



Abigail DeVille (American, b. 1981)

Light of Freedom, 2020

Fall 2020

Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York



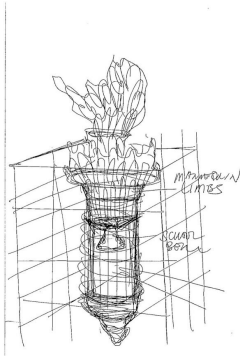
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**ABIGAIL DEVILLE FOCUSES ON SIGNIFICANT CROSSROADS IN
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY IN NEW COMMISSION FOR MADISON SQUARE
PARK
OPENING FALL 2020**

Light of Freedom Responds to the Past and Present By Mining Untold Histories

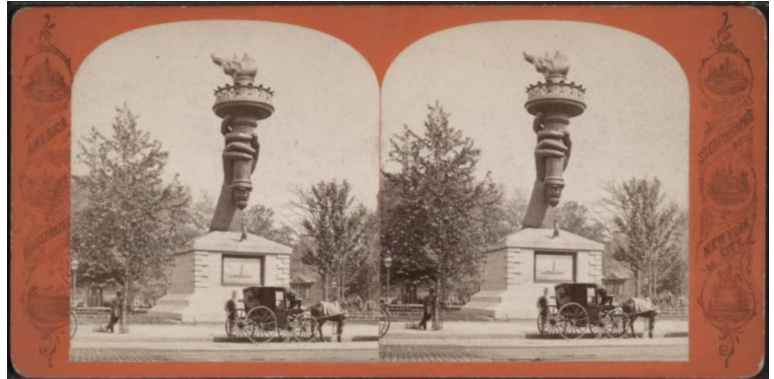


Half Scale of the Original
torch encased inside
scaffolding.

Torch
8ft tall x 6ft wide

Scaffolding variable

Mannequin limbs inside
the torch flame
embedded in the
armature.



Abigail DeVille (American, b. 1981), Proposal for *Light of Freedom* in Madison Square Park, New York, 2020 (left)
E. and H.T. Anthony, Publisher, *Olympic Theatre, Hand Torch, Madison Square*, c. 1876, The New York Public Library (right)

New York, NY | September 25, 2020 — For Madison Square Park Conservancy's public art commissioning program, artist Abigail DeVille will install *Light of Freedom*, a new work that reflects the despair and exultation of this turbulent period. The project is a twelve-foot high reference to the Statue of Liberty's torch, and to the scaffolding that encased it during construction. DeVille has filled her torch with a well-worn bell, a herald of freedom, and the arms of mannequins, beseeching viewers. The scaffold, which prevents access symbolically as well as physically, also recalls a work site, an insistent image in the urban landscape. The torch itself refers to the light of democracy and its foundation in ancient systems of government by citizens. Formative to *Light of Freedom* are the words of abolitionist, author and statesman Frederick Douglass, who proclaimed in a 1857 address in Canandaigua, New York: "If there is no struggle there is no progress."

The artist, who maintains a studio in the Bronx, uses public space to explore overlooked narratives. In *Light of Freedom*, she will mark significant crossroads in the history of African-Americans in New York. This work recognizes and hallows the area's earliest enslaved Africans, who were brought to New Amsterdam in 1626, and critiques the promise of democracy represented by the arm and torch of the Statue of Liberty, which were installed in Madison Square Park from 1876 to 1882. *Light of Freedom* also summons the current Black Lives Matter movement. As the organization that stewards historic Madison Square Park, the Conservancy has worked to address the question of how public art can respond in civic space to this unprecedented time. DeVille's *Light of Freedom*, the program's fortieth public art project, will be on view through January 2021.

"Abigail DeVille is known for using found materials and for uncovering the hidden record of lives lived in urban populations," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator of Madison Square Park Conservancy. "Art in civic space can often react to pressing issues literally and metaphorically. DeVille's work is uplifting and contemplative in its recognition of the pandemic, protests and the election season." "We are honored to work with Abigail DeVille on *Light of Freedom* as she realizes this important project in the Park," added the Conservancy's Executive Director Keats Myer. "The Park has remained open since the pandemic began here,

providing an outdoor location for respite and relief for those who have been isolated. Families, neighbors, communities and workers are all in the Park as are protestors who have used the site to gather.”

Light of Freedom is organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator and Tom Reidy, Senior Project Manager. Keats Myer is the Conservancy’s Executive Director.

Public Programs

Light of Freedom will be complemented by Zoom programs with the artist. The schedule will be announced at a later date.

