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SIAH ARMAJANI: COMMUNAL SPACES AT MIT LIST CENTER

The List Visual Arts Center at MIT will present Siah Armajani: Communal Spaces, February 27 - April 10, 1988. At once a sculptor, architect, and social philosopher, Minneapolis-based Siah Armajani has designed exemplary communal spaces around the world. The exhibit includes models and finished works for previous projects, including gardens, reading rooms, bridges, and lobbies, and a major new work being seen for the first time. A public preview reception occurs Friday, February 26, 5-7 pm. The artist will be present.

Armajani has been commissioned by MIT to create a master design plan for MIT's main public entrance lobby at 77 Massachusetts Avenue, with funds from the New Works Program of the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

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Armajani has said: "I am interested in the nobility of usefulness. My intention is to build open, available, useful, common, public gathering places. Gathering places that are neighborly. They are not conceived in terms of wood and steel but in terms of their nature as places at hand, ready to be used...Public art provides a means of repairing the rupture between contemporary life and the things that we have lost."

The exhibition will feature the first public viewing of a major new work, his large Sacco and Vanzetti Reading Room #2, with benches, shelving and assorted reading materials. It is appropriate that this piece be seen in the Boston area; these two Italian immigrants were executed for murder in nearby Charlestown in 1927.

Armajani considers himself a "civic" artist and grounds his ideology in a democratic populism with its roots in the philosophy of the French Enlightenment as well as in the legacy of honest common sense of New England's native philosopher Thoreau. He has created permanent and temporary works internationally, and is currently working with sculptor Scott Burton, architect Cesar Pelli, and designer Paul Friedberg to design a major series of public spaces in Battery Park City in lower Manhattan. His work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, and has been featured in solo exhibitions worldwide. Previously, his work was featured in the MIT Hayden Gallery exhibitions "Body Language" (1981) and "Beyond the Monument" (1983).

The exhibition was organized by List Center Curator and Acting Director Katy Kline.

The List Visual Arts Center is located in the Wiesner Building, 20 Ames Street, on the MIT Campus, not far from the Kendall Square T station. Weekdays, 12-6, weekends, 1-5. Admission is free.