

Alexander Gray Associates

Art Basel 2015

Art Feature Sector | Booth T11



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Siah Armajani: *Bridges*

Alexander Gray Associates presents recent and historical work by Siah Armajani (b.1939), highlighting the artist's ongoing interest and study of bridges. Reflecting on the bridge as both the physical embodiment of a connecting structure and a conceptual framework has enabled Armajani to cross cultural spheres between his native Persian and adopted American cultures, becoming one of the first architectural elements, and the most enduring, to appear as a repeating motif in his six-decade practice.

Armajani moved to the United States from Iran in 1960 to study philosophy at Macalester College in Minnesota. While his early education in Tehran and exposure to Persian literature and poetry was key to his connection with the symbolic meaning of bridges, it was during this time when his interest in American vernacular architecture grew and the physical structure emerged in his practice. In his 1960s objects, including *Paul Bunyan's Matchsticks* (1968), Armajani deconstructed the truss systems of wood bridges, providing the basis for his later models and celebrated public works. *House Before the Bridge* and *House Above the Bridge* (both 1974–1975) continue Armajani's conceptual exploration, re-creating the simple construction techniques of early American bridges and the parallel wooden planks used to build farmhouses, yet undermine the assumptions that a bridge should span something physical, and a house must provide shelter. Rather, the bridge stands as symbol for passage, both material and psychological. The reflection of the large-scale sculpture, *Street Corner No. 3* (1995), encourages this symbolic nature by establishing a new sense of place as much as articulating an existing one.

Fusing multiple experiences through art is a pivotal idea in Armajani's vision and production, exemplified in his literary and cultural interests that are not bound by his Iranian heritage, but also in his ongoing engagement with European and American philosophers, writers and thinkers. Drawing on this connection, are his early calligraphic works from the 1950s with his most recent drawings from the "Tomb Series" (1972—ongoing), including *Tomb for Frank O'Hara* (2015), which pay homage to those who have inspired his artistic philosophy.

Alexander Gray Associates is a contemporary art gallery in New York. Through exhibitions, research, and artist representation, the Gallery spotlights artistic movements and artists who emerged in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Influential in political, social and cultural 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.



Street Corner No. 3, 1995, painted wood and bronze
60h x 145.75w x 18.25d in (152.4h x 370.21w x 46.36d cm)



Tomb for Frank O'Hara, 2015, felt pen on graph paper
36h x 24w in (91.44h x 60.96w cm)



Paul Bunyan's Matchsticks, 1968, mixed media
14.75h x 70.75w in (37.47h x 179.71w cm)

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Cover: *House Above the Bridge*, detail, 1974–75, mixed media
10.25h x 18w x 4.75d in (26.04h x 45.72w x 12.07d cm)
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