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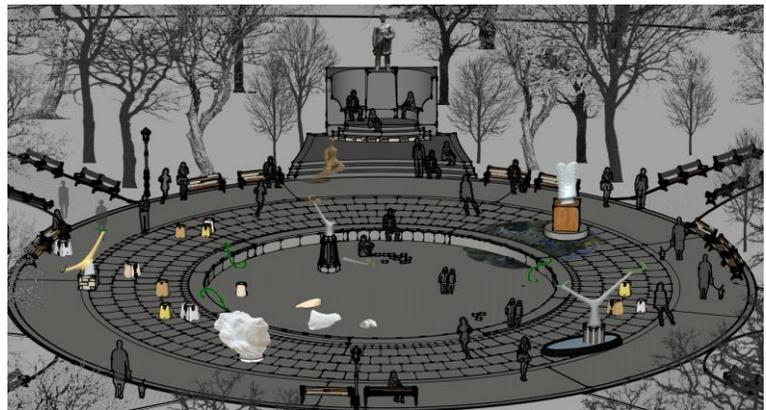
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**ARLENE SHECHET COMMISSIONED TO CREATE NEW SITE-SPECIFIC INSTALLATION
AT MADISON SQUARE PARK**

In *Full Steam Ahead*, Shechet advances the possibilities of porcelain by bringing the material to an outdoor site and pushing its scale to groundbreaking dimensions

On view from September 25, 2018 through April 28, 2019



New York, NY | July 26, 2018 (Updated September 7, 2018)—Artist Arlene Shechet has been commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy to create a new site-specific installation for the Park, on view from September 25, 2018, through April 28, 2019. Marking the Conservancy's thirty-seventh exhibition and the artist's first major public art project, *Full Steam Ahead* features a series of new sculptures in porcelain, wood, steel, and cast iron installed around and within the emptied circular reflecting pool in the north of Madison Square Park.

"Arlene Shechet may be best known for her work in ceramic, but she is also established as a risk taker, an artist who pushes and advances materials and content to the edge and into humor," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, exhibition curator and Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Mad. Sq. Art. "In *Full Steam Ahead*, Arlene extends the possibilities of ceramic in terms of form and scale, uniting a traditionally interior vocabulary with new materials and within the Park's changing landscape. By disputing long-held expectations for materials, for sites, and for assumed behavior, Shechet is charting new possibilities for outdoor public sculpture."

For *Full Steam Ahead*, Shechet reconfigures the Park's emptied circular reflecting pool with a series of sculptures, designing the space as an outdoor room or what Shechet calls "a manufactured version of nature." Her installation straddles function and art by including seating for conversation, fostering interaction within the Park's teeming urban site. Initially inspired by memories of the sunken living room in her grandparents' apartment, she encourages visitors to step into the reflecting pool to linger and reflect.

Along the pathways and perimeter of the reflecting pool, Shechet has chosen to realize human-scale sculpture to relate to the physical presence of traversing visitors, utilizing forms that reflect her interest in historical decorative arts and are suggestive of flora and fauna: the outsized remnants of a lion's head and paw; remains of a bird's colossal feather displayed high on a pedestal as an ominous trophy; and tree-like sculptures and branches in cast iron. As visitors walk around the installation, they will discern

deliberate contradiction in Shechet's work: figuration and abstraction, humor and narrative, mass and immateriality, innovation and extinction.

Arlene Shechet said: "My hope has been to reimagine the hardscape of the Park with delight and surprise. New Yorkers rely on the sidewalks, the pavement, and the street as the core of their urban lives. *Full Steam Ahead* becomes a lively and human amphitheater, softening the hardscape through sculptural intervention evocative of 18th-century garden landscapes."

Shechet is best known for her work in ceramic and porcelain, materials considered fragile and precious. In *Full Steam Ahead*, she uproots that perception with breakout examples of porcelain bringing the material to a new level in terms of scale and form. Recent residencies at the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory in Saxony and at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan reflect the artist's fascination with two previously unconnected sites for porcelain fabrication and her interest in the delight and discovery of eighteenth-century decorative arts and twenty-first century industrial production of sinks and bathtubs. The project also includes work in Krion, cast iron, steel, brass, concrete and wood.

The title *Full Steam Ahead* takes inspiration from the distinguished 1880 bronze monument to Admiral David Glasgow Farragut, the collaboration of architect Stanford White and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Admiral Farragut is best-known for his naval victory against the Confederacy at the Battle of Mobile Bay during the Civil War when he commanded: "Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!" Shechet acknowledges and critiques the centrality of historic nineteenth-century monuments devoted to male statesmen and heroes by placing a hand-carved wood sculpture of a female figure on the monument's steps adjacent to the carved base of two typological reliefs of women named Loyalty and Courage.

The Conservancy's Executive Director Keats Myer said: "We are greatly anticipating Arlene Shechet's *Full Steam Ahead* in the Park this fall and into the winter and springtime. She is creating a magical installation in the emptied basin of our reflecting pool, encouraging visitors to engage with the sculpture and with each other within the shifts across the seasons."

