

Films of Makhmalbaf: Cinema, Politics and Culture in Iran



The rise of Iranian cinema to world prominence over the last few decades is one of the most fascinating cultural stories of our time. There is hardly an international film festival anywhere that does not honor the aesthetic and political explorations of Iranian filmmakers. At the vanguard of this ascent has been Mohsen Makhmalbaf, and no one better personifies Iranian cinema. His life and career have been shaped, and in a way been defined, by the Islamic revolution and the complex historical influences beyond it. Critically, vividly, and sometimes pitilessly, Makhmalbaf's films provide a mirror of Iranian history and culture, both before and after the cataclysm of the revolution. From the start, Makhmalbaf has explored the relationship between the individual and a larger social and political environment. As a result, his work serves as an extended commentary on the historical progression of the Iranian state and its people. And if Makhmalbaf's films are at times polemic, he nonetheless brings a poet's sensibility to urgent and eternal issues--faith, love, regret, suffering, injustice--of the human condition. In *The Films of Makhmalbaf* Eric Egan examines the close and volatile relationship between a highly popular art form and the politics of power in Iranian society. Through a critical analysis of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's films, the book traces the development of Iran's national cinema both before and under the Islamic Republic. An artist whose work is provocative and never far from controversy, Makhmalbaf's films have always been reflexive meditations on the nature of cinema and art within a society. As Iranian society has changed, so his films have progressed, from ardently advocating the declared ideals of the Islamic regime to criticizing the failures of the revolution and examining difficult topics, all the while elucidating the social and political role of art and the artist.

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