

Limited Art Edition

A new Limited Art Edition has been produced for this exhibition, titled *Sunrise* (2015) and is available to purchase at the IMMA Shop. Donated by the artist, all proceeds from sales of this print help to fund IMMA's ambitious programme.

Catalogue

A major publication accompanies this exhibition, featuring contributions from Rahel Aima, Hoor Al Qasimi, Tina Kinsella, Caoimhin Mac Giolla Léith, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian, Rachel Thomas, Murtaza Vali, together with poetry by Michael Davitt, Rumi and Sohrab Sepehri. Available to purchase at the IMMA Shop.

Don't forget, IMMA Members receive a 20% discount on Art Editions, 10% discount on IMMA Shop purchases and free entry, plus guest, to paid exhibitions.

Associated Talks and Events

Talk and Preview / Aziz Isham

Thursday 09 August 2018, 6.30pm / Lecture Room / Booking advised

Aziz Isham, producer, journalist and activist, presents a personal perspective on some of the most defining movements that have shaped and influenced his grandmother's life and work. This talk is followed by the exhibition preview and formal launch with Hans Ulrich Obrist, curator, critic and Artistic Director, Serpentine Galleries, London.

Curators Lunchtime Talk Series

Friday 21 September, 1.15-2pm / Meeting Point - Main Reception / Drop In

Rachael Gilbourne, Assistant Curator, Exhibitions, IMMA, presents an insightful walk-through of the exhibition. Admission fee applies.

Artist Response / Roxana Manouchehri

Friday 05 October 2018, 1pm / Main Galleries, West Wing / Booking advised

Artist Roxana Manouchehri reflects on the craft, skills and artistic traditions of her native country Iran. In this exhibition walk-through, Manouchehri draws on her own experiences and practice to explore the merging of traditional Persian techniques with contemporary abstraction that Farmanfarmaian not only pioneered but continues to influence a subsequent generation of Iranian artists. This talk reflects on geometrical patterns and its roots in mathematics, repetition and spirituality, each derived from 15th century Persian architecture.

For full programme details and tickets visit the IMMA website www.imma.ie. All talks are free but ticketed unless otherwise stated.

Have a question about an artwork? Want to know more? Ask a member of our Visitor Engagement Team, easily identifiable through their blue lanyards.

IMMA would like to thank Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian for her insight and creativity, together with The Third Line, Dubai, and Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates for their support. We would also like to thank each of the private lenders and our invaluable IMMA Members and Patrons.

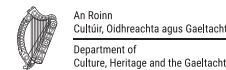
The exhibition is organised by IMMA in collaboration with Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates.

The exhibition is co-curated by Rachel Thomas, Senior Curator: Head of Exhibitions, IMMA, and Hoor Al Qasimi, Director, Sharjah Art Foundation, and assisted by Rachael Gilbourne, Assistant Curator: Exhibitions – Projects & Partnerships, IMMA.

Organised by IMMA in collaboration with:



Exhibition supported by:



Front cover:

Monir in her salon, 1975, Tehran, Bukhara (Turkoman textile) in background.

Image courtesy of the artist and The Third Line, Dubai.

**IMMA
MAIN GALLERIES, WEST WING
10 AUGUST – 25 NOVEMBER 2018**

Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian Sunset, Sunrise



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IMMA is delighted to present *Sunset, Sunrise*, a retrospective exhibition of works by Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian. With a career spanning more than six decades, Farmanfarmaian is one of the most prominent contemporary Iranian artists working today.

Farmanfarmaian was born in Qazvin, Iran in 1924. Between 1945 and 1957, she spent her formative years amidst the New York art scene, a time marked by friendships with fellow artists such as Frank Stella and Andy Warhol, before returning to Iran. Exiled following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Farmanfarmaian returned once again to her native Iran and has been firmly re-established there since 2004.

***Sunset, Sunrise* reflects a life lived between two cultures and across histories of East and West. It investigates the abundance and mystery of nature, the universe and our place within it. More than seventy artworks are on display ranging from painting, sculpture, jewellery and tapestry to collages and works on paper. There are previously unseen drawings such as *Untitled 4* (2017) and *Untitled* (2012) together with her signature mirrored pieces. Often kaleidoscopic with rich geometric and architectural forms, these works encapsulate Farmanfarmaian’s ability to merge traditional Persian techniques with contemporary Western abstraction.**

The title, *Sunset, Sunrise* invokes the sky that both separates and connects the East and West, and the moment of dawn and dusk that captures the elusive, emotive quality of life. Two key pieces, *Sunset* (2015) and *Sunrise* (2015), mark the beginning and close of the exhibition, and this poetic reflection between nature and the human heart is at play throughout Farmanfarmaian’s practice.

