

MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY

ROSE B. SIMPSON CONVENES TOWERING SCULPTURAL SENTINELS IN MADISON SQUARE PARK AND INWOOD HILL PARK

***Seed* Showcases Simpson’s Figurative Sculpture and Marks the Conservancy’s First
Collaboration with Another New York City Park**



Rose B. Simpson, *Seed* (2024) in Madison Square Park. Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein. Courtesy of the artist and Madison Square Park Conservancy.

New York, NY | April 11, 2024—On the grounds of Madison Square Park and Inwood Hill Park, artist Rose B. Simpson (b. 1983, Santa Clara Pueblo) convenes gatherings of large-scale bronze and steel figures for a major new commission that evokes our connections to the land and to one another across time. Commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy as part of the milestone 20th anniversary of its public art program, Simpson’s outdoor exhibition *Seed* features nine towering sculptural sentinels sited between the two parks, marking the Conservancy’s first collaboration with another New York City public park. Drawing from Simpson’s own background, the history of Manhattan Island and the Lenape people, and the human experiences that tie us all together, *Seed* is both personal and collective. *Seed* is on view at Madison Square Park and Inwood Hill Park through September 22, 2024, and is accompanied by a series of public programs and activations throughout its run.

"One of the most resolute figurative sculptors working today, Rose probes at the conditions of contemporary life, offering strength, vision, and hope for the future. In her commissioned project for Madison Square Park Conservancy, she activates two parks in Manhattan with sculpture that provokes contemplation about the complicated and dehumanizing histories of the communities and land where these public sites now stand. Through figuration, the works also acknowledge the significance of connection that can be experienced in protected parkland like Madison Square Park and Inwood Hill Park," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, the Conservancy's Artistic Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator.

Born and raised in Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, Simpson has established a prolific mixed-media practice that is informed by the enduring tradition of Pueblo potters. Drawing upon her multigenerational, matrilineal lineage of Santa Clara Pueblo artists working with clay, Simpson combines traditional processes of producing clay pottery with innovative techniques and materials, including steel and bronze, bridging past and present practices. Her works often take the form of androgynous figures that straddle earthly and spiritual realms.

Grounded in Manhattan's history as the center of Lenapehoking, the ancestral lands of the Lenape people, *Seed* illuminates various notions of interconnectedness: our relationship with the land, with one another, and with the generations of people who come before and after us. In Madison Square Park, seven eighteen-foot-high sentinels convene around a central sculpture of a female figure emerging from the earth, supporting and nurturing her. Fabricated in weathered steel with bronze embellishments, these ancestral protectors look outward, gazing boldly ahead to the present with recognition of layers of history including those that form America's colonial past. A smaller second face on the back of each figure meets the viewer closer to the ground; these faces are youths who represent the future.

As part of the exhibition, Simpson has also installed two eight-foot-tall bronze sentinels in Inwood Hill Park. Located in Upper Manhattan, Inwood Hill Park is a contested space in Native American history as the site where Dutch colonial governor Peter Minuit "purchased" Manhattan Island from the Lenape in 1626. In acknowledgment of this history, one of the sentinels faces the ancient wood, honoring Native connections to the land, while the other looks outward to the Hudson River, part of a trade route that brought settlers who worked to obliterate Native people and practices beginning in the 1600s.

"We are excited to partner with Inwood Hill Park for Rose's exhibition, bringing her important project to multiple communities in Manhattan," said Madison Square Park Conservancy Executive Director Holly Leicht. "This is the Conservancy's first-ever collaboration with another public park in the city and makes our public art program's milestone anniversary year all the more significant, signaling a new level of reach and engagement."

Simpson's *Seed* is the second artist commission in the twentieth anniversary year of the Conservancy's art program, following a vibrant tulle-based installation by Ana María Hernando that opened at the park in January, and preceding a processional performance by María Magdalena Campos-Pons and a major sculptural project by Nicole Eisenman in the fall. In conjunction with the anniversary, the Conservancy has also produced its first retrospective publication, documenting two decades of public art in the park; released a short documentary

chronicling the history of the program; and is showcasing alumni artists through audio interviews and a public art symposium. More information is available on the Conservancy's [website](#).

Public Programs

Seed is complemented by public programs that address the themes of the exhibition and engage with the local communities of Madison Square Park and Inwood Hill Park. All programs are free and open to the public.

More details on individual events follow below and can be found on the Conservancy's website [here](#).

Panel Discussion: Why Does Figuration Remain Vital to Contemporary Sculpture? Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Neuehouse (110 E 25th Street, New York, NY 10010)

Rose B. Simpson joins in a conversation with leading contemporary sculptors including Tau Lewis to discuss the role of figuration within their practices. The panel is moderated by Eva Respini, Deputy Director and Director of Curatorial Programs at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Artist Talk: Rose B. Simpson June 20, 2024, 6:00 - 7:00 PM

Inwood Hill Park

Rose B. Simpson shares more about the ideas that informed *Seed* and her process of realizing the work. The talk includes introductory remarks by Brooke Kamin Rapaport (Artistic Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator, Madison Square Park Conservancy) and Danny Bonilla (artist and member, Inwood Hill Community Board).

Music on the Green Wednesdays, July 10, 17, and 24, 6:00 - 7:15 PM

Madison Square Park

Carnegie Hall curates a series of musical performances in Madison Square Park inspired by *Seed*. These performances are part of the free Carnegie Hall Citywide concert series.

About the Artist

Rose B. Simpson (b. 1983, Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico; lives and works in Santa Clara Pueblo) has had solo exhibitions at The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia; Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; Nevada Art Museum, Reno; Wheelwright Museum, Santa Fe; and Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art. Her work is in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art; Denver Art Museum; Hood Museum of Art, Hanover; Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Nevada Art Museum, Reno; Benton Museum of Art at Pomona College, Claremont; Portland Art Museum; Princeton University Art Museum; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. In 2023, Simpson was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the Institute of American Indian Arts by President Biden. She is among the artists featured in the 2024 Whitney Biennial.

Exhibition Credits

Seed is commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy and organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Artistic Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator, Tom Reidy, Director of Art Operations, and Truth Murray-Cole, Senior Curatorial Manager. Yah Jeffries is the Senior Art Department Manager. Holly Leicht is the Conservancy's Executive Director.

Exhibition Support

Projects and initiatives for the twentieth anniversary of Madison Square Park Conservancy's art program in 2024 are funded by the following generous supporters.

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

About Madison Square Park Conservancy

Since 2004, Madison Square Park Conservancy has commissioned and presented premier installations by visionary artists ranging in practice and media. The program has exhibited works by artists including Diana Al-Hadid, Tony Cragg, Abigail DeVille, Leonardo Drew, Teresita Fernández, Cristina Iglesias, Hugh Hayden, Maya Lin, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Josiah McElheny, Giuseppe Penone, 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.

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, nurture, and enhance Madison Square Park, a dynamic 6.2-acre public green space. The Conservancy is committed to engaging the community through its public art program, beautiful gardens, inviting amenities, and 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 100% of the funds necessary to operate the park, including the brilliant horticulture, maintenance, sanitation, security, and free cultural programs.

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Media Contacts:

Resnicow and Associates

Juliet Sorce, 212.671.5158 or jsorce@resnicow.com

Delaney Smith, 212.671.5160 or dsmith@resnicow.com

Jenny Levine 212.671.5189 or jlevine@resnicow.com

Aureole Ribes 212.671.5167 or aribes@resnicow.com