

Monir Farmanfarmaian & Zhan Wang

September 8 - October 29, 2011

Opening reception: September 8th, 2011, 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm



Monir Farmanfarmaian, *Convertible Series, Group 12*, 2011
Mirror and reverse glass painting on plaster and wood, 6 parts,
Dimensions Variable: 59 x 59 x 1.5 inches, as shown



Zhan Wang, *Artificial Rock #74*, 2005, Stainless steel, wood
With base: 27.25 x 11 x 7 inches

Haines Gallery is pleased to present a two-person exhibition featuring sculptural works from Iranian artist Monir Farmanfarmaian and Beijing-based Zhan Wang. While addressing their respective cultural heritages, these artists share a concern for the distinct materiality of their sculptures. Utilizing materials with highly reflective surface qualities – with associations of progressive, cultural artifact – the works bring forth a palpable sense of contemporary place when encountered. The resulting dialogue of historic and aesthetic reference, alongside issues of cultural specificity, engages with the timely debate regarding the positioning of tradition within the context of expanded global access and widespread innovation.

Monir Farmanfarmaian has articulated her singular vision for the last half century through reverse-painted glass and mirror objects that recall both Qajar-era Persian interior decora-

tion and high modernist abstraction of the 20th century. Having lived in New York during the 1940s and 1950s, she absorbed the art of the new, Abstract Expressionism. This novel perspective –layered upon her knowledge of the arts and crafts of her native Iran and the refined historical decoration of its ancient cities – produced a distinct aesthetic fusion of Persian pictorial language and pristine geometry. Her work at once references the spiritual geometries of Islamic architecture, most notably the tenants of Sufism, but with a distinctly post-modern edge. Farmanfarmaian is the subject of a forthcoming monograph by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Co-Director of Exhibitions and Programmes at the Serpentine Gallery in London. She was nominated for the 2011 Jameel Prize – the Victoria & Albert Museum's biennial award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition – and will have a commission unveiled this spring at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as part of the

renovation of their Islamic galleries.

For many years, artist Zhan Wang has produced sculptures based on an object symbolic of China's past, the Scholar's Rock, which was traditionally collected and placed in courtyards or other places of private contemplation. Zhan Wang's stainless steel reinterpretations of this form draw attention to the shifting value system in China, from an appreciation of contemplation and meditation to the fervent pursuit of commercialization and commodification. These highly reflective works not only utilize the preferred new building material in his native country, but also quite literally reflect the rapid urbanization of modern day China and its increasing estrangement from the natural world. He recently completed a commission for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. Later this fall, Zhan Wang will be featured in a solo exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing.