



# MAD. SQ. ART 2012. CHARLES LONG *PET SOUNDS*

May 2 - September 9, 2012  
Madison Square Park  
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy





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# FOREWORD.

For the twenty-third exhibition presented by Mad. Sq. Art Charles Long's *Pet Sounds* has occupied Madison Square Park's central Oval Lawn—and to the excitement and delight of the tens of thousands of visitors we welcome each day during the summer. This exhibition has noticeably and seamlessly become part of the Park's landscape, and perhaps more than any other exhibition in our history, *Pet Sounds* offers a personal experience for all those who come to see, hear, and interact with the playful forms Charles has integrated into this wildly imaginative network of indefinable shapes and railings. *Pet Sounds* engages the Park audience in new ways and it changes our view of the Park by layering its natural landscape with the one Charles has created. This exhibition has expanded the limits of what we often think can be achieved outdoors and in a public space by pushing our own personal boundaries in making each of us part of the exhibition. In doing this, Charles has opened a new physical and mental space for those who experience *Pet Sounds* that will be etched in our collective memory for years to come.

Watching the development of this project has provided a privileged look into Charles Long's ever-evolving artistic vision and process. A constant wellspring of innovation and integrity, Charles has focused on every detail of *Pet Sounds* from the sand on which it is installed to the exact sounds each of his fantastical blobs emits. And as with every exhibition that Mad. Sq. Art presents, we are fortunate to have the dedication of not only the artist, but also the Mad. Sq. Art Advisory Committee and the Board of the Madison Square Park Conservancy. Without their support, we could not bring such exciting programming to life. This summer, Mad. Sq. Art and Charles Long have given New York a new playground, a living musical instrument, and a new space for engagement, reflection, and reaction all at once. I look forward to seeing you in the Park among the blobs.

Debbie Landau  
President  
Madison Square Park Conservancy



# ARTIST STATEMENT. CHARLES LONG.

For *Pet Sounds* I sought something that would integrate into the flow of the city and specifically with the meandering park paths with their pedestrian movement, domestic and urban animals amidst trees, lines of benches following curving railings and for it to be in play with all the interactions between them. It was probably when I photographed a man napping on a bench in a slouched position that my amorphous concept took shape. On this photo I painted in a brightly colored blob similarly slouched next to this sleeping body and I let one end of the blob trail off so that it became a railing which flowed gently along the park path.

