

Exhibitions

David Ebony's Top 10 New York Gallery Shows for November

Sweep away your post-election blues.

David Ebony (<https://news.artnet.com/about/david-ebony-203>), November 26, 2016



Installation view, Siah Armajani, showing, in foreground, *Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 2016.
Photo Courtesy Alexander Gray Associates.

3. Siah Armajani at Alexander Gray Associates, through December 17.

Viewing Siah Armajani's exhibition of recent works a few days after the election perfectly suited my reflective mood. Most of the pieces on view are new additions to the Iranian-born, Minnesota-based artist's ongoing "Tomb Series" of sculptures, drawings, and installations commemorating martyrs, activists, artists and writers. Previous works included *Tomb for Sacco and Vanzetti* (2009), and "tombs" for writers Walt Whitman, and Theodor Adorno. The new group features imaginative crypts for the late poets Frank O'Hara and Arthur Rimbaud, and the philosopher Richard Rorty, who died in 2007.

Outstanding among the new pieces is *Tomb for Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (2016), a tribute to the German writer and outspoken critic of the Nazi party, who was imprisoned in 1943, and executed in the Flossenbürg concentration camp two weeks before Allies liberated the place. It is an uncanny, coffin-like wood object painted bright red, and mounted on two saw horses, with lateral doors opened to reveal a noose, the manner of Bonhoeffer's death.

Despite the subject matter, the overall tone of the exhibition is hopeful rather than morbid. I went through the show with painter Elliott Green, who focused on Armajani's vast (40 by 223 inches), panoramic ink drawing on paper, *Written Iran* (2015-2016), pointing out the consistently eccentric perspectives in the details of Persian architecture throughout the composition. In this meticulous line drawing, the urban scene, referencing landmark buildings in Isfahan, interspersed with dense passages of classic Persian poems rendered in calligraphy by the artist's hand, is part of a personal vision, arcane and somehow futuristic.