



HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

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

**ATLANTA, March 12, 2020** — Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (1924-2019) 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 will present the first posthumous exhibition of her work in an American museum with "Monir Farmanfarmaian: A Mirror Garden" (Aug. 14, 2020-Jan. 3, 2021).

The exhibition was inspired by the High's 2019 acquisition of Farmanfarmaian's cut-mirror sculpture titled "Untitled (Muqarnas)" (2012) as well as 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 present work by Persian artists and to engage the Persian community.



Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian (Iranian, 1924-2019), *Untitled (Muqarnas)*, 2012, mirror, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood, High Museum of Art, purchase with funds from the Farideh & Al Azadi Foundation, 2019.174.

"We are honored to present Farmanfarmaian's work at the High and to recognize her importance as a singular creative force," said Michael Rooks, the High's Wieland Family curator of modern and contemporary art. "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 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. Objects on view will include a selection of sculptures, drawings, textiles and collages spanning four decades, from 1976 to 2019. Drawings from the late 1970s such as "Untitled" (1977), featuring a composition based on the hexagon, provide examples of her early investigations of geometric form and pattern, while later drawings such as the High's "Untitled (Circles and Squares)"

(2014) are painstakingly crafted, demonstrating the artist's conceptual and technical virtuosity and her use of repetition and pattern.

Sculptures from 2009 to 2019 unite fragments of mirror and colorful painted glass in resplendent mosaic patterns. "Untitled (Muqarnas)" (2012) is composed of identically opposite, wing-like forms. The title refers to the honeycombed ceilings in Persian shrines and palaces while also recalling the wings of the Faravahar, an ancient Zoroastrian symbol tied to Persian cultural identity. Another 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 four silk carpets designed by Farmanfarmanian.

Farmanfarmanian often grouped her work in series she called "families," suggesting a familial affinity of form, dimensionality or structure between works in each group. The exhibition will include several examples of these "families," most notably all eight members of "Third Family," which is based on the first eight regular polygons in Euclidian geometry. Shown together, the entire group of works will demonstrate the complete progression of the artist's concept for the series. Another special feature of the exhibition includes two works from the artist's "Convertible" series in which component parts of the sculpture may be rearranged in multiple configurations demonstrating the fluidity of geometric structure.

The galleries will also feature several intimately scaled collaged boxes that the artist called "Heartache Boxes," which were produced after the death of her husband Abol-Bashar Farmanfarmanian in 1991. Recalling Joseph Cornell's boxes arranged with objects related to longing, memory and dreams, as well as the art of Persian miniature painting, these elaborately crafted assemblages are arranged with prints, photographs and a variety of objects that refer to the artist's life and career, including images of her early work and references to her "lost" life in Tehran before the Islamic Revolution.

The exhibition will be presented on the second level of the High's Anne Cox Chambers Wing.

### **About the Artist**

Born in Qazvin, Iran, in 1924, Farmanfarmanian 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, Farmanfarmanian 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 craftsmen 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 by 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.

### **Exhibition Organization and Support**

"Monir Farmanfarmaian: A Mirror Garden" is organized by the High Museum of Art. This exhibition is made possible by Premier Exhibition Series Sponsors Delta Air Lines, Inc. and Invesco; Exhibition Series Sponsors Northside Hospital and WarnerMedia; Premier Exhibition Series Supporters the Antinori Foundation, Sarah and Jim Kennedy, and Louise Sams and Jerome Grilhot; Benefactor Exhibition Series Supporter Anne Cox Chambers Foundation; Ambassador Exhibition Series Supporters Tom and Susan Wardell and Rod and Kelly Westmoreland; and Contributing Exhibition Series Supporters Lucinda W. Bunnell, Marcia and John Donnell, W. Daniel Ebersole and Sarah Eby-Ebersole, Peggy Foreman, Robin and Hilton Howell, Mr. and Mrs. Baxter Jones, Margot and Danny McCaul, Joel Knox and Joan Marmo, and The Ron and Lisa Brill Family Charitable Trust. 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 the 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 17,000 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).

# # #

#### **DIGITAL IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

##### **Media contact**

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