



MAD. SQ. ART 2010  
ERNIE GEHR: *SURVEILLANCE*  
APRIL 9 - MAY 14, 2010  
Presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - 04-05-2010

The Madison Square Park Conservancy's Mad. Sq. Art program is pleased to announce the exhibition of *Surveillance*, a four-channel high-definition video installation by noted filmmaker Ernie Gehr, on view from April 9 through May 14, 2010 at the southern end of Madison Square Park.

### **SURVEILLANCE**

The four interrelated "digital playgrounds" that comprise *Surveillance*, a new four-channel high-definition video installation created in and about historic Madison Square Park by avant-garde filmmaker Ernie Gehr, take inspiration from two seemingly disparate sources. On the one hand a tribute to the lush environment, lively atmosphere and fundamentally recreational and replenishing character of public parks, *Surveillance* is also an acknowledgement and investigation of the proliferating presence of security cameras in public life; an attempt to poetically apply the aesthetic of surveillance in a manner that focuses the eyes and mind on the sensuous visual tableaux and fleeting moments of intimacy that make Madison Square Park such a treasured urban oasis.

Since 1967, Gehr has been at the vanguard of experimental filmmaking, and for the past decade has expanded the scope of his practice to include a variety of digital media. His arrival onto the cinematic avant-garde scene coincided with the emergence of the aesthetically and conceptually rigorous Structural film movement. Gehr's 1970 film *Serene Velocity* is frequently cited as one of the premier examples of Structural film, a movement characterized by a fascination with

the material qualities of film itself and a foregrounding of the experience of seeing as mediated by the camera.

In *Surveillance*, Gehr's use of identical concentric frames and the slow, steady sweep of his camera echoes the visual vocabulary of security footage, but rather than instill foreboding, his richly saturated colors and exacting composition invite reflection and immersion; they sharpen the senses and expose the countless visual puns and paradoxes of public activity so often overlooked by the naked eye.

### **ERNIE GEHR**

Ernie Gehr was born in 1941 and grew up in Milwaukee, WI. He lives and works in New York City. Since 1967, Gehr's experimental films have cemented his place as one of the most influential and internationally celebrated members of a generation of artists whose collective innovations in filmmaking revolutionized the medium's position in the field of visual art. Beginning in 2000, the formal and conceptual rigor, minute attention to detail and rich, sensuous imagery that characterize Gehr's work in film have become the hallmarks of his recent experiments with digital media, including the multi-channel high definition digital video installation format used in *Surveillance*, his 2010 commission for the Madison Square Park Conservancy.

Gehr has exhibited extensively and to great acclaim since the late 1960s at institutions including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Modern, London; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Museum of the Moving Image, New York; Anthology Film Archive, New York; the Toronto International Film Festival and many more. His work is featured in many significant public collections, including those of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Anthology Film Archives, New York; the Academy of Motion Pictures, Los Angeles and the Art Institute of Chicago. Gehr's 1970 film *Serene Velocity* was selected by the United States Library of Congress for preservation in the National Film Registry, and he has been the recipient of numerous awards, including most recently the Stan Brakhage Vision Award from the Denver International Film Festival in 2009.

### **MAD. SQ. ART**

Mad. Sq. Art is the free gallery without walls presented by the Madison Square Park Conservancy in historic Madison Square Park, a 6.2-acre public park located at 5th Avenue and 23rd Street. In Spring 2010, Mad. Sq. Art will also exhibit *Event Horizon*, the United States public art debut of internationally renowned sculptor Antony Gormley.

Major Support for Mad. Sq. Art is provided by Founding Partners Agnes Gund and Anonymous. Substantial support is provided by Ronald A. Pizzuti, Toby Devan Lewis, the Henry Luce Foundation and the Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust. This project is supported in part with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Mad. Sq. Art is made possible by the leadership and generosity of the many friends of the Madison Square Park Conservancy.

### **MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY**

The Madison Square Park Conservancy, a public/private partnership with New York City Parks & Recreation, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping historic Madison Square Park bright, beautiful and full of free cultural programs. For more information, please visit [madisonsquarepark.org](http://madisonsquarepark.org).

High resolution stills from *Surveillance* are available upon request. Please direct all inquires to:

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