



LEONARDO DREW COMMISSIONED TO CREATE NEW PUBLIC ART PROJECT AT MADISON SQUARE PARK

City in the Grass envisions a conceptual city within the Park,
where visitors can engage directly with its structures and surfaces

On view from June 3 through December 15, 2019



Installation in-process for *City in the Grass*, commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy.
Photographer credit: Hunter Canning.

New York, NY | May 31, 2019—Madison Square Park Conservancy has commissioned Leonardo Drew to create a monumental new public art project for the Park opening this spring. Marking the Conservancy's 38th commissioned exhibition and the artist's most ambitious work to date, *City in the Grass* presents a topographical view of an abstract cityscape atop a patterned panorama. Building on the artist's signature techniques of assemblage and additive collage, the installation extends over 100 feet long with a richly textured surface that invites visitor engagement. *City in the Grass* is on view from June 3, 2019, through December 15, 2019.

"In this teeming urban space, Leonardo Drew's goal has been to bring people close in to his work, to study the swells and folds of his cityscape, and to locate a personal place within the purposeful voids in the work," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, exhibition curator and Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Madison Square Park Conservancy. "This is a symbolic and literal multilayered project. The artist builds layer on layer of materials while

using the metaphor of a torn carpet as a complicated reference to home, comfort, and sanctuary. Viewers can look onto *City in the Grass* as if they are giants assessing a terrain; upon sitting along the Oval Lawn's green expanse, they are able to embed themselves within the fabric of the sculpture."

For *City in the Grass*, Drew has crafted a sprawling work of varied materials that undulates across the lawn and, at various points, crescendo into towers rising up to 16 feet tall. These sculptures grow in and around a patterned surface made black and white wood mosaic and of colored sand that mimics Persian carpet designs, reflecting the artist's interest in East Asian decorative traditions and global design more broadly. Bringing together domestic and urban motifs, *City in the Grass* invites the Park's visitors to walk on its surface and to explore the abstract terrain of the work from all angles.

Added the Conservancy's Executive Director Keats Myer, "We look forward to welcoming Leonardo Drew's *City in the Grass* to our Oval Lawn. Through this monumental, interactive, and visually dynamic work, Drew will encourage visitors to consider and celebrate their relationships to the cities they inhabit and explore, and the agency that each individual possesses in their making."

City in the Grass is organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Mad. Sq. Art; Tom Reidy, Senior Project Manager; Julia Friedman, Senior Curatorial Manager; and Tessa Ferreyros, Curatorial Manager.

About the Artist

Leonardo Drew is a New York-based artist known for his unique manipulation of natural materials and creation of additive sculptures and installations. While his treatment of materials—which often includes techniques like burning, oxidizing, and weathering—evokes found objects, Drew chooses to work with new materials that provide him with complete control of his material choices and compositional form. Celebrating the materiality and symbolic resonances of his chosen media, Drew creates work addressing both formal and social concerns.

Recent solo museum exhibitions include shows at de Young Museum, San Francisco (2017); SCAD Museum of Art at the Savannah College of Art and Design (2013); Beeler Gallery at the Columbus College of Art & Design (2013); Palazzo Delle Papesse, Centro Arte Contemporanea, Siena (2006); Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2001); and Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC (2000). Drew's mid-career survey, *Existed*, premiered at the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston in 2009. The exhibition went on to the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, NC, and the deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, MA.

Drew's work is included in numerous public and private collections. Public collections include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville; and Tate, London. He has collaborated with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and has participated in artist residencies at ArtPace, San Antonio and The Studio Museum in Harlem, among others. In 2011 he was awarded the prestigious Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize presented by The Studio Museum in Harlem.

Drew was born in 1961 in Tallahassee, FL, and grew up in Bridgeport, CT. His talent and passion for art was recognized at an early age, and he first exhibited his work at the age of 13. He attended the Parsons School of Design and received his BFA from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 1985. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn,

NY. He is represented by Galerie Lelong, which is presenting an exhibition of his work opening May 16.

Public Programs

City in the Grass is activated throughout its run with a range of artist conversations, family tours, and special events. For more information and up-to-date listing of events, please visit <https://www.madisonsquarepark.org/mad-sq-art>.

Art Talks

Join a series of lively discussions with artists and thinkers considering issues and elements explored in *City in the Grass* and the role of public art.

Tuesdays, 6–7 p.m.

- June 11 – Writer and Editor Seph Rodney
- August 6 – Artist Leslie Hewitt
- September 10 – Poet Quincy Troupe and Leonardo Drew
- October 8 – Leonardo Drew and Brooke Kamin Rapaport

Lunchtime Art Tours

Join a Mad. Sq. Park staff member for a free tour exploring *City in the Grass*.

Every Wednesday, June 5 – September 18, 12:30–12:45 p.m.

Family Art Tours

Madison Square Park staff lead tours for families of *City in the Grass*.

Tuesdays, June 11, July 9, August 6, and September 10, 4–4:30 p.m.

Polyglot Theatre's "Ants"

Polyglot Theatre, Australia's leading creator of interactive and participatory theater for children and families, present a performance investigating the nature of work and our relationship with the environment as three larger-than-life "ants" rove throughout the park and atop *City in the Grass*.

Wednesdays, June 5 through Saturday, June 8.

The DASH Ensemble's "Human Nature"

Combining elements of modern, hip hop, floor work and physical theater, The DASH Ensemble presents *Human Nature* in conjunction with *City in the Grass*, and invites the public to observe their rehearsal process and performances within Drew's metaphorical cityscape. The DASH Ensemble leads a movement improvisation masterclass during the week followed by a performance on Friday and Saturday in the Park.

Wednesday, August 21 through Saturday, August 24.

About Madison Square Park Conservancy and Mad. Sq. Art

Madison Square Park Conservancy cultivates and enlivens Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public park in New York City's Flatiron District and one of the city's most treasured greenspaces. Through its public art commissions, horticultural stewardship, and engaging programming, the nonprofit creates an urban oasis that welcomes a diverse community of over 60,000 visitors each day.

Since 2004, the Conservancy has become a leader in commissioning new works of public art, curating and presenting over 35 major site-specific installations and solo exhibitions through

its Mad. Sq. Art programming. Led by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator, the program invites leading artists to push the boundaries of their practice and create risk-taking new works that experiment with materiality, scale, and theme in response to the Park's unique environment. The ambition of the commissioning program expands each year alongside the diverse range of innovative artists including Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Iván Navarro, Martin Puryear, and Ursula von Rydingsvard.

In 2018, the Conservancy was selected as the commissioning institution for the 2019 U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, marking the first time that an organization whose visual art program focuses exclusively on public art has received this honor. With Rapaport serving as Commissioner, the Conservancy will be presenting new work by Martin Puryear.

Support

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