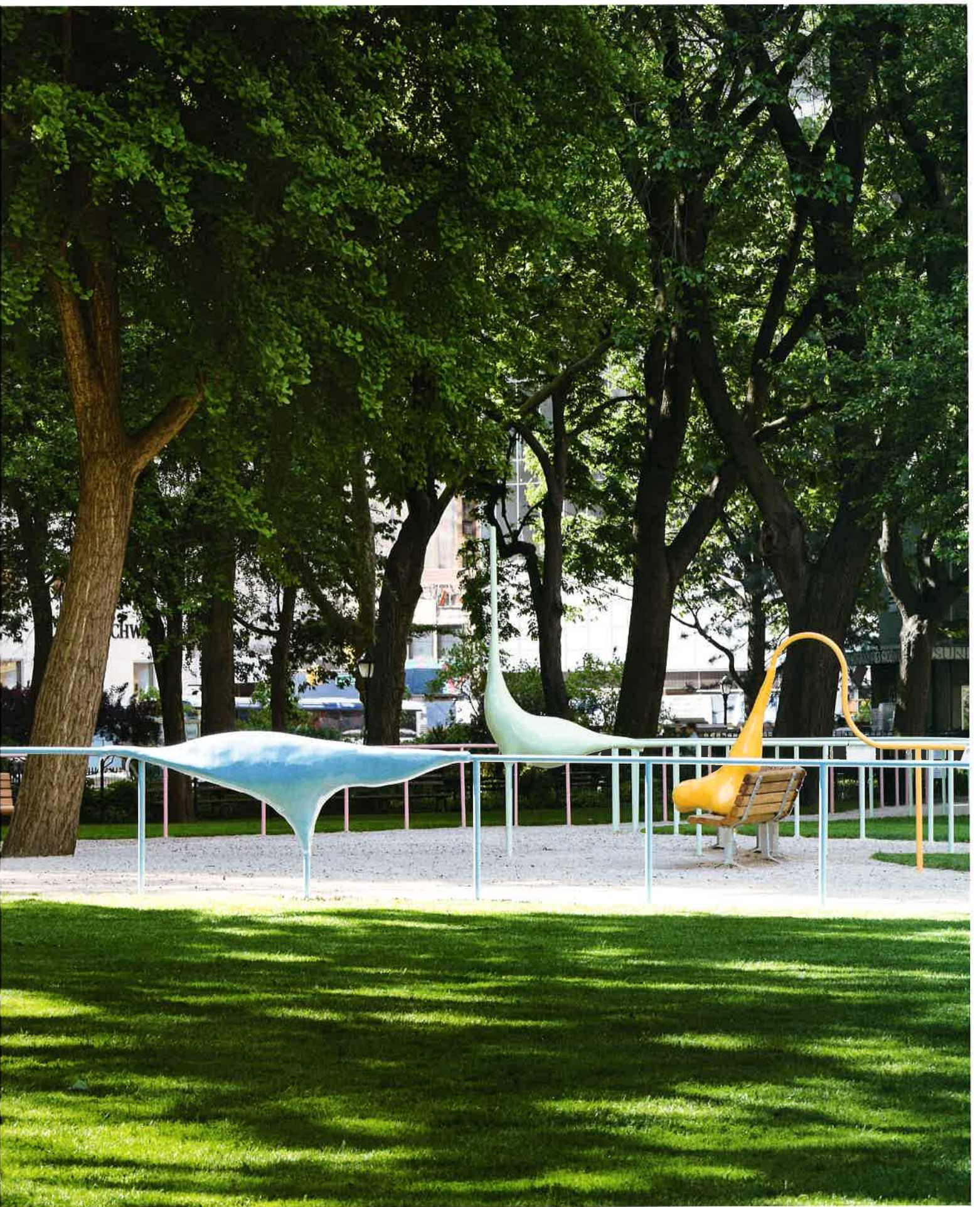
I was exploring the concept of the park as a mental state, a place of the unconscious, sort of turning the real park in on itself. And as I saw the people sitting and dozing on benches as park features, conversely I saw the park features such as the railings as snaking limbs. What this led to eventually was my making a system of railings defining paths spilling out onto the great lawn where they evolve into human scaled blobs lounging on benches and plopping down on a picnic table. The paths converged creating a surreal park within the center of the park. I wanted people to connect to these sleeping blobs and wake them. I wanted the blobs to respond and affect people in a unique and abstract way. I sculpted forms that would have a body-like scale and a slick surface to seduce touch as hands glide from railing to amorphous blob. With their elusive figuration and responsive sound you can't quite place them. I want this kind of abstract experience to become part of the collective memory of the city.

# OUTER CHILD'S PLAY: *PET SOUNDS* AT MADISON SQUARE PARK.

Adam D. Glick  
Martin Friedman Curator, Mad. Sq. Art

When Charles Long first envisioned *Pet Sounds* for Madison Square Park, his brightly colored railings and seductive, touch-sensitive amorphous shapes were only contained by the physical boundaries of the park. Reaching twenty-five feet in the air and undulating above the Park's pathways, Long's initial conception coupled the stratospheric with the grounded, the untouchable with the intimate, and he imagined an environment that could easily have jumped out of a story by Dr. Seuss. Over the course of the exhibition's three-year development, Long preserved the fantastical, unrestrained nature of *Pet Sounds* as he centralized its placement on Madison Square Park's Oval Lawn. A winding network of six "blobs" of varied sizes, shapes, and colors have come to occupy the center of the park and when touched, these unusual forms react by producing equally unfamiliar sounds. Visitors who experience the exhibition have access to an open public space to explore firsthand and engage with *Pet Sounds*, an installation that transforms the vertical and horizontal sightlines of one of Manhattan's most well-known outdoor spaces. The forms, sounds, and curious presence of the installation at the center of a nineteenth-century Beaux Art park in New York intrigues both casual passers-by and visitors seeking out the exhibition. After all, what are those shapes? Are they aliens or giant toys? Or perhaps they are oversized pieces of taffy or distorted body parts? Whatever their categorization, their allure and solicitation to be







touched is irresistible. The excitement of physically engaging with art, something we are so often conditioned to see and not to touch, sparks a quest for pleasure in virtually all of those who interact with *Pet Sounds*, though with more complexity than first meets the eye—or the hand.

