NEWS RELEASE

1280 PEACHTREE STREET, N.E. • ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30309

Press Office
TEL 404-733-4437
FAX 404-733-4529
prinfo@woodruffcenter.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IRANIAN FILM FESTIVAL RETURNS TO THE HIGH FOR 12th YEAR

Iranian Film Today November 6-November 21, 2009

ATLANTA, October 14, 2009 – The 12th annual Iranian Film Today festival opens at the High next month, and includes groundbreaking films from award-winning filmmakers Mehrshad Karkhani ("Loose Rope") and Mahdi Moniri ("Tinar"). Beginning Friday, November 6, and continuing through Saturday, November 21, the six-film series showcases a variety of themes and offers an exceptional sampling of Iranian filmmaking.

"As the world becomes smaller, film's capacity to serve as a window into other cultures becomes more important than ever. This is true for all international cinema, but especially for places like Iran, where our image of the country tends to be defined by the latest news report or headline," said Linda Dubler, curator of media arts at the High. "This year's selection of works in Iranian Film Today upholds the reputation of Iranian filmmakers for innovation, especially in the blurring of boundaries between fiction and documentary. Beautiful examples of the power of humanist cinema, these movies will be a revelation for audiences new and old."

Iranian Film Today begins on Friday, November 6, with "The Song of Sparrows" from director Majid Majidi. The film follows a missing ostrich, a broken hearing aid and a lost job that nearly drive a generous-spirited and loving father over the edge in this tale of innocence and corruption. The film's main character Karim is a hard worker and his family's sole support. Karim travels to Tehran, where he works nonstop and his pursuit of material success is echoed by his young son. In his review for Slate.com, Andrew O'Hehir wrote, "Majidi is one of the finest picture-makers in the elegant Iranian tradition; in his search for nonverbal epiphanies he neither hurries nor wastes a moment, and his characters and story have a clarity and simplicity that never feels cloying."

Filmmaker Nahid Persson Sarvestani is an Iranian exile living in Sweden who, as a poor Communist teenager, supported the 1979 overthrow of the Shah of Iran. Sarvestani seeks out the Shah's widow, the still-elegant Queen Farah, in "The Queen and I," on Saturday, November 7. This fascinating film chronicles how history plays out in the lives of individuals, and how loss can bring together two women who view that history through very different lenses, uniting them in their love for their country. A poignant story of friendship and a personal investigation of subjectivity and truth, the film was called "captivating and remarkable" by the *Los Angeles Times*.

On Friday, November 13, director Mehrshad Karkhani's "Loose Rope" follows the unlikely duo of Asgar and Mikhail, who work together in southern Tehran. When Mikhail gets a call from their boss ordering them to travel across town with a cow in the back of their Chevy, they set off for the affluent suburbs. Along the way they encounter many spectators eager to capture the sight of a cow being ferried through

the traffic-clogged streets of northern Tehran. In the Cleveland International Film Festival's catalogue, "Loose Rope" was called "a beautiful and often funny parable about the ties that bind us all."

Showing on Saturday, November 14, is "Tinar" an award-winning documentary directed by Mahdi Moniri. The film is the moving portrait of a young boy whose resilience, honesty and loneliness make him unforgettable. Made over a three-year period and shot in the mountains of northern Iran, the film captures the life of the young boy, who has been deserted by his father after his mother's death. As he shares with the audience his dreams of attending school, joining his brother in the city and being cared for rather than left to fend for himself, his voice becomes that of all poor, neglected children. The film won the UNESCO award at the Asia Pacific Film Festival.

Hailed by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, as "one of the best Iranian films of recent years," "Before the Burial," showing on Friday, November 20, is a mysterious psychological drama about love and forgiveness. Director Behnam Behzadi—who co-wrote the film "Half Moon," shown in 2007 as part of Iranian Film Today—presents this new film that presents alternating dream-like scenes with episodes set in the familiar urban chaos of Tehran. The film explores the last days of bus-driver Samiak as he approaches his 40^{th} birthday and sets out to even the score with those who arranged his expulsion from medical school and sent him to jail for his political views. But his resolve is shaken when he meets a smiling sprite of a young woman who claims to be a princess from a far-off island.

"Super Star" showing on Saturday, November 21, closes out the series. This comedic drama from one of the country's leading female directors, Tahmineh Milani ("Cease Fire"), centers on an actor whose good looks can't make up for his arrogance and womanizing ways. Kourosh (Shahab Hosseini, who won the Best Actor award at the Fajr Film Festival for his performance) is beset by debt, smokes incessantly and is juggling six relationships when he meets a sweet sixteen-year-old who claims to be his daughter. The angelic, resourceful Raha steps into his life and gently sets him on the path to reform.

Film Series Schedule

All films are screened at 8 p.m. (unless otherwise noted) in the Richard H. Rich Theatre, located in the Memorial Arts Building, adjacent to the High at Peachtree and 15th Streets in midtown Atlanta. All films are in Persian with subtitles. "Tinar" is in Mazandarani dialect with subtitles.

"The Song of Sparrows" "Tinar"

Friday, November 6 Saturday, November 14

"The Queen and I"
Saturday, November 7
"Before the Burial"
Friday, November 20

"Loose Rope" "Super Star"

Friday, November 13 Saturday, November 21

Support

The 12th annual Iranian Film Today is co-organized by Linda Dubler, curator of media arts at the High Museum of Art, and Iranian cinema specialist Reza Sohrabi, who generously donated his time and expertise to this program. 35mm projection facilities in the Rich Auditorium were provided by a gift from George Lefont. Generous support of the High's international film series is provided by the Woodruff Arts Center Celebrates Diversity Initiative through the generous support of Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.



Tickets

Tickets can be purchased in advance by visiting the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office, calling 404-733-5000 or going online to www.High.org. Admission prices are \$7 for the public and \$6 for Museum members, students and seniors. Patron-level members enter free. Tickets may also be purchased at the door on the night of the screening.

Film Information

The public may call the High's film hotline at 404-733-4570 for up-to-the-minute information about visiting directors, receptions, changes or cancellations and for a free subscription to the quarterly film calendar. The Museum's website is www.High.org.

The High Museum of Art

The High Museum of Art, founded in 1905 as the Atlanta Art Association, is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 11,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists and is distinguished as the only major museum in North America to have a curatorial department specifically devoted to the field of folk and self-taught art. The High's media arts department produces acclaimed annual film series and festivals of foreign, independent and classic cinema. In November 2005, the High opened three new buildings by architect Renzo Piano that more than doubled the Museum's size, creating a vibrant "village for the arts" at the Woodruff Arts Center in Midtown Atlanta. For more information about the High, please visit www.High.org.

The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is ranked among the top four arts centers in the nation. The Woodruff is unique in that it combines four visual and performing arts divisions on one campus as one not-for-profit organization. Opened in 1968, the Woodruff Arts Center is home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Young Audiences. *To learn more about the Woodruff Arts Center, please visit www.woodruffcenter.org*.

###

DIGITAL IMAGES FOR THE FILMS ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Media Contact:

Nicole Johnson Public Relations Coordinator, High Museum of Art

Tel: 404-733-4585 | E-mail: nicole.johnson@woodruffcenter.org