



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF WORK BY  
IRANIAN ARTIST MONIR FARMANFARMAIAN**

*Featuring her celebrated mirror sculptures, drawings, textiles and collages*

**ATLANTA, Nov. 17, 2022** — Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (1922-2019) was one of Iran’s most celebrated and revered visual artists, known internationally for her geometric mirror sculptures that combined the mathematical order and beauty of ancient Persian architectural motifs with the forms and patterns of hard-edged, postwar abstraction. The High Museum of Art presents the first posthumous exhibition of her work in an American museum with “Monir Farmanfarmaian: A Mirror Garden” (Nov. 18, 2022-April 9, 2023).

The exhibition was inspired by the High’s 2019 acquisition of Farmanfarmaian’s 2012 cut-mirror sculpture “Untitled (Muqarnas)” (2012) and her 2014 drawing “Untitled (Circles and Squares).” “Muqarnas” was acquired with funds from the Farideh & Al Azadi Foundation as part of a significant gift to The Woodruff Arts Center, of which the High is an arts partner, to purchase and present work by Persian artists.

“‘Untitled (Murqarnas)’ is among the most popular works on view in our collection galleries. We are delighted to present more of Farmanfarmaian’s work, and in doing so, provide a broader context for understanding her creative process and practice,” said Rand Suffolk, the High’s Nancy and Holcombe T. Green, Jr., director.

The High’s Wieland Family curator of modern and contemporary art, Michael Rooks, added, “We are honored to recognize Farmanfarmaian’s importance as a singular creative force through this exhibition. For generations of artists in post-revolution Iran, Farmanfarmaian represents the paradigm of an independent artist whose work was unfettered by the histories and customs of its context but existed in conversation with contemporary art practices across cultures. At the same time, her work reflects a deep understanding of and reverence for Iranian culture.”

The exhibition’s title is borrowed from Farmanfarmaian’s 2007 memoir, co-authored by Zara Houshmand, which evokes the visual splendor of the artist’s mirror-mosaic sculptures. The



Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (Iranian, 1922-2019), “Untitled (Muqarnas),” 2012, mirror, reverse-glass painting, and plaster on wood, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, purchase with funds from the Farideh & Al Azadi Foundation, 2019.174.

more than 60 works on view in the exhibition include a selection of sculptures, drawings, textiles and collages spanning four decades, from 1974 to 2018. Early drawings explore the infinitude of geometrical space and the countless possible variations of geometric pattern, while her series “Nomadic Tents,” from the late 1970s, employs different combinations of form based on the triangle. Farmanfarmaian’s “Nomadic Tents” refer to the nomadic tribes of Iran whom the artist studied in her youth and foreshadow the artist’s diasporic relationship to her homeland following the Iranian Revolution in 1979.

Additionally, the exhibition features a selection of rarely seen “Heartache Boxes,” small-scale assemblages that comprise a poetic visual memoir of the artist’s life at midcareer. Begun after the death of her husband in 1991, the elaborately crafted “Heartache Boxes” are arranged with objects related to longing, memory and dreams. They include prints, photographs and a variety of objects that refer to the artist’s life, times and career, including miniature images of her early work and references to her “lost” life in Tehran before the Iranian Revolution.

The exhibition also includes a range of the artist’s mirror-mosaic sculptures across the arc of her career. Farmanfarmaian’s best known sculptures unite fragments of mirror and reverse-glass painting in resplendent mosaic designs, employing a 17th-century Persian technique called *aine-kari*. Some of her earliest mosaics were made in the shape of mirrored balls, such as “Mirror Ball” (1974), which demonstrates the endless possibilities for mosaic patterning on a sphere. Farmanfarmaian’s mirrored balls prefigure the artist’s later sculpture, notable for its intricate patterning and complex form.

