works are done with more detail, such as Mohammad Mosaddegh 's portrait. The artist's searches in the field of modern art led to gaining experience in modern styles. Another part of his works are his abstract experiences.	Portrait of Mossadegh

		personality.		
Rome meeting hall exhibition	1954	Mohasses traveled to Europe in 1333 and settled in Italy and studied art with Ferruccio Frazzi at the Academy of Art in Rome.	A short explanation about one of the artist's exhibitions in Italy in one of Iran's newspapers of that time, as well as the few pictures left behind, along with the artist's brief explanation in this regard, is one of the most important information available about the paintings of this era. He considered the works of this era to be an extension of the previous work period and the continuation of specific research. This part of the artist's life includes a special period of his career. The still lifes of this period show some differences compared to the previous works of the artist. The works of this period have more character and individuality.	inanimate nature
Roam in the abstract	1955-1964	A new chapter begins in Mohasses' career, which is based on abstract experiences.	Space abstractions that evoke the underwater world at the same time. This process, with changes, led to works such as the works of the second and third Biennale of Tehran, and after that, they ended with the paintings of the exhibition "Iranian Painters Educated in Italy". Many of these works can be considered inspired by abstract expressionism and artists such as Jackson Pollock. He saw signs of the Italian painters of that time (especially the painters of the 1950s) in the way of coloring and specific techniques.	Spatial counterpoint
Phi Phi	1964-1966	Allocating the works of	The significant difference between the artist's before and after works	Phi Phi howls

howls with joy		an exhibition to a specific period in the specific artistic career applies to the "Iran" hall exhibition.	with the works of this exhibition. The works of this period have high individuality and show off an individual look. The creation of works of this kind has lasted for some time and is not limited only to the said exhibition. This exhibition set the stage for the greater fame of Mohasses in Iran. In Iran, the artistic community reacts to the artist's work and personality. The first serious and conscious efforts to isolate the issue are formed in this period. The subjectification of the human body and the specific personal interpretation of it, along with deforming the human face and body, is one of these cases. Biting humor and a critical look are included in the works of Mohasses. The attempt to use texture to express the desired feeling in his works is intensified. Many specific personal characteristics and behaviors are also more apparent from this point of time.	with joy
Peak silence	in 1966-19-1976	We are witnessing the formation of the most famous and successful work period. In this period, in addition to	During this period, he started to create his works with different subjects, which in a general division include fish, birds, mythological creatures, still life, human beings distorted in machine life or apocalyptic spaces and some other subjects. Despite the high quality of the works of this era and his reputation, we see few exhibitions of him.	Peak silence in

		painting, he also sculpts.		
Ground subjects	1976-1993	Mohasses gradually distanced himself from the subjects of the previous period and his subjects once again set foot on the ground with a look like the past.	Subjects such as tourists and women of the rich class who spend their money badly can be seen in the works of Mohasses. Works inspired by the bitter events of their time, such as the Halabja incident, the Persian Gulf War, and the like, are among the most common of these cases. Some of these works show the great longing of the artist for the geography of his hometown. The biting humor of many of them partially remember the fifth period of the artist's work of the "Phi Phi" series. In this era, the colors have become more diverse and there is no need to talk about pus colors and special textures anymore. In the last years of the artist's life and due to various reasons, such as illness, we see his collages. These works are not on par with their predecessors in terms of quality, some of them are sometimes close to stereotypes. According to the published works of the artist, the collection of his last sculptures was created around 1993. The above factors along with his illness in the last years of his life prevented him from creating other sculptures.	Ground subjects

Table 9.4. Sample works from different work periods of Mohasses

 Still life	 Portrait of Dr Mosaddegh	 inanimate nature	 Spatial counterpoint
 Phi Phi howls with joy	 Peak in silence	 Ground subjects	

9.4. Technique

Picasso is an artist who has worked with all different art media: from oil painting to drawing, sculpture, graphics, ceramics, and from there working with tools such as gouache, pastel, colored pencil; and creating lithographs, wood works, plaster and wood figures, bronze sculptures, compositions of paper, cloth and glue; structures of iron and wire, wood or metal sheets; pictures; and designs for costumes, curtains before and after the stage of theater and ballet; and finally poetry and playwriting (Buchheim, 1959).

The technique of the work period has changed so much that it has changed from the spaces of expressionism, which is close to abstract, to a form that is almost figurative. Since he considers all the works to be his own, he does not have the fear of being an element like many artists. Choose an exclusive (like blue color) and keep it until death to be the signature of his work. He considers the origin of all this dispersion from his superior intelligence. In determining the boundaries of periods, he believes only in the sense of how to express, blue color is more expressive, and the labyrinths of expression spaces are more understandable. Sometimes red may be more suitable. This depends on the mental state of the artist and happens many times in everyday life. Specifically, these periodic differences are chain rings.

9.5. Careful observation

Picasso had a keen sense of observation and painted based on his memory. In fact, the presence of a static model in front of his eyes was somehow hindering his creativity. He wanted to paint freely. It is rare for someone to sit in front of Picasso and become an object. It worked directly from the model. He visited her for a whole summer to paint Minty and then painted her from his memory. The result was exactly what Minty wanted and couldn't find in the nineteen times she sat down to be painted. People know Gertrude Stein more from Picasso's paintings than from her photographs. He felt an inner connection to painting, but he did not want to paint only stereotypes and models.

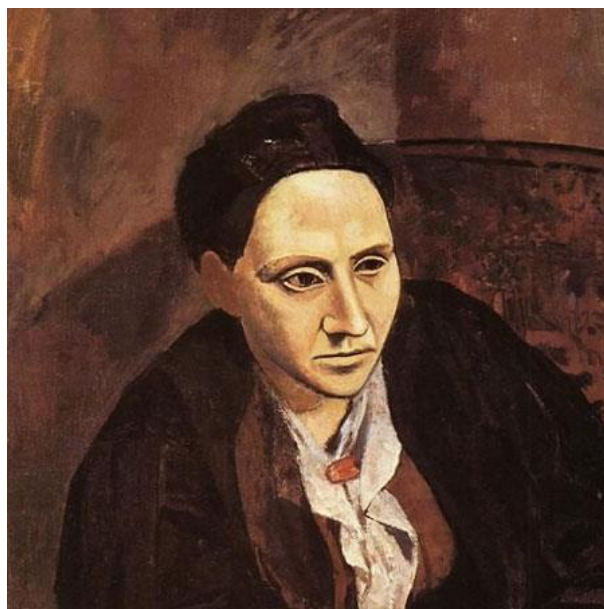


Image 9.1 *Portrait of Gertrude Stan* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York),

81.3 x 99.6 cm, 1906

Mohasses believed that he was a historical character, and this was a key statement about his character that he could develop, for a historical character any concrete story or any staging could be done. Mohasses is an artist who uses metaphors and symbols well, and the stories include his own destruction and the destruction of his works by others. All these stories have in common the removal of works. Mohasses can be called the leading artist of his era, and the spirit of his time can be seen in his works. Mohasses is the only Iranian artist who can be called a global and transnational artist. A progressive and passionate artist, he looked at the world around him from another point of view, and his surroundings appeared in a melted metamorphosis. Mohasses looked much further. He saw distant horizons. The title of the artist, his receiver, was stronger than the terrible events.

9.6. Content elements in the works of Picasso and Mohasses

9.6.1. Common colors

Picasso's paintings in his teenage years mostly consisted of green and blue colors, which gave the work a sad and uncomfortable atmosphere. Most of the paintings painted in this period show poor people, drunkards, and beggars. The suicide of a friend had a deep

impact on the young Pablo, and the blue period was formed under such conditions. He was a period of severe depression in which all his paintings were drawn around the concept of sadness, mostly with dark colors and in the form of sadness. Blue color was an inseparable element of his works. (McNeese, 2006).

The variety of colors in Mohasses' works is very limited and in blue, blue and gray materials. The colors have a certain purity and richness in their small range. The artist's desire to create order in the canvas has given the works a heavy and dynamic atmosphere.