Of course, interactivity is nothing new in contemporary art, where exhibitions requiring visitor participation have become a critical and financial coup for cultural institutions and private galleries alike. Take, for example, Carsten Höller's multistory slide at the Tate Modern in London and the New Museum in New York (2006 and 2011, respectively), Mike and Doug Starn's *Big Bambú* on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2010, the naked "human archway" in Marina Abramovic's 2010 *The Artist Is Present* at the Museum of Modern Art, as well as numerous recent gallery exhibitions by artists whose works are made with the intention of direct physical engagement with, and participation by, the "viewer." *Pet Sounds*, however, is set apart from other such participatory exhibitions insofar as the physical act required by those who experience it is neither a passive one, nor does it merely involve being led through a created environment or a single structure. One does not fold his or her hands and twist through a slide, nor simply wander through an artfully constructed jungle gym. In order to engage with *Pet Sounds*, the conscious act of touching is paramount: a directed stroke or glide of the hand (or often, a full embrace) is required for the vibrations and animal sounds to emanate from Long's seemingly organic forms, which are installed so they act as participants in their own exhibition—

and so that those who touch them do, too. The pleasure and excitement gained from touching the playful and seemingly alien objects in *Pet Sounds* offers a snapshot into how our inherent curiosity and desire to touch is tempered predominantly by age, and perhaps moreover, by an awareness of and resistance to our own self-pleasure. Psychoanalytic readings of the act of touching and its connection to self-discovery and pleasure-seeking elucidate how these acts (be they intentionally sexual or otherwise) are inextricably linked to the excitement one feels when engaged with a particular object in any environment. If this is the case, the simply playful and "uncritical" nature of *Pet Sounds* is anything but, and instead publicly displays the expression of not merely fun-making, but also of fundamental human impulse. Given that the first "object" a child plays with is often connected to a fixation on his or her own body, we quickly learn that such self-exploration for amusement in public is discouraged. As a result, this fascination and exploration to continue pleasure seeking is often transferred to inanimate objects such as food and toys, both of which Long has said time and again are easily seen in his "blobs" for *Pet Sounds* (so much so that unofficial nicknames for some of the shapes include "bubble gum" and "nose").<sup>1</sup> Could we then be attracted to and intrigued by this work because it leads us to strive to recover the foregone pleasure of unrestrained exploratory touching and pleasure while nevertheless respecting the prohibition of its fulfillment?<sup>2</sup> If so, it is no mystery that the sculptures in *Pet Sounds*, which can easily be viewed as body parts, candy, and/or giant toys, excite visitors of all ages as a collective pleasure center in their own right.











Be that as it may, could we instead think of these shapes as purely fun machines that create a playground and nothing more? Can we separate Long's work from all critical, art-historical, and/or psychoanalytic interpretation? After all, the artist himself has claimed that "fun might be the enemy of critical discourse."<sup>3</sup> To conceptualize *Pet Sounds* as uncritical and merely a crowd-pleasing exhibition because of its playful nature risks eclipsing its various sculptural influences. *Pet Sounds* extends a twentieth-century tradition of sculpture made from unusual materials and paired with sound, giving a nod to the kinetic sculpture machines of Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely, as well as to the work of the Baschet Brothers (who produced sound-making sculptures and experimental musical instruments beginning in the 1950s) and of Max Neuhaus (who created an art form devoted to defining physical spaces with continuous sound). For Long, however, *Pet Sounds* is less about extending a certain tradition or fitting into the often ill-fated attempt to trace a linear art history, and more about activating the public. Long has said, "There's a way of people making public art where they [the artists] blow up a small thing and it is often times very much just like a giant toy. In truth, it feels like an empty gesture because people can't do much with it. [...] Those kinds of gestures—I am not interested in that, since there is not much of a public engagement."<sup>4</sup> With his installation at Madison Square Park, Long is activating the work and the public, while nevertheless continuing his own art history and tradition of the merging of the body, sound, and sculpture. *Pet Sounds*, whose title is taken from the 1966 Beach Boys album of the same name, comes seventeen years after Long's *The Amorphous Body Study Center* (1995), a project on which the artist partnered with the British band Stereolab (*The Amorphous Body Study Center* was included in the 1997 Whitney Biennial). For that work Long created a set of plastic blobs with headphones connected to them and through which the audience could listen to music while "toying with a conveniently placed mound of candy-colored Plasticine."<sup>5</sup>



