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## BELOIT COLLEGE LITERARY GARDEN BRINGS ART AND LIFE TOGETHER: [All Edition]

Jennifer A. Galloway Wisconsin State Journal. **Wisconsin State Journal** [Madison, Wis] 06 Apr 1997: 1A.

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New York, Chicago and Los Angeles can brag about their Serras, their Calders and their Moores.

Now Beloit, population 35,000, will be home to a trio of public art works by the celebrated sculptor Siah Armajani, a coup that has the recipient, and the artist, tickled almost beyond words. One piece, an outdoor literary retreat, is coming to **Beloit College** from Los Angeles.

"I am very, very excited about this opportunity," said Armajani, who lives in St. Paul, Minn., and has an international reputation for creating functional public art.

"I find the college and the city very nice and very intelligent."

**Beloit College** announced today that the Lannan Foundation of Los Angeles is giving the college "The Poetry Garden," a sculptural enclave designed by Armajani for its offices in 1992. The gift is part serendipity and partly the result of deep friendships between the artist, college and foundation leaders. It will complement an existing Armajani (pronounced ar-ma-JA-nee) sculpture on campus and a bridge the artist is designing to span the Rock River in Beloit, about 50 miles southeast of Madison.

For **Beloit College**, "The Poetry Garden" and its planned site within a residential quadrangle will be a visual expression that art is a part of life and not separate from it, said Victor Farrall Jr., president of **Beloit College**, which has 1,100 students. The garden will be used as a site for poetry readings and other literary gatherings.

"People are not just going to look at it and leave," Farrall said. "They are going to use it and it then becomes part of their environment."

The expansive yet intimate 3,000-square-foot garden is surrounded by stark gray walls lined with luminous ceramic jars and Alaskan cedar benches emblazoned with lines from the late Wallace Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar." The sculptor said he was moved by the dichotomy in the poem between a work of art and the nature of public art.

The garden courtyard houses polygonal plots of grass nestled within a plaza stippled with red, black and white marble chips.

Armajani, 58, will redesign aspects of the garden and quadruple its size to incorporate the work into the college's quadrangle.

"I am going to use everything in 'The Poetry Garden' and expand it," he said.

Armajani intends to add quotations by the American philosopher, John Dewey, with whom he shares a passion that education, particularly the liberal arts, is the cornerstone of democracy.

"Hopefully **Beloit College** will become a center of educational activity, especially literary, in that part of the country," said Armajani, a genteel and modest man who has created public art all over the world.

Among his more recent works are the tower and cauldron that bore the Olympic flame in Atlanta, a waterfront bridge and tower on Staten Island, N.Y., and the Irene Hixon Whitney pedestrian walkway in Minneapolis.

Armajani's ties, and those of J. Patrick Lannan Jr., president of the foundation, to the Midwest and Beloit date back many years.

Armajani grew up in Tehran, emigrated to the United States in 1960, and graduated from Macalaster College in Minneapolis in 1963. One of his closest college classmates was Alan McIver, now **Beloit College**'s vice president of enrollment services.

Farrall, the college president, is an old friend of Lannan, who grew up in Chicago.

Not long ago the foundation began dispersing its art collection as it shifted its focus from culture and art to education. Other recipients of works from the Lannan Foundation include the **Art Institute of Chicago**, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The foundation also was preparing to move its offices to Santa Fe from Los Angeles where "The Poetry Garden" was housed.

Lannan said the foundation looked for a home for the garden in Los Angeles but was unable to find a suitable recipient that could preserve the work. Around that time, Lannan got a note from Farrall.

"Suddenly it occurred to me that that was the place," Lannan said from Santa Fe. "Siah was also enthused."

Farrall said he cajoled Lannan repeatedly and then invited him and Armajani to visit the campus during a January weekend when Branford Marsalis was performing with the Beloit Chamber Orchestra. Within 14 hours of their visit, Lannan and Armajani decided the college would care for the garden while incorporating it into students' lives.

"It was a great solution of what to do with the work," Lannan said. "Siah strongly believes that art relates to the community and serves the overall process of education."

The foundation is underwriting the moving and installation costs and the project is expected to be completed next spring.

Armajani refused to accept a fee for the necessary design work, Lannan said.

That generosity is a small sign of the sculptor's philosophy. He has little interest in producing monumental sculptures. He prefers works that he describes as "low, common, near to the people."

"I'm not trying to celebrate the angst or personality of the artist," said Armajani.

"I'm just a vehicle to get ideas across. I don't try to change behavior, I just try to listen to the needs of a community and enhance them."

Examples of works by Siah Armajani Olympic tower, cauldron and bridge to the stadium, Atlanta Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs Plaza, Minneapolis Skyway linking Norwest Bank and Firststar Bank, Minneapolis Loring Park Gazebo, Minneapolis Irene Hixon Whitney Bridge in Minneapolis Bridge and tower on a waterfront plaza at the St. George Ferry Terminal in Staten Island, N.Y.

Glass bridge in Newcastle, England Three covered bridges in Leipzig, Germany Two skyway bridges in Louisville, Ky.

Collaborated with Cesar Pelli and Paul Friedburg on the World Financial Center waterfront plaza in New York City.