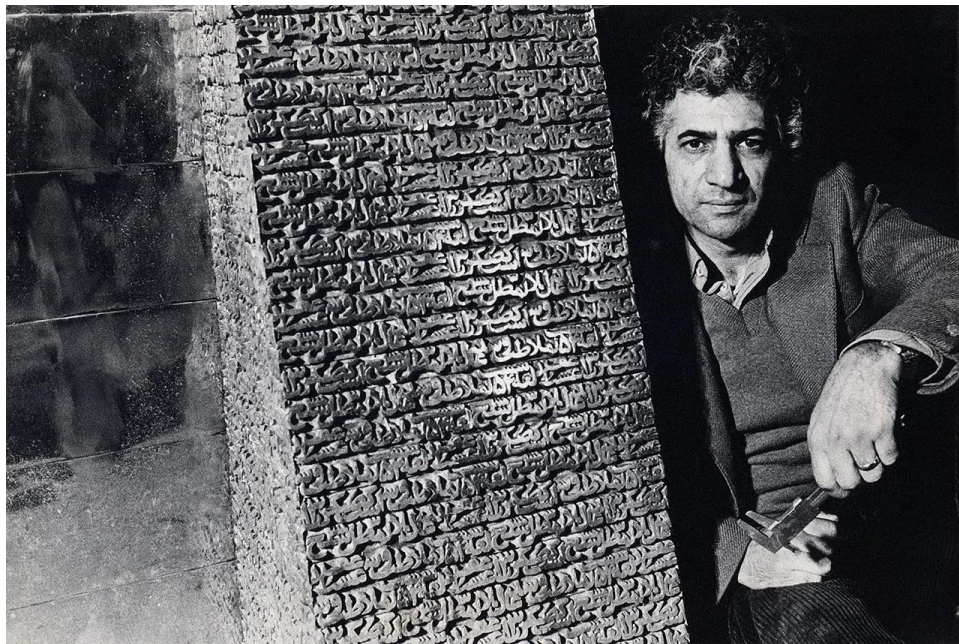


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver Art Gallery Presents Parviz Tanavoli: Poets, Locks, Cages

The first major presentation of the internationally acclaimed artist's work in Canada will feature rare and highly regarded works.



June 29, 2023, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm), Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw) and Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔt) Nations.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to announce the highly anticipated exhibition, *Parviz Tanavoli: Poets, Locks, Cages*. This landmark exhibition marks the first major presentation of works by Iranian-born, Vancouver-based artist Parviz Tanavoli in Canada. Renowned for his unique ability to merge sculpture and poetry, Tanavoli's exhibition will captivate audiences and ignite a new appreciation for his extensive contributions to modern sculpture.

With more than 100 works spanning six decades of Tanavoli's career, *Poets, Locks, Cages* delves into the artist's exploration of the poet, the lock and the cage as recurring themes. The exhibition displays the full breadth of Tanavoli's artistic practice, focusing on sculpture while surveying painting, printmaking and mixed media. As one of the foremost contemporary Iranian artists and a member of the highly influential Saqqakhaneh school, Tanavoli draws inspiration from Iran's rich history and cultural traditions.

Tanavoli's sculptural works symbolically exemplify the interplay between Iran's pre-Islamic and Islamic cultural identities. His ability to capture the duality of these identities sets him apart as one of the foremost contemporary Iranian artists who have achieved such a remarkable feat. *Poets, Locks, Cages* sheds light on this crucial integration of sacred and secular histories in Tanavoli's art, offering a rare opportunity for North American audiences to engage with the concept of modernism in Iran.

"The poet is the artist's self-portrait," said **Pantea Haghighi**, independent curator. "The poet, Farhad the Mountain Carver and the artist become interchangeable and reincarnate as Tanavoli maneuvers through Iran's cultural shifts over the six decades represented in this exhibition. Tanavoli becomes the symbol of persistence and resistance similar to the Mountain Carver."

A highlight of the exhibition is the inclusion of Tanavoli's rarely seen and intimate "Wonders of the Universe" series. This remarkable body of work consists of lyrical paintings inspired by Vancouver's scenery on the unbound pages of antique books, first discovered by the artist in a Tehran bazaar. Visitors will have the privilege of experiencing the largest selection of "Wonders of the Universe" ever shown, marking its first-ever presentation in Canada. The exhibition also showcases a small number of antique sculptures from the artist's personal collection.

