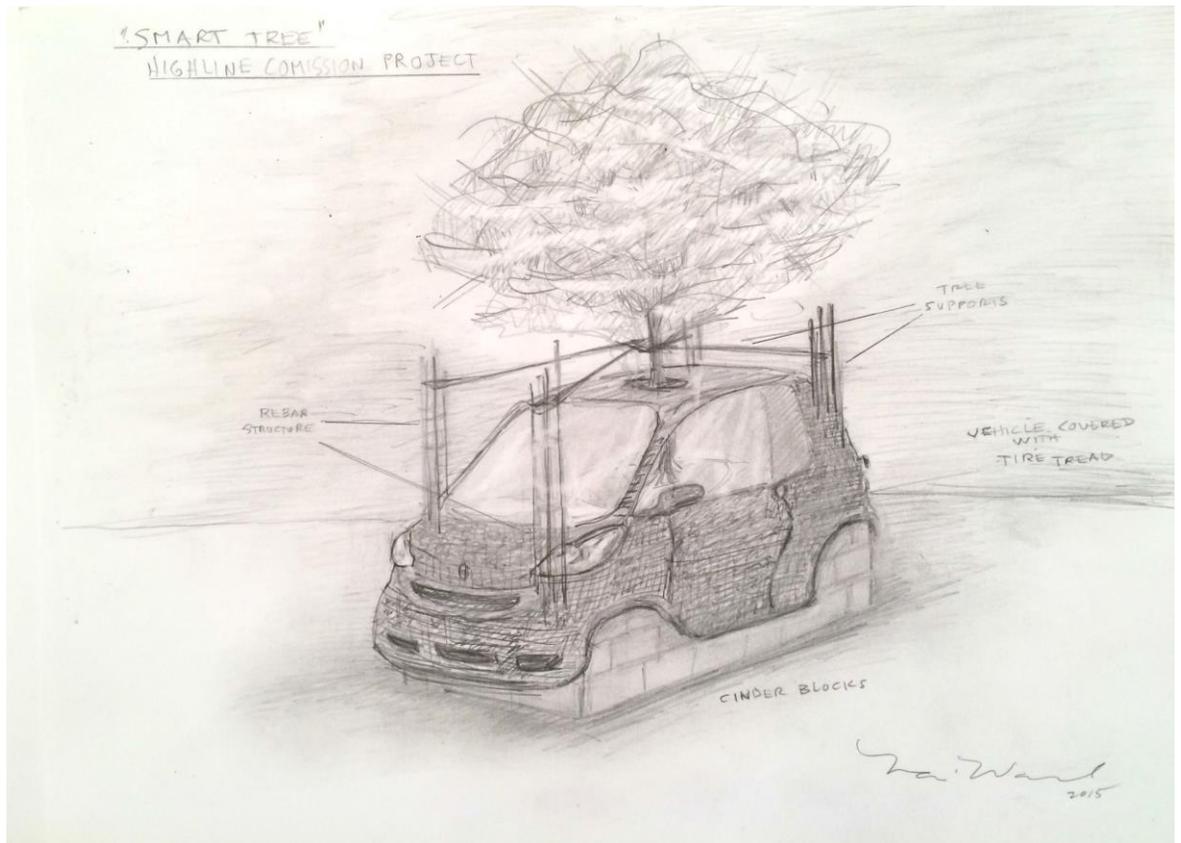




# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Drawing of Nari Ward, *Smart Tree*, 2016. Courtesy the artist.

## HIGH LINE ART PRESENTS

### NARI WARD *SMART TREE*

#### FOR HIS HIGH LINE COMMISSION, THE ARTIST RECREATES A CHILDHOOD MEMORY

#### APRIL 2016 – MARCH 2017 ON THE HIGH LINE AT WEST 23<sup>rd</sup> STREET

**New York, NY (April 12, 2016)** – Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art is pleased to announce the upcoming High Line Commission by artist Nari Ward titled *Smart Tree* (2016). Recreating a childhood memory, the artist presents a Smart car covered in tire treads with an apple tree growing out of its roof. Installed on the High Line at West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, the sculpture will be on view from April 29, 2016 to March 2017.

Nari Ward makes sculptural installations from materials he collects in his own neighborhoods—in his original hometown in Jamaica, in various neighborhoods in New Jersey and New York, and most recently in Harlem, where he has lived since 1983. Ranging from a haunting grouping of abandoned baby strollers (*Amazing Grace*, 1993) to a scrolling script of “We the People” written in dangling shoelaces (*We the People*, 2011), to a collection of preservative cans filled with neighbors’ smiles (*Sugar Hill Smiles*, 2014), Ward’s compositions resonate with the materials they comprise. Ward takes up daunting societal topics ranging from healing and health care, to justice and the police, to immigrant identity struggles. All of his artworks wrestle with memory and belonging—from the formal throes of citizenship applications to the personal intimacies of family. Throughout his work, Ward





juxtaposes surprising materials and themes, explaining, “I always feel like when I make something, the more absurd it is, the more potential for symbolism and meaning it gains.”

Inspired by a building adjacent to the High Line that had been transformed into an indoor parking lot, Ward reconfigures a memory from his childhood for his High Line Commission, *Smart Tree*. Returning to his father’s home in Jamaica after 15 years away, Ward remembers finding one of two abandoned cars in the front yard sprouting a lime tree. He reimagines this fantastical story for the High Line in the form of a Smart car refinished with strips of tire treads and propped up on cinder blocks. In place of a lime tree, *Smart Tree* will feature an apple tree growing out of its roof, adapted out of necessity for its North American context. With the car’s cinderblock base representing stasis, and its coating of tire treads suggesting perpetual movement, Ward’s *Smart Tree* holds up a mirror to the flux surrounding the High Line itself and reminds viewers of the High Line’s history as a major transportation artery in Manhattan.

“Nari Ward is a poet of urban transformation: he chronicles the lives of cities and their inhabitants through the objects they leave behind. That’s why we are particularly happy to exhibit his work on the High Line, which itself has witnessed the many metamorphoses of this city,” says Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art. “His new sculpture is a strange monument in reverse: it speaks about urban culture magically returning to nature. It is hard to say if *Smart Tree* is a relic from a distant past or an image of a near future; either way, as with all of Ward’s sculptures, it captures what it means to live and grow roots in a contemporary metropolis.”

#### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Nari Ward (b. 1963, Jamaica) lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include the Pérez Art Museum Miami (2015); Savannah College of Art and Design Museum, GA (2015); Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia (2011); and MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2011). Notable group exhibitions include *Black: Color, Material, Concept*, Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015); *The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now*, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (2014); and *NYC 1993: Experimental Jet Set, Trash and No Star*, the New Museum, New York (2013). Ward’s work has been featured in major international exhibitions including the Nanjing Biennial, China (2010); Prospect.1, New Orleans (2008); the Whitney Biennial, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2006); the Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2006); the Sharjah International Biennial 7, UAE (2005); and the 8th Havana Biennial (2004).

#### **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.

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For further information on High Line Art, please visit [art.thehighline.org](http://art.thehighline.org).

#### **ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE**

Friends of the High Line raises 98% of the High Line’s annual budget. Owned by the City of New York, the High Line is a public park maintained, operated, and programmed by Friends of the High Line, in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

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