Image 9.2 *Life*, Picasso, 1903, Cleveland Museum of Art (right); *Untitled*, Mohasses, 1975 (left)

9.6.2. Common themes in the works

Both Picasso and Mohasses look at the world and man with modern thought, the subjects of many of their paintings and sculptures include strange creatures such as mythical minotaur and nightmarish beasts wandering in the barren plains of despair. Birds and still life are also visible in the works of both.

I. people

Picasso depicts man as a creature with misplaced limbs, women's faces with two noses and three eyes, the image of a stallion in the grip of unbridled anger, with a crooked body and rake-like horns. Sometimes a collection of pictures and paintings with Their real form is not classical, they are introduced under the name of "Picasso". As an artist, Picasso drew strange and incomprehensible pictures. In the works of Bahman Mohasses, man has a central role. An undisguised, sometimes winning language that defines loneliness, mortality, and human's encounter with the emptiness of his contemporary man. The way of dealing with the sometimes-complex forms and the division of the human being that we encounter in the figures. A person who is connected to his history and in his material, weight unconsciously entertains himself in games that are made by him (Pouyan, 2013).

A creature that is often depicted with a defect in its limbs and body (or clumsy, or without eyes and face). A kind of powerful expressionist expression can be seen in his works. No modern Iranian artist has ever created such a person in these dimensions.



Image 9.3 *Sitting woman*, Picasso, 1939 (left); *Personaggio I*, Mohasses, 1968 (right)

"Being headless" can be seen in Mohasses works, and his works include people who have "small heads and fat bodies". Destroyed shows, he still maintains that configuration and muscular structure in his paintings and sculptures. His figures are generally not faithful representations of physical dimensions and proportions. His emphasis on the physical aspects of the body is visible in the nakedness of the organs and the rough coloring of the paintings and the cold and hard materials of the sculptures.

There is another strain in Mohasses' work: his figures. In front of these figures, we do not get involved in their identity; What they represent or admit. We feel these while watching them. Whether they are men or women, we put ourselves in the place of these characters. Mentality and psyche, or in other words the reality of its models, crystallizes in the "hands" of the figures. Compassion and greed, pain and pleasure of living and touching, seeking, and owning it. An artist whose hands and arms are the main characteristics of the figures in his paintings and sculptures has made intelligence his guide. In private portraits, hands and arms reveal almost everything (Selvaji, 2010).

II- Archetypes of sculpture

Mohasses is called the inheritor of archetypes of sculpture; A legacy left over from ancient civilizations and known as "Gods". "Picasso" says: "A man of an ancient civilizations close to Greece, wanted to make a statue, he made a god." He refers to small idols and fertility goddesses as well as gods related to ancient civilizations. These subtleties were a great reference and source of inspiration for Mohasses in making his sculptures, just as Picasso and many other Western artists used them in their works; The most obvious of them is the form of "cowman" (Minotaur), which is a combination of a cow's head and a human body. This style of sculpture can also be found in Iran and the ancient Marlik civilization that existed before the Aryans. These mythical and legendary creatures are seen many times in the works of Mohasses. He is familiar with these old patterns and sees them in the works of great artists such as Picasso. In one of his etudes of the "Royal Family" statue, a boy can be seen holding a goat in his hands, and this form of work can also be seen in Picasso's works.



Image 9.4 *The royal family*, Mohasses, 1972; *The goat*, Picasso, 1950

A sculpture from the "Shush" civilization has been discovered showing a man hugging a goat, and this shows that this theme was created by an Iranian sculptor six thousand years before Picasso. We can refer to the quote of "Andre Malraux" who says that there is a kind of reincarnation in art.

III- Myth

Throughout his life, Picasso watched the bullfight and drew sketches and paintings from it. In fact, his paintings from this event represent his most comprehensive analysis of violence. Bullfighting painting "Death of a Matador" is a magnificent piece, about the death of a matador who is lifted into the air in a wave of red cloth on the bull's head. This work is very reminiscent of Rubens with its slow and circular movement as well as its

theme. In the period that is influenced by Mediterranean art, Mohasses leads to the creation of mythological works, and in his most important and well-known collection of works, he depicts Mediterranean myths such as the Minotaur on a background of two or more pieces and a flat, like a meeting place. It depicts the sea and the beach.



Image 9.5 *Dying bull*, Picasso, 1934 (top); *Minotaur*, Mohasses 1977 (bottom)

The flute player man sculpture is derived from the mythological figure of the Roman "Faun" or the Greek "Satyr". In Roman mythology, fauns are horned creatures with the upper body of a human and the lower body of a goat. Picasso made this mythological

theme the theme of his works. Paying attention to myths and human-animal idol images is one of the characteristics of Mohasses' works, which is also manifested in the sculpture of a man with a lip. By referring to this figure of classical art dancers, Mohasses compared Picasso's modernist approach in using native arts and myths to create a modern work. It takes work. The character "Flute player" is one of the characters that can be seen repeatedly in Mohasses works. It is possible to examine the modern art of Iran and immediately consider it influenced by Western art. In Greek legends, there is also a mythical creature named "Pan" who plays the flute.



Image 9.6 *The flute player*, Mohasses, 1973 (left); *Satyr, Faun and Sentaaur with Trident*, Picasso, 1946 (right)

IV- Still life

Picasso paid attention to everyday objects and used them in different ways in his works. His compositions of still life are extremely beautiful, especially when musical instruments are added to them. He created the first cubist collage works in which the objects are not visible with their original textures and are mixed in the whole work and form two-dimensional forms that are difficult to identify. Mohasses also has collections of still life in his works; For example, a collection of bell peppers, which, of course, are not dissimilar to the human body. Still life has a very long history in the history of Iranian art, and despite the simplicity of the subject, they always bring deep sadness in the work (Khalatbari, 2017).

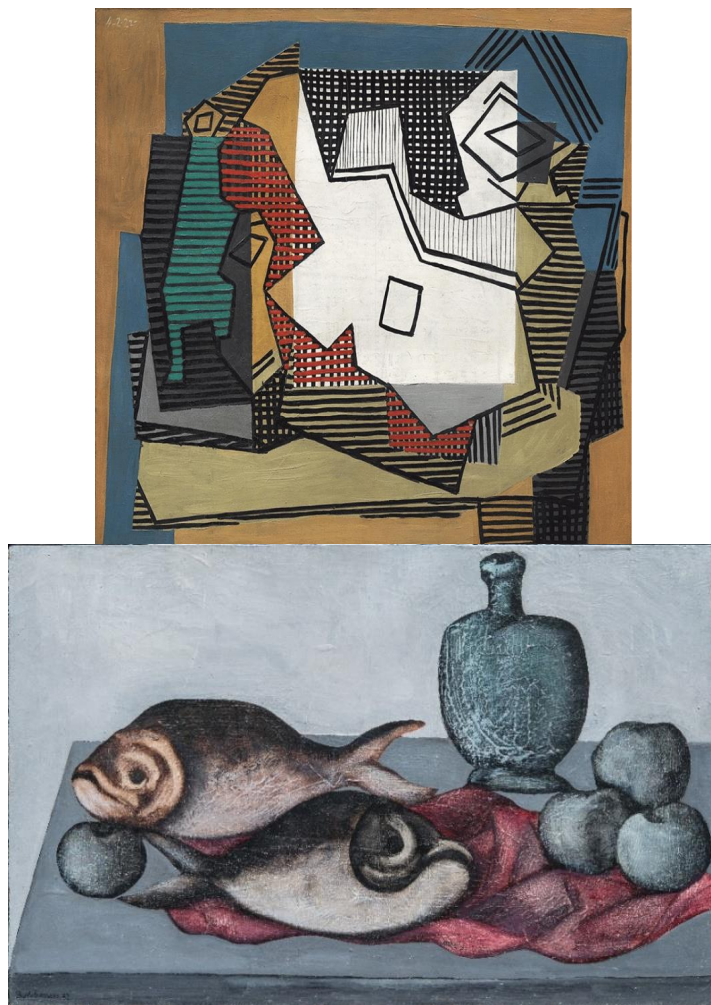


Image 9.7 *Still life*, Picasso, 1922; *still life*, Mohasses, 1969

9.7. Analysis and reading of works

9.7.1. sadness

One of the most special time periods in Picasso's career is the "Blue Period". No artist showed the bitterness of life as deeply as Picasso in his career. A show that reached its peak exclusively in the "Blue Period". Perhaps this peak can be considered because of his severe depression. During this period, the theme of all his works was based on the concept of sadness and sorrow, as it can be seen from the set of melancholic colors of the blue period in the intersection with the bright shade of blue and its dark border, without a doubt, the experience of poverty in the first years of emigrating to Paris and dealing with The workers and the poor have had a great effect in portraying the portraits of the characters with a feeling of pity towards them. The presence of brighter colors, but still with a sad design including white and gray, shows well the exhaustion and suffering of Picasso.

