

MAD.

SQ.

ART.

JACCO

OLIVIER





# MAD. SQ. ART 2011. JACCO OLIVIER

December 15, 2011 – March 12, 2012  
Madison Square Park  
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy



# CONTENTS.

Foreword .....	5
<i>New Romance: Jacco Olivier at Madison Square Park</i> by Daniel Belasco .....	6
Jacco Olivier .....	22
Previous Mad. Sq. Art Exhibitions .....	24
Acknowledgments .....	24

# FOREWORD.

When I first encountered the work of Jacco Oliver at the SITE Santa Fe Biennial in 2010, I was immediately taken with its rich beauty, deceptive simplicity, and artfully playful nature. Thanks to Sarah Lewis, co-curator of the Biennial and member of Madison Square Park Conservancy’s Art Advisory Committee, Mad. Sq. Art has been given the opportunity to bring Jacco Olivier’s own flora and fauna to our park. With this exhibition Olivier stretches the boundaries of painting, animation, and film—creating a unique, magical experience with his six works in and above Madison Square. As Olivier brightens the park with his paintings as films, we, too, have been given the opportunity to expand the boundaries and limits of what an outdoor video exhibition can be, even during a New York winter. As you will read in Daniel Belasco’s essay “by situating the six videos throughout marginal and transitional terrain of pathways and landscaping, Olivier affirms the park as a sanctuary that provides visitors with perceptible moments of peace and serenity.” It is an effect that we seek to achieve, on some level, with each exhibition, and Olivier’s work is no exception.

What is most striking about Olivier’s work is that he begins with and never loses sight of a single image. Whether we’re following a deer leap out of the woods, watching a bug attempt to turn himself over, or falling down the rabbit hole, the subtle alterations that Olivier introduces with each additional layer through his unique process of painting and over-painting continually captivate, amuse, and engage us. And when we step away from the work itself, we realize that what results reveals a history of the painting process that captures scraps of narrative and visual iconography brought to light as moving paintings.

This exhibition would not be possible without the support of Robert Kloos, Director for Visual Arts, Architecture and Design at the Consulate General of the Netherlands, nor without Marianne Boesky and Annie Rana at Marianne Boesky Gallery. We are most grateful for their involvement in this project and for their support from its inception to completion. I would also like to thank the Mondriaan Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for their kind support of the exhibition and this catalogue. Most of all, though, I would like to thank Jacco Olivier for giving us the opportunity to let our imaginations run wild in a park that we are fortunate to experience every day, and with his colorful additions, we are able to do so in a new and wonderful way.

Debbie Landau  
President  
Madison Square Park Conservancy



# NEW ROMANCE: JACCO OLIVIER AT MADISON SQUARE.

by Daniel Belasco

Video has appeared in almost every conceivable format and context within indoor gallery spaces. When presented out of doors, however, the medium receives a far more limited range of treatments. This is largely because of the challenges of exposing an electrified medium with fragile components to the elements. Whether for commercial, informational, or artistic purposes, outdoor screens and monitors require some sort of architectural or sculptural support. Up to now, outdoor video art has fallen into two basic categories: projections that use the structures of cinema, and videos on monitors that use the structures of advertising. Recent examples in New York include Creative Time's "The 59<sup>th</sup> Minute" series of short videos on the Astrovision monitor in Times Square (2001), Doug Aitkin's *Sleepwalkers* projected on the façade of the Museum of Modern Art (2007), and the High Line Channel's permanent set-up for daily video screenings (2011). Outdoor art videos are usually short term projects, or more commonly, one-off screenings that function more as time-based events than immersive installations. Whether shown on screens or monitors, video depends on architecture to assert itself against the transience and noise of urban life.

