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**MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY'S MAD. SQ. ART ANNOUNCES MARTIN
PURYEAR'S *BIG BLING* WILL REMAIN ON VIEW IN MADISON SQUARE PARK
THROUGH APRIL 2, 2017**

*Big Bling, a forty-foot high, temporary multi-tier structure is Mad. Sq. Art's
thirty-third public art exhibition*

New York, NY | October 12, 2016 – Madison Square Park Conservancy announces that the exhibition of *Big Bling*, by renowned American sculptor Martin Puryear, has been extended through April 2, 2017.

Big Bling, a multi-tier wood structure wrapped in fine chain-link fence, has captured the imagination of New Yorkers with its spectacular presence since its installation in May. A gold-leafed shackle is anchored near the top of the structure. At forty feet high, *Big Bling* achieves colossal scale and elicits a range of readings, stimulating diverse and profound interpretations of its meaning.

The largest temporary outdoor sculpture Puryear has created, *Big Bling* is part animal form, part abstract sculpture, and part intellectual meditation. The artist's signature organic vocabulary appears in a graceful, sinewy outline and an amoeboid form in the work's center.

Big Bling's architectural language suggests a building that is accessible by ascension through its levels. Its storeys are obstructed by chain-link fence, a barrier to entry, which covers all visible surfaces of the sculpture. In contrast to the coarse materials employed throughout most of the work, the gold shackle is a shimmering beacon that simultaneously adorns and restrains. (The term "bling" is rooted in urban youth and rap culture of the 1990s and refers to flashy jewelry and accessories.)

Martin Puryear (American, b. 1941), an American sculptor known for his devotion to traditional ways of working, typically creates handmade artworks using methods gleaned from carpentry, boat

building, and other trades with spare, exacting stylistic dignity. Wood, his signature material, is employed in his Madison Square Park project to anchor the physicality of the tremendous sculpture.

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 tourists.

"Mad. Sq. Art is a cultural resource for the general public, exhibiting important commissioned sculpture by acclaimed contemporary artists," said Keats Myer, Executive Director of Madison Square Park Conservancy. "Our goal is to bring world-class art to the public for free. Madison Square Park is truly a neighborhood park with a far-reaching cultural perspective."

"We are honored to work with Martin Puryear to realize the largest sculpture in his distinguished body of work," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Martin Friedman Senior Curator. "Puryear often balances abstraction with powerful metaphor and *Big Bling* sits within this trajectory. Public art is a communal activity. Its reach can be significant for communities and neighborhoods, and Puryear has captured this concept with a public sculpture of grand scale and important content."

Following New York, *Big Bling* will travel to Philadelphia to the Association for Public Art, opening in May 2017 where it will be on view for six months. This is a first-time collaboration between Madison Square Park Conservancy and the Association for Public Art. Both New York and Philadelphia already have permanent public pieces by Puryear: *North Cove Pylons*, 1995, at Battery Park City, New York and *Pavilion in the Trees*, 1993, in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

A celebrated series of sculpture exhibitions by living artists, Mad. Sq. Art was launched by the 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 expands each year alongside an increasingly diverse range of innovative, world-class artists.

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

Image: Martin Puryear, *Big Bling*, 2016. Pressure-treated laminated timbers, plywood, fiberglass, gold leaf, 40 x 10 x 38 ft. Collection of the artist, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Martin Puryear. Photo: Yasunori Matsui

About Martin Puryear:

Martin Puryear (American, b. 1941) earned his B.A. from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (1963) and his M.F.A. from Yale University (1971). He served in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone (1964-66) and attended the Swedish Royal Academy of Art (1966-68). Puryear's 2007 retrospective was organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York and traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. An exhibition of his drawings, *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, was held at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York in 2015; it will be on view at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2016. He has received many distinguished 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). Puryear lives and works in the Hudson Valley region of New York.

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

Mad. Sq. Art is the free, contemporary art program of Madison Square Park Conservancy. Since 2004, Mad. Sq. Art has commissioned and presented thirty-two premier installations in Madison Square Park by acclaimed artists ranging in practice and media. Mad. Sq. Art has exhibited works by artists including 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, Jacco Olivier, Roxy Paine, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Shannon Plumb, 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 98% 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.

The Association for Public Art (aPA, formerly Fairmount Park Art Association) commissions, preserves, interprets, and promotes public art in Philadelphia. The aPA is the nation's first private nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a "Museum Without Walls" that informs, engages, and inspires diverse audiences. Established in 1872, the aPA integrates public art and urban design through exemplary programs and advocacy efforts that connect people with public art.

associationforpublicart.org

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