

MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY

LARRY BELL TRANSFORMS MADISON SQUARE PARK WITH HIS LARGEST PUBLIC ART PROJECT TO DATE

**Debuting Two New Sculptures Alongside Recent Works, *Improvisations in the Park*
Illuminates Subtle Changes in the Park's Natural and Urban Landscapes**



Larry Bell, *Cantaloupe but Honeydew*, 2025 (left) and *Pacific Red II*, 2017 (right) in *Improvisations in the Park*.
Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth, and Anthony Meier, Mill Valley. Commissioned by Madison Square Park
Conservancy. Photo: Timothy Schenck.

New York, NY | September 30, 2025—Luminary artist Larry Bell has taken over Madison Square Park with his largest public art project to date in his expansive, seven-decade career. Commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy, *Improvisations in the Park* features six works that showcase the array of perceptual effects—the reflection, transmission, and absorption of light—that Bell unleashes through his use of glass as a sculptural medium. The presentation debuts two new works created specifically for the park as well as two recent works being shown for the first time. Bell's sculptures shift in tonality depending on the time of day and season, allowing parkgoers to experience the work differently throughout the exhibition's nearly six-month run. *Improvisations in the Park* is on view in Madison Square Park from September 30, 2025, through March 15, 2026.

"At 85 years old, Larry Bell continues to push beyond the traditional bounds of sculpture, creating works that transform perception. Despite their solid structure, his sculptures feel somehow immaterial, a paradox that encourages viewers to slow down and observe—an invitation for a much-needed moment of reflection amid the bustle of the city and the intensity of our present moment," said Denise Markonish, Madison Square Park Conservancy's new Martin Friedman Chief Curator. "My predecessor, Brooke Kamin Rapaport, invited Bell to propose a project for the park, and when I started this position in June, I was thrilled to be able to work with such an important and innovative artist. We are excited to be presenting Bell's work as part of our historic public art program."

Renowned for his ability to harness the surface qualities of glass to conjure distinct optical effects, Bell stands among the pioneers of the Light and Space movement that emerged in Southern California in the 1960s. These artists, many of whom are still working today, experiment with perceptual phenomena. Bell manipulates the color, transparency, and reflectivity of glass to create works designed for maximum interplay with their surroundings. Throughout his career, he has frequently extended his examination of the interactions

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between light, color, and materiality outside the walls of museums and galleries, most recently with major commissions for the campus of North Carolina State University and the outdoor plaza at MOCA in Los Angeles.

Bell's work in the public realm soars to a new scale with his Madison Square Park Conservancy exhibition, which is not only his largest public art project but also his first outdoor public art installation in New York. *Improvisations in the Park* activates six lawns in Madison Square Park with Bell's vibrantly colored cubes and nested arrangements, situated throughout the park for visitors to discover as they meander along its pathways. The exhibition debuts *Cantaloupe but Honeydew* (2025) and *Red Eyes* (2025), two new six- and eight-foot-tall standing wall sculptures, forms that Bell has referred to as "improvisations" for their ability to be configured in endless combinations with each new installation. These are presented alongside four recent works, two of which—*Frankly Purple* (2022) and *Blues from Aspen* (2018)—are being exhibited for the first time. The works transform and are transformed by the ambient light in the park, registering subtle changes as the sun traces its daily arc through the sky, and as the seasons transition from late summer to autumn to winter during the exhibition's run. Each nuanced change shifts the viewer's perception, creating new visual compositions that illuminate often-overlooked phenomena in the urban environment. Bell has stated that he is "excited by the visual conversation between light and the natural beauty of the park."

"Though Larry Bell's geometric glass works initially appear to contrast Madison Square Park's green oasis, on further reflection they actually augment the park's natural setting and the surrounding city, putting a lens on the subtle daily and seasonal changes that happen here," said Madison Square Park Conservancy's Executive Director Holly Leicht. "This is a dynamic exhibition that rewards return visits and continued viewing, making it a particularly special experience for those who travel through the park every day, as many of our visitors do."

Improvisations in the Park will be accompanied by free public programs, including an opening celebration on the evening of September 30 that will include a 12-string guitar performance by musicians Eliane Delage and Jackie Forzano, as well as sunset tours of the exhibition led by the curatorial team on three Wednesday evenings this fall and winter: October 15 (6:00 pm), November 12 (4:30 pm), and December 17 (4:00 pm). The exhibition is the thematic anchor of the Conservancy's annual public art symposium, which will be held at SVA Theatre on Friday, November 14. Details on the symposium and other public programs will be announced throughout the fall.

In November, the Conservancy will release an exhibition catalogue featuring essays by Markonish and *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Magazine* writer Randy Kennedy, who is director of special projects for Hauser & Wirth and editor in chief of the gallery's quarterly culture magazine, *Ursula*.

About the Artist

Larry Bell is one of the most influential artists to emerge from Southern California's Light and Space movement that emerged in the Los Angeles area in the 1960s. While they worked in a range of materials and scale, the loosely connected group of artists—including James Turrell, Robert Irwin, Mary Corse, Helen Pashgian, Doug Wheeler, and others—focused on the viewer's perception and how everyday experience can transform through light. Bell's first experimentation with glass was in 1959, when he worked in a framing shop and learned to cut glass. He moved from Los Angeles to Taos, New Mexico, where he continues to live and work, in 1973.

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Bell's work is well-known to New York museumgoers. The 2017 Whitney Biennial featured *Pacific Red II*, six red glass cubes that were displayed on a terrace at the Whitney Museum of American Art. In 2022, a long-term installation of his opened at Dia Beacon. The artist's large- and small-scale works are in the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art.

Bell's Madison Square Park Conservancy commission coincides with *Irresponsible Iridescence*, a presentation of new works on paper on view at the Judd Foundation in New York through January 31, 2026, as well as his ongoing solo exhibition, *Larry Bell: Improvisations*, which premiered at the Phoenix Art Museum in 2024 and is currently on view at the San Antonio Museum of Art through January 4, 2026.

Exhibition

Improvisations in the Park is commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy. Initially curated by Brooke Kamin Rapaport, the project is being organized by Denise Markonish, Martin Friedman Chief Curator; Tom Reidy, Director of Art Operations; and Tiera Ndlovu, Assistant Curator. Holly Leicht is the Conservancy's Executive Director.

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 park has become a testing ground for artistic innovation, offering artists the opportunity to experiment with new techniques, materials, scale, and content, and allowing the public to experience thought-provoking exhibitions free of charge and without barriers to access. In 2019, the Conservancy served as the commissioning institution for the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale with an exhibition of work by Martin Puryear, marking the first time that an organization whose visual art program focuses exclusively on public art has received this honor.

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