The evaluation of specific works, including portraits, sculptures and even still life works, is the sadness in these works and the suffering that can be seen in all of them. This suffering is more than a human suffering, it is "being suffering" or "living suffering". Each of his works turns into tragedy and this is the result of his special point of view. He himself is looking for tragedy in existence and seeks it with all his heart.



Image 9.8 *Two sisters*, Picasso, 1902 (right); *Untitled*, Mohasses, 1991 (left)

9.7.2. objection

The world of art considers the "Guernica" painting to be a message of Picasso's annoyance and anger, a message that shows his pain and sorrow over the massacre of the defenseless people of a small Spanish town who were mercilessly attacked by Nazi bombers. Guernica is a symbol of anger in the history of world art. With the benefit of exciting movements and bitter and merciless silence, this work is calculated to the point of insanity, elegant and respectable. The silence of the painting reminds me of a terrible empty scream. Proximity of contradictions, congestion and tremendous tension are created. Picasso's Guernica screen is full of figures that scream, twist, cry and finally perish. The works of Mohasses are a deafening cry of the calamity that has befallen mankind. His objection to creation can be seen in all fields, but he sarcastically called creation an attempt to create a human being like himself. Based on this, can he be considered influenced by a malicious idea that mocks death, old age, suffering, ugliness, and injustice of death in a loud protest? A person from a wide world but protesting what is happening in this world.

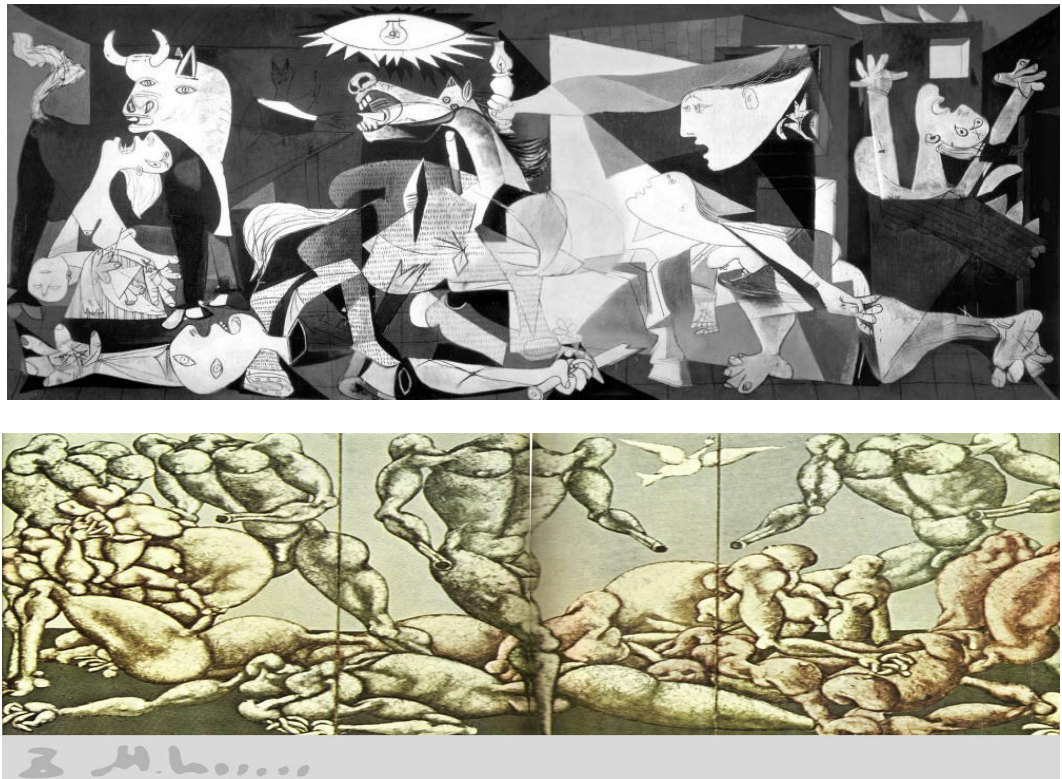


Image 9.9 *Guernica*, Picasso, 1937 (top); *Vietnam massacre*, Mohasses, 1969 (bottom)

9.7.3. Lostness, mystery

The revelation in the world is not the end of an artist, especially if it is an artist with unconventional and complex features like Picasso, whose secrets are endless and with each of his works, he calls the audience to analyze and interpret the mystery. An artist who, with more than eight decades of continuous work, devoted most of his long life to artistic creation. An artist who made him one of the most famous artists in history, from the early classical designs to the most complex works in his last working days. From the first glance, you can see a child/artist who can explain the world around him on paper with special characteristics and display his special sensitivities. Mohasses is an artist who includes himself in his works, but in the end, he scatters his works around the gate, and a kind of loss can be seen in his works. All aspects of Mohasses' life are mysterious and ambiguous, basically he is considered a mysterious artist. He has opened a book that will never be closed. An artist from the geography of the Middle East that everyone is looking for to find the right key to enter his mysterious world. The ideological resonance of his artistic nature has made many curious and eager, and it must be acknowledged that something more than empty space is hidden behind a door that we are trying to open. He is an exception in the contentless world of people who carry the name of artist, an exception among those who have nothing in their work, nor beyond it. Pure imitative people. Bahman made himself a researcher in his work, and this is how the key turns in the lock. His characteristic is such that he gives every researcher a key.

9.7.4. Authenticity and nostalgia

Mohasses and Picasso are both from their own country. Mohasses is Iranian and Picasso is Spanish. Being native means the viewer or artist who has a sense of kinship with the works of these two and sees a part of themselves in their works. Mohasses sees his vision as different from that of a Mediterranean. He does not hide the influence of the atmosphere of northern Iran on his work and to some extent, he believes that he has a relationship with nations whose works are like the atmosphere of climates in terms of vision, philosophy and issues that are related to Iran. But he does not consider his work to be Mediterranean or Greek. On the other hand, the sadness in Pablo's works belongs to Spain, because Picasso is Spanish.

9.7.5. Illustrators of violence

The biggest theme of Picasso's works is violence. He hated violence, but he knew it well, as if the canvas needed it. And based on his knowledge of the creative violence of art and acknowledging it, he could very accurately and believably deny war. The genuine hatred and terror in Picasso's paintings can be clearly seen. His works show a man who thinks about killing and is constantly afraid of being killed.

"A woman with a snarl" is part of a series of images of a monstrous woman with an open mouth screaming, which was a cruel caricature of Olga. Entering middle age made his mental atmosphere more bitter, black, and sad.

