



For Immediate Release



Sable Elyse Smith, C.R.E.A.M., 2018. Photo by Timothy Schenck

AGORA

Featuring works by Maria Thereza Alves, Andrea Bowers, Mariechen Danz, Pope.L, Duane Linklater, Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa, Marinella Senatore, Timur Si-Qin, Sable Elyse Smith

A group exhibition exploring the role of art and artists in defining, creating, and using public space

April 19, 2018 – March 2019

Various locations along the High Line

New York, NY (March 26, 2018) – Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art is pleased to announce *Agora*, a group exhibition that looks at the role of art in defining, creating, and using public space. The exhibition takes its name from the ancient Greek word referring to the square, that public gathering area that was, in old city-states like Athens, the core for commercial, artistic, political, and spiritual life of the city. For centuries, artists have used public locations – and the public in general – as sites and actors for their work. Transforming these

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places into theaters and arenas for the realization of performances and collective actions, artists mobilize a kind of collective voice of the people. Through these collective actions, and the manipulation of our expectations of what does and does not belong in these ostensibly collectively owned spaces, they challenge what these spaces are, how they're made, and who they're made for. From single speaker's corners to sprawling protests; from grand parades and processions to performances carried out in secrecy; from bronze historical equestrian statues to initials etched on edges of pavement; and from WPA murals to graffiti tags, the forms artists' works take in the public space vary widely in scale, volume, and form. However, across time they share common themes: challenging why and how public and private space, life, and activities are separated; how boundaries are drawn, built, and transgressed; who is allowed to stand and speak, and where.

The exhibition looks at the power of art to change society, what the role is of art in public space, and whether art be a form of protest. Artists working in public often take a political tone, mobilizing the public for social and political change, and for the possibility of realizing an alternate future. On the High Line, a public space and natural platform for the projection of voices into urban space, nine artists share their experiences inhabiting, speaking out in, and challenging the assumed boundaries of public space.

Maria Thereza Alves (b. 1961, São Paulo, Brazil) addresses the relationship between imperialism, conquest, and the erasure/silencing of indigenous people. For the High Line, Alves presents an iteration of her ongoing project launched in 1999 entitled *Seeds of Change*, which follows the movements of seeds distributed by cargo ships that carry people and goods around the globe. *A Ballast Flora Garden: High Line* is one of three gardens that are part of Maria Thereza Alves's *Seeds of Change: New York—A Botany of Colonization*, which unearths historical ballast sites and flora that have traveled to New York City by trade ship ballast over the past two centuries. Earth, stones, sand, wood, bricks, and whatever else was economically expedient was used as ballast to stabilize merchant ships in relationship to the weight of their cargo. Upon arrival in port, the ballast was unloaded, carrying with it seeds native to the area where the ballast had been picked up. Over the past two centuries, more than 400 species of plants were brought over by ships and were growing on ballast grounds throughout New York, from where they have spread further since. To understand this history, Alves has worked with horticultural experts and local communities at Pioneer Works, the High Line, The New School, and Weeksville Heritage Center to research the ballast flora and the stories it tells about migration, commodification, and valuation.

Andrea Bowers (b. 1965, Wilmington, Ohio) is a Los Angeles-based artist working in video, drawing, and installation, combining art and activism to foreground the struggle for social justice. For the High Line, Bowers presents a continuation of her ongoing work supporting DREAMers, individuals who came to the United States at an early age without documentation, who have assimilated to U.S. culture, and who have been educated in U.S. schools (so-called because of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors or "DREAM" Act). Bowers invited the immigrant rights activist group Movimiento Cosecha to write a slogan in support of DREAMers, realized as a neon sign reading "Somos 11 Millones / We Are 11 Million," which is the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

Mariechen Danz (b. 1980, Dublin, Ireland) is a Berlin-based artist who researches representations of the body, investigating the way it has been given meaning in various



cultures, epochs, and fields of knowledge. In her installations, performances and music, often in collaboration with other artists and musicians, the human body emerges as a contradictory structure and a scene of conflict—an utterly contaminated zone, both politically and historically. For the High Line, Danz presents a new iteration of *The Dig of No Body*, a sculpture that references anatomical learning models segregated into individual parts, like a life-sized soil sample in movable layers. The work evokes our changing relationship to the earth, as well as the popular contemporary name “Anthropocene,” which suggests humans’ creation of a new geological era.

Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa (b. 1978, Guatemala City, Guatemala) creates sculptures, videos, and performances that explore absence, presence, and the way our bodies interact with the built environment. For the High Line, Ramirez-Figueroa casts a bunk bed in aluminum, referencing the fraternity of a shared space, while also evoking a sense of loss. The fragility of the structure reflects the precariousness of childhood, and in particular, the experiences of the children in the illegal orphanages that appeared in Guatemala during the civil war from 1960–1996. Specifically, the work is influenced by the Buddhist belief that “form is emptiness; emptiness is form,” and that all things are interconnected.

Pope.L (b. 1955 Newark, New Jersey) is an artist working in performance, theater, installation, video, and painting. His works include physically demanding actions, as well as sculptures and performances that explore language, gender, race, ideology, and community. For the High Line, Pope.L presents a large neon sign that reads “RiGT TURN for REPARATIONS” in flickering red and green letters. The apparent typo and backwards letters are intended to make viewers read life differently. The red and green in his apparatus suggest the jolting stop-and-go vicissitudes of progress, love, and money, either apparent or impossible.

Duane Linklater (b. 1976, Moose Factory, Canada) is an Omaskêko Ininiwak artist from Moose Cree First Nation. He explores the relationship between indigenous people and museums, especially the differences in how the two value indigenous institutions and art objects. For the High Line, Linklater presents a series of towering tripods that reference the elemental structure of teepees. Linklater describes the teepee as a form of provisional, mobile architecture that is set in contrast to the bombastic development happening throughout New York and along the High Line. The title of his piece, *pêyakotênaw*, comes from the Cree word for family, which is formed from *peyak*, which means number one, combined with *otenaw*, the word for city or town.

Timur Si-Qin (b. 1984, Berlin, Germany) creates artwork that posits advertising and commercial marketing as a result and extension of biology. Across his practice, Si-Qin works to combat essentialism—whether in branding, language, or nature itself. He often builds seemingly organic environments whose underlying industrial structures can be easily seen, thus calling into question the things we take for granted as “natural” or “unnatural.” For the High Line, Si-Qin presents *Forgiving Change*, aluminum casts of a burned tree branch from Pepperwood Preserve, which was the site of one of the many forest fires that crossed the west coast of North America in 2017.

Marinella Senatore (b. 1977, Cava de’ Tirreni, Italy) is an artist working in performance and sculpture. In her work, Senatore is interested in creating a conversation between herself and the people experiencing it. For the High Line, the artist presents an installation of festive lights



under the park at Gansevoort Plaza similar to the celebratory ones made by artisans in Puglia, Italy, on the occasion of popular and religious events. The installation takes the title *GIVE YOUR DAUGHTERS DIFFICULT NAMES* from a quote by the feminist poet Warsan Shire, and creates a space of gathering and congregation—a public piazza for people to use.

Sable Elyse Smith (b. 1986, Los Angeles, California) examines the complex language and emotional landscapes embedded in systems of surveillance and structures of constraint, and the often invisible ways in which they shape our minds and direct our bodies. For the High Line, Smith creates *C.R.E.A.M.* (titled after the Wu Tang Clan song), an altered replica of the Hollywood Sign that reads IRONWOODLAND—a reference both to the Ironwood State Prison and to “Hollywoodland,” the segregated real estate development that was advertised by the original sign. The piece draws attention to the contradictory nature of institutions that not only develop real estate, but prisons as well.

ABOUT HIGH LINE ART

Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art commissions and produces public art projects on and around the High Line. Founded in 2009, High Line Art presents a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Curated by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and produced by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

For further information on High Line Art, please visit art.thehighline.org.

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ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE

Friends of the High Line raises nearly 100% of the High Line’s annual budget. Owned by the City of New York, the High Line is a public park programmed, maintained, and operated by Friends of the High Line, in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

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