Among late works in the exhibition, “Untitled (Muqarnas),” from the High’s collection, refers to the honeycombed ceilings in Persian shrines and palaces, while its wing-like forms recall the wings of the Faravahar, an ancient Zoroastrian symbol tied to Persian cultural identity. Another late work, titled “Gabbeh” (2009), features a triangular pattern formed by overlapping hexagons that serves as the foundation for an irregular combination of colorful polygons, arcs and diagonals. Its title refers to a type of Persian carpet produced by nomadic weavers. The exhibition also includes a selection of silk carpets designed by Farmanfarmaian.

Between 2010 and 2014, Farmanfarmian produced a series of works she called “families”—five groupings of eight sculptures based on the eight regular polygons in Euclidian geometry. The exhibition features all eight geometric shapes drawn from multiple “families.” The variation of form, pattern and structure in the families demonstrate the advanced complexity of the artist’s concept while more broadly exhibiting the fluidity of geometry and the fundamental mathematical principles at the center of Farmanfarmaian’s practice.

The exhibition is presented on the Second Level of the High’s Anne Cox Chambers Wing.

### **About the Artist**

Born in Qazvin, Iran, in 1922, Farmanfarmaian studied at the College of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran in the early 1940s, later traveling to New York to further her education.

There she attended Parsons School of Design, Cornell University and the Arts Student League. In New York, Farmanfarmaian absorbed the development of geometric abstraction and observed its burgeoning permutations in contemporary art. Her community of artist friends and colleagues there included Milton Avery, Alexander Calder, Joan Mitchell, Louise Nevelson, Frank Stella, Andy Warhol and others. These experiences, combined with her deep knowledge of Iranian arts and crafts, resulted in her personal vision for a truly global modernity.

Following her marriage in 1957, the artist returned to Iran, where she began to study, collect and preserve the traditional decorative arts of her home country. However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution led Farmanfarmaian and her family back to New York, where they would remain in exile for the next 26 years. In 2004, Farmanfarmaian moved back to Tehran, reestablishing a studio where she worked with some of the same craftspeople she had known in the 1970s.

The artist first received significant attention in 1958, when she was awarded a gold medal for her work in the Iranian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, leading to exhibitions in Tehran, Paris and New York. Since then, her work has been shown at major institutions and in exhibitions worldwide. Most recently, major retrospective exhibitions of her work have been presented at the Sharjah Art Foundation, UAE; the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Fundação de Serralves, Museu de Arte Contemporânea, Porto.

Farmanfarmaian's work is included in important public collections around the world including the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Museum of Modern Art, Tehran; Tate Modern, London; and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

She is the subject of the monograph "Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian: Cosmic Geometry," edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist, and is the co-author of her autobiography, "A Mirror Garden" (Knopf, 2007). In December 2017, the Monir Museum opened in Tehran, the only museum dedicated to a single female artist in Iran.

## **Related Programs**

### **[A Mirror Garden Experience](#)**

Sunday, Nov. 20, 2022

6 to 9:30 p.m.

Benefactor packages from \$500 to \$5,000

This partnership between the High and the restaurant Rumi's Kitchen will tantalize you with the sights, sounds and cuisine of Persian elegance. Please join the High to celebrate the "[Monir Farmanfarmaian: A Mirror Garden](#)" exhibition at the Museum and enjoy an exhibition-inspired, chef-guided multi-course dinner with wine pairings at Rumi's Kitchen. This is an exclusive pop-up experience, not to be missed. The dinner will be followed by a champagne reception and tour of the exhibition. Benefactor packages also include additional benefits.

### **Teen Art Afternoon: Reflecting on the Year**

Saturday, Jan. 7, 2023

2 to 4 p.m.

Free for teens

At this event, teens can reflect on the past year by making crafts with mirrors and light, inspired by the work of Iranian artist Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian. *Support for Teen Programming is provided by Molly Blank Foundation.*

### **Inquiring Minds: Monir Farmanfarmaian**

Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2023

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Members: \$14; Not-yet-members: \$18

Registration required

Curious about ["Monir Farmanfarmaian: A Mirror Garden"](#)? Inquiring Minds invites participants to explore the exhibition through small group conversation. How does Farmanfarmaian combine ancient Persian motifs with cutting-edge contemporary design? What recurring themes can you see in her works? How has her work changed and expanded throughout her lifetime? During this program, you will explore these questions and more through close looking and group discussion. Come as you are and share your observations and opinions.

