

The New York Times

November 7, 2014

Inside Art

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The Glow Coming To Madison Square

Public art projects in Madison Square Park — the urban oasis between Madison and Fifth Avenues from 23rd to 26th Streets — have been beautiful, bemusing and sometimes even a tad creepy.

One of the most outrageous took place in 2009, when 31 slightly different sculptures of a naked man dotted the park's grounds, were perched along rooftops on neighboring buildings and scattered around the sidewalks of the Flatiron district. The figure, cast by the British sculptor Antony Gormley from his own body, caused quite a stir. One passer-by called 911, having mistaken a sculpture perched on the ledge of the Empire State Building for a jumper.

Now, another ambitious and dramatic — though far more benign — installation is set to take up residence at the park from April 30, 2015, through Jan. 10, 2016, casting a luminous golden glow that will be visible from blocks away. It's the work of the New York conceptual artist Teresita Fernández. Rather than simply erecting a sculpture in the park, her mission is to challenge the traditional notion of outdoor art, creating an experiential installation.

Called "Fata Morgana," an Italian phrase meaning mirage (after the Latin name for Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's legendary half sister), it is a 500-foot-long sculpture in six sections. Hundreds of polished metal discs perforated with intricate patterns, in organic shapes that are reminiscent of natural foliage, will be suspended over the pathways, creating a kind of canopy visitors will walk under.

"I see the park as a system of arteries reflecting and distorting urban life," Ms. Fernández said. "It will reflect the landscape on a grand scale, as your own reflections are seen from above and are shaped by other people and by the environment. It takes the whole park and unifies it." Like a horizontal band, she added, the site-specific project "becomes a



LEHMANN MAUPIN, NEW YORK AND HONG KONG AND ANTHONY MEIER FINE ARTS, SAN FRANCISCO

A digital rendering of Teresita Fernández's "Fata Morgana," which is to be installed next spring in Madison Square Park.

ghostlike installation that both alters the landscape and radiates golden light." It also will be a visual barometer of what changes around it during different seasons and times of day.

This isn't Ms. Fernández's first foray in Madison Square Park. In 2001, she created "Bamboo Cinema," a labyrinth of hollow plastic tubes, as part of a group show.

Brooke Kamin Rapaport, senior curator of the Madison Square Park Conservancy, said she has been following Ms. Fernández's work for years. "She's interested in the question of ephemerality and mirage; perception, light and space — all of which is particularly suited for outdoor projects," Ms. Rapaport said. "The installation will change significantly over time and with the park's population."

Calling it one of the conservancy's most ambitious installations, she estimated that "Fata Morgana" would be experienced by 50,000 park visitors daily.

A Franklin Furnace 'Nest'

By the end of the year, Franklin Furnace, the avant-garde institution, will move to Pratt Institute's Brooklyn campus as part of a new organization in residence agreement. "We're not merging, we're nesting," said Martha Wilson, who founded Franklin Furnace in 1976 as an

alternative space that oversaw projects like artist books, installations and cutting-edge performances.

Under the arrangement, Franklin Furnace will share its rich archives with Pratt; in turn, Pratt will help ensure that those materials are preserved for the future. "It puts on our campus an archive that is second to none," said Andrew W. Barnes, dean of Pratt's School of Liberal Arts and Sciences. "The idea is they stay as their own organization, and we stay as ours." The institutions plan to collaborate on projects and programs.

An exhibition, "Performing Franklin Furnace," organized by Independent Curators International, will showcase 30 historic events that took place at Franklin Furnace. It will be held at Pratt Manhattan Gallery, at 144 West 14th Street, from Feb. 20 through April 30.

Since its inception, Franklin Furnace has gone through many incarnations. It began in a TriBeCa storefront and — like other alternative spaces in the 1970s — became a hub of creativity. "Karen Finley had her first New York performance there in 1983, when she took a bath in a suitcase and made love to a chair using Wesson cooking oil," Ms. Wilson recalled. Other artists who got their start at Franklin Furnace included Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Ida Applebroog and Eric

Bogolian.

In 1996, it sold its TriBeCa home, becoming what Ms. Wilson called a "virtual institution." Since then, it has made its resources electronic and overseen performances in various physical spaces as well as online. "Now we will be able to undertake ambitious projects that we couldn't have done on our own," she said.

Curatorial Moves

Two appointments were made this week at New York museums. Denise Allen, who has been curator of Renaissance paintings and sculpture at the Frick Collection since 2003, will move up Fifth Avenue to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a curator in the department of European sculpture and decorative arts. She starts on Nov. 17, replacing James David Draper, who is retiring after 45 years at the Met.

Mr. Draper won't be totally gone from the museum. He and Ms. Allen will be collaborating on a catalog of the Met's Italian bronze sculptures, which is scheduled for publication in about four years.

The Guggenheim Museum has created a new post, curator for architecture and digital initiatives, and appointed Troy Conrad Therrien to it. An architect by training, he is also an adjunct assistant professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, where he teaches design and technology courses and is a director of the Architecture Online Lab.

At the Guggenheim, Mr. Therrien will create programs about contemporary architecture and urban development. He will also be involved in the Guggenheim Helsinki Design Competition, organizing an exhibition of six shortlisted submissions to be held in Finland in spring 2015, and will also develop programs for the Guggenheim's proposed museum there. He will have a hand in the Guggenheim's digital initiatives, too, helping to reshape the way the public, scholars and artists engage with the museum online.