

Armajani's on a roll with exhibitions: [METRO Edition]

Mary Abbe Martin; Staff Writer. **Minneapolis Star and Tribune** [Minneapolis, Minn] 09 Jan 1987: 17C.

Spring 1987 is definitely Minnesota sculptor Siah Armajani's season in the sun. In addition to three major projects underway in the Twin Cities, the international superstar has exhibitions opening during the next six months in Switzerland, the Netherlands and West Germany.

And in April his work will be included, along with that of Minnesota artists T.L. Solien of Pelican Rapids and William Raaum of Minneapolis, in the first contemporary art show staged in the glitzy new wing of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Armajani's fame is exceeded only by his modesty, and he is always reticent to discuss his many projects. During a recent interview, however, he explained that it took about four years for Jean Christophe Ammann, director of the Kunsthalle in Basel, Switzerland, to organize the enormous retrospective of his work opening there in March.

The show will include 94 of Armajani's distinctive architectural sculptures and models for his large-scale public reading rooms, gardens and plazas. Walker Art Center has lent three pieces to the exhibition - a small sculpture from a series inspired by early-American covered bridges, the "garden gate" piece from his "Dictionary for Building" series and a very recent mirrored work that hasn't yet been exhibited.

The show, which spans about 15 years in Armajani's career, was difficult to organize and ship because so much of his work is either very large or permanently installed in a public space.

Most often made of painted wood, Armajani's sculptures resemble eccentrically shaped picnic tables, reading rooms, attic stairs or distinctive doorways. The centerpiece of the Basel show will be his most recent piece, a room-sized construction called "Reading Room for Sacco and Vanzetti."

Armajani said he has been planning the room since the mid-1970s, when he became interested in the anarchists "because they're underdogs.

"It's a functional piece for people to sit in and read, where they can have privacy and openness," said Armajani.

The exhibition also will be shown at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in May and June.

Armajani is completing several new works commissioned for Documenta, a prestigious exhibition of avant-garde art held biennially in Kassel, West Germany, which opens in June.

In Minneapolis, Armajani is completing plans for a plaza in front of the **University of Minnesota**'s Humphrey Institute on the West Bank campus, and he recently finished designs for a skyway bridge that will cross Marquette Av. between 6th and 7th Sts.

That bridge project is part of the new Norwest Center designed by New York architect Cesar Pelli, with whom Armajani has collaborated on other projects including a 3-acre, \$14 million waterfront plaza called Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan Island.

What Armajani calls his most important design is the Whitney Bridge, a graceful steel arc that will span Hennepin and Lyndale Aves., linking Loring Park with the new Minneapolis Sculpture Garden being built on city parkland in front of the Walker Art Center-Guthrie Theater complex. He expects bridge construction to begin in August.

Other projects in the works? Just a study garden to be built in Munster, West Germany, next year, a sculptural bridge for Munster's Wilhelm University after that . . .

"Every day there are shows opening around the world," he said. "Enough is enough."

Court piece

Minneapolis sculptor Janet Lofquist recently was awarded a \$60,000 commission to create a sculpture for the entrance court of Minnesota Center, a 15-story office tower being built by Homart Development Co. in Bloomington. Lofquist has designed a multi-media sculpture including a metal boat with cast-iron ribbing, sailing on choppy green-granite waters.

Lofquist has explored boat motifs in paintings, prints and sculpture for the past several years. Two years ago, she was one of five artists whose temporary sculptures made of indigenous Minnesota materials were installed along the Mississippi River in a special show organized by Forecast, a Twin Cities organization specializing in public art projects.

Lofquist's design was chosen from six finalists in a competition juried by the project's architect, Loren Ahles of Hammel Green and Abrahamson, Inc.; artist Wayne Potratz, who chairs the

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New shows

The latest project from Forecast will put new art by eight young Twin Cities artists into public spaces throughout the metropolitan area from now through March 31.

Called "Studio Projects," the exhibition is a kind of free form art show featuring 55 paintings, sculptures and collages plus a spring-inspired mural in Hennepin County Government Center.

Instead of showing the new work in traditional museums or commercial galleries, the artists will be displaying them in four shows at three Minneapolis locations: the atrium of First Bank Place East, 120 S. 6th St.; the A level of Hennepin County Government Center, 300 S. 6th St., and Coffman Union on the University of Minnesota's east bank campus.

Florence Hill's 34 foot mural "January Thaw," includes a soundtrack of gull calls and ocean surf, which she hopes will gradually warm and "melt" the people who see it, helping them "to become less reserved, relax, to lose stiffness and tension." It will be at the Government Center through Jan. 31 and there will be a free public reception from 5 to 9 p.m., Thursday .

That reception will flow through the skyway into the First Bank Atrium where the second "Studio Project" will be on view. The atrium show features prints, drawings and handmade books by Terry Schupbach, collages by Bonnie Cutts, and an 8-foot-tall paper sculpture by Amanda Degener.

Degener's ambitious sculpture is a fanciful piece inspired by two pages from Lewis Carroll's classic children's book "Alice in Wonderland."

First Bank's show opens tomorrow and continues through Feb. 18. Degener will give a free talk about her work Jan.29 from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Minneapolis Public Library, 300 Nicollet Mall, followed by a papermaking demonstration at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, 24 N. 3rd. St., Minneapolis.

Coffman Union's Gallery 1 will have the third show, a group of monoprints by Minneapolis artist Maria Santiago Junnila, from Feb. 16 through March 13. A free public reception will be held at the gallery Feb. 19 from 5 to 9 p.m. and Junnila will discuss her work there at noon March 5.

The final show will feature new paintings by Susan Abelson and Scott Brennan plus a plaster relief model of swimmers that Glenn Biegon created for a wall of St. Paul's Oxford Public Pool. The show will be in the First Bank Atrium from Feb. 21 through March 31. A free reception will be held Feb. 26 from 5 to 9 p.m.

Showing furniture

Lowry Hill Gallery, the most recent addition to the Twin Cities art scene, has carved a unique niche for itself: hand-crafted contemporary furniture.

The gallery, at 1775 Girard Av. S. in Minneapolis, represents nine artisans whose recent designs include black walnut and cherry dining furniture and a sculptured cherry rocking chair. The gallery is open by appointment only; call 374-3632.