

Siah Armajani

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احمد شاملو

Alexander Gray Associates

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October 27–December 17, 2016

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The Tomb Series 2015–2016

“Death has not required us to keep a day free.” Samuel Beckett

The mourners, after entering the garden, made a left turn and walked slowly for about eighty feet and then stopped. They stopped at the right place, the furthest corner from the house. They were brought bowls of rose water and they washed their hands and then dried them with fresh towels. This they repeated three times and then walked toward the house, climbing three steps and entering the portico. They went to their rooms and changed into black shirts and dresses and then joined the other mourners and started to cry for days to come. Until the fortieth day of her death the radio was silent, there was no music and no lights except in her room where a candle was burning. Day after day the kitchen was busy, morning to night, preparing food.

On the other side of the world it was quite different for Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was arrested on April 9, 1943, and executed on April 9, 1945, alone in silence until May 30, 1945, when the world learned of his death.

Bonhoeffer, the Existentialist Christian theologian, rose up to kill *evil* itself. He joined with any plot to rid Germany of *evil*. He visited clergy and revealed his fears in lectures and sermons. He met with fellow travelers in the clergy and among parishioners. He struggled day in and day out to fire up the leading Existentialist theologians Karl Barth and Paul Tillich to stand up for a clear statement.

They did not.

And the Clergy of the Church did not.

They all capitulated with ashes in their mouths.



Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016

"The death of the poet was kept from his poems."

W. H. Auden writes in memory of W. B. Yeats:

"He disappeared in the dead of winter:

The brook was frozen, the airports almost deserted and snow disfigured the public statues.

The day of his death was a cold day.

Far from his illness

The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests

The peasant river was untempted by fashionable quays;

By mourning tongues

The death of the poet was kept from his poems."

Auden shouted out John Ashbery's prominence.

And Ashbery wrote on Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and translated it from his native language to his native language. Translating any poem from one language into another is speculative and capricious; John Ashbery's astonishing translation of Rimbaud's *Illuminations* renders other translations suspect and useless.

John Ashbery also wrote on Frank O'Hara:

*"His career stands on an unrevised work-in-progress; the fact that parts of it are now missing or unfinished is unimportant, except as an indicator of the temporal, fluctuating quality that runs through his work and is one of its major innovations."**

"I can't even enjoy a blade of grass unless I know there's a subway handy, or a record store as some other sign that people do not totally regret life."

Frank O'Hara

"Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem." Walt Whitman

Richard Rorty was Whitman's and Dewey's best continuum of Progressive Pragmatism. Rorty is the author of *The Mirror of Nature; Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity; The Consequences Pragmatism; Achieving Our Country.*

Whitman and Dewey did struggle for social justice as central for their country's moral identity.

After forty days, death became permanent and the mourners drifted apart. But the house did not come back for a full year.

Siah Armajani, Minneapolis, October 2016



Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016



Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016



Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016



100 and One Dead Poets, 2016

[The page is filled with dense, handwritten text in Arabic script, written diagonally across the page. The text is very small and difficult to read in detail.]



[A small block of handwritten text in Arabic script, positioned to the right of the bird drawing.]



[A small block of handwritten text in Arabic script, positioned to the right of the pear drawing.]