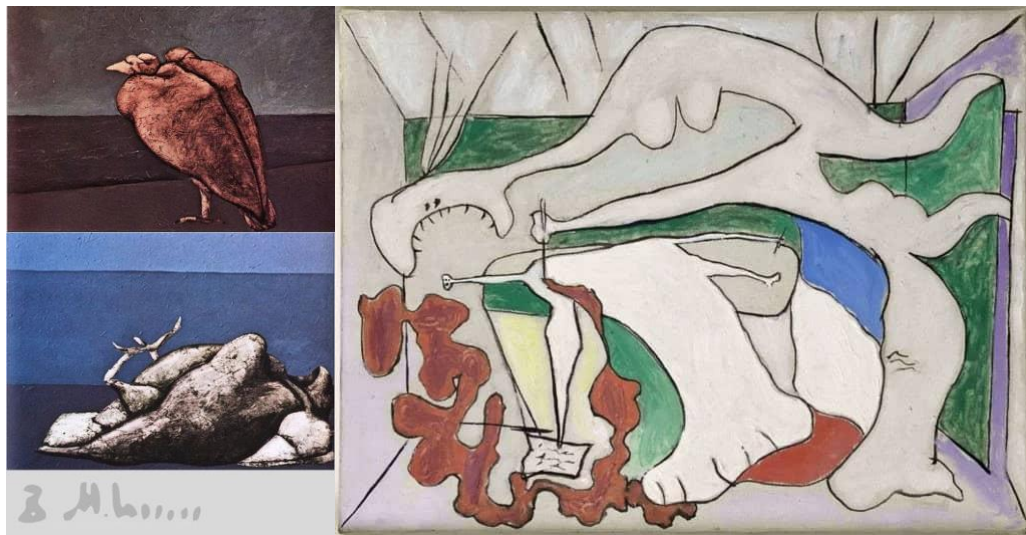


Image 9.10 *Bird in front of beach*, Mohasses, 1967 (left);

La Femme au stylet, Picasso, 1931 (right)

At the same time, he explored the nature of violence and with his artistic creations, he depicted all aspects of it, such as rape, murder, victimization, bullfighting, and carnivorous monsters. His personal review in this period shows that he endured a lot of pain and suffering in this period and maybe he took revenge through painting. It seems that Pablo forgets the emotions of his Cubist period in his violent art. But at the same time, some of his truest and most memorable images belong to this period, which is passionate and vital, in this carnival of death and nothingness. In the "Death of Mara" painting, someone may be killed, Picasso himself, but something else is born from this violence: the ugly baby and the scream of art. The Maidens of Avignon represent

aggressive art, full of sharp and fragile lines, exploding surfaces and maddened staring eyes. Picasso's bullfights are not in accordance with the tradition of depicting bullfights in Spain, which he supposedly mastered. Instead of criticizing Spanish society, his bullfights are baroque entertainments. In his close-ups of the cataclysmic moments of the bullfight, Picasso emphasizes its primary elements: hitting, killing, and tearing apart. The cow tears apart the horse's belly, its guts spill out, the horse and the cow are visually intertwined and merged, which at first looks like confusion. And this is a return to the complexity of Cubism, but this time with an irrational dimension. To understand Picasso's paintings in the 1930s, one must be able to enter his illusions and fantasies, in this way the reality of violence breaks down and re-forms in our minds. The effect of this is shocking. To understand what is happening in Picasso's paintings of bullfighting, one must accept its logic. This is the knowledge that Picasso reaches after a decade of using violence.

In the later works of Mohasses, a kind of anarchist spirit can be seen. It's as if the brush has landed on the canvas with extreme violence and anger, and the intense colors still show a kind of spiritual explosion of the artist, which is not present in any way in his early works. In some of his works, with the blue color of the background or with the type of space he created, the technique of human violence is reminded. But this human violence should not be confused with aggressive violence. Violence is a specific technique, and it is considered as the result of a kind of scratching and digging. Looking at seagulls in Bahman's works recalls a kind of clichéd and delicate form, while the seagull is a symbol of effort and struggle for survival, the seagull continuously fights against storms, water, sea, waves, cold and heat. It is food and sustenance and sometimes it even looks like a scavenger.

9.7.6. bitter and hidden humor

Picasso turned the humor in modern French art upside down. He painted the painting "Three Dancers" at the age of 43 and became bitter, black, and sad. Before portraying this painting, Picasso lost one of his closest friends due to his death. He was very fond of ballet and depicted the exuberance of the dancers along with the decaying form of their presence through cubism. Picasso sees rebellion and destruction both in his characters, in

what their physical face is hidden. What is hidden and hidden from others, in other words, is the secret of the survival of personality in the heart of social action. When he sees this revelation, he exposes it; Not nakedness of the body, but nakedness of the state and internal organs of the personality, in addition to the external physical body, his characters have an internal organ whose face is not the same as the external physical body...a psychological organ that is at the same time active and passive after the social actions of the physical body. Subjective and active...Picasso, instead of showing a part of the subject's psychological states in the work...he completely throws the subject out of his body and the outer layer of the thick body. One of the main factors distinguishing Bahman's works from many Iranian painters, apart from his unique technique among Iranian painters, was his dark and bitter perspective in his works. Humor on the screen is a special feature of the works. He considered this humor as having family roots and reflecting the bitterness and difficulties that Mohasses has faced.



Image 9.11 *Three Dancers*, Picasso, 1925, (left);

Minotaur scares people for good, Mohasses, 1966 (right)

9.7.7. Innocence in works

Picasso kept pigeons for most of his life and chose them as a symbol of peace. The only creatures that are innocent in the works of Mohasses are "pigeons" and "fishes". The fish often fell out of the water, and this can be seen as a sign of fate that he did not like any part of the world to live and spend his whole life in sorrow, and finally this issue led to the destruction of his works. Also, seagulls and fishes are the effect of Bahman's observation during his childhood, which was spent in the northern regions of Iran.

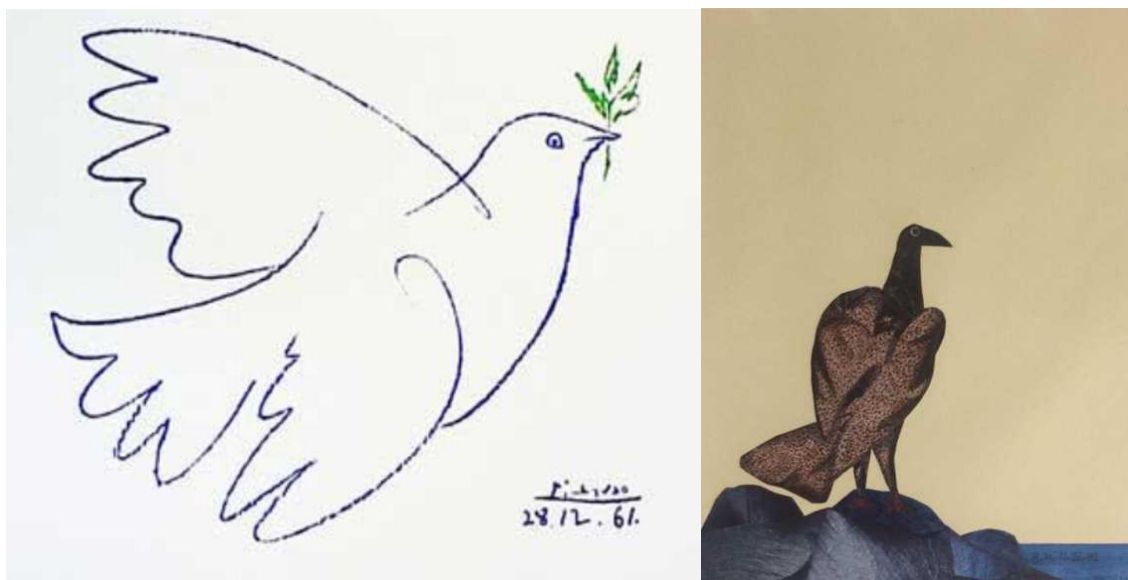


Image 9.12 *Pigeon*, Picasso, 1949 (left); *Untitled, Mohasses*, 1992 (right)