As one of the great female artistic pioneers, Farmanfarmaian can be set alongside 20th century innovators such as Etel Adnan, Carol Rama and Hilma af Klint, all of whom have been rediscovered for their vital contributions to the development of contemporary art and have been

represented within exhibitions at IMMA in recent years.

This is the first time Farmanfarmaian’s work has been shown in Ireland. *Sunset, Sunrise* will travel to Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates in 2019.

There are key strands of Farmanfarmaian’s research, thematics and artistic techniques running throughout the exhibition.

Flowers, Nightingales and Heartache

From her early childhood, Farmanfarmaian had an eye for detail; “I was like a human magnifying-glass...” Her first works concentrated on organic subjects – flowers, birds in flight, blades of grass and trees. She was inspired by the gardens of Qazvin and how these were depicted in the architectural details of her family home. The nightingale and floral imagery were to become ongoing motifs throughout her career.

In the beginning, these works took the form of simple ink on paper and unique one off prints known as monotypes. Farmanfarmaian adapted these commercially to support herself, securing a job at the department store Bonwit Teller when she first arrived in NYC in the 1930s. Farmanfarmaian’s drawings were used as branding throughout the high-end fashion store and referred to as ‘Iranian violets’. From a fine art perspective, her interest in the idea of nature was significant in these early flower drawings. The American painter Milton Avery was an influence and a friend, teaching her techniques including monotype printing. Farmanfarmaian’s first exhibition was to be these monotype flowers, shown in Tehran in 1958.

Botanical motifs reappear when Farmanfarmaian is commissioned to create interior displays of mirror panelling and large-scale glass windows. Such commissions were made for sites ranging from museums and government offices to private royal quarters. Here the flowers and birds merge with the modernist mirror and mosaic designs, held together by traditional Persian craftsmanship. You

can see an example of this in the work *Shazdeh’s Garden (2)* (2010) hanging in this exhibition.

Again much later, following the death of her husband Abol in 1991, Farmanfarmaian’s nightingales re-emerge as delicate pictures, holders of memory in her ‘Boxes’ and ‘Heartache’ series. Two of these small-scale works are shown in the galleries here. The artist put together her laments in these intimate pieces, creating three-dimensional collages from photographs, prints and objects.

Light, Colour and Reflection

As an artist, Farmanfarmaian’s desire for light and colour is captured in her stunning jewel-like mirror and glass works, from dazzling disco balls and intricate mazes to the monumental, site-specific commissions she creates.

Reflective materials can be found throughout the exhibition, not only in the mirror sculptures, jewellery and reverse-glass paintings but also within Farmanfarmaian’s drawings and collages which feature luxurious, shimmering textures of glitter on paper, fabric, crystals, beads and gold leaf. It seems apt that the artist’s name – Monir – means ‘bright’ and ‘lustrous’ in Farsi, the artist’s first language.

Light and reflection became Farmanfarmaian’s signature material following her return to Iran in the late 1950s, after a period of twelve years in New York. In Iranian culture, mirror holds significance having been used in mosaics for centuries. Farmanfarmaian describes its symbolic meaning as embedded within the national psyche; “...mirrors are like water, in the sense that they reflect nature. Water in ancient Persian tradition is seen as blessed because it represents light and purity. Mirrors do the same.”

Farmanfarmaian’s instinct to experiment with mirror came while hosting the American artists Robert Morris and Marcia Haffif. On a visit to the religious shrine Shah Cheraq Mosque in Shiraz, Iran, they

stayed for hours within the shrine’s high, domed ceilings and curved walls. Surfaces were embellished in their entirety with mosaic mirror and coloured glass. As Farmanfarmaian describes, “When I saw the mirror mosaics, I was so moved I burst into tears. All I could see was the movement and reflections of people and things as if they were suspended in the sky, constantly changing.”

Farmanfarmaian describes the shrine as a living theatre, where you become a part of the art and art becomes a part of you. You are reflected in it, every form and every colour is caught-up in the reflections, with the mirror constantly moving and changing the character and dimensions of the world. She goes on to say, “That’s when I thought, why shouldn’t we have this experience every day? I decided I needed to bring this material into people’s lives.”