*Pet Sounds* follows this trajectory of combining sounds, form, and audience participation, though this time, the artist has added more conversational and immediately recognizable elements to the exhibition at Madison Square Park. Long has said that part of his inspiration for *Pet Sounds* was found in watching the ways people interact with the Park itself—the way they move through its pathways and sleep on benches, and in noting this, his forms followed suit. Long's colored railings wind around the Park's center, creating the illusion of movement despite their immobility, and his "blobs" engage in conversation with us and with another, resting on benches and tables and drawing visitors—quite literally—into their inner circle. We are both in conversation with these forms as much as we are with ourselves about them. Their familiar albeit striking presence has added to Long's conception of the Park as an independent mental state, one of simultaneous desire, intrigue, and curiosity, and one where critical interpretation gives way to pure, unadulterated fun.

<sup>1</sup>Conversation with the artist, April 2012.

<sup>2</sup>David K. Jordan and Marc J. Swartz, *Personality and the Cultural Construction of Society* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2010), 75.

<sup>3</sup>Aimee Walleston, "Made for These Times: Charles Long Brings Pet Sounds to Madison Square Park," *Art in America* Online Edition, May 2, 2012.

<sup>4</sup>Andrew Winer, "Charles Long," *BOMB Magazine* (Number 119/Spring 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Michael Wilson, "Charles Long," *Frieze Magazine* (Issue 84, June-August 2004).











# CHARLES LONG.

## EDUCATION

- 1988 MFA, Yale University, New Haven  
1981 Whitney Independent Study Program, New York  
1981 BFA, University of the Arts, Philadelphia

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

- 2012 *Pet Sounds*, commissioned by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, Madison Square Park, New York  
Charles Long: *Minimal Surfaces\_ Ocean of Hours*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
- 2011 *Seeing Green*, solo project in conjunction with *All of this and nothing*: The 6th Hammer Invitational, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010 The Art Show, Art Dealers Association of America, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York  
*100 Pounds of Clay*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
- 2009 *Charles Long*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
- 2007 Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Frieze Art Fair, London  
*knowirds*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
- 2006 *Monads, Soul Houses and a Star-off Machine*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York  
*100 Pounds of Clay*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
- 2005 Photographs, Dwight Hackett Projects, Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
*More Like a Dream Than a Scheme*, SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico  
*More Like a Dream Than a Scheme*, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, RI  
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Armory Art Fair, New York, NY
- 2004 *Winter Work*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
- 2003 Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
- 2002 *100 Pounds of Clay*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA
- 2001 Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
Elias Fine Art, Allston, MA  
Sets for Merce Cunningham's *Way Station*, City Center, New York, NY
- 1999 Schmidt Contemporary, St. Louis, MO  
James Van Damme, Brussels, Belgium  
Saks Fifth Avenue Art Project, Los Angeles, CA
- 1998 Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA  
St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO  
Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York, NY
- 1998 Sperone, Milan, Italy  
Fundação Cultural de Distrito Federal, Brazil
- 1997 Schmidt Contemporary Art, St. Louis, MO  
London Projects, London  
Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris, France  
Galeria Camargo Vilça, São Paulo, Brazil
- 1996 Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
- 1995 Kunsthalle Lophem, Belgium  
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY
- 1993 Elizabeth Koury Gallery, New York, NY
- 1992 Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

- 1991 Elizabeth Koury Gallery, New York, NY  
*White Room: Charles Long*, White Columns, New York, NY
- 1990 Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

