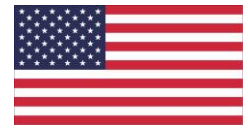




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MARTIN PURYEAR TO REPRESENT UNITED STATES AT 58th VENICE BIENNALE IN 2019

U.S. Pavilion Presented by Madison Square Park Conservancy and
Commissioned by Brooke Kamin Rapaport

New York, NY – August 15, 2018 – **Madison Square Park Conservancy**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, announced today that **Martin Puryear** will represent the United States at La Biennale di Venezia 58th International Art Exhibition. 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, the Biennale will mark a major international presentation for the artist, whose work has remained at the forefront of American creativity and who will create new site-specific pieces for the U.S. Pavilion.

The 2019 U.S. Pavilion 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 Biennale that the U.S. Pavilion will be organized by an institution whose visual arts 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 confronts contemporary issues as a maker of objects in the studio. For more than five decades, 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. “Since our first project in 2004, Madison Square Park Conservancy has commissioned over 30 contemporary art installations, fostering dynamic engagement with the public to inspire, provoke, and captivate through resonant examples of contemporary art within one of the most cherished green spaces in New York City. We are proud to realize installations that are accessible and open to the broadest possible audience. The expertise and experience we have as an institution dedicated to public art will enhance next year’s presentation at the U.S. Pavilion, which provides a critical spotlight on one of the most significant and influential artists working today.”

Puryear will create an entirely new body of work for the U.S. Pavilion, including new sculpture and a site-specific outdoor installation for the Pavilion’s forecourt. Puryear’s work summons disparate sources of inspiration to realize a coherent vision that culls and clarifies across cultures, continents, eras, and perspectives. In conjunction with the presentation 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.

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. **Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects** will serve as exhibition designers, working with Puryear and Rapaport on the layout of objects in the interior galleries and outdoor forecourt. **Paula Scher** of Pentagram, will realize exhibition and catalogue graphic design. The catalogue will be published by **Gregory R. Miller & Co.**, and **Anne M. Wagner**, Class of 1936 Professor Emerita at the University of California, Berkeley, will write a catalogue essay.

The 2019 U.S. Pavilion: Martin Puryear is made possible by The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, The Ford Foundation, The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, Agnes Gund, Matthew Marks Gallery, and The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in honor of Agnes Gund. Additional support is provided by The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation and Charina Endowment Fund.

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 and 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 symbolism 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 is a nonprofit organization that maintains, operates, and programs Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public park and cultural space in the heart of New York City. **Keats Myer** serves as Executive Director. Welcoming more than 60,000 national and international visitors on a daily basis, the Conservancy engages the community through its beautiful gardens, inviting amenities, and free cultural programs. Since 2004, the Conservancy has commissioned over 30 major installations and exhibitions by contemporary artists as part of its art program, which has garnered an international reputation for showcasing challenging, inspiring, and engaging outdoor installations. Past projects have spotlighted the work of such artists as Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Teresita Fernández, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, Giuseppe Penone, Alison Saar, and Ursula von Rydingsvard. In fall 2018, the Conservancy will present a new commission, by artist Arlene Shechet. *Full Steam Ahead*, comprising 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, will be on view from view from September 25, 2018 through April 28, 2019. For more information please visit: <https://www.madisonsquarepark.org/mad-sq-art>

ABOUT LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Established in 1895, the Venice Biennale is considered the most prestigious international art exhibition, introducing hundreds of thousands of visitors to exciting new art every two years. The 58th 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 Venice Biennale, a building in the neo-classical 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

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.

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