When Jacco Olivier, a Dutch artist based in Amsterdam known for painterly video animations, visited Madison Square Park to plot his commission, he first responded to the park's composition of diverse plantings, small animals, commemorative statuary, iron fences, and backdrops of iconic skyscrapers. Olivier began to have immediate associations with wildlife, envisioning animals that could





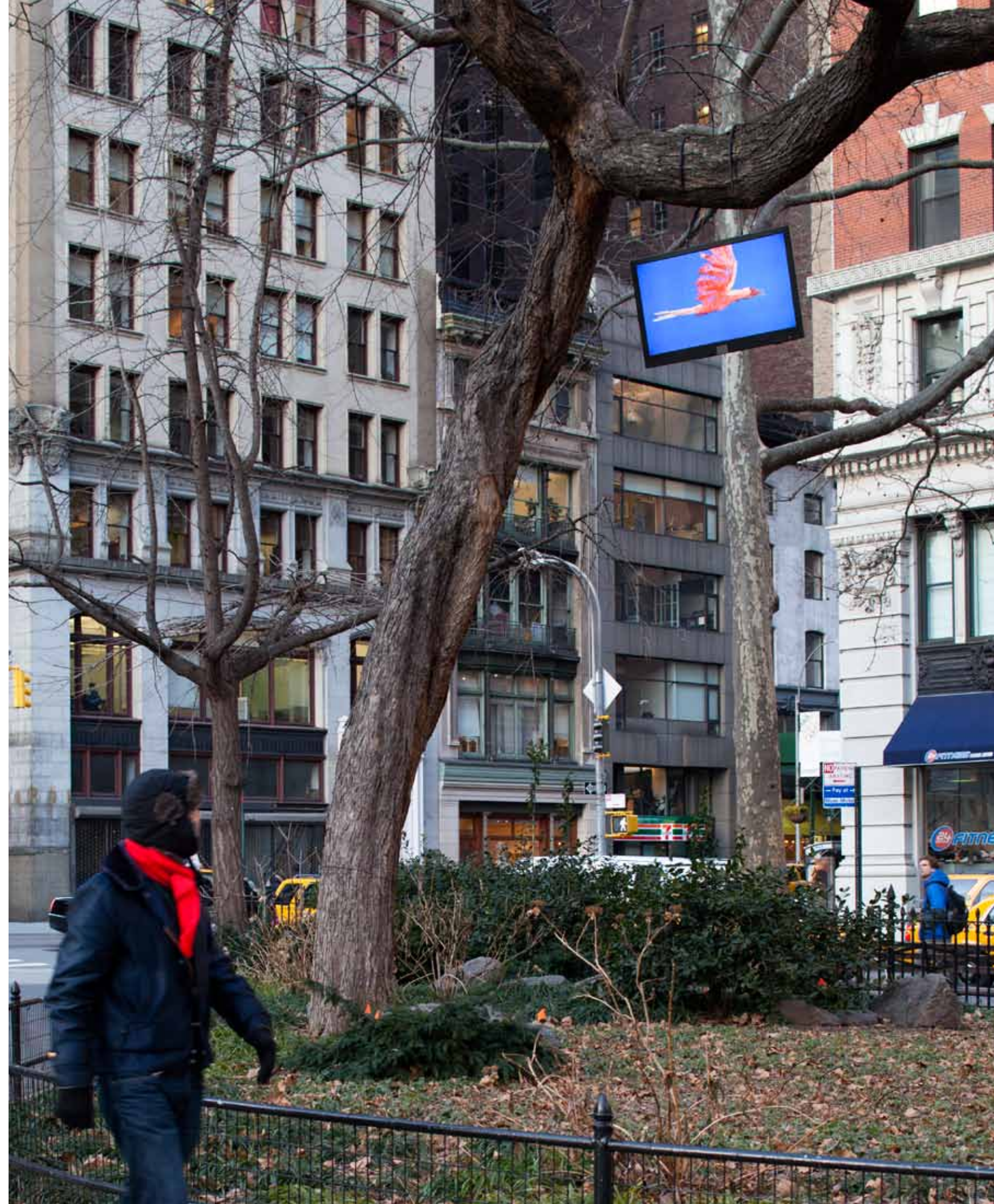


inhabit the park, like a stag accompanying one of the statues. Noticing that some of the most interesting features of the park are not at eye level, Olivier imagined a bird in the trees and a bug on the ground. A father of two, Olivier kept children in mind, seeing the park through their eyes as well as his own. The natural elements of the park became ripe with possibility for the interaction of Olivier's gorgeous animations, which are remarkably scalable: they have been shown on small monitors in domestic settings and large three-channel projections in galleries. Thus began one of the most original public installations in recent video art. Olivier has placed six animated videos—three