Pablo Picasso is more than just a family name. The Spanish master has long been admired in the East and the West, and his popularity shows no signs of abating. Picasso is the most influential and powerful artist of the first half of the 20th century. Picasso considered himself a painter above all, but his sculptures have also left a great impression. He also entered other fields such as printing and ceramics. After all, he was a famously charismatic figure. Picasso's works are a deep exploration and research from the beginning to the end. Picasso is the epitome of amazing authority over his own power, he transforms everything he touches, he must make of it something that belongs only to him, that can never exist without him. When Picasso destroys, he does not sit during ruins, he uses destruction to create a new composition in which everything is given a new life, everything is distorted, becomes more evocative and it captures a person's mind more than ever. Picasso embodies one of the most distinct human tendencies in the 20th century. Frankly, it shows the victorious side of this desire, but with the greatest strength and dominance, it urges us to feel the anxiety that comes upon humanity in the face of painful questions. Picasso believes that an artist is always absorbing different opinions and ideas from his surroundings. "The artist is a reservoir for absorbing ideas and feelings from his surroundings. He draws from the ground, from a piece of paper, from a meaningless shape, or from a spider's web gets an idea." Many Iranian painters and art experts consider Bahman Mohasses to be the most complete Iranian painter by European

standards. Mohasses can be called a legend that will remain in the memory of world art. Regarding Bahman Mohasses, due to many events of the artist's work in geographically far from Iran and out of reach, research in this matter is not easily possible. According to the works left by Bahman Mohasses, it is possible to recognize the working periods in his works, especially his paintings. Mohasses, who spent a long period of his life outside of Iran, was an artist with a style, a voice, which was both strongly Iranian and European.

Chapter X

Analysis of Mohasses' Personality



10.1. Introduction

A study of Bahman Mohasses' work is, in essence, a deep study of Mohasses himself. His art is not an isolated or impersonal work of an artist, it is a direct extension of his psyche, worldview, and inner struggles. Every painting, every sculpture, and even every sentence he uttered or translated offers a glimpse into the fragmented but deeply thoughtful mosaic of his personality. His works are full of meaning, drawn from his intellectual obsessions, personal conflicts, and emotional intensity. Engaging with Mohasses' art means entering a space where the boundary between artist and artwork is blurred. His works are confessional, philosophical, and confrontational; they act as mirrors of his inner world—a world that was often in stark contrast to the society around him. In this sense, "A Study of Bahman Mohasses' Personality" goes beyond traditional analysis of art. Thus, this chapter is not simply a descriptive overview of Mohasses' personality. This is an attempt to uncover the hidden dimensions of Mohasses' personality: his loneliness, his rebellion, his sense of alienation, his intellectual depth, and his relentless search for artistic and existential truth. It is a journey into the mind of an artist who constantly challenged external norms while remaining in constant dialogue with his inner self—a dialogue that found its voice through bold brushstrokes, distorted figures, mythological imagery, and brutally honest symbolism. The main goal of this chapter is to explore the relationship between the artworks and their cultural-political contexts: This includes examining how the intellectual and political climate during the periods of creation—including the impact of exile, censorship, isolation, and encounters with modernity—are reflected in the tone, themes, and formal qualities of the works.

This chapter identifies several specific personality traits of Mohasses, such as:

- I. **A multidimensional and comprehensive personality (painter, sculptor, designer, translator):** Like most intelligent Iranian intellectuals, Mohasses has had a multidimensional personality. He was a versatile artist, because besides painting and sculpting, he had a lot of experience with novels, translations, theater, etc. He translated important books and created a theater. From the point of view of some people, Malaparte's skin book is a narration of the artist's own circumstances and has similar characteristics to him (Aghdashloo, 2008).

- II. **Pioneer and avant-garde:** The avant-garde paintings of Bahman Mohasses can be considered as one of the most prestigious works of modern Iranian painting. He was one of the first artists in Iran who learned painting in the western way and mixed it with an eastern perspective. A capable artist who introduced Iranian painting to a non-Iranian audience using western techniques. This leading position places him in the position of one of the most influential artists in Iran. His skill was to understand the language of Eastern and Western art and portray it well by using European techniques. A capability that is found in few Iranian artists.
- III. **Genius, innovative and creative:** Mohasses is a painting genius who can be called the Iranian Picasso. He knows his ability and skill to see from Picasso. Mohasses is an example of this statement: "One does not become an artist, but an artist is born". It is a teacher's duty to read and be independent in seeing. He saw other worlds with the help of reading. Independence in seeing makes him unique, although he never allowed exaggeration about him. Bahman could be in the position of a Murad, but with full awareness, he seeks an ax from this work.
- IV. **Prolific and inquisitive:** Mohasses is a prolific artist who created many works from his teenage years until his death. He considers the search as a kind of exit opportunity for painting, which he does not know how to do, and he refers to it as "jumping into a horn every time". Mohasses considers all the things he has done as a chain tied together and believes that searching cannot be achieved in the way that he finds his own way. He always preferred going to arrive.
- V. **Improviser:** Mohasses is also an improvisational artist who in his works was just trying to convey his words and with that indescribable stubbornness, he tried to show that he is never defeated.
- VI. **Separately woven taffeta of contemporary painting-sculpture:** When the cultural and artistic community talks about Bahman Mohasses, they think about himself rather than his works. In many cases, they analyze their character and confirm or deny it, not the mind of their creations.
- VII. **He has not imitated anyone:** It is Bahman Mohasses who imitated Bahman Mohasses. Others who are imitators see life and nature through others; they look at the world with borrowed glasses.

- VIII. **The opportunity to know the future earlier than others:** Mohasses is one of those people who had the opportunity to get to know earlier and evaluate the contemporary artistic and tasteful levels of his peers, he demanded a greater share from the time in which he lived.
- IX. **Having a special artistic style:** He achieved a degree of mastery in his artistic style that he was able to depict human pain, not his personal and human pain.
- X. **Sad, depressed and descended from tragedy:** Bahman's art begins and ends with tragedy. He considers tragedy as the source of inspiration for his paintings and sculptures. There is no hope in any of his works. It should be pondered a lot, this tragic seriousness comes from his bitter personality, or his Aristotelian perception of art. He criticizes the times with a non-decorative seriousness in his paintings.
- XI. **Reclusive and evasive:** He interacted with few people and preferred seclusion to attending artistic circles, especially Iranian ones; A trait that is clear in his works, especially in his sculptures. Mohasses had few friends during his lifetime and in certain cases he communicated with people of letters through letter writing. Even the people with whom Mohasses were in contact were isolated artists. He belonged to a social class that was not compatible with the artists of that period, and had an aristocratic character that was not related to the middle class of society and many times the reactions he showed were the result of the same class differences.
- XII. **Serious, stubborn and inconsistent:** Bahman is an inconsistent artist; Not with the times, not with the ruling power and public opinion, which does not agree with any of them. He is not even compatible with traditions, rituals, and common life, with his contemporaries and colleagues, and finally, even with himself. From among these norm-breaking inconsistencies in the field of private and public life, he has been able to present his most difficult interpretation of man as a physical thing independent of the accuracy of the view in the soulless invisibility, in an artistic and creative way. It is also inconsistent in the analysis of traditional beliefs and despite the cultural belief of the ancient civilization, which accepts the humiliation of the body for the sake of exaltation of the soul, it proves

the fact that human rights are derived from love, freedom, security and destruction within the framework of the body. By knowing as much as possible, it is possible to be a true citizen of this city world. More importantly, he was one of the few artists who never strained against bad conditions and did not take a souvenir photo with any dictator. Practically, his identity prevented him from compromising on freedom, and therefore he preferred isolation over negotiation with this foundation and that institution. His behavior is indicative of a modernist who has embraced the bitterness of his individuality at the cost of isolation.

XIII. **Autocratic and autonomous:** Mohasses was a special and autocratic person. That is, he believed in the knowledge he had. He changed during the events of the times and turned from optimism and hope to absolute pessimism. Mohasses sat and got up with his fellow professionals who had the same attitude as him. But in the end Bahman abandoned everyone and finally came to a very bitter and fascist look.

