

ART

Asia Society “Iran Modern”

The Asia Society turns up the volume on the polyphonic chorus of global modernism in this standout show of more than a hundred works by twenty-six Iranian artists active during Reza Shah Pahlavi's three decades of imperial rule. Past and present political turbulence thickens the air—the figures in Nicky Nodjoumi's paintings have been bloodied and battered by the regime, and images by the photojournalist Abbas capture Tehran's protesting citizenry on the verge. Still, the years preceding the 1979 Islamist revolution are presented as a cultural golden age. Artists in Tehran had access to international postwar innovations (abstraction, assemblage, Pop) and interpreted or waived, rather than merely parroted, those developments on their own terms. The curators stress that point, but their case is handily made by such pioneering works as Marcos Grigorian's composition of blistered mounds of earth on canvas, from 1963—well before Robert Smithson started eying the dirt in New Jersey. Through Jan. 5.