

The Iranian New Wave of the 1960's and 70's is thought have been started by three main filmmakers and theorists : Ebrahim Golestan, Farrokh Ghaffari, and Fereydoun Rahnema. (pg 9, Ghorbankarimi) Although the movement has little in ways of concrete theories and approaches to filmmaking, the Iranian New Wave was united in its rejection of the dominant cinema at the time: Film Farsi (a mainstream industry, often considered the Hollywood of Iran). However there were, "common elements and similarities in form and content. Realism, poetic vision, documentary style, and most importantly intellectuality,". (pg 87, Jahed)

Another aspect to the Iranian New Wave is its dedication to public education of both cinema and filmmaking. Ghaffari and Rahnema were both educated in France (pg 8, Ghorbankarimi) and with their knowledge of French Cinema, Ghaffari founded the Kanoon-e Film-e Iran (Iran's Film Club) and started to show foreign documentaries as public exposure to new possibilities in cinema. (pg 409, Aitken) Golestan, on the other hand, took a different approach to education, and he started Iran's first independent film studio and production house, called the *Golestan Film Unit*.

[Title Sequence: The Golestan Film Unit and Iranian Poetic Documentary]

Up to the Golestan Film Unit's establishment, Ebrahim Golestan had been known as a critic and intellectual of both literature and cinema. And it was only in the 1950's that Golestan started his filmmaking career. He started making newsreels and short documentaries for the Iran Oil Company and U.S. NBC and CBC television. (pg 31, Jahed) In 1955 the Golestan Film Unit came into existence.

[clip from Lezione di Cinema Interview (6:00 - 6:45)]

And it was with this untrained group of five that Golestan started to work on a series of six short documentaries about oil production, and this series became the first Iranian films to win international acclaim. (pg 32, Jahed) *Yek Atash (Fire)* (1961) was to become the most seen and celebrated of the six films, and of Golestan's work yet. With the production of this series, Golestan became known as, "the pioneer of the poetic documentary." (pg 409, Aitken) In *Yek Atash* in particular, Golestan's poetic style, "was conveyed through the tempo and rhythm of the images and a flowing narration by Golestan himself." (pg 33, Jahed).

Of the five people a part of the Golestan Film Unit's origin, Feroz Farrokhzad is perhaps the most well-known. She had her first experiences working in film as editor and sometimes director's assistant at the Golestan Film Unit, including working as the editor of *Yek Atash*, which took two years to complete. (Brookshaw) Farrokhzad's work at the Golestan Film Unit led her to be seen as the other pillar of Iranian poetic documentary, and this position was reinforced with the making of her own film, *The House is Black (Khaneh Siah Ast)* (1963)

In 1962, the Golestan Film Unit was commissioned to make a documentary about by The Society for Aid to Lepers, and Farrokhzad both directed and edited the film, becoming one of Iran's first female documentary makers. (Brookshaw) *The House is Black* exemplifies Iranian Poetic Documentary in its weaving together of both strong poetic narration, and visual realism. The narration consists of passages from both Farrokhzad's own poetry, and from the Quran as well.

[clips from *The House is Black*]

The House is Black was Farrokhzad's last film before her untimely death at the age of thirty-two in an automobile accident, but won several international awards and is still a highly

regarded film in Iranian New Wave, Iranian Poetic Documentary, and in Iran's film history generally.

The House is Black and *Yek Atash* both became landmark films of the Iranian Poetic Documentary, paved the way for the coming decades of the Iranian New Wave, and had great effect on future directors of Iran's flourishing cinema of the 1980's and 90's. (pg 10, Ghorbankarimi)

Ebrahim Golestan and Forough Farrokhzad worked their backgrounds in literature into a new form of cinema for Iran: one of poetic narration that connects to Iran's longstanding literary tradition, the use of editing as poetry in itself, and the finding of subject and inspiration in reality. Far ahead of their time, but also a needed instigation of change in Iranian cinema, Golestan and Farrokhzad revolutionized Iranian documentary and the direction of Iranian film permanently.

Bibliography

Aitken, Ian. *The Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2013. Print.

Brookshaw, Dominic Parviz. *Forugh Farrokhzad, Poet of Modern Iran: Iconic Woman and Feminine Pioneer of New Persian Poetry*. London: Tauris, 2010. Print.

Ghorbankarimi, Maryam. *A Colourful Presence: the Evolution of Womens Representation in Iranian Cinema*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars P., 2015. Print.

Jahed, Parviz. *Directory of World Cinema: Iran*. Chicago, IL: Intellect, 2012. Print.

Lezione di Cinema

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKSFKce83qg>