About the Artist

Abigail DeVille (American, b. 1981) creates sculpture, installation and performance often incorporating found materials from her neighborhood and the streets around the exhibition venue. Her work has focused on gentrification, lost regional histories, community transformation and racism. DeVille’s projects pivot from the Modernist tradition of collage and assemblage as she makes objects and environments that gather found and acquired materials. She participated in Madison Square Park Conservancy’s symposium, *Innovating Public Art* (2019). She has exhibited at Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Institute of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, New Museum in New York and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

DeVille was born in New York and works in the Bronx. The artist received a BFA from the Fashion Institute of Technology (2007), attended Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture (2007) and received an MFA from Yale University (2011). DeVille has participated in residencies at the International Studio and Curatorial Program in Brooklyn (2012), the Studio Museum in Harlem (2013-14), The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study Fellowship (2014-15), Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in Captiva (2017) and the American Academy in Rome / Rome Prize (2017-18). She has received awards from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, the Van Lier Fund of New York Community Trust, Creative Capital, United States Artists, and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation. The artist teaches in the Interdisciplinary Sculpture Department at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and, in spring 2021, at Yale School of Art.

Exhibition Support

Leadership support for *Light of Freedom* is made possible by the Ford Foundation.

Major support is provided by Candy and Michael Barasch, Suzanne Deal Booth, Ed Bradley Family Foundation, Harold and Colene Brown Family Foundation, The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family, Stardust Arts, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Additional support is provided by Eve Biddle, Ingrid Cincala-Gilbert, Shawna C. Gallancy, Stephanie Joyce and Jim Vos, Rebecca Kramer, Charles Moffett, Catherine E. Sippin, Sarah Stein-Sapir, and Anonymous.

Major support for Mad. Sq. Art is provided by Sasha C. Bass, Bunny & Charles Burson, Toby Devan Lewis, Ronald A. Pizzuti, Thornton Tomasetti, Tiffany & Co., Anonymous, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Substantial support is provided by Charina Endowment Fund, Eataly, Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, The Jacques & Natasha Gelman Foundation, The Sol Lewitt Fund for Artist Work, Mad. Sq. Art Council, Audrey & Danny Meyer, The New York EDITION, the Rudin Family, and Sorgente Group of America. Additional support is provided by 400 Park Avenue South, Irving Harris Foundation, Lenore G. Tawney Foundation, and Fern and Lenard Tessler.

Madison Square Park Conservancy is a public/private partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

Thank you to Materials for the Arts.

Following the exhibition in Madison Square Park, *Light of Freedom* will be on view at the Momentary, a satellite contemporary art space of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

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, the nonprofit creates an urban oasis that welcomes a diverse community of over 60,000 visitors each day. Keats Myer is the Conservancy's Executive Director.

Since 2004, the Conservancy has become a leader in commissioning new works of public art, curating and presenting forty major site-specific installations and solo exhibitions through its Mad. Sq. Art programming. Led by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief 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, Leonardo Drew, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, Martin Puryear, Erwin Redl, Alison Saar, Arlene Shechet, Ursula von Rydingsvard, and Krzysztof Wodiczko.

In 2019, the Conservancy served as the commissioning institution for the 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 and Curator, the Conservancy presented new work by Martin Puryear.

For more information contact

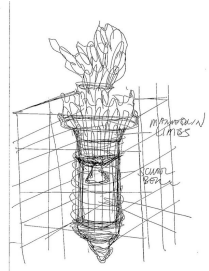
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Light of Freedom by Abigail DeVille
Image Sheet

Request access to images [here](#).

Unless specified, all works by Abigail DeVille (American, b. 1981)



Half Scale of the original
torch enclosed inside
scaffolding.
Torch
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Scaffolding variable
Mannequin limbs inside
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Light of Freedom, 2020

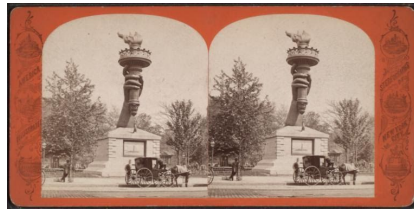
Artist rendering

Welded steel, cabling, rusted metal bell, mannequin arms, metal scaffolding, wood

156 x 96 x 96 inches approximately

Collection the artist

Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York



E. & H. T. Anthony, Publisher

Olympic Theatre, Hand Torch, Madison Square, c. 1876

Albumen print

Robert N. Dennis Collection of Stereoscopic Views, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, Photography Collection, The New York Public Library



