



SIAH ARMAJANI: Spaces for The Public. Spaces for Democracy.



NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

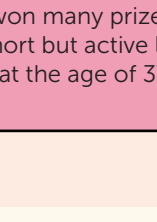
WELCOME to *Siah Armajani: Spaces for the Public. Spaces for Democracy.*! In this exhibition, we will explore how Armajani merges architecture, art, and literature to create sculptures, drawings, and public installations.

Who is Siah Armajani?

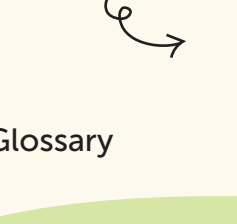
Siah Armajani is an artist, sculptor, and architect, who was born in 1939, in Tehran, Iran.



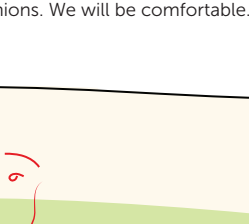
He grew up in a home filled with books and poetry, learning the importance of reading.



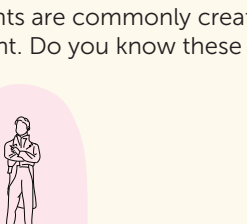
His father would regularly read Persian literature to Armajani and his siblings.



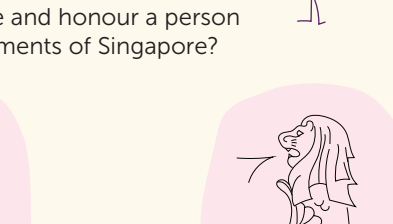
In school, he studied both Western and Middle Eastern history, culture and philosophy.



He then left Iran for the United States where he continued his studies in philosophy and mathematics. He also pursued painting.



Now, Armajani is best known for his public art, and uses philosophy, poetry, and politics as inspiration for his work.



While looking at the artworks on display, use these activity cards to guide you in unfolding the ideas behind them. Don't forget to share your responses, pictures, and videos using the hashtag **#SiahArmajaniSpaces**, and tag us on Instagram **@ntu_ccsingapore**. Have fun!

Recommended for ages 10 and above.

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Printed in July 2019 by First Printers Pte Ltd © NTU, CCA Singapore

FIND Tomb for Arthur Rimbaud

Look Closely

Can you identify the different objects that make up this work?

How does this sculpture reflect the identity of Arthur Rimbaud?

Notice the colours used in this piece. Why do you think Siah Armajani used such bright colours?

Compare the drawing and maquette of this artwork. What are the differences between the two?

Background Information

In the *Tomb* series (1972 - 2016), Siah Armajani pays tribute to the philosophers, political activists, and poets who have been major influences on his art and beliefs. Due to the building parts that make up the sculptures, they do not appear like tombs, but as places where someone might live in.

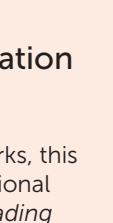


Who is Arthur Rimbaud?

Arthur Rimbaud (1854 - 1891) was a French poet known for his surrealist writings, which had a big impact on modern literature and the arts. He started writing poems in primary school, and won many prizes for his work in his short but active life. He passed away at the age of 37.

Tidbits

The pink and blue painted surfaces of the sculpture refer to the description taken directly from one of Rimbaud's poems titled, *A Dream for Winter*.



Poets are highly respected figures in Persian culture.

In the winter, we will leave in a small pink railway carriage With blue cushions. We will be comfortable.

Glossary

Maquette

A **maquette** is a three dimensional model, created to visualise how sculptural projects might look like, and to test out potential materials it could be made out of.

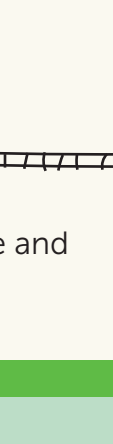
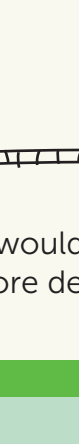
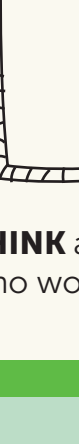
Surrealism

Surrealism is a cultural movement that started in the 1920s. Best known for visual artworks and writings, surrealism aims to express one's imagination and creativity that is free from logic.

Conceptual Art

Conceptual art is art based on an idea or concept, and can be represented in almost any form.

Monuments are commonly created to celebrate and honour a person or an event. Do you know these national monuments of Singapore?



CREATE your own conceptual art piece, and dedicate it to someone you admire.

How can you create a monument without it being a statue?

Think out of the box! Combine different objects together.

2D



3D

TRANSFORM your drawing into your very own maquette.



FIND Sacco and Vanzetti Reading Room #3

Look Closely

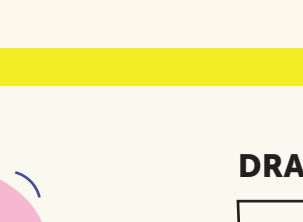
Does the *Reading Room* remind you of places you have been before?

What do the pencils in this installation remind you of? Why do you think they are placed in this way?

Examine how the chairs are arranged. Does the design of this installation encourage or discourage social interaction among its users? Why?

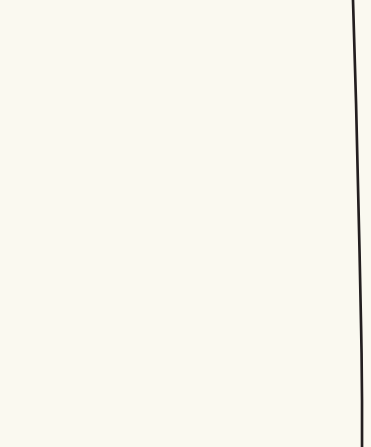
Walk around the different sections of the *Reading Room* and interact with the installation. How does being in the space make you feel?

