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MONIR FARMANFARMAIAN

Convertibles

October 27 – December 24, 2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 3, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

Haines Gallery is pleased to present *Convertibles*, our third solo exhibition of recent work by internationally acclaimed Iranian artist Monir Farmanfarmaian (b. 1924, Qazvin, Iran; lives and works in Tehran).

Monir Farmanfarmaian has spent over half a century articulating her singular vision through mirrored mosaics, reverse-glass painting, and works on paper that recall both the sacred geometry of Persian art and architecture and the reductive abstraction of the 20th century. Her artistic evolution has been shaped at once by cataclysmic geopolitical upheavals, ancient Persian traditions, and the New York art scene of the 1950s. The arc of Farmanfarmaian's creative development is one of the great stories of contemporary art.

The works in Monir's *Convertible* series are jewel-like, multipart reliefs comprised of nearly-identical, interlocking elements; these can be arranged in a variety of configurations, each designed by the artist. With their intricate mirrored surfaces and bursts of colorful reverse-glass painting, these kaleidoscopic pieces offer an array of possibilities for viewing. As with the whole of Monir's practice, the *Convertibles* combine the artist's maverick creativity with forms and materials specific to her native Iran. The result is a dazzling, unprecedented body of work that reflects an artistic perspective that has only become more refined with time.

Several of the *Convertible* works included in this exhibition are named for the months of the Persian solar calendar currently used in Iran. This observation-based timekeeping system begins each year on the vernal equinox, as determined by astronomical observations from Tehran. The complex geometry traced by the movements of the heavens



Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Ordibehesht (Convertible Series)*, 2015
mirror, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood
6 elements: 20 x 20 x 5 inches each; overall: 57 x 72.5 x 5 inches



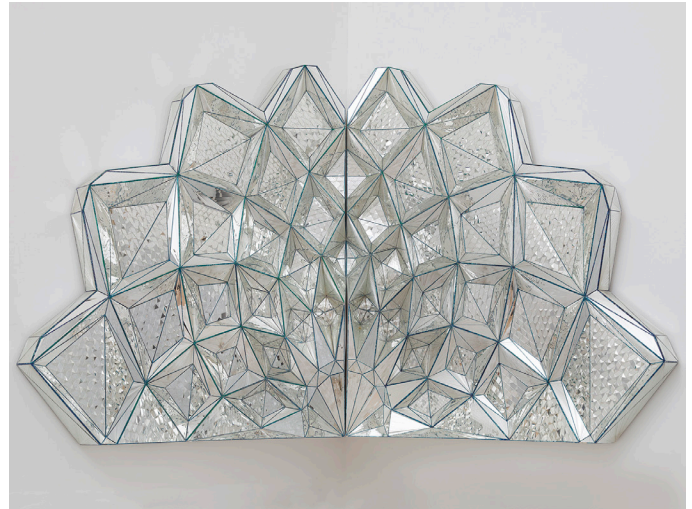
Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Tir (Convertible Series)*, 2015
mirror, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood
6 elements: 24 x 27 x 6 inches each; overall: 63 x 63 x 6 inches

is echoed in the dynamic nature of these artworks: as the curve of the circle is cut into arcs and the various angles are conjoined, mathematical precision gives way to wonder. In its origins, the word “geometry” literally means “to measure the earth.” But for the Sufi mathematicians and theologians whose geometry has so inspired Monir, the task was less to measure the earth than to identify, within the earthly realm, manifestations of a divine natural order.

Convertibles also includes an extraordinary example from the artist’s *Muqarnas* series, named for the ornamental vaulting customarily found within the domes and cornices of the famed mirrored shrines of Iran. Such sites have served as a source of inspiration for Monir’s artwork since the mid-1960s, when she visited the 14th Shrine of Shah Cheragh in Shiraz with artists Marcia Hafif and Robert Morris. It was, as Monir has described it, “architecture transformed into performance, all movement and fluid light, all solids fractured and dissolved in brilliance.” She could just as easily be describing the impact of her own work.

An analogous experience of Monir’s works unfolds within one of the gallery’s more intimate spaces, where visitors are enveloped in the elaborately patterned shadows and reflections cast by Monir’s mirrored spheres and wall panels, both inscribed with a lapidary reverse-glass painting in shades of sapphire. One of Monir’s signature artistic forms since the 1970s, the spheres conjure a host of associations—one famously sat atop Andy Warhol’s personal desk until his death in 1987; here, they reflect one another and the viewer within the more intimately scaled space.

As the artist Shirin Neshat has observed, “Monir’s enduring appeal stems from her ability to navigate and find a balance between traditionalism and the avant-garde, past and present, the rooted and the nomadic. Her art, wisdom, strength, humility, and vigorous energy have earned her a legacy that will continue to prevail over time.” The curator Hans Ulrich Obrist has called Farmanfarmaian, “A role model for the artist of the twenty-first century.”



Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Untitled (Muqarnas)*, 2012
mirror, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood
2 panels: 59 x 61 x 12 inches each; overall: 59 x 86 x 12 inches



Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Mirror Ball*, 2010
mirror, reverse-glass painting, plaster on wood
8.5 x 8.5 x 8.5 inches