XIV. **Pessimistic:** Mohasses was pessimistic, this pessimism was sometimes based on realism and sometimes based on self-exaltation. According to him, he looked down on the people and after returning to Iran, he has more problems with the people than with the government. Just like the writers of his generation, Mohasses could not be molded into a specific system, and he was in a way suffering from an identitylessness. This loss of hope can also be clearly found in him due to the destruction of Mohasses works by himself.

XV. **Razor sharp behavior and artistic moodiness:** An anarchist spirit can be seen in specific works; A vision of brushes that have been beaten on the canvas as if out of anger and numerous sharp colors that have exploded on the canvas and have no sign of his first works. Perhaps this change can be seen because of his mental imbalance, which was always accompanied by a unique bitterness. The strange and strange temperament of the artist, who is famous and special, and this strangeness also existed in him.

XVI. **It is an endless sea that has no end:** He knows that the end is death. It is nothingness and regret. Behind the birds that are depicted are the nights and days of the creeping sea. Although it is not a wave, it is not a boat. From the other side

of the sea, which we cannot see, we hear the birds' voices and their eternal pleas, which do not disappoint, promising that we can still stay on this earth.

XVII. **Depicting the eternal human quest:** Mohasses has stood by this eternal sea throughout his years and knows the depth of the water. After the passage of his life, days and years, his entire existence has been spent portraying the birds of the sea, who watch the world with anxious, surprised and wandering eyes. These birds summarize the end of the world in a special plea and cry, but they do not deny it. This is the importance of specific work. These birds are still on the ground. They are looking for release in the blue light of the sea, not knowing the hopelessness of the inhabitants of the earth. After visiting the birds, we whisper: When there is suffering, there is no nothingness. existence is These birds live by the sea.

XVIII. **Having a personal and metaphorless language that leads to the loneliness of the artist:** It is in this eternal solitude that the artist becomes a creator. It prophesies the world and the future and brings courage and faith to fruition in others.

XIX. **The reality that his projects is naked and impenetrable:** Mohasses, with all his despair at the levels, believes in the depths.

XX. **Different sexual orientation:** In addition to his aristocratic nature, Mohasses' vassalage also had other reasons, such as his gender identity. A reason that was not easily accepted even in the Iranian intellectual environment.

XXI. **His dark and dark worldview towards the world and man:** The wave of French intellectualism in the 60s and the intellectual and philosophical approaches of his time formed such specific thoughts that he also considered man as a creature condemned to life who carries the burden of suffering and loneliness forever.

XXII. **Immigrants and self-imposed exile:** Mohasses migrated to Tehran from the city of Rasht in the Caspian Sea region and went to Italy in 1333 and settled there. During the years before the Islamic revolution, he frequently visited his home in Tehran; This was while many of his friends were unaware of him. He then went to Italy, settled there and died in Rome at the age of 79. His angry

works are the cry of the same person who lives in self-imposed exile everywhere in the world.

XXIII. **A proud and protesting observer:** It is a proud and protesting observer who is always released from observation and comes to the context of life. In the wonder of this world that has no interior and all that is silence and depression. Disaster occurs when man thinks this world is internal. He had an insolent and boisterous language, which came to life in paintings that were the knowledge of people whose screams were buried in their throats, and these people were always lost in endless sorrow and loneliness.

Conclusions



Some artists create such an overwhelming aura around themselves that they become almost inaccessible, obscured behind their mystique. They rarely speak publicly, do not mentor students, and leave behind no clear lineage of followers. Bahman Mohassess was one of these elusive figures. He belonged to a generation of formidable intellectuals and artists shaped by the exceptional historical, political, and cultural circumstances of mid-20th-century Iran. These individuals are often described as part of a “golden generation”—a group that emerged during a rare convergence of social upheaval, artistic awakening, and intellectual ferment, making them unique and, in many ways, unrepeatable in the broader tapestry of Iranian contemporary history.

Mohassess stood apart even among this exceptional cohort. He was one of those rare artists who chose a solitary path—not merely in lifestyle but as an existential stance. His solitude was not born of isolation in the conventional sense, nor from a lack of recognition. Rather, it was a deliberate, almost defiant embrace of detachment. He transformed this solitude into an artistic lens, a profound perspective through which he viewed and interpreted the world. This philosophical loneliness became a core element of his creative identity, visible and palpable in both his paintings and sculptures. In his work, Mohassess laid bare the inner tensions of the human condition. He projected his bitterness, disappointments, and unfulfilled longings onto the canvas and into bronze. His creations often carried a sense of tragedy, alienation, and ironic reflection of both personal and collective despair. Figures in his art are frequently deformed, faceless, or fragmented, expressing not only physical distortion but psychological disintegration. These recurring motifs evoke themes of censorship, exile, mortality, and existential absurdity.

To truly understand Bahman Mohassess’ work, one must first understand the man behind it—his contradictions, his audacity, his profound sense of exile, and his relentless search for meaning in a fragmented and often absurd world. His art cannot be separated from his identity; it is not a mere reflection of external realities, but a deeply personal narrative shaped by his inner turmoil, intellectual rigor, and existential questions. Mohassess was an artist for whom creating work was not a decorative endeavor but a means of grappling with fundamental questions about life, death, freedom, alienation, and the artist’s role in society.

By studying Mohasses' personality, his temperament, his cultural influences, his emotional outlook, gain vital insight into symbolism, themes, and formal choices that define his work. He is one of the rare figures in modern Iranian art whose thought and expression transcend geographical or cultural boundaries. His work does not simply address Iranian identity or historical events; it addresses the human condition in all its complexities. This universality is what sets Mohasses apart. He did not create art for a specific audience or to serve a particular ideology – he created it as an act of expressing personal truth, even when that truth was painful or difficult to bear.

The various facets of Mohasses' personality – his isolation, his humor, his defiance, his melancholy, his deep love of classical literature and philosophy – form a rich and often contradictory tapestry that is reflected in his art. He was both intellectual and reclusive, provocative and poetic. His work contains layers of meaning that require patience, sensitivity and an understanding of his complex personality to decipher.

The most obvious sign of his cultural modernity can be seen in Mohasses' works. According to the famous Italian critic Giuseppe Selvaggi, "everything that has been said before about him as a creator can be repeated, and each time a new manifestation of his personality is reached". Director. All describe Mohasses in the same way. He was a specific example of an Iranian intellectual. Mohasses is a genius artist who can be called the Iranian Picasso. He knows his ability and skill to see himself from Picasso. Mohasses is an example of this proposition: "One does not become an artist, but an artist is born". The characteristic of being a teacher is independence in seeing. He also saw other worlds with the help of reading. Independence in seeing makes him unique. Although he never allowed exaggerations to take place. Mohasses could have been a Murad, but he sought axe with complete awareness. Mohasses is considered one of the first Iranian painters who learned painting in the Western way and used it They connected with the eastern view. Mohasses can be considered as a western scholar who combined it with the art of the East and delivered it to the Iranian world.

Mohasses' aesthetic was deeply introspective yet universally resonant. His ability to distill his emotional and intellectual experiences into stark, unflinching visual forms set him apart. He made no effort to please the audience or conform to prevailing artistic

norms; instead, he remained intensely committed to the truth of his own vision—no matter how uncomfortable or unsettling it may have appeared.

Mohasses was a singular figure in contemporary Iranian art—both a painter and sculptor of exceptional originality. Within cultural and artistic circles, discussions about Mohasses often center more on his complex persona than on his body of work. His personality—enigmatic, uncompromising, and fiercely intellectual—frequently becomes the subject of analysis, overshadowing even the powerful expressions embedded in his creations.

Mohasses' paintings and sculptures defy comparison with those of his contemporaries or successors. He cultivated an intensely personal and idiosyncratic vision, diverging from prevailing artistic trends in both form and ideology. While many Iranian artists of the mid-20th century sought to localize or 'Iranianize' the aesthetics of modern Western art, Mohasses resisted such formulas. Instead, he fused his deep understanding of Western artistic and philosophical traditions with a profound sense of Iranian identity—producing works that were at once cosmopolitan and deeply rooted in his cultural consciousness.