Discuss the above questions with your friends or family!



Background Information

Like many of Siah Armajani's works, this artwork was designed as a functional structure for public use. This *Reading Room* focuses on being a conducive environment for education by encouraging people to come together to read, discuss, and share ideas. The installation was also created to commemorate two Italian-born American anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. They were charged and executed for murder, even though they were widely believed to be innocent.



Tidbits

Siah Armajani has done several other works referencing Sacco and Vanzetti. Find out what they look like!

The deliberately awkward or uncomfortable design references a history of state violence in the United States.

Reading Room #3 draws inspiration from Russian artist Alexander Rodchenko's design of a Workers' Club, which served as a meeting place for reading and education.

Armajani believes education through reading is the key to achieving equality and a successful democracy.

What is your favourite book?

If you could curate your own library, what books would you include?

Glossary

Democracy

A **democracy** is a system of government, where citizens can participate in the decisions that affect the way their community is run.

Anarchist

An **anarchist** is a person who believes in a society where all individuals enjoy complete freedom from any forms of government.

WRITE three words to describe the *Reading Room*.

How can you make the *Reading Room* more communal and neighbourly?

Rearrange and modify its different elements, and **DRAW** your new and improved design in the space below.

THINK about where you would put this structure and who would use it. Add more details!

FIND Street Corner No. 1

Look Closely

Examine the materials used in this artwork. Why do you think these materials were chosen?

Observe the middle portion of the work. Describe what it looks like to you. What do you think it is supposed to represent?

Does this bridge look like the ones you commonly see around you? Where would you imagine seeing a bridge like this?

What are the functions of a bridge? Does this artwork fulfill that function?

Background Information

To Siah Armajani, bridges are not just important physical structures that link divided spaces together. He also uses bridges as a metaphor to symbolise the connection between different communities. In this artwork, you can see a combination of influences from Siah Armajani's time in Iran and the United States. The motifs of traditional ceramic jars are representative of his Persian heritage, while his fascination with American vernacular architecture is reflected in the construction methods and materials he uses.

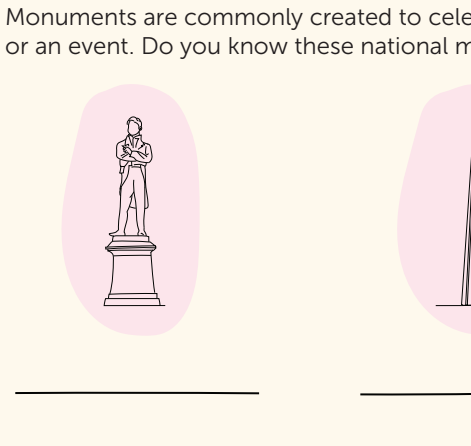
Tidbits

Armajani often works with metal and wood as construction materials in his artworks.

Glazed ceramic jars are a common motif in Siah Armajani's work. It first appeared in his 1992 *Lannan Poetry Garden*.

What do you use to store dried goods at home?

The motif is inspired by Siah Armajani's memories of the huge pottery urns his mother would use to store dried beans and rice.



What do you think Singapore vernacular architecture looks like?

Glossary

Vernacular architecture

Vernacular architecture is an architectural style that is based upon local needs, the use of construction materials native to its specific region, and reflecting local cultural traditions.

Motif

A **motif** is a repeated design or pattern.

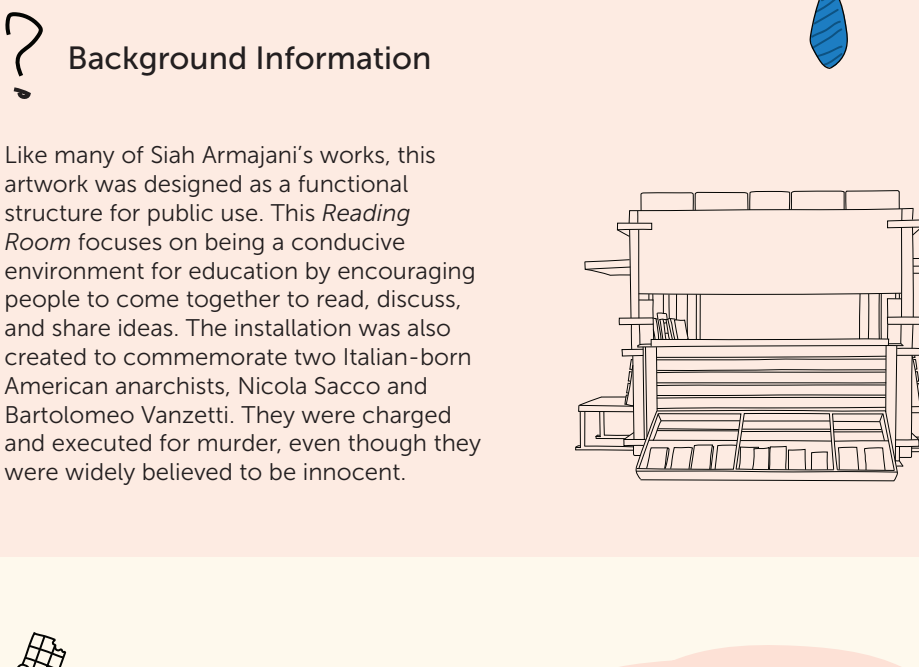
How would you infuse your cultural heritage into your bridge design?

DRAW it out.



THINK of a motif that represents your culture.

USE this motif, and **DESIGN** your own bridge.



COMPARE your drawings with your friends. See if you can merge your ideas together to create a new hybrid design.