new and three existing—in compelling and surprising locations throughout the 6.2-acre park. Because the park is flat, with little topographical variety, the six works relate to variations in the landscaping, which he compares to stage set imagery, like an “old-fashioned coulisse landscape.”<sup>1</sup> Some videos are best viewed in intimate encounters along pathways while others can be appreciated from a distance. Olivier has, as much as is possible, conjoined the formal and affective languages of outdoor cinema and advertising, giving visitors new sites of discovery free from architectural limitations. He has integrated the screen to blend and hybridize painted animations with the park environment.

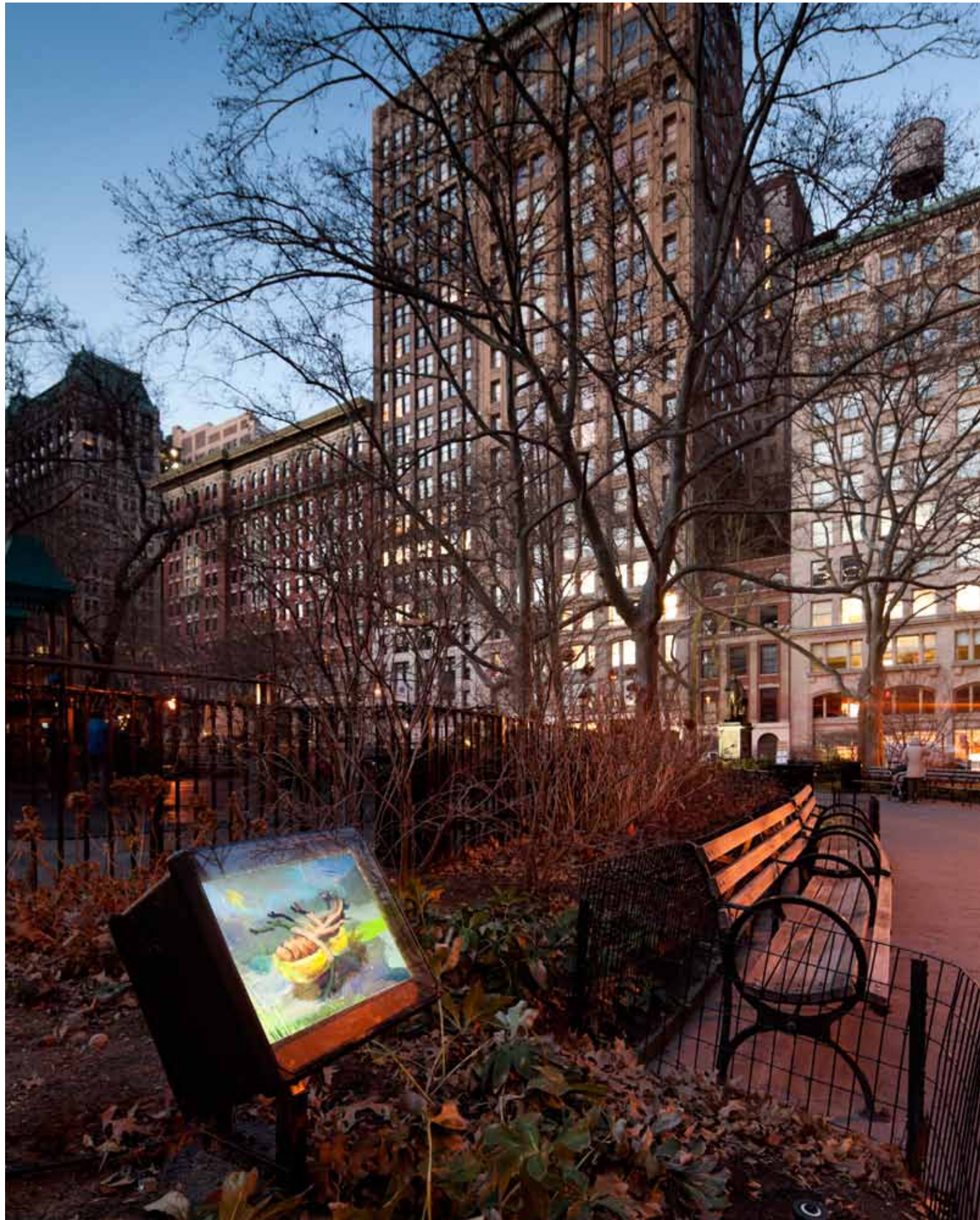
Typically, Olivier's animations are short, between one to four minutes, allowing the viewer a satisfyingly brief encounter with lushly painted moving images that are immediately recognizable and enact subtle dramas. The titles of several works at Madison Square Park—*Hide*, *Home*, and *Rabbit Hole*—suggest an arc of anxiety alleviated by taking refuge in smaller, more intimate