Full Steam Ahead is organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Mad. Sq. Art, Julia Friedman, Senior Curatorial Manager, Tom Reidy, Senior Project Manager, and Tessa Ferreyros, Curatorial Manager.

Public Programming

Full Steam Ahead will be activated throughout its run with a range of artist conversations, walking meditations, and special events.

Art Talks

Join in lively discussions with artists and thinkers about *Full Steam Ahead* and public art.

Thursdays, 6–7pm

- October 4: Faye Hirsch
- November 1: Andrianna Campbell
- December 13: David Salle

Walking Meditations

Step into Monday with a guided walking meditation around *Full Steam Ahead*, brought to you in partnership with the Rubin Museum of Art.

Mondays, October 22 & 29, November 5, 12, 19, 26, 7–8am

In Conversation

Poet Kenneth Goldsmith engages with creatives from a variety of fields for insights and inspiration. Refreshments will be served.

Tuesdays, 12–1pm

- November 6: Andrei Codrescu
- November 13: Rhonda Lieberman
- November 20: David Wondrich

- November 27: Virginia Heffernan
- December 4: Kenneth Goldsmith
- December 11: Paula Scher and Seymour Chwast

Passing by Samuel Beckett with Dianne Wiest

In a sculptural costume designed by artist Arlene Shechet, Academy Award and two-time Oscar Winner Dianne Wiest will perform pieces from Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*. Taking place within Shechet's installation, *Full Steam Ahead*, the performance will allow passersby to come and go as it unfolds, to return for repeats over the course of the week, and to experience fragments as they move through the installation. October 22–26, 12 – 1 pm

Winter Solstice Procession

Acoustic performers will conduct a ceremonial procession through Full Steam Ahead, walking down pathways and into the installation weaving a sonic energy that wraps around and highlights the site. December 21, 12:30 pm

About the Artist

Arlene Shechet (American, b. 1951) is a sculptor living and working in New York City and the Hudson Valley. *All at Once*, a major, critically-acclaimed twenty-year survey of her work was on view at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in 2015. *All at Once* was hailed by *The New York Times* as "some of the most imaginative American sculpture of the past 20 years, and some of the most radically personal." In recent years, Shechet's work has incorporated historic museum installations, including *Porcelain, No Simple Matter: Arlene Shechet and the Arnhold Collection*, on view at The Frick Collection from May 2016 to April 2017. The exhibition was described in *The New Yorker* as "a balancing act of respectful and radical" with "whimsical beauty and deep smarts." *From Here on Now*, a solo exhibition, was on view at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. in 2017.

Shechet was featured in PBS's *Art 21* in 2014 and The Metropolitan Museum of Art Artists Project in 2016. She is the recipient of numerous prizes including the 2016 CAA Artist Award for Distinguished Body of Work, a John S. Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship Award in 2004, the Anonymous Was a Woman Artist Award, and the Joan Mitchell Painters and Sculptors Grant in 2010, as well as several New York Foundation for the Arts awards.

Her work is in distinguished public and private collections including Brooklyn Museum, Hessel Museum of Art in Annandale-on-Hudson, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Walker Art Center, and Whitney Museum of American Art. She received her B.A. from New York University and her M.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design.

Join the conversation on Twitter and Instagram via the hashtags **#MadSqArt**, **#ArleneShechet**, and **#MadSqFullSteamAhead**. For more information on Madison Square Park Conservancy and its programs, please visit <http://madisonsquarepark.org>.

About Mad. Sq. Art and Madison Square Park Conservancy:

A celebrated series of sculpture exhibitions by living artists, Mad. Sq. Art was launched by Madison Square Park Conservancy in 2004 to bring free public art programs to New York. The program has received extensive critical and public attention since its inception and has developed into a world-class cultural institution. Its ambition and scale expand each year alongside an increasingly diverse range of innovative, world-class artists.

Mad. Sq. Art has exhibited works by artists including Diana Al-Hadid, Bill Beirne, Jim Campbell, Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Mark di Suvero, Kota Ezawa, Rachel Feinstein, Teresita Fernández, Bill Fontana, Ernie Gehr, Orly Genger, Sandra Gibson & Luis Recoder, Antony Gormley, Paula Hayes, Jene Highstein, Tadashi Kawamata, Mel Kendrick, Sol LeWitt, Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied, Charles Long, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Iván Navarro, Josiah McElheny, Jacco Olivier, Roxy Paine, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume

Plensa, Shannon Plumb, Martin Puryear, Erwin Redl, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Alison Saar, Jessica Stockholder, Leo Villareal, and William Wegman.

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, nurture, and enhance Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public green space, creating an environment that fosters moments of inspiration. The Conservancy is committed to engaging the community through its beautiful gardens, inviting amenities, and world-class programming. Madison Square Park Conservancy is licensed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to manage Madison Square Park and is responsible for raising 100% of the funds necessary to operate the Park, including the brilliant horticulture, park maintenance, sanitation, security, and free cultural programs for Park visitors of all ages.

Madison Square Park's 6.2-acre site welcomes more than 60,000 daily visitors—a richly diverse audience including local residents, families, public school groups and day camps, office workers, students, artists, and international visitors.

Support:

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