- 2013 (Expected) Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, TX
- 2011-2012 *American Exuberance*, Rubell Family Collection /Contemporary Arts Foundation, Miami
- 2011 *Goldmine*, University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach, CA  
*MELT*, Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY  
*Uberyumy*, Robert and Frances Fullerton Museum of Art, San Bernardino, CA  
*Site as Symbol*, FoCA, Los Angeles, CA
- 2010-2011 *The Jewel Thief*, Tang Museum at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY  
*Conversations*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada  
*Without You I'm Nothing: Art and its Audience*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- 2010 *Invisible City*, Instituto Cervantes, Madrid, Spain  
*New Art for a New Century: Recent Acquisitions 2000-2010*, Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA  
*Multiple Pleasures: Functional Objects in Contemporary Art*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY  
*In the Hall of Pure Intimacy*, Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Innovations in the Third Dimension: Sculpture of our Time*, Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT  
*California Calling: Works from Santa Barbara Collections, 1948-2008, Part II*, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA  
Silver Star Alumni Exhibition, University of the Arts, Philadelphia
- 2008 *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York  
Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York  
*Nina in Position*, Artists Space, New York
- 2007 *The Office*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY  
*To Be Continued*, Magasin 3, Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm  
*Merce Cunningham: Dancing on the Cutting Edge*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami
- 2006 *Transitional Objects: Contemporary Still Life*, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York  
*The Uncertainty of Objects and Ideas: Recent Sculpture*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.  
*Gone Formalism*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia
- 2005 *Contained*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY  
*The Shape of Color: Excursions in Color Field Art*, AGO/Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada
- 2004 *Atmosphere*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
*Mania For Coleslaw: New Hybrid Media Performance*, Highways Performance Space, Santa Monica, CA  
*Art for Kerry*, Sister Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2003 *Painting on Sculpture*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, NY  
*Happiness*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo
- 2002 *New Attitudes in Sculpture*, Green Street Gallery, Boston, MA
- 2001 Arte Contemporaneo Internacional, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City  
*New Prints 2001*, International Print Center New York

- ART/MUSIC: rock, pop, and techno*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
- Original Language: Highlights from the MCA Collection*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- Lateral Thinking: Art of the 1990s*, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
- een goed in de weg staande tafel*, Galerie van Gelder, Amsterdam
- 2000** *Soft Core*, Joseph Helman, New York
- Open Ends*, Museum of Modern Art, New York
- Luci in Galleria: da Warhol al 2000*, Gian Enzo Sperone, Torino, Italy
- Media City Seoul 2000*, Contemporary Art and Technology Biennial, Seoul, Korea
- Hand-arbeit*, Haus der Kunst, Munich
- A Decade of Collecting: Recent Acquisitions of Prints and Drawings, 1940-2000*, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, MA
- Greater New York*, P.S.1/MoMA, New York
- 1999** *Magasin 3*, Stockholm Konsthall (with Ernesto Neto and Siobhan Hapaska), Stockholm
- Almost Warm & Fuzzy: Childhood and Contemporary Art*, Des Moines Art Center, IA
- The Masters of Graphic Arts International Biennial, Municipal Museum of Art, Győr, Hungary
- Cancelled*, Apexart, New York
- Transmute*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- 33 Works from the Jumex Collection*, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City
- Collectors Collect Contemporary: 1990-1999*, ICA, Boston
- Paradise 8*, Exit Art, New York, NY
- Efficace et commode*, CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux
- 1998** *Blunt Object*, The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, IL
- Spectacular Optical*, Thread Waxing Space, New York
- Pop Surrealism*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
- I LOVE NY: Crossover of Contemporary Art*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany
- Precursor*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York
- Crossings*, Kunsthalle Wien, Austria
- 1997** *Heart, Mind, Body, Soul: American Art in the 1990s*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- The Best of the Season*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
- Performance Anxiety*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
- Irredeemable Skeletons*, Shillam + Smith 3, London
- Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
- Ut Scientia Pictura*, Paolo Baldacci Gallery, New York, NY
- Galerie Klaus Peter Goebel, Stuttgart, Germany
- Now Here*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark
- Transformat*, Wiener Secession, Vienna, Austria
- 1996** *Defining the Nineties: Consensus-Making in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami
- Young Americans, New American Art in the Saatchi Collection: Part I*, Saatchi Gallery, London
- Mutate/Loving the New Flesh*, Lauren Wittels Gallery, New York
- a/drift*, Center for Curatorial Studies Museum at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
- 1995** *Smells like Vinyl*, Roger Merians Gallery, New York
- Sperone Westwater, New York, NY
- Outside You*, Baumgartner Galleries, Washington, D.C.
- Living with Contemporary Art*, The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT
- 1994** *For Appearance Sake*, Horodner Romley Gallery, New York
- Across the River and into the Trees*, Rushmore Festival, Woodbury, NY
- Sight/Seeing*, Gallery Bardamu, New York
- Me, Myself, & I*, InterArt Center, New York
- 1993** *The Modernists*, The Koffler Gallery, North York, Ontario, Canada
- Dirty Ornament*, The Rotunda Gallery, Brooklyn, New York
- Jours Tranquilles à Clichy*, 40, Rue de Rochechouart, Paris
- Charles Long and Carl Ostendarp, Schmidt Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1992** *Contextures and Constructures*, Rubenstein/Diacono Gallery, New York
- Contemporary Surfaces*, Pamela Auchincloss Gallery, New York
- Stephanie Theodore Gallery, New York
- Update 1992*, White Columns, New York
- 1990** *Stendhal Syndrome: The Cure*, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York
- Word Perfect*, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, Canada