### **Author Talk: Zara Houshmand**

Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023

7 to 8 p.m.

Members: Free; Not-yet-members: \$20

Zara Houshmand, coauthor of Farmanfarmaian's memoir "A Mirror Garden," will share her experiences of collaborating with the artist on a book that draws on their overlapping experiences and memories of life as young women in Iran. Between the two, empathy becomes a conscious creative tool that bridges very different art forms for an intimate expression of personality and an open-ended exploration of form.

### **Monir in the Mirror of Contemporary Art**

Thursdays, Feb. 23-March 16, 2023 (Virtual Program)

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Members: \$200; Not-yet-members: \$250

Registration required

This online class will examine the diverse artistic and cultural contributions of Farmanfarmaian within the historical context of Iranian and global art practice since the 1940s. Led by Kaveh Rafie and Leili Adibfar, Ph.D. candidates at the University of Illinois Chicago, class sessions will focus on the artist's early life and work in Iran, her experience of living and working in New York, and her participation in culturally diplomatic exchanges between the two nations. The class will review Farmanfarmaian's vast experimentations with various media and techniques, including reverse glass painting and mirror work, as well as the legacy of mirror work in contemporary Iranian art.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

“Monir Farmanfarman: A Mirror Garden” is organized by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. This exhibition is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsor Delta Airlines, Inc.; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters ACT Foundation, Inc., Sarah and Jim Kennedy, Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot, Harry Norman Realtors, and wish foundation; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporters Robin and Hilton Howell; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters The Antinori Foundation, Corporate Environments, the Arthur R. and Ruth D. Lautz Charitable Foundation, Elizabeth and Chris Willett; Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Farideh and Al Azadi, Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Mr. and Mrs. Robin E. Delmer, Marcia and John Donnell, Mrs. Peggy Foreman, Helen C. Griffith, Mrs. Fay S. Howell/The Howell Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, Dr. Joe B. Massey, Margot and Danny McCaul, the Ron and Lisa Brill Family Charitable Trust, Wade A. Rakes and Nicholas T. Miller, the Fred and Rita Richman Fund, USI Insurance Services and Mrs. Harriet H. Warren. Generous support is also provided by the Alfred and Adele Davis Exhibition Endowment Fund, Anne Cox Chambers Exhibition Fund, Barbara Stewart Exhibition Fund, Dorothy Smith Hopkins Exhibition Endowment Fund, Eleanor McDonald Storza Exhibition Endowment Fund, the Fay and Barrett Howell Exhibition Fund, Forward Arts Foundation Exhibition Endowment Fund, Helen S. Lanier Endowment Fund, Isobel Anne Fraser–Nancy Fraser Parker Exhibition Endowment Fund, John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Exhibition Endowment Fund, Katherine Murphy, Riley Special Exhibition Endowment Fund, Margaretta Taylor Exhibition Fund, and RJR Nabisco Exhibition Endowment Fund.

### **About the High Museum of Art**

Located in the heart of Atlanta, the High Museum of Art connects with audiences from across the Southeast and around the world through its distinguished collection, dynamic schedule of special exhibitions and engaging community-focused programs. Housed within facilities designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architects Richard Meier and Renzo Piano, the High features a collection of more than 18,000 works of art, including an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American fine and decorative arts; major holdings of photography and folk and self-taught work, especially that of artists from the American South; burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, new media and design; a growing collection of African art, with work dating from prehistory through the present; and significant holdings of European paintings and works on paper. The High is dedicated to reflecting the diversity of its communities and offering a variety of exhibitions and educational programs that engage visitors with the world of art, the lives of artists and the creative process. For more information about the High, visit [www.high.org](http://www.high.org).

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**Media contact:**

Marci Tate Davis  
Manager of Public Relations  
404-733-4585  
[marci.davis@high.org](mailto:marci.davis@high.org)