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**Madison Square Park Conservancy's Mad. Sq. Art
Premieres Newly Commissioned Film
"City of Nature"
By
Kota Ezawa**

**On View in Madison Square Park
March 31 – May 15, 2011**

New York—Madison Square Park Conservancy's Mad. Sq. Art announces the premiere of *City of Nature*, a new film by artist Kota Ezawa to be on view in Madison Square Park March 31 – May 5, 2011. Knitting together fleeting, split-second excerpts of popular films in which flora and fauna are the featured characters, the artist's new animated video offers a six-minute cinematic comment on the juxtapositions between nature and culture in narrative mass media. Incorporating re-interpreted scenes from renowned films including Ang Lee's iconic *Brokeback Mountain* to the Guy Ritchie directed, Madonna starring,

Swept Away, the new Mad. Sq. Art commission will be screened continuously daily from 11am to 9pm.

The artist, Kota Ezawa, comments, “*City of Nature* is an alternative to the mainstream nature film in that it weaves together 70 nature scenes from 20 different pop culture films through animation. The nature scenes, stemming from films as diverse as *Late Spring* by Yasujiro Ozu and *Rambo: First Blood*, are stitched together into an abstract narrative where one natural element leads to the next. The entire film collage is hand redrawn and transformed into an animated film.

Surrounded by classic Manhattan buildings, Madison Square Park itself can be experienced as a piece of architecture, and as such, encourages us to view Manhattan as landscape. The fusion of nature and construction is a prevalent theme in *City of Nature* as throughout the city of Manhattan—natural film landscapes re-constructed over and over again through the process of animation, just as nature in real form is re-constructed time and time again as Manhattan continues to evolve. In this way, the film mirrors Madison Square Park, attempting to draw park-goers into a conversation about nature both within the film and throughout the park itself.”

President of the Madison Square Park Conservancy Debbie Landau notes, “We are delighted to present a new commission by such a talented artist whose films explore the relationships between art, culture, and the natural environment around us. With nature as its subject, *City of Nature* will offer an insightful and timely addition to the environs of Madison Square Park, which, in turn, will prove themselves an apt compliment to Ezawa’s work.”

Incorporating roughly 70 clips—many just seconds long—*City of Nature* presents what the artist refers to as a “video collage.” Scenes of streams and foliage are re-presented and further transformed by Ezawa’s hallmark style of freehand, computer assisted digital animation. The six-minute animated work draws from more than 20 popular films including, *Brokeback Mountain*, *Days of Heaven*, *Deliverance*, *Der Berg Ruft*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *Late Spring*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Moby Dick*, *Swept Away*, and *Twin Peaks*. The animated sequence of this time-based collage lends itself as a visually striking and original work containing subtle but deliberate echoes of iconic cultural moments embedded in our collective unconscious. In much the same way that Madison Square Park presents a cultivated and aestheticized side of nature, wildlife and green space amidst the urban landscape of central Manhattan, *City of Nature* examines the ways in which popular culture presents aestheticized images of the natural world, “unnatural” visions of nature that embed themselves in our cultural memory and media landscape more deeply than we may consciously know.

About the Artist:

Kota Ezawa was born 1969 in Cologne, Germany and received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute before completing his MFA at Stanford University. Ezawa re-presents iconic moments from the media, popular culture, and the history of photography in animated videos, slide projections, light-boxes, and

prints. Ezawa meticulously recreates animated sequences using basic digital drawing and animation software. His source material has included the Zapruder 8mm film of the Kennedy assassination, the O.J. Simpson trial, and clips from the films *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?* and D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*.

His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at museums and institutions throughout the country including: Wexner Center for the Arts (Columbus), St. Louis Art Museum, Artpace (San Antonio), Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Hartford), and Santa Monica Museum of Art, among others. His work has also been included in group exhibitions internationally throughout Brazil, Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Spain, South Korea, Slovak Republic, and the U.S. Prestigious showings include group exhibitions at The Art Institute of Chicago, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, DC), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Museum of Modern Art (New York), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai Art Museum (China), Seoul Museum of Art (Korea), Smithsonian American Art Museum (Washington, DC), among others. His work has also been included in the Whitney Biennial (2006), Shanghai Biennial (2004), and the 5th International Media Art Biennial (2008) in Seoul, Korea.

His recent publications include *Odessa Staircase Redux*, (ECU Press/JRP Ringier, 2010), and *The History of Photography Remix*, (Nazraeli Press, 2006).

He received a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award in 2003, a SECA Art Award from the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2006 and a Eureka Fellowship in 2010.

Ezawa lives and works in San Francisco and is currently represented by Murray Guy Gallery, New York.

Mad. Sq. Art and Madison Square Park Conservancy

The presentation of Kota Ezawa's *City of Nature* follows a number of acclaimed art installations presented by Madison Square Park Conservancy's Mad. Sq. Art program. Previously presented artists include Jim Campbell, Antony Gormley, Ernie Gehr, Shannon Plumb, Jessica Stockholder, Mel Kendrick, Bill Beirne, Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschild, Richard Deacon, Tadashi Kawamata, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Bill Fontana, Roxy Paine, William Wegman, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Jene Highstein, Sol LeWitt, and Mark di Suvero.

The Madison Square Park Conservancy is an award-winning organization and is the honored recipient of the International Art Critics Association's 2010 Second Place award for *Best Project in a Public Space* for the organization's exhibition of *Antony Gormley: Event Horizon* (2010), which featured 31 sculptures of the human form placed in and around Madison Square Park and on the rooftops of architectural treasures throughout New York City's Flatiron District and environs.

From May 5 to August 14, 2011, the Madison Square Park Conservancy will present *Echo*, a new commission by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa.

Mad. Sq. Art is the free contemporary public art program presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy in the historic 6.2-acre park located in the Flatiron district at Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street. #

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The Madison Square Park Conservancy, a public/private partnership with New York City Parks & Recreation, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping historic Madison Square Park a bright, beautiful and lively public space.

For more information on the Madison Square Park Conservancy and its programs, please visit <http://madisonsquarepark.org>.

*Image: Still from Kota Ezawa's *City of Nature* (2011). Courtesy of the artist and Madison Square Park Conservancy.

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