quarters. By situating the six videos throughout marginal and transitional terrain of pathways and landscaping, Olivier affirms the park as a sanctuary that provides visitors with perceptible moments of peace and serenity. Using the latest high definition technology and traditional artistic tools, Olivier's installation reminds us of the renaturalization of New York City, where coyotes now periodically roam Central Park, and beavers swim in the Bronx River, after an over 200 year absence.

As an art student at the Rijksakademie in the late 1990s, Olivier (born 1972) aspired to be a painter. However, at that time, Luc Tuymans and Raoul de Keyser were ascendant. Their “perfect painting,” in Olivier's view,<sup>2</sup> brilliantly resolved a painterly touch with photographic source or conceptual orientation, and became a model for an entire younger generation of European and American artists. Nearing the end of his formal studies, Olivier sought a different means to paint by taking multiple photographs of his images as he painted them. No single painting needed to be perfectly resolved or finished, each would serve a sensation or emotion conveyed through vignettes set in motion. Olivier showed the images first as a slide show, and then as digital animations. He soon perfected his technique of painting on board, where the paint would sit freshly on the surface. Olivier also paints drops and splatters on clear plastic planes to be layered into his animations, creating the 3D effects that are one of his hallmarks. After years of experimentation, Olivier has achieved a striking balance between the tactility of paint, the semantics of film, and the elasticity of video.







Olivier's turn toward animation occurred at a millennial moment when artists accepted the screen as a ubiquitous presence in contemporary art and daily life and sought new means to integrate conventional art media of drawing, sculpture, and painting with video and digital technologies. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, artists as diverse as William Kentridge, Kara Walker, Shahzia Sikander, and Thomas Demand found that animating their art granted new freedoms to challenge conventions of art and film. Their often subversive imagery and political content communicated with new and wider audiences. Animation historian Paul Wells wrote that animation's "very aesthetic and illusionism enunciates difference and potentially prompts alternative ways of seeing and understanding what is being represented."<sup>3</sup> Touching our primal ability to respond to motion, animation is a powerful memory machine.

*Bird* (2011), created especially for Madison Square Park, is typical in the way Olivier economically conjures an image or emotion. The one-minute-fifteen-second video depicts a sequence of brightly colored birds, beginning with one that is recognizable as a parrot, and ending with simple flipbook style sketches of a generic bird in flight. For just a few seconds, one, then another bird is differently rendered in color and set in motion. The work fades out, then loops to the beginning. Painted from memory, the animation evokes the parrots that fly by the window of Olivier's Amsterdam studio. In Madison Square, *Bird* exists where a bird might be, in the air. The animation appears on a monitor suspended from a tree branch hanging over a bed of plantings. Set in a weatherproof

case, the 46-inch LCD monitor disappears once one concentrates on the animation. Olivier's use of a tree instead of architecture as the outdoor video support is a novel horticultural context that relates to the creative use of trees from Gordon Matta-Clark's suspended performance *Tree Dance* (1971) to Jennifer Zackin's colorful, rope-wrapped trees (2004).

