

the Davis.

DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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High-resolution images and interviews upon request

**THE DAVIS MUSEUM AT WELLESLEY COLLEGE
PRESENTS THE FIRST U.S. MUSEUM RETROSPECTIVE
of
IRANIAN ARTIST PARVIZ TANAVOLI
February 10 – June 7, 2015**

WELLESLEY, Mass. – The Davis Museum at Wellesley College presents *Parviz Tanavoli*, the first comprehensive retrospective exhibition of the Iranian artist’s work to be mounted by a U.S. museum. An opening celebration, featuring a 5pm talk with the artist, will be held on Tuesday, February 10 from 5-8pm. On view through June 7, the exhibition is free and open to the general public.

Critically acclaimed and widely acknowledged as the “father of modern Iranian sculpture,” Tanavoli’s trajectory has spanned east and west as he has innovated ambitiously across media. Best known as a sculptor, his expansive *oeuvre* also includes painting, printmaking, ceramics, rugs, and jewelry. As well, he is a highly regarded collector, scholar, and poet. This exhibition shares the breadth and richness of his work from the 1960s to the present.

Based in Tehran and Vancouver, Tanavoli (b.1937) was a leading influence among a generation defined by its commitment to artistic practices that are both modern and distinctly Iranian. Over decades, he has refined a complex system of symbols and motifs into a distinctive visual lexicon, fusing Persian traditions with pop sensibility. As well, his work entwines profound sensitivity to language, formal clarity, and conceptual engagement into a forcefully original artistic practice.

Tanavoli returns again and again to the Poet, the Prophet, and the Lovers, to walls and windows, locks, and birds— figures that stand on metaphorical borders, and exist aesthetically between traditions of realism and abstraction. Among his many long-standing projects, *heech*—initiated in February 1965, and set to mark a fiftieth anniversary with the opening of the Davis exhibition—perhaps best exemplifies Tanavoli’s work. The artist treats the calligraphic script for “heech,” the Farsi word for “nothing” or “nothingness” to multiple expressions in three dimensions and variable materials—from delicate jewelry to polished bronze and hi-gloss fiberglass sculpture. The concept of *heech*, as Tanavoli explains, is abstract, philosophical, and celebratory; he says, “*Heech* is not nothing. It has a body, a shape, but also a meaning behind it.”

Internationally recognized as one of Iran's foremost artists, Tanavoli's work has been presented around the world, and has recently been featured in exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, Asia Society and the Grey Art Gallery at New York University. His work is held in numerous public and private collections, including: Tate Modern and the British Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tehran; Mathaf Museum, Qatar; Royal Society of Fine Arts, Amman; and the Guggenheim Museum, Abu Dhabi.

Parviz Tanavoli is curated by **Lisa Fischman**, Ruth Gordon Shapiro '37 Director of the Davis, with **Dr. Shiva Balaghi**, Brown University.

The exhibition, and a fully-illustrated companion publication, are made possible with generous support from **The Maryam and Edward Eisler/Goldman Sachs Gives Fund on Art and Visual Culture in the Near, Middle, and Far East**. Established in 2014 by Maryam Homayoun Eisler '89 and Edward Eisler, the Eisler Fund creates a unique cross-disciplinary platform for research, exhibitions, and scholarship on art and visual culture in the Near, Middle, and Far East and supports ambitious programming that draws heavily on the collections-based, curatorial, scholarly, and pedagogical resources of the Davis Museum and Wellesley College Art Department. *Parviz Tanavoli* marks the first venture under its auspices.

PROGRAMMING

In partnership with the **Cinema and Media Studies** program, the Davis presents a **Film Series, Women in Modern Iranian Cinema**, exploring groundbreaking achievements of women directors in modern Iranian cinema. Generously supported by the Davis Museum Film Program Gift, the series will present 35 mm copies of Samira Makhmalbaf's *Blackboards* (March 4), Marziyeh Meshkini's *The Day I Became a Woman* (March 11), Ana Lily Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night* (April 1), Mitra Farahani's *Fifi Howls from Happiness* (April 15). All screenings will begin at 6pm in Collins Cinema, and are free and open to the public.

On April 17 and 18, the Davis will present **Art and Reality: A Symposium on Contemporary Middle Eastern Art in Context** exploring current issues in contemporary Middle Eastern art, an area of newly heightened interest among institutions, collectors, curators, scholars, and patrons. The event kicks off on Friday, April 17 with a special screening of Terrance Turner's new documentary film, *Parviz Tanavoli: Poetry in Bronze*. On Saturday, April 18, a daylong symposium considers Tanavoli's art in context and expands to consider the "new" field of contemporary Middle Eastern art, questions of creative freedom and the social responsibility of artists, and matters of "soft power" in the region. Presented with major support from the Kathryn Wasserman Davis '28 Fund for World Cultures and Leadership, the

film screening and symposium are free and open to the public, however reservations are required, for more information, visit theDavis.org.

DAVIS MUSEUM GENERAL INFORMATION

***Location:* Wellesley College, 106 Central St., Wellesley, Mass.**

Museum Hours: Tuesday–Sunday, 11:00 am–5:00 pm. Closed Mondays, holidays, and Wellesley College recesses.

Admission is free and open to the public.

***Telephone:* 781-283-2051**

***Website:* www.theDavis.org**

Parking: Free and available in the lot behind the museum. Additional parking is available in the Davis Parking Facility.

***Tours:* Led by student tour guides. Free. Call 781-283-3045.**

Accessible: The Davis, Collins Café and Collins Cinema are wheelchair accessible and wheelchairs are available for use in the Museum without charge. For accommodations, please contact Jim Wice, director of disability services at 781-283-2434 or jwice@wellesley.edu.

ABOUT THE DAVIS MUSEUM

One of the oldest and most acclaimed academic fine arts museums in the United States, the Davis Museum is a vital force in the intellectual, pedagogical and social life of Wellesley College. It seeks to create an environment that encourages visual literacy, inspires new ideas, and fosters involvement with the arts both within the College and the larger community.

ABOUT WELLESLEY COLLEGE AND THE ARTS

The Wellesley College arts curriculum and the highly acclaimed Davis Museum are integral components of the College's liberal arts education. Departments and programs from across the campus enliven the community with world-class programming— classical and popular music, visual arts, theatre, dance, author readings, symposia, and lectures by some of today's leading artists and creative thinkers—most of which are free and open to the public.

Since 1875, Wellesley College has been the preeminent liberal arts college for women. Known for its intellectual rigor and its remarkable track record for the cultivation of women leaders in every arena, Wellesley—only 12 miles from Boston—is home to some 2300 undergraduates from every state and 75 countries.