"This is a highly significant exhibition, not only for Vancouver and the Vancouver Art Gallery, but for the world. We are contextualizing a lifelong career of art making and thinking," said **Anthony Kiendl**, CEO and Director of the Vancouver Art Gallery. "This is the first time that people in [Parviz's] adopted city of Vancouver will get to see a comprehensive exhibition of his work brought together in one place at one time. We look forward to sharing it with everyone."

The exhibition invites audiences to explore Tanavoli's sculptural language and his belief in sculpture as a form of poetry. Through fascinating combinations of motifs, the exhibition brings to life the artist's unique visual symbology, often embodying literary concepts.

Accompanying the exhibition is a significant English-language publication published on the occasion by Vancouver Art Gallery, featuring essays by renowned experts in the field. Pantea Haghighi, Venetia Porter, Fereshteh Daftari, Lynn Gumpert and Colin Browne provide fresh perspectives on Tanavoli's interdisciplinary practice, enriching the visitor's understanding of his artistic journey.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Gallery will also be hosting an in-depth conversation with two internationally renowned scholars and curators, Dr. Fereshteh Daftari (formerly of MoMA, New York) and Dr. Venetia Porter (Honorary Research Fellow, British Museum) on July 8th, 2023. More information can be found on the Gallery's website: www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/events/july8parvizlecture.

Parviz Tanavoli: Poets, Locks, Cages opens July 1st, 2023 through November 19th, 2023.

Organized by the Vancouver Art Gallery and guest curated by Pantea Haghighi, Independent Curator.

For further information, please visit www.vanartgallery.bc.ca/exhibitions/parviztanavoli.

IMAGES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

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Image Credit: Parviz Tanavoli in his Niavaran studio, Tehran, 1988, Photo: Courtesy of the Artist

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Parviz Tanavoli was born in Tehran in 1937. Upon graduating from the Brera Academy of Milan in 1959, he taught sculpting at the Tehran College of Decorative Arts, and from 1961 - 1963 he taught at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. He then returned to Iran and assumed the head of sculpting department at the University of Tehran, a position he held for 18 years until 1979, when he retired from his teaching duties. Since 1989 he has lived and worked both in Tehran and Vancouver, Canada. He has had solo exhibitions at the West Vancouver Art Museum and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art. His work has been displayed at the British Museum - London, the Grey Art Gallery - New York University, the Isfahan City Center - Iran, Metropolitan Museum - New York, Minneapolis Institute of Art - Minneapolis, Olympic Park - Seoul, S. Korea, Qatar National Museum, Royal Museum - Jordan, Royal Scottish Museum - UK, the Museum of Modern Art - Vienna, Museum of Modern Art - New York, Walker Art Center - Minneapolis, Shiraz University - Iran, Tate Modern - London and in numerous other prestigious venues around the world.

ABOUT THE GUEST CURATOR

Pantea Haghighi is an independent curator based in Vancouver. After achieving a degree in art history at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Haghighi undertook interdisciplinary graduate-level research at her alma mater, focusing on modernism and architecture. Her expertise in contemporary art has supported her contribution to community development at various Canadian institutions. Haghighi uses her experience collaborating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to bring communities together and create spaces that encourage discussion and the exchange of ideas. Her curatorial projects include Gohar Dashti: Dissonance, West Vancouver Art Museum, 2020; Looking at Persepolis: The Camera in Iran, 1850–1930, Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver, 2018; Modernism in Iran, Griffin Art Projects, North Vancouver, 2018; where/between, Equinox Gallery, Vancouver, and Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, 2016; Sanaz Mazinani: Mirrored Explosions, West Vancouver Art Museum, 2016; and Akbar Nazemi: Unsent Dispatches from the Iranian Revolution, 1978–1979, Presentation House Gallery, North Vancouver; Kenderdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon; and Windsor Art Gallery, Ontario, 2005.

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ABOUT VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's leading and innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's ground-breaking exhibitions, extensive public programs, and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Institute of Asian Art founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design, and architecture. The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and the work of the Gallery.

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