

America's Best Public Art for Summer 2015

Cross-country culture stops from Aspen to New York City

by Mark Ellwood

April 6, 2015

The Madison Square Park Conservancy has been staging site-specific art in its Flatiron greenspace for just over a decade: Past standouts have included *Pulse Park*, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's tribute to the human heartbeat, and 2009's *Event Horizon*. Anthony Gormley's project, which scattered 31 cast-iron and fiberglass figures around the perimeter, earned widespread acclaim while also prompting [calls to 911](#) when some were mistaken for potential suicides.



Digital rendering of Teresita Fernández's *Fata Morgana* in Madison Square Park.

Courtesy Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong, and Anthony Meier Fine Arts, San Francisco via Bloomberg

In the wake of her well-received [MASS MoCA installation](#), Brooklyn-based artist **Teresita Fernández** has been handed this year's project. She's calling her piece *Fata Morgana*, or mirage, a nod to its shimmering, otherworldly affect. The six-section, 500-foot-long piece will be installed as a canopy over pedestrians. Constructed from perforated discs, mirrored to evoke futuristic foliage, it will catch sunlight in different ways throughout the day. *Fata Morgana* officially opens on the last day of April and remains installed through early January 2016.

Fernandez's piece is just one of several impressive public art projects set to make their debuts in spring and summer across the country. Make your travel plans now.

LOS ANGELES



(Clockwise from top left) John Baldessari, *Love and Work*, 10 billboards, San Antonio, 2014; Mario Ybarra Jr., *Barrio Aesthetics*, 10 billboards, Mobile, Ala., 2014; Eve Fowler, *it is so*, 10 billboards, Houston, 2014; Daniel R. Small, *Pending Cipher for the Open Present*, 10 billboards, Las Cruces, N.Mex., 2015

Source: "The Manifest Destiny Billboard Project" via Bloomberg

Los Angeles Nomadic Division: The Manifest Destiny Billboard Project — Erstwhile Whitney staffer Shamim Momin is known for headline-grabbing projects that combine high-caliber artistic merit with a punky flair. Her latest is no exception. For *The Manifest Destiny Billboard Project*, Momin has worked with artist Zoe Crusher to ringmistress 10 artists in creating approximately 100 billboards along I-10 from Florida to California. She's tapped both emerging and established names—the fifth installment, for example, saw John Baldessari's *Love & Work* appear on billboards in and around San Antonio. The project "arrives" in Los Angeles in June when artist [Matthew Brannon](#) will apply his painstakingly handcrafted approach to graphic design (think letterpress, lithography) on the final 10 billboards of the continent-spanning installation.

ASPEN, COLO.



IT WILL
END IN
TEARS

(From left) Miranda July, *Eleven Heavy Things*, 2009; Anthony Discenza, *END IN TEARS*, 2010

(From left) Photo by Brian Paul Lamotte. Courtesy of the Artist and Deitch Archive via Bloomberg; Courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery, San Francisco via Bloomberg

Aspen Art Museum: Stories We Tell Ourselves — This six-month-long show on Aspen's new Shigeru Ban-designed site taps a team of three artists to examine the relationship between art and language. Miranda July's interactive outdoor sculptures *Eleven Heavy Things* began the program March 27, installed on site in tandem with Anthony Discenza's disconcerting road signs, where the form of street signage has been co-opted for warnings or confessions (such as *It Will End in Tears*). Come midsummer, these works will be replaced with a single monumental piece, Scot Jim Lambie's oversize keyhole *A Secret Affair*, acting as a "gateway" to the new museum.

NEW YORK CITY



(Clockwise from top left) Jeppe Hein, *Semicircular Mirror Labyrinth II*, 2013; Jeppe Hein, *Appearing Rooms*, 2004; Jeppe Hein, *Long Modified Bench Oppenheim*, 2008

(Clockwise from top left) Photo: Anders Sune Berg. Courtesy: Johann König, Berlin, 303 Gallery, New York and Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen via Bloomberg; Courtesy: Johann König, Berlin and 303 Gallery, New York via Bloomberg (2)

Public Art Fund: Please Touch the Art — Danish artist Jeppe Hein uses his playful sense of humor to create art that encourages viewer interaction. He's probably best known for *Appearing Rooms*, syncopated fountains that shoot jets out of the ground to form "walls" made of water; sporadic breaks allows the daring to dash into or out of those rooms. He has already restaged the piece, commissioned for the garden of the Villa Manin in Italy, several times on London's [South Bank](#) and during [Art Basel in Miami](#). Next, he'll bring it to New York's Brooklyn Bridge Park, beginning May 17. It will form part of the aptly named "Please Touch the Art" show, along with 17 more of his works, including a mirrored labyrinth and some trippy riffs on the traditional park bench.