His artistic language—whether expressed in oil on canvas or cast in bronze—bears the hallmarks of both European modernism and Iranian mythos. He was an artist with a distinct voice: bold, ironic, tragic, and unmistakably his own. The most visible expression of his cultural modernity resides in the uncompromising nature of his work, which confronts the viewer with existential themes, political critique, and personal anguish.

As Giuseppe Selvaggi, the prominent Italian critic, noted: “One can repeat everything that has been said about him as a creator, and each time reach a new manifestation of his personality.” This statement captures the multi-layered, ever-evolving complexity of Mohasses' character and works.

He was an inconsistent artist. Incompatible with the times, incompatible with public opinion. Incompatible with tradition, ritual, and common life; Inconsistent with his contemporaries and colleagues and ultimately inconsistent with himself.

Bahman Mohasses was, in many ways, an artist defined by his inconsistencies deliberately and unapologetically so. He was at odds with his time, out of sync with prevailing public sentiment, and irreconcilable with tradition, ritual, and the conventions

of ordinary life. His worldview and artistic approach diverged not only from societal norms but also from the artistic community around him. He was frequently in conflict with his contemporaries and peers, and perhaps most strikingly, in perpetual tension with himself. This internal and external incompatibility was not a flaw, but rather a defining feature of his identity as an artist and intellectual.

His paintings and sculptures do not merely depict reality; they distort, abstract, and reinterpret it, revealing deeper psychological and philosophical layers. In his hands, the human figure becomes a site of existential inquiry: limbs are elongated or truncated, faces are erased, and bodies are fragmented, reflecting a profound dislocation from both self and society. Through these visual strategies, Mohasses confronted themes such as mortality, alienation, censorship, and the absurdity of existence with searing intensity.

Widely regarded as the most influential painter and sculptor in modern Iranian art, Mohasses created a visual language that was at once deeply personal and universally resonant. His work cannot be confined within the boundaries of national or folkloric identity. He was never a "local" or "national" artist in the traditional sense. Instead, his art engaged with broader human concerns—questions of being, freedom, and desperately transitioning his work part of a global dialogue in modern art.

His work embodies a singular philosophical and emotional depth that set him apart from his contemporaries. While some observers have labeled him a nihilist or an absurdist due to the dark and often unsettling nature of his themes, many Iranian artists and critics strongly disagree. They view Mohasses not as a passive observer of despair, but as a powerful, unfiltered voice—a sharp and unrelenting cry rendered through the mediums of sculpture and painting.

He did not belong to any local school or nationalistic tradition. Mohasses refused to be confined by cultural or political expectations, choosing instead to engage with universal human themes such as alienation, existential anxiety, identity, and mortality. His work transcended geographical and temporal boundaries, positioning him as a figure in conversation with global modernism rather than simply a representative of Iranian art.

All the painter's silence and the silence about him are not exclusive to someone who can be removed and ignored from the modern and contemporary painting of Iran. The

maturity and originality of this artist's works, forms, spaces, and colors have been so high since the beginning that it can be generalized to his whole mind, life, and works that have not been done or seen.

Bitter protest and humorous and telling metaphors are unique in the crooked shapes and giants of Bahman Mohasses. Mohasses was one of those painters who, in addition to having a unique technique, his bitter and dark view of human existence and destiny distinguished him from other painters. His paintings are often composed of people in cold and hot lands, and from among them, other subjects such as fish, giant birds, inanimate nature, etc. appear. His works are not like the works of any of his contemporaries and even the artists after him. He took a special and unique look at the process of modern art in Iran and the efforts of artists to Iranianize the form of western modern art. Mohasses was a versatile artist, because in addition to painting and sculpture, he translated important books and created a theater. From the point of view of some people, Malaparte's skin book is a narration of the artist's own circumstances and has similar characteristics to him.

Giuseppe Salvaji, looking at Mohasses' works in relation to his interest in theater, says: When I learn about Mohasses' interest in theater, this mathematical balance in his works becomes clearer to me because, just like the artistic theater in the end, accuracy and correctness are completely innovative. Mohasses also respects geometric accuracy in his perception and translation of life, which make up his works, but his works are full of emotion (of a harsh and cold type) and free expression. It shows art. We can conclude that Mohasses was able to work for more than sixty years with his persistence and hard work, and his undeniable genius, and everything he created had the unmistakable stamp of his angry and surprising world view.

Today, his valuable works are kept in Italy, America and Iran more than anywhere else. Bahman Mohasses is a painter and sculptor, sometimes he also writes poetry, Like Japanese haikus:

We were told and repeated
that we are dirt and dust

They forgot to say
that we are star dust

There are days when Bahman Mohasses is no longer present—when his absence is deeply felt. Yet, his works continue to speak, finding new audiences, especially among the younger generations who never lived in his time. For these viewers, encountering Mohasses for the first time is a unique experience his art does not offer immediate answers but invites reflection. At first glance, one's aesthetic senses are awakened; there is a visceral reaction, though the meaning may remain elusive. And yet, with each subsequent viewing, his works grow more distinctive, more layered, and unmistakably his own.

Mohasses' art raises questions rather than offering conclusions. It draws the viewer into a dialogue, sometimes quiet, sometimes jarring—compelling them to explore the deeper meanings behind the distorted forms, the fragmented bodies, and the mythic references. As he once said, one should not expect beauty in the conventional sense from his paintings—these are not meant to be decorative objects for a living room wall. Instead, they confront, disturb, and provoke thought.

Mohasses' works, by utilizing tangible yet innovative symbols and signs, present an image of Iranian art that is both globally recognized and reflective of Iran's cultural and social spirit. These characteristics have made him one of the most significant representatives of modern Iranian art. His works remind us that tradition and modernism are not in conflict but can be creatively harmonized to generate new meanings. As one of the most prominent examples of modern Iranian art, Mohasses' works have achieved a global identity by employing Iran's rich mythological and cultural symbols. The transformation of these symbols in his works, using modern techniques and the reimagining of traditional forms, has created a bridge between tradition and modernism, contributing to the unique appeal and distinction of his works in the contemporary art world. These symbols and forms, especially in Mohasses' sculptures and paintings, represent a unique artistic identity that emerges from Iran's history and culture while simultaneously speaking a universal language.

His position in the canon of contemporary Iranian art is both significant and singular. Mohasses was not only a painter and sculptor, but also a translator and playwright truly modern artist whose body of work bridges disciplines and cultural boundaries. His artistic authenticity lies in his refusal to conform, in the fierce individuality of his vision.

A prominent feature of his oeuvre is a visible fascination with classical antiquity, especially ancient Greek art and philosophy. This influence is evident not only in the themes of his plays and sculptures but also in the iconography of his paintings. The rough, fossil-like figures, the buried and eroded forms in his tableaux, resemble relics of a lost civilization—testaments to his deep engagement with history and myth. These images evoke a sense of decay and permanence, suggesting that Mohasses saw the ancient world not as distant, but as something still alive within the modern psyche.

One of the most prominent artistic figures admired by Bahman Mohasses was Pablo Picasso. This admiration was not merely superficial or stylistic; it was deeply personal and philosophical. Picasso, for Mohasses, represented the archetype of the modern artist: rebellious, prolific, and unapologetically original. Mohasses did not hide his fascination with the Spanish master. It is often recounted that even in his self-presentation, Mohasses consciously emulated Picasso's iconic image. In numerous photographs, Mohasses appears with a cigarette in hand, adopting the same casual yet defiant posture often associated with Picasso. He reportedly remarked, "There is no photograph of Picasso without a cigarette in his hand," suggesting that this gesture had become a symbolic extension of the modern artist's persona one he deliberately adopted.

But beyond surface parallels, the comparison between Mohasses and Picasso is rooted in their shared boldness, their relentless innovation, and their capacity to push the boundaries of artistic expression. Like Picasso, Mohasses was a genius in the truest sense an artist who defied categorization, who moved seamlessly between mediums, and who reinvented visual language in ways that were often misunderstood or controversial during his lifetime.