Olivier developed two other new ways to set park features in dialogue with video for *Rabbit Hole* (2011) and *Deer* (2011). An abstract work, *Rabbit Hole* depicts Olivier's swirls, blobs, and sweeps of paint gliding slowly outwards to the edges of the frame, as if seen on the way down a well. The feeling of movement downward and inward, towards an uncertain end, is rendered through painterly techniques recalling abstract elements of Kandinsky and Miro. *Rabbit Hole* is presented on a 46-inch monitor covered by sturdy Plexiglas and embedded in the lawn, just off a paved path. Blades of grass serve as an appropriate frame. Facing downwards to watch a video is a rare shift in perspective that puts the viewer in a dominant position, exemplified by Pipilotti Rist's well-known *Selfless in the Bath of Lava* (1994), installed in a small screen embedded in the wood floor at PS 1. But *Rabbit Hole* feels vast, like an establishing shot of cosmic movement. It recalls the sensation of the Eames Office's short film *The Powers of Ten* (1968), which sequentially pictures shifts in scale, from networks of galaxies to picnickers in a Chicago park to the molecular structure of a human hand. Our awareness of our position in Madison Square Park is heightened, as it is with *Deer* (2011), the largest of the three works conceived for Madison Square Park. The video captures the

















gentle moves of a sitting stag, projected on a four by seven foot glass screen mounted just over a foot above the ground. Slowly, the animal turns to face the viewer, eats, lowers its head, and seems to acknowledge us. The deer's movements are registered by the antlers, flickering as the painted image alters. The animal never rises from a seated position, and then fades into an all green background that absorbs all the trees, sky, and other elements.

In addition to the new works, Olivier added three existing videos that are thematically and tonally consistent to the commission. *Stumble* (2009) documents the struggles of an upended beetle. The creature slowly flails its legs, and the background changes to suggest the passage of time. There is something determined and allegorical about the efforts of the beetle, evoking Kafka's Gregor Samsa transformed into a cockroach, straining to recalibrate his consciousness. Olivier's beetle manages to right itself and moves forward slowly off the frame to the right. The video ends on a hopeful note. Fittingly it is shown on a small 19-inch monitor installed low to the ground, as is *Hide* (2004), a jazzy piece about a frog trying to cross a road. *Home* (2006), the only video with human subjects, has a wider scope. Following the activities of men and animals in a small town near the woods, *Home* includes elements, such as a deer, bird, and a 3D-like plunge through treetops, found in other works at Madison Square Park. *Home* seems to link the six videos and suggest their role as scenes in a dramatic narrative of encountering wildlife in urban surroundings.

The merging of paint and nature has long been an artistic dream. Artists venturing outdoors in the early 19th century to accurately record the minute color variations of natural light and shadow

began a trajectory, from Corot's green fields to Monet's water lilies to Pollock's skeins, of the painted mark or gesture striving for equivalence, dissolving the conceptual barrier between nature and culture. Olivier, as a painter, first expanded his practice to include time and movement. Now, with the commission at Madison Square Park, he has expanded the purview of animation to include an urban park. Staying true to his initial ideas, associations, and memories when first surveying the park, Olivier, like all creative urban dwellers, adapted to the surroundings.

<sup>1</sup>Jacco Olivier, statement, 2011.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with the author, February 19, 2010.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Wells, *Animated Bestiary: Animals, Cartoons, and Culture*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009, 5.







