

The Museum of Modern Art

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INTERNATIONALLY CELEBRATED IRANIAN DIRECTOR RECEIVES FIRST MAJOR FILM RETROSPECTIVE IN NEW YORK AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Salaam Cinema!: The Films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf

June 13-23, 1997

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters 1 and 2

Mohsen Makhmalbaf is one of the most active and innovative artists of Iran's post-revolutionary cinema, known in his country not only for his accomplished filmmaking but also for his novels, plays, and essays. Beginning June 13, The Museum of Modern Art will present *Salaam Cinema!: The Films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf*, a retrospective that includes eleven of Makhmalbaf's fourteen feature films as well as a short documentary made by the director. Of particular interest in the series, which ends June 23, are two documentaries about the filmmaker and his work and *Namay-e Nazdik (Close-up, 1989)*, a narrative film by countryman Abbas Kiarostami in which an appearance by Makhmalbaf underscores his renown in his own country.

Born in an impoverished area of Tehran, Makhmalbaf left school at the age of fifteen to provide for his family, and soon became involved in militant activities against the regime of Shah Raza Pahlavi. Two years later he was imprisoned for attacking a policeman, an incident re-created in his 1996 film *Noun-o-Goldoun (A Moment of Innocence/The Bread and the Vase)*. Released from prison during the 1979 Islamic revolution, he turned his attention to writing, then moved on to film, where he worked as a scriptwriter, editor, and actor.

Salaam Cinema!: The Films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf illustrates the development of the director's style from the early allegorical works, such as *Este'azeh (Fleeing from Evil to God/Seeking Refuge in God, 1984)*, in which the director aligned himself with Islamic religious

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values; through a second period marked by socially and politically engaged films, such as *Baqkot (Boycott, 1985)* and *Biycycle-run (The Cyclist, 1989)*; to the most recent films, such as *Once Upon a Time, Cinema, 1992*, *Salaam Cinema, 1995*, and *A Moment of Innocence, 1996*, which brilliantly conflate documentary and fictional elements.

The films of this later period are critical of Iran's censorious social codes and the making of them has challenged Makhmalbaf, and other Iranian artists, to create, in the director's words, "a cinema of ideas." Five of his films, including *Gabbeh*, have been banned in Iran, where the director is currently preparing his newest film.

Over the course of his career, Makhmalbaf's work has been selected to appear at all the major international film festivals, winning this singular director more than one hundred awards. *Gabbeh* (1995), which had its American debut and received considerable acclaim at the 1996 New York Film Festival, has been acquired by New Yorker Films and will open theatrically on June 25 at the Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. Makhmalbaf's films, with their compassionate explorations of intolerance, poverty, and exploitation, and their poignant admixtures of irony and humanism, are a moving testament to his concern for his culture and people.

Salaam Cinema!: The Films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf was organized by Alberto Barbera, Festival Internazionale Cinema Giovani, Torino, and Alissa Simon, The Film Center, Chicago; with the cooperation of the Farabi Cinema Foundation, Tehran; MK2, Paris; New Yorker Films; Maani Petgar; and Houshang Golmakani. The program was coordinated for The Museum of Modern Art by Adrienne Mancina, Curator, and Jytte Jensen, Assistant Curator, Department of Film and Video.

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You are cordially invited to press screenings for

Salaam Cinema!: The Films of Mohsen Makhmalbaf

**Friday, May 30
The Museum of Modern Art**

- 11:00 *Gong-e Khab-dideh. Zendegi, Asar va Andishehayeh Mohsen Makhmalbaf* (*Stardust-Stricken. Mohsen Makhmalbaf: A Portrait*). 1996. Directed by Houshang Golmakani. Documentary. With Mohsen Makhmalbaf. In Farsi, English subtitles. Video. 70 min.
A fascinating, almost surreal documentary that mixes clips from Makhmalbaf's films with details of the filmmaker's tumultuous life. A rare glimpse into an unusual artist's thinking and development.

- 12:30 *Noun-o-Goldoun (A Moment of Innocence/ The Bread and the Vase)*. 1996. Iran/France. Written and directed by Mohsen Makhmalbaf. With Ali Bakhshi Jozam, Mir Hadi Tayebi, and Ammar Tafti. In Farsi, English subtitles. Courtesy MK2, Paris. 78 min.
The director's most recent film, in which the policeman he stabbed as a teenager and Makhmalbaf himself coach young actors in the re-creation of the stabbing incident. An uncommonly pure and charming film.

To RSVP, please call Graham Leggat at 212 708/9752.

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Members of the press: For more information, photographs, or preview cassettes, please call Graham Leggat at 212/708-9752. For additional information on Museum programs, visit our Web site at www.moma.org.

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