



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

## MARTIN PURYEAR TO REPRESENT UNITED STATES AT BIENNALE ARTE 2019

**Martin Puryear: Liberty/Martin Puryear: Libert  Will Feature New and Recent Sculpture as Well as Monumental Work for the Pavilion's Forecourt**

***U.S. Pavilion Presented by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York and Commissioned by Brooke Kamin Rapaport***

New York, NY | February 5, 2019—**Madison Square Park Conservancy**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, will present **Martin Puryear** as the representative for the United States at the 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Puryear is recognized for a fiercely independent visual language of object making that has developed over a half-century and for a sculptural practice that has influenced generations of artists. On view May 11 through November 24, 2019, **Martin Puryear: Liberty/Martin Puryear: Libert ** will build upon themes and techniques central to Puryear's oeuvre and marks a major international presentation for the artist, whose work has remained at the forefront of American creativity.

The U.S. Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2019 is commissioned and curated by **Brooke Kamin Rapaport**, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Madison Square Park Conservancy. The exhibition marks the first time in the history of the Art Biennale that the U.S. Pavilion will be organized by an institution whose visual art program is focused exclusively on public art. Madison Square Park Conservancy and Puryear previously collaborated on the commission of a public art installation of his monumental sculpture *Big Bling* in New York's Madison Square Park in 2016.

*Martin Puryear: Liberty/Martin Puryear: Libert * meditates on liberty as an essential human theme and continues the artist's exploration of abstract forms culled from global sources. Featuring new sculpture and a monumental installation that will activate the forecourt of the neoclassical U.S. Pavilion, the exhibition will challenge expectations about how everyday forms found around the world can be elevated into highly resonant objects transforming perception, inspiring individuals, and questioning history.

"For more than five decades, Martin Puryear has created a body of work distinguished by a complex visual vocabulary and deeply-considered meaning. His exacting method and subtle power of nuance has influenced generations of artists in the U.S. and internationally," said Rapaport. "When Puryear learned that he would represent our country at the Biennale, his response was that he would do so as both an artist and as a citizen. This position is not a discovery for those who know Puryear and his sculpture. His enduring approach has galvanized his work for more than five decades: issues of citizenry, allegiance, democracy, liberty and responsibility have long propelled the artist. Madison Square Park Conservancy is proud to partner with Puryear and bring our expertise and experience as an institution dedicated to public art to the U.S. Pavilion, which provides a critical spotlight on one of the most significant and influential artists working today."

Puryear's work summons disparate sources of inspiration to realize a coherent vision that brings together elements across cultures, continents, eras, and perspectives. The exhibition is being designed by **Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects**, who are working closely with Puryear and Rapaport to create a unified experience of the works on view in the outdoor forecourt and within the galleries.

As the dedicated exhibition scholar, **Darby English**, the Carl Darling Buck Professor at the University of Chicago, will collaborate with Rapaport on text panels and interpretive materials related to the exhibition. He will also author a major essay in the exhibition catalogue. **Paula Scher** of Pentagram will realize exhibition graphic design. **Miko McGinty** will design the exhibition catalogue, published by **Gregory R. Miller & Co.**, and will include additional essays by Rapaport, **Anne M. Wagner**, Class of 1936 Professor Emerita at the University of California, Berkeley and cultural writer **Tobi Haslett**.

In conjunction with the exhibition at the U.S. Pavilion, the Conservancy and Puryear will realize outreach programs with underserved youth through a collaboration between **Studio Institute of Studio in a School Association, Inc.**, in New York, and **Istituto Santa Maria Della Pietà** in Venice.

*Martin Puryear: Liberty/Martin Puryear: Libertà* is made possible by The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. Bloomberg Philanthropies is the lead sponsor of the exhibition. Leadership support is provided by Carmel Barasch Family Collection/Morris A. Hazan Family Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, Agnes Gund, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation and Jack Shear, Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis, Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, Matthew Marks Gallery, The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in honor of Agnes Gund, and Helen and Charles Schwab. Major support is provided by The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, Athena Art Finance, Meta Alice Keith Bratten Foundation, Charina Endowment Fund, Mrs. Donald Fisher, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Glenstone Foundation, Stacey and Rob Goergen, Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Michael Kahn, KC Fabrications Inc., Liz and Eric Lefkofsky, Amitha Raman and Neil Luthra, Crystal McCrary and Raymond J. McGuire, Terra Foundation for American Art, Unalam of Unadilla, New York, and VIA Art Fund. Additional support is provided by the Irving Harris Foundation, Pamela J. Joyner and Alfred J. Giuffrida, Henry Moore Foundation, The Lenore G. Tawney Foundation, Thornton Tomasetti, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and Charles and Helen Wilkes.