# JACCO OLIVIER.

## EDUCATION

**1997-1998** Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, NL  
**1991-1996** Hogeschool voor Kunst en Vormgeving, Den Bosch, NL

## SOLO EXHIBITIONS

**2012** New York, New York City Center, curated by the New Museum, February – May 2012  
Amsterdam, Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst, January 19, 2012

**2011** New York, Madison Square Park, presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy, December 2011-March 2012  
Berlin, Galerie Thomas Schulte, *Jacco Olivier: Recent Video Works*, January 29 – March 12, 2011  
Amsterdam, Ron Mandos, January 8 – February 12, 2011

**2010** Burgos, Spain, Centro de Arte de Caja de Burgos, September 24, 2010 – January 16, 2011  
London, Victoria Miro Gallery, September 7 – October 2, 2010  
Houston, TX, Blaffer Gallery, The Art Museum of the University of Houston, May 14 – August 7, 2010  
New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, February 19 – April 3, 2010

**2008** Seoul, South Korea, I M ART, May – June, 2008

**2007** Madrid, Pilar Parra & Romero, December 13, 2007 – February 9, 2008  
Berlin, Galerie Thomas Schulte, February 10 – March 17, 2007  
New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, January 19 – February 17, 2007

**2005** London, Victoria Miro Gallery, January 12 – February 10, 2007  
Berlin, Galerie Thomas Schulte, *Im Kabinette, Video Works*, September 30 – November 6, 2005

**2004** New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, *Moving Pictures*, November 13 – December 11, 2004  
London, Victoria Miro Gallery, *Moving Pictures*, October 12 – November 13, 2004

**2001** Renesse, Netherlands, Stichting Plus Min, April 2001

**2000** Paris, Yves Hoffmann Gallery, December 2000

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

**2012** Vijfhuizen, Netherlands, Stichting Kunstfort Vijfhuizen  
Amsterdam, Muziekgebouw aan het IJ

**2011** Dordrechts, Netherlands, Dordrechts Museum, *What’s Up? De jongste schilderkunst in Nederland*, November 20, 2011 – April 22, 2012  
Amsterdam, Ron Mandos, *6 x Rijksakademie Alumni*, October 29 – December 3, 2011  
Miami, Art Video at Art Basel Miami Beach, New World Center in collaboration with Artprojx, *Revolution*, December 1 – 4, 2011  
New York, Ogilvy & Mather, curated by Jun Lee, October 4 – March, 2011  
Saitama, Visual Museum, September 2011  
Kilkenny, Ireland, Kilkenny Arts Festival, August 5 – 14, 2011  
Berlin, World Peace Festival, *Peace Starts with Me*, August 2011

**2010** Portsmouth, NH, Portsmouth Museum of Art, *Humanimal*, July 21 - October 3, 2010  
London, Victoria Miro Gallery, *In the Company of Alice*, June 22 – July 30, 2010

Santa Fe, NM, SITE Santa Fe 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial: *The Dissolve*, June 20, 2010 – January 2, 2011

**2009** West Hollywood, The Pacific Design Center, *Remote Viewing: The Best of Loop*, curated by Paul Young, November 9 – February 10, 2009. Travels to Centre d’Art Santa Monica, Barcelona  
Bridgehampton, NY, Silas Marder Gallery, *Giganticism*, July 11 – 26, 2009  
Chicago Tony Wight Gallery, *Single Channels*, June 12 – July 10, 2009

**2008** Bergamo, Italy, Porta Sant’Agostino, *Stultifer Navis: The Ship of Fools*, 2008  
New York, Sara Meltzer Gallery, *Landscapes for Frankenstein*, curated by Rachel Gugelberger and Jeffrey Walkowiak, June 19 - August 1, 2008  
Alba, Italy Palazzo dell’Esposizioni, *Alba Art Show*, curated by Jovana Stokic, May 17 – June 1, 2008

**2007** Madrid, Fundacion ICO, *Fantasmagoria: Dibujo en movimiento*, January 18 – March 18, 2007  
Lismore, Ireland, Lismore Castle Arts, *Titled/Untitled*, January 2007

**2006** Geneva, Centre Pour l’image Contemporaine, *Version Animée*, October 17 – December 17, 2006  
Denver Museum of Contemporary Art, *See into Liquid*, January 27 – May 26, 2006

**2005** Aachen, Germany, Ludwig Forum, *Roaming Memories*, October 8 – November 20, 2005  
Istanbul, Istanbul Modern, *Video Program*, 2005  
Monfalcone, Italy, Galleria Comunale, *U\_MOVE*, 2005  
Prague, Prague Biennale 2, May 27 – Spetember 15, 2005  
Marrakech Le Musee de Marrakech, *The Wonderful Fund on Tour*, October 1, 2005 – January 15, 2006