It would not be an exaggeration to describe Bahman Mohasses as the "Iranian Picasso." Not because he mimicked Picasso's style, but because he embodied a similar spirit of radical independence, formal experimentation, and cultural synthesis. However,

Mohasses brought something uniquely his own to this inheritance: he was a Western-educated intellectual who internalized the great traditions of European modernism yet filtered them through an Iranian lens. His art was not a copy of the West, but a complex fusion of Western modernist ideas with Eastern myth, literature, and existential thought.

Recognized as one of the top ten painters in Iran, Bahman Mohasses left behind a legacy that continues to challenge, provoke, and inspire. His life and art are inseparable, and his work remains an enduring testament to a brilliant mind that defied convention and carved its own path through the cultural landscape of modern Iran.

In the end: Modern Iranian painting has not produced another artist of Mohasses' scale—one whose artistic language, intellectual engagement, and psychological insight converge so forcefully. His presence in Iranian art remains unmatched, not just for the originality of his work, but for the uncompromising clarity with which he expressed the complexities of the human condition. His artistic identity cannot be confined to a single label. He was not only a painter and sculptor but also an accomplished translator, playwright, and director. His intellectual versatility made him a quintessential Iranian modernist a rare figure who moved fluently between disciplines.

In this way, Mohasses can be seen as a cultural mediator a scholar-artist who absorbed the intellectual currents of the West and reconfigured them into something deeply resonant with the Iranian condition. He did not merely borrow forms; he transformed them. He delivered to the Iranian world an art that was both global and rooted, personal and universal, modern and timeless.

Suggested future research perspectives

This study of Bahman Mohasses opens several avenues for further academic research and artistic discourse. His multidimensional personality and thoughtful art invite diverse perspectives that can deepen and broaden the understanding of his legacy.

1. Broader Comparative Studies

Future research could place Bahman Mohasses in a broader comparative framework alongside international artists such as Pablo Picasso, Alberto Giacometti, and Francis Bacon. He also contracted Iranian modernist artists, although Mohasses had very few students, and only Parvaneh Etemadi can be mentioned. Parvaneh Etemadi, a prominent artist and Bahman Mohasses' only direct student, was one of the pioneers of contemporary Iranian art. She made a great impact on the art world with works in diverse styles such as collage and expressive-abstract painting. Her unique and emotional view of the world of color and form distinguished her works from other artists. Such studies help to identify common thematic concerns such as existentialism, alienation, and the fragmented body while emphasizing the distinctive visual language that Mohasses developed within the specific cultural and political context of Iran. Comparative analyses can also show how Mohasses internalized Western modernism and transformed it into a uniquely Iranian artistic idiom.

2. Interdisciplinary analysis

An interdisciplinary approach that integrates psychology, philosophy, literature, and cultural studies can provide deeper insight into the emotional and intellectual dimensions of Mohasses's work. Examining his art through psychoanalytic theories, existential philosophy, or semiotic frameworks can illuminate his explorations of identity, loneliness, and death. This approach also illuminates how his reclusive personality and philosophical depth shaped the symbolic and narrative layers in his artwork.

3. Archival Development

There is a pressing need for systematic archival research to collect and preserve material related to Mohasses's life and work. Future scholars could focus on collecting and analyzing unpublished writings, interviews, correspondence, sketches, and private

collections. The creation of a dedicated digital or physical archive would provide valuable resources for scholars, curators, and students, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of his artistic evolution and intellectual growth.

4. Influence on Contemporary Art

Further studies could examine how Mohasses's ideas, visual style, and philosophical approach have influenced subsequent generations of Iranian and diaspora artists. By examining the echoes of his thought in contemporary painting, sculpture, and conceptual art, scholars could trace his continuing influence on modern art discourse. Such work would also help redefine his place in the broader genealogy of Iranian modernism and its intersections with global art movements.

5. Exhibition and Curatorial Studies

Future curatorial projects could introduce Mohasses's work to international audiences through retrospectives, thematic exhibitions, and appropriately contextualized museum collaborations. Curatories could focus on framing his art within the global narrative of twentieth-century modernism, while highlighting his intellectual independence and distinct Iranian identity. Such exhibitions could also engage viewers with the philosophical and political undercurrents of his work, encouraging new interpretations and conversations.

6. Translation and Publication

Translating Mohasses' writings, interviews, and critical essays into multiple languages is vital to expanding his global visibility and academic reach. These translations would not only preserve his intellectual legacy but also allow a wider audience to engage directly with his thoughts on art, literature, and culture. Publishing annotated versions and scholarly commentaries can facilitate critical discourse and comparative research across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Detailed characteristics of Mohasses' work periods

The Period	The Period Characteristics
1. Habib Mohammadi Workshop	The first coherent period of Mohasses' work can be considered as the workshop of Habib Mohammadi and about 14-15 years old artist. Most of these works include subjects such as the still life of landscapes and portraits, which were in the style of Habib Mohammadi's Russian realism and were influenced by the intellectual atmosphere prevailing in Rasht at that time.
2. Jalil Ziapour 1948-1954	The arrival of Bahman Mohasses in Tehran around 1948 brought about fundamental changes in his works. Associating with prominent cultural personalities and activists in this field, along with getting acquainted with the currents of contemporary art and learning more about it with Jalil Ziapour, opened a new chapter in the working life and personality of Mohasses. In this period, compared to previous works, Mohasses has a more psychological understanding of the subject. In addition, more realistic works have been made with more payment, such as Mossadegh's portrait. On the other hand, the artist's research in the field of modern art causes him to gain experience in modern styles as well. But he was always interested in Picasso. His influence on Picasso took on a different form and was expressed in the continuance of the inanimate nature of the product.
3. Rome Meeting Hall Exhibition	Mohasses' exploration of the art world, among other factors, eventually paved the way for his trip to Italy. The works of this period can be considered as a continuation of the previous period of work and the continuation of Mohasses' research. The works of this period, compared to previous works, have more individuality and individuality.
4. Abstraction period	A new chapter begins in Mohasses' portfolio, which is based more on abstract experiences than anything else. Spatial abstracts that also evoked the underwater world. In addition to these influences, one can see signs of Italian painters of that time (especially painters of the fifties) in the method of painting and techniques.
5. Phi Phi howls with joy	This special period is dedicated to the works of an exhibition in Mohasses' artistic repertoire. The first reason for this choice can be considered as the significant difference between the works before and after Mohasses with the works of this exhibition. From this exhibition, a critical look at Mohasses' works can be found. This exhibition marked the background of most of Mohasses' fame in Iran. The subjectification of the human body and its personal interpretation of it, along with the deformation of the human face and limbs, are among these cases.

6. The peak in silence	We are witnessing the formation of a new era, in other words, the most famous and successful period of Mohasses' work. In this period, in addition to painting, he also sculpts. Shortly before that, he translated books and directed theater. During this period, he created his works with various subjects, which in a general division include fish, birds, mythical creatures, inanimate nature, metamorphosed humans in machine life or apocalyptic spaces, and some other subjects.
7. Earth subjects	Mohasses' last period of work began in the mid-1970s. He spent a long time without any special exhibitions, despite his isolation for years and his reputation for holding a few exhibitions. Since he does not exhibit works from this period, and due to leaving Iran in 1978 and staying in Italy for a long time, many of his audiences in Iran were unaware of these works for many years. It distances itself from the themes of the previous period, and its subjects once again step on the ground with a look like the past. New topics such as tourists and wealthy women who spend their money in distress. Also, works inspired by the bitter events of their time, such as the story of Halabja, the Gulf War and the like, are among the most common of these. Some of these works also show the artist's great nostalgia for the geography of his birthplace. The biting humor of many of them is somewhat reminiscent of the fifth period of the artist's "Phi Phi" collection. During this period, the colors became more diverse and there was no longer any need for pus colors and special textures. In the last years of the artist's life and for various reasons such as illness, we see collages of him more than anything. According to the works published by the artist, his last collection of sculptures was created around 1983. The severity of the disease, as well as excessive isolation, has prevented the creation of paintings and more sculpture.

