

MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY

NICOLE EISENMAN TOPPLES SYMBOLS OF DEVELOPMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN NEW MADISON SQUARE PARK COMMISSION

Opening in October, *Fixed Crane* Features a Decommissioned Industrial Crane with Humorous and Unexpected Sculptural Elements That Question Models of Human Progress

Project Caps the Twentieth Anniversary of the Conservancy's Public Art Program

New York, NY | August 20, 2024—This October, artist Nicole Eisenman assembles a monumental public project for Madison Square Park that destabilizes familiar heroic objects associated with human achievement. *Fixed Crane* features a toppled industrial crane embellished with handmade sculptural elements. The work marks a significant moment in the artist's practice, expanding her explorations of the 20th-century concept of the "readymade" and pushing the boundaries of her work in figuration. Commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy as part of the milestone twentieth anniversary of its public art program, *Fixed Crane* is on view at Madison Square Park from October 24, 2024, through March 9, 2025, and will be accompanied by a series of public programs and activations.

"*Fixed Crane* is a transformative work from one of today's most influential artists who experiments with new materials and ideas—and is emblematic of the Conservancy's 20-year-long support for artists as they evolve their practice through public artworks," said Brooke Kamin Rapaport, the Conservancy's Artistic Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator. "Eisenman's project is invigorated by a range of references—from art to everyday life to activities in an urban park. She combines grim and humorous sculptural elements that reflect on the human impulse to build, questioning our notions of 'societal progress.' *Fixed Crane* contrasts the vital tools that shape the urban landscape with a listless, defunct symbol of that exhausted power."

Eisenman has developed a multilayered practice that envisions imaginative and unexpected scenes through an often-irreverent lens. In *Fixed Crane*, she references and disrupts accepted understanding of prominent art historical sources, including Marcel Duchamp's early 20th-century readymades—artworks repurposed from ordinary, prefabricated objects, like Eisenman's crane—to Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (*Luncheon on the Grass*, 1863) whose primary subject is a nude woman casually lunching on a picnic blanket, which Eisenman alludes to through the casual repose of the crane on the park's grassy lawn.

In the center of Madison Square Park's Oval Lawn, Eisenman upends an actual decommissioned 1969 Link-Belt industrial crane onto its side, where visitors will be able to walk around its 90-foot length or sit atop its counterweight which has become a bench. She embellishes this massive readymade with studio-made sculptural elements, including a figure at the apex of the crane's overturned cab, waving like a flag as an ambiguous symbol of surrender or occupation. Within the cab appears a solitary illuminated figure—a ghostly vision of a once-active crane operator. Eisenman further incorporates her absurdist visual vocabulary through other additions, including a bronze Birkenstock sandal-wearing foot caught under the crane's treads and bandages appended to the crane that appear to "heal" the obsolete apparatus. In contrast to the immense machinery, these smaller-scale handmade objects shift power from the monumental to the individual and from the expansive publicness of the park to the intimacy of the artist creating the work in a studio space.

“Our public art commissions often inspire new and sometimes provocative perspectives on the world around us,” said Madison Square Park Conservancy Executive Director Holly Leicht. “With this work, Eisenman creates a pointed dialogue and visual contrast with the skyscrapers rising near the park. It is a fitting conclusion to our public art program’s anniversary season, setting the tone for ambitious commissions in the years to come.”

Fixed Crane will be complemented by public programs, including an artist talk with Eisenman, a dance performance choreographed by Ryan McNamara, and additional events. More information on public programming will be announced ahead of the opening.

Eisenman’s *Fixed Crane* is the fourth and final 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 in the park in January, towering sculptural sentinels across two New York City parks by Rose B. Simpson unveiled in April, and an upcoming two-part processional performance by María Magdalena Campos-Pons on September 7 and September 20, 2024, which the public can register to participate in [at this link](#). 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 podcasts and a public art symposium. More information is available on the Conservancy’s [website](#).

About the Artist

Nicole Eisenman (b. 1965, Verdun, France; lives and works in Brooklyn, New York) is known for her inventive and complex paintings and sculpture that tackle tropes of Western art history. She has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Carnegie Prize, and her work has been included in three Biennials at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and featured in the 2019 Venice Biennale’s main exhibition. In 2015, Eisenman was named a MacArthur Foundation Fellow. Eisenman has had recent solo exhibitions at the Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway; Fondation Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, France; Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany; Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Netherlands; and New Museum, New York. An important survey of her work opened in 2023 at the Museum Brandhorst, Munich, Germany and traveled to Whitechapel Gallery, London, and is now on view at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Exhibition

Fixed Crane is commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy and organized by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Artistic Director and Martin Friedman Chief Curator; Tom Reidy, Director of Capital and Special Projects; and Tiera Ndlovu, Curatorial Manager. Yah Jeffries is the Senior Art and Development 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

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the nonprofit entrusted by the City of New York to operate Madison Square Park, a 6.2-acre public space in the heart of Manhattan. Our mission is to conserve, maintain, and program this ever-evolving, historic green space, including raising 100% of the park's operating budget. Our dedicated team takes great pride in caring for and shaping an urban oasis for all to enjoy. Anchoring a diverse and vibrant live-work community, Madison Square Park is both an intimate neighborhood park and an international destination for 60,000 daily visitors.

Since 2004, Madison Square Park Conservancy has commissioned and presented projects 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, Shahzia Sikander, 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.

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