**2004** London, Victoria Miro Gallery, *Extended Painting*, October 12 – November 13, 2004  
New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, *Seeing Other People*, June 18 – August 15, 2004  
Glasgow, Transmission Gallery, *Jacco Olivier, Kate Ford, Helen Baron*, 2004  
Milan, Lia Rumma Gallerie, *Latest Paintings*, January 28 – April 3, 2004  
London, Victoria Miro Gallery, *10 years Rijksakademie*, January 14 - February 14, 2004

**2002** Amsterdam, Arti et Amicitiae, *Amsterdamse visite*, December 10 - December 15, 2002  
Rotterdam, Room *Meet me again*, April 2002

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**2012** Wyma, Chloe. “27 Questions for Dutch Painter Jacco Olivier,” *Artinfo*, January 18, 2012  
“Jacco Olivier’s ‘Painterly Animations’ Bring Madison Square Park to Life,” *Arts Observer*, January 12, 2012  
Carlson, Jen, “Madison Square Park Gets New Wildlife... With New Art Project,” *Gothamist*, January 10, 2012

**2011** “Jacco Olivier: Sneak Peeking Park Art,” *Curbed*, December 15, 2011  
“Madison Square Park,” *Art Media Agency*, December 1, 2011  
Johnson, Mary. “Avant Garde Animation to Take Over Madison

Square Park,” *DNAinfo.com*, November 30, 2011  
Holland, Heather. “New Mad. Sq. Art exhibit, opening in December, will feature animation,” *Town & Village*, November 24, 2011  
Vogel, Carol. “Inside Art,” *The New York Times*, November 18, 2011.

**2010** Cashdan, Marina. “Alice Neel’s Paintings Infiltrate London: Review of ‘In the Company of Alice’ at Victoria Miro,” *The Huffington Post*, July 9, 2010.  
“The Dissolve,” *Santa Fe 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial*, June 20, 2010.  
Sanchez, Casey. “Anything that Moves,” *Pasatiempo*, June 18- June 24, 2010.  
Whitaker, Blake. “Blaffer Art Gallery: First Take: Jacco Olivier,” *Houston Press*, May 13, 2010.  
“Jacco Olivier,” *The New Yorker*, March 30, 2010.  
Weiner, Emily. “Critic’s Pick: Jacco Olivier,” *Artforum*, March 23, 2010.  
Johnson, Ken. “Jacco Olivier,” *The New York Times*, March 12, 2010.

**2008** Lax, Thomas J. “Images in Motion,” *Artkrush*, February 20, 2008. <http://www.artkrush.com/current/#feature>

**2007** Kley, Elisabeth. “Jacco Olivier,” *Artnews*, April 2007, p. 134.  
Genocchio, Benjamin. “Jacco Olivier,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2007, p. E30.  
Darwent, Charles. “Moving pictures from the Netherlands,” *The Independent*, January 14, 2007.  
Boutet de Monvel, Violaine. “Reviews,” *ArtPress*, January 2007, p. 79.

**2005** Smith, P.C. “Jacco Olivier”, *Art in America*, May 2005.  
Jacobs, Joseph. “Jacco Olivier,” *Artnews*, February 2005.

**2003** Hackworth, Nick. “New Dutch mastery to celebrate a rebirth,” *London Evening Standard*.  
Guner, Fisun. “The rijks way to see art,” *Metro London*.  
Coomer, Martin. *Time Out London*.

## AWARDS

**2012** San Antonio, Artpace, Residency



# PREVIOUS MAD. SQ. ART EXHIBITIONS.

- 2011

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

Nawa Rawanchaikul *I ♥ Taxi*  
Teresita Fernandez *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.

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
Patricia E. Harris, First Deputy Mayor  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner  
Kate Levin, Commissioner, Cultural Affairs

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



# 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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