#### AWARDS

- 2008** Award of Merit Medal for Sculpture, American Academy of Arts and Letters, NY
- 2006** Residency at the Anderson Ranch Arts Center, CO
- 2005** John Edwards Jr. Endowed Chair, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture
- 2002** Pollock-Krasner Foundation
- 1999** Pollock-Krasner Foundation
- 1997** Guggenheim Fellowship
- 1994** National Endowments for the Arts
- 1993** Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation
- New York Foundation for the Arts
- 1990** NEA Inter-Arts Grant, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY

# PREVIOUS MAD. SQ. ART EXHIBITIONS.

**2011** Jacco Olivier  
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 & 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 *Aesope's Fables, Double Tetrahedron, Beyond*

**2003** Wim Delvoye *Gothic*

**2002** Dan Graham *Bisected Triangle, Interior Curve*  
Mark Dion *Urban Wildlife Observation Unit*  
Dalziel + Scullion *Voyager*

**2001** Navin Rawanchaikul *I♥Taxi*  
Teresita Fernández *Bamboo Cinema*  
Tobias Rehberger *Tsutsumu*

**2000** Tony Oursler *The Influence Machine*

From 2000-2003, exhibitions were presented by the Public Art Fund on behalf of the Campaign for the New Madison Square Park.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

We are grateful for the support of Mad. Sq. Art from Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Forest City Ratner Companies, Thornton Tomasetti Group and Pentagram. Charles Long and Mad. Sq. Art would also like to acknowledge Martin and Mickey Friedman for their enthusiastic support which contributed to the development and realization of this project.

Special thanks to Tanya Bonakdar, Manhattan Parks Commissioner William Castro, Marty Chafkin, Cheryl Chan, Renee Coppola, Concetta Duncan, Sara Fitzmaurice, Jonathan Kuhn, Jennifer Lantzas, Brad Lowe, John Morgenstern, Perfection Electric, Veronica Roberts, Paula Scher, Ethan Sklar, Lingxiao Tan, and the Board of Directors of the Madison Square Park Conservancy for their visionary commitment to the Mad. Sq. Art mission.

We also gratefully acknowledge the enthusiastic support of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.



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# SUPPORT.

Mad. Sq. Art is the free contemporary art program presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, the public/private partnership with the City of New York/Parks and Recreation.

Major Support for Mad. Sq. Art is provided by Liane Ginsberg, Agnes Gund, Toby Devan Lewis, Dorothy Lichtenstein, Tiffany & Co., The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and Anonymous. Substantial support is provided by Martha and Bruce Atwater, Raymond Leary and Melva Bucksbaum, The Henry Luce Foundation, Ronald A. Pizzuti, The Rudin Family, Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch, Tishman Speyer, the Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Sol LeWitt Fund for Artist Work, NYC & Co., and *Time Out New York*. Additional support is provided by Andrea and Kenneth Krueger, Danny and Audrey Meyer, Jamie Welch and Fiona Angelini, and Leslie and Howard Zensky.

Exhibition support for *Pet Sounds* is provided by James-Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach, Nancy Magoon, Guillaume and Christina Malle, and Sorgente Group. Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline Sponsor of Mad. Sq. Art. Ace Hotel New York is the Official Hotel Partner of Mad. Sq. Park. This project is also supported in part with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council.

For more information, visit [madisonsquarepark.org](http://madisonsquarepark.org).

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 DELTA



# MAD. SQ. PK. CONSERVANCY

The Madison Square Park Conservancy is the public/private partnership with New York City Parks & Recreation, dedicated to keeping Madison Square Park a bright, beautiful and active park. The Conservancy raises the funds that support lush and brilliant horticulture, park maintenance and security. The Conservancy also offers a variety of cultural programs for park visitors of all ages, including Mad. Sq. Art.



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