

MoMA PS1

FIRST LARGE-SCALE RETROSPECTIVE OF THEATER DIRECTOR AND PLAYWRIGHT REZA ABDOH ON VIEW THIS SUMMER AT MoMA PS1

Reza Abdoh

June 3–September 3, 2018

3rd Floor, MoMA PS1

Long Island City, NY – June 3, 2018 – MoMA PS1 presents the first major retrospective of pioneering theater director and playwright Reza Abdoh (Iranian-American, 1963–95), who was one of the most compelling figures in American experimental theater when he died of AIDS-related complications in 1995 at only 32 years old. Abdoh’s provocative and challenging work confronted the humanitarian catastrophe of the AIDS epidemic and the culture wars of the Reagan era, investigating a range of urgent social issues that remain equally relevant today, including those surrounding sexual orientation, gender, race, class, and privilege. *Reza Abdoh* is on view through September 3, 2018.

Over the course of his short career, Reza Abdoh created hallucinatory theater productions that collaged together strategies of the theatrical avant-garde with fairy tales, myth, BDSM, queer club culture, and cable television. His fast-paced, immersive productions pushed actors—and audiences—to their limits with sophisticated layerings of sound, video, dance, speech and song. Featuring unusual, disorienting sets, these performances were often staged in alternative spaces such as abandoned warehouses, seedy motels, and city streets in Los Angeles and New York. His productions often incorporated deliberately provocative and often disturbing portrayals of racism, sexism, and homophobia that could be deeply troubling for viewers—holding a mirror up to American culture to denounce its hypocrisies and injustices.

Reza Abdoh brings together extensive documentation of Abdoh’s life and work, including scripts, notebooks, photographs, video works, and other ephemera assembled in collaboration with members of his original theater company. The exhibition is framed by a large-scale, multimedia timeline tracing Abdoh’s life and work authored by *Bidoun*, a platform for Middle Eastern art and culture, which situates his work in relation to contemporary events in both Iran and the United States. Video recordings of Abdoh’s plays have also been re-constructed, re-mastered, and re-edited by *Bidoun*. The exhibition features new, multichannel installations, concluding with a monumental installation based on his groundbreaking 1991 production *Bogeyman*.

Reza Abdoh was born in 1963 in Tehran. He moved to England at the age of fourteen and, at sixteen, in the midst of the Iranian Revolution, to the United States. He briefly attended the University of Southern California. In 1986, he began staging plays at the legendary Los Angeles Theater Center. Over the next nine years, he would write and direct over a dozen plays between Los Angeles and New York, make a feature film as well as countless videos (in collaboration with the videographer Adam Soch) that were both integrated into his sets and existed as stand-alone art pieces. With his theater group dar a luz, he is best known for the productions *Father Was a Peculiar Man* (1990), *The Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice* (1990), *Bogeyman* (1991), *The Law of Remains* (1992), *Tight Right White* (1993), and *Quotations*

From a Ruined City (1994). He passed away in 1995, at the age of 32. In 1996, he posthumously received a Bessie Choreographer and Creator Award for Sustained Achievement.

Reza Abdoh is co-organized by Klaus Biesenbach, Director, MoMA PS1 and Chief Curator at Large, The Museum of Modern Art; and Negar Azimi, Tiffany Malakooti, and Babak Radboy for Bidoun. The presentation at MoMA PS1 is organized with Jocelyn Miller, Assistant Curator, and Oliver Shultz, Curatorial Assistant, MoMA PS1.

The exhibition is co-produced with the KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, where it will be presented from February 2 to April 29, 2019 and organized in collaboration with Krist Gruijthuisen, Director.

In conjunction with *Reza Abdoh*, a program of screenings and conversations will take place at The Museum of Modern Art addressing the transgressive nature of Abdoh's practice and presenting the artist's rarely-seen film and media works. Further details and participants to be announced.

Reza Abdoh is supported by The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Additional funding is provided by the MoMA PS1 Annual Exhibition Fund.

About MoMA PS1: MoMA PS1 is devoted to today's most experimental, thought-provoking contemporary art. Founded in 1976 as the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, it was the first nonprofit arts center in the United States devoted solely to contemporary art and is recognized as a defining force in the alternative space movement. In 2000 The Museum of Modern Art and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center merged, creating the largest platform for contemporary art in the country and one of the largest in the world. Functioning as a living, active meeting place for the general public, MoMA PS1 is a catalyst for ideas, discourses, and new trends in contemporary art.

Hours: MoMA PS1 is open from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Thursday through Monday. Closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission: \$10 suggested donation; \$5 for students and senior citizens; free for New York City residents, MoMA members, and MoMA admission ticket holders within 14 days of visit. Free admission as a Gift to New Yorkers made possible by the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation.

Directions: MoMA PS1 is located at 22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Ave in Long Island City, Queens, across the Queensboro Bridge from midtown Manhattan. Traveling by subway, take the E, M, or 7 to Court Sq; or the G to Court Sq or 21 St-Van Alst. By bus, take the Q67 to Jackson and 46th Ave or the B62 to 46th Ave.

Information: For general inquiries, call (718) 784-2084 or visit momaps1.org.

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