100 and One Dead Poets, detail, 2016

Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016

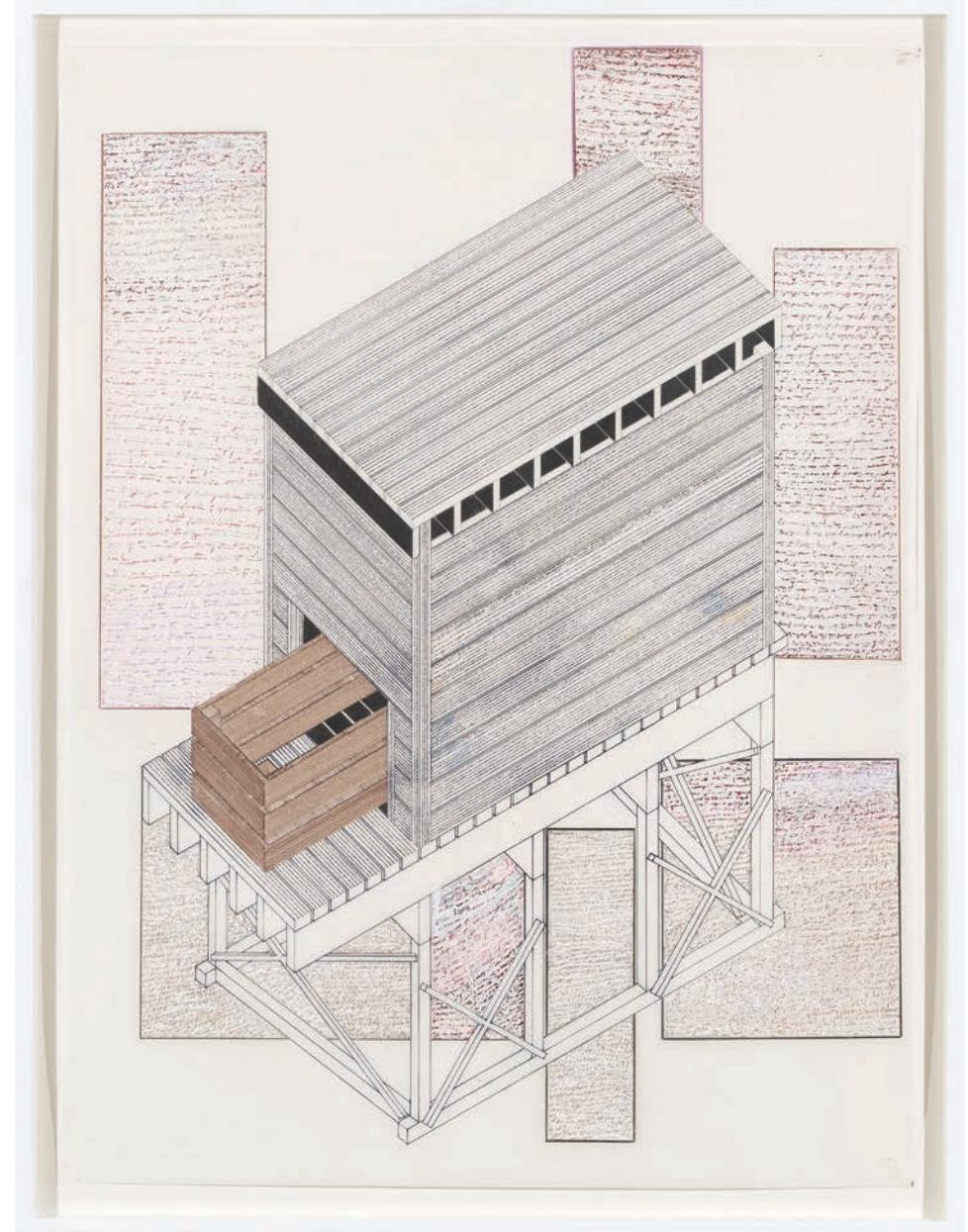




Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016



Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016



Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016



Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016



Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016



Written Iran, detail, 2015–16



Written Iran, 2015–16
Following spread: Detail

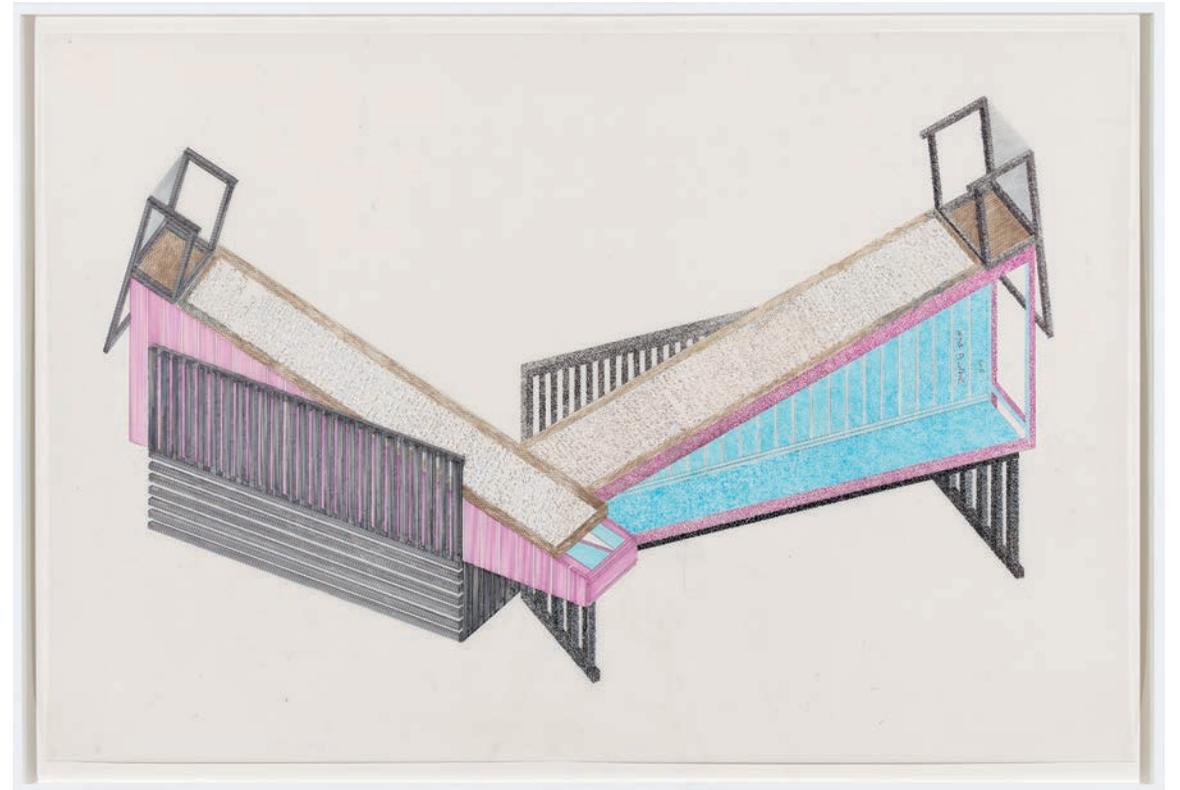


Handwritten Arabic text in a cursive script, covering the upper portion of the architectural structure. The text is densely packed and follows the contours of the walls and arches.

Handwritten Arabic text in a cursive script, covering the middle section of the architectural structure. The text is densely packed and follows the contours of the walls and arches.

Handwritten Arabic text in a cursive script, covering the lower portion of the architectural structure. The text is densely packed and follows the contours of the walls and arches.





Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016

Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016

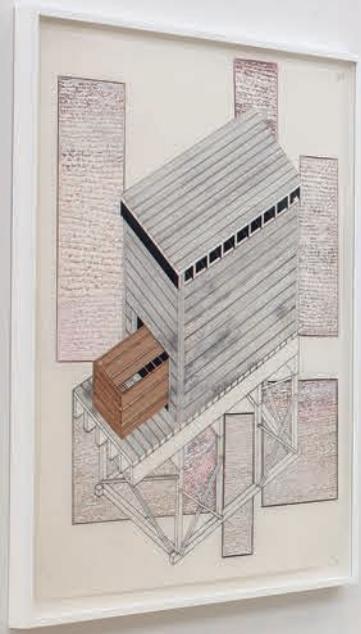




Above: 100 and One Dead Poets, 2015-16
Left: Detail



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016





Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016

Siah Armajani (b.1939) was born in Iran and moved to the United States in 1960 to attend Macalester College in Minnesota, where he continues to live and work. His sculptures and public works, informed by his democratic and populist ideals, exist between the boundaries of art and architecture. With nearly one hundred projects realized internationally since the 1960s, Armajani is recognized as a leading figure in conceptualizing the role and function of public art.

As a student in Tehran, Armajani was drawn to American philosophers and writers, and later studied American populist thought as a philosophy major in the U.S. These early theoretical interests continue to catalyze his work, taking form in objects and architectural spaces designed in homage to literary, philosophical, and political figures. American vernacular architecture has been a consistent visual motif in Armajani's practice, and is embodied in his public works, including bridges, gardens, and outdoor structures. Armajani's *Tombs*, his most recent sculptures series, are uninhabitable glass and wood structures that reference both American modernist and vernacular architecture, paying tribute to figures who have informed and inspired Armajani's art and ideology.