Artist Abigail DeVille installing *Light of Freedom* in Madison Square Park

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Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York

Photo: Andy Romer



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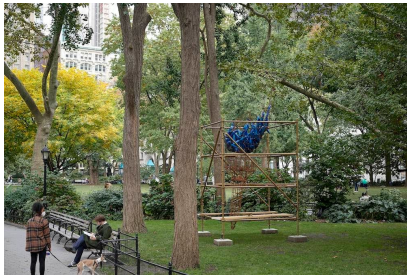
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Works by Abigail DeVille (Not in Exhibition)



Haarlem Tower of Babel, 2012

Reclaimed lumber, accumulated debris from Dead Horse Bay, my grandmother's heirlooms, charcoal, mannequin legs, American flag painting, zip ties, shopping cart, milk crates

72 x 72 x 192 inches

Courtesy the artist

Photo: LaToya Ruby Frazier



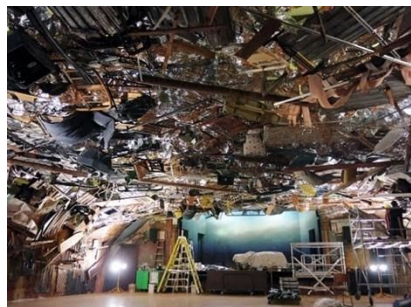
ADDC Obelisk, 2014

Wood, cinder blocks, fabric, paper, plastic, chicken wire, plaster, crates, shopping carts, tape, rope, paint, barbed wire, gold leaf, box springs

60 x 60 x 180 inches

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Groana Melendez



Midsummer Event Horizon, 2014

Accumulated debris, heirlooms, aluminum foil sheeting, furniture, painted backdrop

600 x 480 x 240 inches

Installed at *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare. Directed by Peter Sellers. Stratford Festival. Ontario, Canada. July 11- September 24, 2014

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Abigail DeVille



Charm City Round House, 2016

Tarps, brown paper, accumulated debris, heirlooms, found objects, bicycle, scale model of The Peale Museum, tarp version of *The Star-Spangled Banner*, mannequins

240 x 180 x 96 inches

Installed at the former The Peale Museum (Municipal Museum of the City of Baltimore), Baltimore

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Ginevra Shay



Sarcophagus Blue, 2017

Boat, mannequin legs, nylon stockings, wood, rope, paint
 132 x 48 x 36 inches
 Installed at The Armory Show, New York
 Courtesy the artist
 Photo: Abigail DeVille



Wave Wall I, 2018

Fabric scraps; wood; metal chain-link fencing; Good Will toys from Portland, Oregon; metal bells; stuffed animals; disco ball; electric doll
 180 x 36 x 96 inches
 Courtesy the artist
 Photo: Evan LaLonde



Conical Intersect, 2018

Cardboard; paint; cotton batting; archival images of the North Williams business district before demolition; *Street Roots*, Portland newspapers; copies of the *Declaration of Independence*; deflated bicycle tires
 480 x 180 x 216 inches
 Courtesy the artist
 Photo: Evan LaLonde



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 organization creates an urban oasis that welcomes a diverse community of more than 60,000 visitors each day.

Since 2004, the Conservancy has become a leader in commissioning new works of public art, having curated and presented more than forty major site-specific installations and solo exhibitions through its Mad. Sq. Art programming. Curated and overseen by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Chief Curator, the program invites leading and midcareer 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. Embracing museological standards, all exhibitions are accompanied by scholarly publications and complemented by innovative cross-disciplinary programs, performances, artist talks, and symposia.

The ambition and scale of the commissioning program expands each year alongside the diverse range of innovative artists selected, who have included Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Teresita Fernández, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, Jaume Plensa, Martin Puryear, Erwin Redl, Alison Saar, Arlene Shechet, Ursula von Rydingsvard and Krzysztof Wodiczko. The Conservancy also travels exhibitions — recent examples include Al-Hadid's *Delirious Matter*, Drew's *City in the Grass*, Puryear's *Big Bling* and Redl's *Whiteout* — collaborating on the presentation and recontextualization of these major projects in new outdoor settings at museums and cultural institutions across the country.

The Conservancy was the commissioning institution for the 2019 United States Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, 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 and Curator, the Conservancy is presenting new and recent work by Martin Puryear.



MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY LEADERSHIP BIOGRAPHIES

Keats Myer, Executive Director

Keats Myer, a nonprofit institution builder by training, has served as Executive Director of Madison Square Park Conservancy since 2013. Over the past five years, Myer initiated and implemented a critical strategic-planning process leading to an institutional focus on the art and horticulture programs. Under her leadership, the park has become an Arboretum and an American Public Garden and has been selected as the Commissioning Institution for the United States Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2019. Myer has quadrupled fundraising in as many years and overseen a facilities restoration plan that will keep the park peaceful, green, and safe for generations to come.

Prior to joining the Conservancy, Myer was Executive Director of the Children's Museum of the Arts in Lower Manhattan, where she quadrupled the museum's audience and funding and was responsible for the relocation, design, and capital campaign for the museum's new home, which was built in 2010 in Hudson Square. She was also a founding member of the team responsible for conceptualizing, fundraising, designing, and building the National Track and Field Hall of Fame and Learning Center in Upper Manhattan, where she served as Museum Director upon its opening.

Myer completed her B.S. in economics at the University of New Hampshire and received her master's degree from the Wagner School of Public Service at New York University. Myer currently serves as Board President of the Tamworth Community Foundation in New Hampshire.

Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator

Brooke Kamin Rapaport is Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator at Madison Square Park Conservancy. She was Commissioner and Curator of the United States Pavilion at the 58th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, in 2019. Since joining the Conservancy in 2013, Rapaport has overseen its program of commissioned public-sculpture exhibitions by contemporary artists including Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Teresita Fernández, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, Giuseppe Penone, Martin Puryear, Arlene Shechet and Krzysztof Wodiczko. Through Madison Square Park Conservancy, she established the 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 to realize their projects. As guest curator at The Jewish Museum, New York, she organized *Houdini: Art and Magic* (2010), an interdisciplinary exhibition on the life and enduring significance to contemporary artists of the magician and escape artist Harry Houdini, and the retrospective exhibition *Louise Nevelson: Constructing a Legend* (2007). Rapaport has also held positions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 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, panelist, and catalogue essayist 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's 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 and the Al Held Foundation in Boiceville. She currently serves on the board of the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College.



MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY EXHIBITIONS

Since 2004, Madison Square Park Conservancy has commissioned forty major installations and solo exhibitions. 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. Following is a complete list of exhibitions to date.

2020

Abigail DeVille, *Light of Freedom*
Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Monument*

2019

Leonardo Drew, *City in the Grass*

2018

Arlene Shechet, *Full Steam Ahead*
Diana Al-Hadid, *Delirious Matter*

2017

Erwin Redl, *Whiteout*
Josiah McElheny, *Prismatic Park*

2016

Martin Puryear, *Big Bling*

2015

Teresita Fernández, *Fata Morgana*
Paula Hayes, *Gazing Globes*

2014

Tony Cragg, *Walks of Life*
Rachel Feinstein, *Folly*
Iván Navarro, *This Land Is Your Land*

2013

Giuseppe Penone, *Ideas of Stone (Idee di pietra)*
Orly Genger, *Red, Yellow and Blue*
Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder, *Topsy-Turvy: A Camera Obscura Installation*

2012

Leo Villareal, *BUCKYBALL*
Charles Long, *Pet Sounds*

2011

Jacco Olivier, *Stumble, Hide, Rabbit Hole, Bird, Deer, Home*
Alison Saar, *Feallan and Fallow*
Jaume Plensa, *Echo*
Kota Ezawa, *City of Nature*

2010

Jim Campbell, *Scattered Light*
Antony Gormley, *Event Horizon*
Ernie Gehr, *Surveillance*

2009

Shannon Plumb, *The Park*
Jessica Stockholder, *Flooded Chambers Maid*
Mel Kendrick, *Markers*
Bill Beirne, *Madison Square Trapezoids*, with performances by the Vigilant Groundsman

2008

Olia Lialina and Dragan Espenschied, *Online Newspapers: New York Edition*
Richard Deacon, *Assembly*
Tadashi Kawamata, *Tree Huts*
Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, *Pulse Park*

2007

Bill Fontana, *Panoramic Echoes*
Roxy Paine, *Conjoined, Defunct, Erratic*
William Wegman, *Around the Park*

2006

Ursula von Rydingsvard, *Bowl with Fins, Czara z Babelkami, Damski Czepek, Ted's Desert Reigns*

2005

Jene Highstein, *Eleven Works*
Sol LeWitt, *Circle with Towers, Curved Wall with Towers*

2004

Mark di Suvero, *Aesop's Fables, Double Tetrahedron, Beyond*



CONTACT INFORMATION

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