

Iran Colloquium Presents

Domesticity, Consumer Culture, and Modernity in Iran

On the cusp of Iran's entry into modernity, the rules and tenets that had traditionally defined the Iranian home vanished. Subsequently, architects, designers, and commercial advertisers shifted their attention from commercial and public architecture to the new home and its contents. Domesticity and consumer culture also became topics of interest among politicians, Shiite religious scholars, and the Left, who communicated their respective views via the popular media and numerous other means. In the interim, ordinary Iranian families, who were capable of selectively appropriating aspects of their immediate surroundings, demonstrated their resistance toward the officially sanctioned transformations. Through analyzing a series of case studies and appraising a wide range of objects and archival documents—from furnishings, appliances, architectural blueprints, and maps to photographs,



films, TV series, novels, artworks, scrapbooks, work-logs, personal letters and reports— this presentation shows how Iranians have resisted the regulations regarding the separation of public and private life by operating through “in-between” spaces. Emphasizing the voices of everyday people, evoking James C. Scott’s exposés of everyday forms of resistance (as described in his book *Weapons of the Weak*), this presentation hopes to conjure up the realization that the binary notions of controlled and controlling, powerful and powerless, and compliance and defiance, are not always neat and clear-cut. This way of life has also led to a unique approach to home design in Iran. By appropriating the already existing principles of the physical segregation of the sexes and the palpable separation of the public and the private, many architects have adopted a unique style that is neither in conformity with the rules and regulations of the Islamic Republic nor an emulation of the architecture of more open and Western societies. Examining Iran’s recent history through the double lens of domesticity and consumer culture, *this presentation, above all*, demonstrates that a significant component of the modernization process in Iran advanced beyond political and public spheres.

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Pamela Karimi is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. She earned her PhD in the history and theory of art and architecture from MIT in 2009. Her research has been supported by the American Council of Learned Societies, Social Science Research Council, American Association of University Women, the UMass President Creative Economy Initiatives Fund, and Iran Heritage Foundation, among others. She is the author of *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era* (Routledge, 2013) and co-editor of a special journal volume, *Images of the Child and Childhood in Modern Muslim Contexts* (Duke University Press, 2012).

Friday, October 17, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

WLH 207, 100 Wall St.

Light lunch will be provided

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