Armajani's most celebrated public art works are bridges, walkways, and gardens, including the *Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge*, Minneapolis, MN; the World Financial Center's promenade (in collaboration with Scott Burton and Cesar Pelli), Battery Park City, New York; *Gazebo for Two Anarchists* at Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, NY; *Floating Poetry Room*, Ijborg, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; *Bridge for Iowa City*, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA; and numerous gardens at Villa Arson Museum, Nice, France. Armajani was commissioned to design the Cauldron for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Celebration in Atlanta, GA.

Armajani has been the subject of over fifty solo exhibitions since 1978; including surveys and retrospectives at Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City, MO (2016); Parasol Unit, London (2013); Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO (2008); Musee d'art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland (2007, tour); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (1999, tour); Villa Arson, Nice, France (1994); Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles, CA (1992); Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland (1987); Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster, Germany (1987, tour); and ICA Philadelphia, PA (1985). His work has been included in extensive group exhibitions, including *Passages in Modern Art: 1954–1966*, Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX (2016); *Cycle Des Histoires Sans Fin, Séquence Automne-Hiver 2015–2016*, Musée d'art Moderne

et Contemporain (MAMCO), Geneva (2015); *Art Expanded, 1958–1978* and *Art at the Center: 75 Years of Walker Collections*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN (2014); *Iran Modern*, Asia Society, New York (2013); *Spectacular of the Vernacular*, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN (2011); *Word Into Art: Artists of the Modern Middle East*, British Museum, London (2006); Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, PA (1988); *Sculptur Projekte Münster '87*, Germany (1987); *International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (1984); Biennial of American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1981); 39th Venice Biennale, American Pavilion, Italy (1980); *Information*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (1970); and Documenta 5 (1972), 7 (1982) and 8 (1987), Kassel, Germany.

Armajani's work is in numerous public collections, including the Art Institute of Chicago, IL; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; British Museum, London; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Menil Collection, Houston, TX; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, MN; Musee d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX; National Gallery, Washington, DC; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MI; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN.



Installation view, Alexander Gray Associates, New York, 2016

List of Illustrated Works

Sculptures

Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016
Painted wood and ink
77h x 84w x 38d in
(195.58h x 213.36w x 96.52d cm)

Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016
Mixed media
42h x 79w x 32d in
(106.68h x 200.66w x 81.28d cm)

Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016
Painted wood
54h x 103w x 65d in
(137.16h x 261.62w x 165.1d cm)

Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016
Mixed media
66h x 24w x 89d in
(167.64h x 60.96w x 226.06d cm)

Models

100 and One Dead Poets, 2015–16
Painted wood and ink
47.25h x 7.75w x 7.75d in
(120.02h x 19.68w x 19.68d cm)

Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016
Painted wood and ink
45h x 31w x 38d in
(114.3h x 78.74w x 96.52d cm)

Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016
Mixed media
16.5h x 33w x 12d in
(41.91h x 83.82w x 30.48d cm)

Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016
Painted wood and concrete
24h x 24w x 24d in
(60.96h x 60.96w x 60.96d cm)

Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016
Painted balsa and aluminum
19h x 15.5w x 15.5d in
(48.26h x 39.37w x 39.37d cm)

Drawings

Written Iran, 2015–16
Ink on mylar
36h x 192w in (91.44h x 487.68w cm)

Tomb for Richard Rorty, 2016
Ink on mylar
40h x 30w in (101.6h x 76.2w cm)

Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2016
Ink on mylar
36h x 60w in (91.44h x 152.4w cm)

Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2016
Ink on mylar
36h x 24w in (91.44h x 60.96w cm)

Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud, 2016
Ink on mylar
40h x 60w in (101.6h x 152.4w cm)

100 and One Dead Poets, 2016
Ink on mylar
40h x 168w in (101.6h x 426.72w cm)

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Siah Armajani

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Cover image: *Written Iran*, detail, 2015–16, ink on mylar, 36h x 192w in (91.44h x 487.68w cm)

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*John Ashbery quotation. "Introduction" to *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, edited by Donald Allen. Copyright 1971, 2004 by John Ashbery. Used by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc., for the author. All rights reserved.

Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Alexander Gray Associates spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the mid- to late-Twentieth Century. Influential in cultural, social, and political spheres, these artists are notable for creating work that crosses geographic borders, generational contexts and artistic disciplines. Alexander Gray Associates is a member of the Art Dealers Association of America.

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