

Siah Armajani



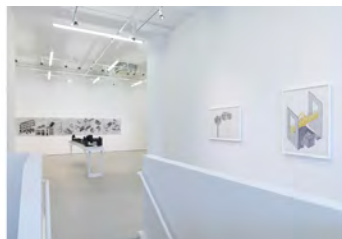
Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates

Siah Armajani, Tomb for Neema, 2012

Time Out says

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The designer of the Olympic torch for the 1996 Atlanta Games, Armajani is known for public art projects inspired by poets, philosophers and historical personages he admires. He also creates architectural constructions and drawings for indoors, which often refer to the pitched-



roof houses and bridges around Minneapolis, the Iranian artist's home for more than 50 years. His debut at Alexander Gray Associates represents his 20th solo show in New York since 1979, and in it, he presents recent works on paper, as well as sculptures from his "Tomb Series" commemorating significant figures from the United States and Iran.

Tomb for Sacco and Vanzetti pays tribute to the two Italian-born anarchists wrongfully convicted and executed in 1927 for allegedly committing an armed robbery in Massachusetts. Their deaths are memorialized by a brick-and-wood structure resembling a chimney. Stairs lead to a bolted door, while on the left, a pair of stacked wooden coffin shapes burst through a side wall, as if the two were trying to escape their fate.

Iranian poet Nima Yooshij (cited as the father of modern Persian poetry) is the subject of *Tomb for Neema*, a sarcophagus-like form balanced atop a stovepipe jutting through a cedar-shingled dormer laid on the gallery floor. Open shutters on two sides suggest a metaphoric passage from one plane of existence to the next.

Turning from the past, Armajani summons the present in an 18-foot drawing on Mylar, depicting his neighborhood. Covered with Farsi script, it's as good a reminder as any of a rich and varied career navigating dual cultures.—*Paul Laster*