For more information about the 2019 U.S. Pavilion, please visit:  
<http://martinpuryearvenice2019.org/>

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Born in 1941 in Washington, D.C., Martin Puryear is an American sculptor whose work is recognized for the subtlety and power of its form and inherent symbolism. Puryear's work is in the permanent collections of major museums across the U.S. and internationally. He represented the United States at the 1989 Bienal de São Paulo, where he was awarded the festival's Grand Prize, and his work was included in the 1992 Documenta IX. Recent exhibitions include a solo exhibition at the Museum Voorlinden, The Netherlands (2018); and an exhibition of his drawings, *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York (2015), that later traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. Puryear was also commissioned to present a major sculptural installation, *Big Bling*, by Madison Square Park Conservancy (2016). The Museum of Modern Art, New York organized a retrospective of Puryear's work in 2007, which traveled to the Modern Art Museum

of Fort Worth, Texas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Puryear earned his B.A. from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (1963) and his M.F.A. from Yale University (1971) and attended the Swedish Royal Academy of Art (1966-68). He has been the recipient of prestigious awards, including the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (1980), a Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant (1982), and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989). He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1992) and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University (1994) and the National Medal of Arts (2011).

Puryear attended segregated public schools through the sixth grade. He spent his childhood exploring the collections of the National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History. His early years as an artist—the 1960s and 1970s—were a period of racial and political unrest in the United States. He responded by developing a rigorous methodology and created work imbued with content and subtlety. While serving in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone from 1964 to 1966, Puryear learned local woodworking and carpentry techniques, consolidating and refining his skills in subsequent years through the study of Japanese architecture and garden design, Native American canoe and Greenland kayak construction, and furniture making (both Scandinavian modernist and Shaker). These experiences unified into the signature style for which Puryear is known today. Puryear lives and works in the Hudson Valley region of New York.

#### **ABOUT THE COMMISSIONER/CURATOR**

Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Commissioner and Curator of the U.S. Pavilion, is Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator at Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York. Since joining the Conservancy in 2013, she has overseen its program of commissioned public sculpture exhibitions by contemporary artists including Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Teresita Fernández, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, Giuseppe Penone, Martin Puryear, and Arlene Shechet. Through Madison Square Park Conservancy, she established Public Art Consortium, a national initiative of museum, public art program, and sculpture park colleagues.

Rapaport has worked as a museum curator, independent curator, and art writer. During her 13-year tenure at the Brooklyn Museum she organized numerous exhibitions and wrote corresponding catalogues in her roles as assistant and then associate curator of contemporary art. As part of the Brooklyn Museum's Grand Lobby series of installations, she worked with contemporary artists including Houston Conwill, Leon Golub, and Meg Webster, to realize their projects. As guest curator at The Jewish Museum in New York, she organized *Houdini: Art and Magic*, an interdisciplinary exhibition on the life and enduring significance to contemporary artists including Matthew Barney, Jane Hammond, Vik Muniz, and Raymond Pettibon of the magician and escape artist Harry Houdini (2010) and the retrospective exhibition *Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend* (2007). Rapaport has also held positions at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Jamaica Arts Center in Queens, New York. She is a contributing editor and frequent writer for *Sculpture* magazine and a regular lecturer, moderator, and panelist on contemporary art and public art.

Rapaport received her B.A. *cum laude* in art history from Amherst College and completed her M.A. in art history from Rutgers University. She is also the recipient of a Helena Rubinstein Fellowship in Museum Studies from the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. She serves on the Board of Directors of Socrates Sculpture Park in Long Island City and is Vice President of the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation in New York. She currently serves on the board of the Mead Art Museum at Amherst.

#### **ABOUT MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY**

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, and under the leadership of Executive Director Keats Meyer, 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, Martin Friedman Deputy Director and 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 selected, who have included Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Iván Navarro, Martin Puryear, and Ursula von Rydingsvard.

Arlene Shechet's, *Full Steam Ahead*, comprised of a series of porcelain, wood, and cast-iron sculptures installed around and within the emptied circular reflecting pool in the north of Madison Square Park is currently on view. In June 2019, the Conservancy will present a new commission by Leonardo Drew. His multilayered work, *City in the Grass*, will be the artist's first major public project. For more information please visit:  
<https://www.madisonsquarepark.org/mad-sq-art>

#### **ABOUT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

Established in 1895, the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia is considered the most prestigious contemporary art exhibition in the world, introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors to exciting new art every two years. The 58<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (May 11-November 24, 2019) is directed by Ralph Rugoff.

#### **ABOUT THE U.S. PAVILION**

The United States Pavilion at the Giardini della Biennale, a building in the neoclassical style, opened on May 4, 1930. Since 1986, The U.S. Pavilion has been owned by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and managed by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, which works closely with the Department of State and exhibition curators to install and maintain all official U.S. exhibitions presented in the Pavilion. Every two years, museum curators from across the U.S. detail their visions for the U.S. Pavilion in proposals that are reviewed by the NEA Federal Advisory Committee on International Exhibitions (FACIE), a group comprising curators, museum directors, and artists who then submit their recommendations to the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Past exhibitions can be viewed on the Peggy Guggenheim Collection website at:  
[www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/pavilion/index.php](http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/pavilion/index.php)

#### **ABOUT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional, and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us, like religion, politics, language and ethnicity, and geography. ECA programs build connections that engage and empower people and motivate them to become leaders and thinkers, to develop new skills, and to find connections that will create positive change in their communities. For more information, visit [www.exchanges.state.gov/us](http://www.exchanges.state.gov/us).

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