(From left) Ragnar Kjartansson, *S.S. Hangover*; Spencer Finch, *Sunset*, 2011

(From left) Photo: Lilja Birgisdóttir. Courtesy the artist; i8 Gallery, Reykjavik via Bloomberg; ew York; Spencer Finch, "Sunset," 2011. Photo: K Bennett. Source: Creative Time and Central Park Conservancy via Bloomberg

Creative Time x Central Park Conservancy: Drifting in Daylight — Beginning on May 15 (and running Fridays and Saturdays through June 20), the northern reaches of Central Park are deeded over to the "Drifting in Daylight" show. It has been coorganized by the park's Conservancy (to celebrate its 35th anniversary) and nonprofit Creative Time, which is still riding high after the success of Kara Walker's Instagram-friendly giant sugar sphinx. For six weekends, eight interactive interventions will appear amid the greenery. Video artist David Levine will stage celebrity-free reenactments of scenes from films shot in Central Park (fingers crossed for *When Harry Met Sally*), while Icelandic prankster Ragnar Kjartansson will bring his 2013 Venice Biennale project, *S.S. Hangover*, to the Meer (six brass-playing men will drift on its waters in an old fishing boat). The most delicious option, though, is undoubtedly *Sunset Soft Serve*—Spencer Finch's solar-powered ice-cream truck that will dole out free, sunset-colored cones.

SEATTLE



Dan Webb's *Shroud* (2008), an example of the intricate, unusual carvings the artist may make during his summer residency.

Photo: Courtesy of Greg Kucera Gallery, Inc. Source: Seattle Art Museum via Bloomberg

Olympic Sculpture Park: Dan Webb — Though he'd studied for a BFA in the early 1990s, sculptor [Dan Webb](#) didn't focus on the woodcarving for which he has gained renown until 11 years ago when his brother was diagnosed with a brain tumor. (The carving became a sort of meditation and escape.) Now the Alaska-raised, Seattle-based artist's woodwork is a fixture of public installations in the Emerald City. This summer, he'll introduce a new site-specific piece during a residence at the Olympic Sculpture Park. Based inside a shack he built there, he will slowly transform one of the park's own Douglas fir trees into disparate objects, exploring both the passage of time and the process of production with a dash of performance art—visitors will be encouraged to visit him in his ad hoc studio.

JOSHUA TREE, CALIF.



Gerhard Tremel and Leo Calice, *Eden's Edge: 9 Shorts on the California Desert*.

Source: High Desert Test Sites via Bloomberg

High Desert Test Sites — Artist Andrea Zittel moved to the California desert 15 years ago, living on 25 acres of land in a brick cabin that was a homesteader's hideout from the 1930s. She then built a series of trailers on her property in which she could billet artists during High Desert Test Sites, her annual site-specific invitational among the boulders and cacti. This year's selection includes Israeli artist Lior Shvil's *Protocol X*, a recreation of army training protocols, on May 9. Vienna-based artists Gerhard Tremel and Leo Calice will show a series of shorts *Eden's Edge*, inspired by the Californian desert, on July 25.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.



Art-designed mini golf during its last iteration at the Walker.

Source: Walker Art Center via Bloomberg

Walker Art Center Sculpture Garden: Artist-Designed Golf — The multidisciplinary Walker, a Minneapolis institution, has been reenergized by current director Olga Viso, who has made an increased emphasis on engagement with the local community central to her tenure. Two years ago, it introduced an artist-designed 18-hole mini golf course in the outdoor garden, and the project reappears again this year on May 21 with four new holes. [Mn Artists](#) corralled a cadre of local talents, such as Tom Loftus and Amy Toscani, to collaborate on greens inspired by Andy Warhol's Brillo pads and street artist Keith Haring, among others.