

"Siah Armajani," The New Yorker, September 22, 2014.



ART

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

SIAH ARMAJANI

Gray

The Iranian sculptor is best known for public works in outdoor spaces that riff on the vernacular architecture of America's heartland, notably bridges. Now in his seventies, Armajani shifts to a subject that is both public and eternally private: a series of tombs, dedicated (mostly) to writers. The exhibition of drawings, models, and freestanding sculptures suffers from overcrowding, but each piece is deeply felt and formally deft, from a tabletop array for John Berryman, which fulfills the poet's unrealized dream of being interred beneath a busy street in Minneapolis, where Armajani has lived since 1960, to a monument for Walt Whitman, graced by a black canvas tent. In the most powerful piece, subtitled "The Last Tomb," the artist memorializes his own life bridging two cultures. The Constructivist-looking drawing, more than eighteen feet long, maps out his adopted home town by marrying straight lines and the curving ornament of Farsi calligraphy. Whitman wrote of "an end that lightly and joyfully meets its translation"—Armajani achieves as much here. Through Oct. 18.