



Martin Puryear to Represent the Pavilion of the United States At the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia

New York, NY | March 1, 2019—**Madison Square Park Conservancy**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, presents **Martin Puryear** as the representative for the United States at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. On view May 11 through November 24, 2019, **Martin Puryear: Liberty/Libertà** marks a major international presentation for the artist, who is recognized for a fiercely independent visual language of object making and has remained at the forefront of American creativity for more than 50 years.

The 2019 U.S. Pavilion is commissioned and curated by **Brooke Kamin Rapaport**, Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York. The exhibition marks the first time in the history of the Biennale Arte that the U.S. Pavilion will be organized by an institution whose visual art program is focused exclusively on public art. The Conservancy and Puryear previously collaborated on the commission of his monumental sculpture *Big Bling* in New York's Madison Square Park in 2016.

Martin Puryear: Liberty/Libertà meditates on liberty as an essential human theme and continues the artist's exploration of abstract forms culled from global sources. Featuring a monumental installation for the forecourt of the U.S. Pavilion and new sculpture, the exhibition challenges expectations and demonstrates how everyday forms are a source that can be elevated into highly resonant objects transforming perception, inspiring individuals, and questioning history.

"For more than five decades, Martin Puryear has created a body of work distinguished by a complex visual vocabulary and deeply-considered meaning. His exacting method and subtle power of nuance has influenced generations of artists internationally," said Rapaport. "When Puryear learned that he would represent our country at the art Biennale, his response was that he would do so as both an artist and as a citizen. This position is not a discovery for those who know Puryear and his sculpture. His enduring approach has galvanized his work for more than five decades: issues of citizenry, allegiance, democracy, liberty and responsibility have long propelled the artist. Madison Square Park Conservancy is proud to partner with Puryear and bring our expertise and experience as an institution dedicated to public art to the U.S. Pavilion."

The exhibition is being designed by **Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects**, who are working closely with Puryear and Rapaport to create a unified experience of the works on view. Dedicated exhibition scholar **Darby English** will collaborate with Rapaport on text panels and interpretive materials, and he and Rapaport, along with **Anne M. Wagner** and **Tobi Haslett**, will each author essays in the accompanying exhibition catalogue being published by **Gregory R. Miller & Co.**

In conjunction with the exhibition at the U.S. Pavilion, the Conservancy and Puryear will realize outreach programs with youth through a collaboration between **Studio Institute of Studio in a School Association, Inc.**, in New York, and **Istituto Santa Maria Della Pietà** in Venice. For more information, please visit: martinpuryearvenice2019.org

Martin Puryear: Liberty/Libertà for the U.S. Pavilion is made possible by The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. Bloomberg Philanthropies is the lead sponsor of the exhibition.

ABOUT MARTIN PURYEAR

Martin Puryear (b. 1941) is an American sculptor whose work is featured in the permanent collections of museums across the U.S. and internationally. Puryear represented the U.S. at the 1989 Bienal de São Paulo, where he was awarded the Grand Prize, and was included in the 1992 Documenta IX. Recent solo exhibitions include a presentation at the Museum Voorlinden, The Netherlands (2018); *Big Bling*, a major commission by Madison Square Park Conservancy (2016); and *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions* at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York (2015), that traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. The Museum of Modern Art, New York organized a retrospective of Puryear's work in 2007, which traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Puryear earned his B.A. from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. (1963) and his M.F.A. from Yale University (1971) and attended the Swedish Royal Academy of Art (1966-68). He has been the recipient of prestigious awards, including the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (1980), a Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant (1982), and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989). He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1992) and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University (1994) and the National Medal of Arts (2011).

ABOUT THE COMMISSIONER/CURATOR

Brooke Kamin Rapaport is Deputy Director and Martin Friedman Senior Curator at Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York. Since joining the Conservancy in 2013, she has commissioned public sculpture exhibitions by such contemporary artists as Diana Al-Hadid, Teresita Fernández, Josiah McElheny, Iván Navarro, and Giuseppe Penone, and established the Public Art Consortium, a national initiative of museum, public art program, and sculpture park colleagues. Rapaport received her B.A. *cum laude* in art history from Amherst College and completed her M.A. in art history from Rutgers University.

ABOUT MADISON SQUARE PARK CONSERVANCY

Madison Square Park Conservancy cultivates and enlivens Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public park in New York City's Flatiron District and one of the city's most treasured greenspaces. Through its public art commissions, horticultural stewardship, and engaging programming, and under the leadership of Executive Director Keats Myer, the nonprofit creates an urban oasis that welcomes a diverse community of over 60,000 visitors each day. Since 2004, the Conservancy has become a leader in commissioning new works of public art, curating and presenting over 35 major site-specific installations and solo exhibitions. For more information please visit: <https://www.madisonsquarepark.org/mad-sq-art>

ABOUT THE BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL CULTURAL AFFAIRS

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional, and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us, like religion, politics, language and ethnicity, and geography. ECA programs build connections that engage and empower people and motivate them to become leaders and thinkers, to develop new skills, and to find connections that will create positive change in their communities. For more information, visit www.exchanges.state.gov/us.

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