The artist’s use of bold, bright shades and unusual colour combinations was noted early in her career during her time at Parsons School of Art and Design, New York in the 1940s. Since then colour has been a common thread throughout her collage, textiles and works on paper. For her, colour is all-immersive – she once described a piece of pottery as “...glazed in a deep blue, somewhere between cobalt and turquoise – a blue that sang as simply as a folk song of water and big sky.”

Geometry

Islamic geometry and patterns of Iranian architecture are the basis of Farmanfarmaian’s work today. Iranian mosques have their foundations in the form of the square, and the artist describes the infinite possibilities of creating new structures out of these forms. Farmanfarmaian’s drawings in felt-tip pen, which you can see in this exhibition, layer coloured lines to trace structures of nomadic tents, minarets and models of architectural sculptures.

In her mirrored works, several pieces are grouped in series or ‘Families’, depending on their different geometries and complexities. For example, the First Family

is relatively simple; the Second Family becomes embossed with added depth; the Third Family features squares, pentagons, hexagons and heptagons, but is more three dimensional, and so on. This exhibition includes works from the Fourth and Fifth Families, amongst other groupings such as Farmanfarmaian’s ‘Convertibles’ whose layouts can be re-arranged by the artist several times over.

Despite allusions to Sufi philosophy and numerology, Farmanfarmaian is adamant that her work is based solely on geometry focusing on the line and the hexagon. According to the architect and author Nader Ardalan however, geometry carries meaning. The core of Islamic aesthetics comes from studying Sufism and the symbolism used by Sufi creatives. Ardalan believes there is symbolic thought in the choice of things, objects and architecture. He notes that although Farmanfarmaian is absorbed by the skilled perfection of the forms she creates, she does not deliberately set out to convey the meanings of such forms. This, he feels, is where the magic springs from in her work.

Poetry and Film

Poetry has been important throughout Farmanfarmaian’s life. In this exhibition, a selection of books by the artist’s favourite poets, such as Rumi and Sohrab Sepehri, are available for you to read. These are joined by publications about Farmanfarmaian’s life and art including the exhibition’s catalogue *Sunset, Sunrise* (2018), the artist’s memoir *Mirror Garden* (2007), co-written with the Iranian-American author and theatre artist Zara Houshmand, and the monograph *Cosmic Geometry* (2011), edited by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Karen Marta. Also featured is *Monir* (2015), an intimate documentary that chronicles Farmanfarmaian’s life and work, directed by Bahman Giarostami.

Artist Biography

Farmanfarmaian attended the Fine Arts College, Tehran, before becoming one of the first Iranians to study in the USA after World War II. She graduated from Parsons School of Design in 1949 and became a

Member of the New York Art Students’ League (1950-53). Engulfed in the epicenter of the modern art world, it was here that she worked alongside iconic contemporary American artists including Jackson Pollock, Frank Stella, Louise Nevelson and Andy Warhol, all of whom had an influence on her work.

Farmanfarmaian has exhibited extensively across Iran, North America and Europe. The Monir Museum, the first Museum in Iran dedicated to a female artist, opened in 2017. Major solo exhibitions have been recently presented at Fundação de Serralves, Porto (2014); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); Savannah College of Art and Design Museum, Georgia (2017); The Third Line, Dubai (2016); WIELS, Brussels (2013); Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2012); Leighton House Museum, London (2008); Victoria & Albert Museum, London (2007). Her work has been included in group exhibitions including the 6th Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2018); 2nd Brugge Triennial (2018); Villa Empain, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels (2016); Sharjah Biennial 11 (2015); Guggenheim Abu Dhabi Collection, Manarat al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi (2015); Asia Art Society, New York (2013); Hauser & Wirth, London (2013); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2010).

Farmanfarmaian has participated in four editions of the Venice Biennale, and awarded the Gold Medal in 1958, 1964 and 1966. Farmanfarmaian’s work is housed in public collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Guggenheim, New York; Metropolitan Museum, New York; Victoria & Albert Museum’s Jameel Collection, London; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane; The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Iran; Swisscorp Bank, Geneva; Sharjah Art Foundation; and the School of Law at Columbia University, New York. Farmanfarmaian lives and works in Tehran.