



Inv. no. 28/2014

CAT. 58. "A COUPLE MAKING LOVE SPIED UPON." MINIATURE
PASTED ON AN ALBUM LEAF. SIGNED BY MIRZA BABA

IRAN; C. 1850

THE MINIATURE H: 26; W: 17.7 CM

Erotic motifs became more widespread in Iran from the end of the 18th century. In many cases, the paintings were inspired by Western art, something that can be seen in the milieu as well as in the often slightly caricatured figures. In this case, an intimate scene is enacted in a European-style interior, with red draperies in the background and a Neo-classical chair on which the man is seated.

The woman matches the period's female ideal with her round head and eyebrows meeting above the nose, and her other attributes are emphasized by her transparent blouse. The scene is actually quite innocent, and the erotic element cannot be read in the couple's expressionless faces.

The tryst will soon move in a more explicit sexual direction, however, as the young man's hand is on its way down under the woman's dress.

The scene's controversial character is moreover emphasized by the three women outside the windows. The slightly caricatured types are reacting in different ways to the couple are an angry black slave, a wronged older rival of the young woman, and an old, experienced woman who, in contrast, does not seem especially surprised by the scene.