



Iván Navarro Installation Takes Skyline to Street Level in Madison Square Park

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by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

Putting their own spin on the notion that all the world's a stage, installation artists in the U.S. and around the globe continue to make the counterclaim that all the world is essentially a gallery. For a recent case in point, one need look no further than Madison Square Park in New York City, where Brooklyn-based Chilean artist Iván Navarro has created the site-specific sculptural installation *This Land Is Your Land*. The piece is part of the Mad. Sq. Art initiative of the Madison Square Park Conservancy.

The installation takes a staple of the New York City skyline—water towers—and presents three of them as part of the street-level landscape of the park, which stretches from 23rd to 26th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenue.

Inside each of the towers, different neon reflections repeat infinitely on mirrored walls. All three are installed at an elevation that allows visitors to walk beneath them so they can look up and peer inside.



Installation view of Iván Navarro's "This Land is Your Land" in Madison Square Park, 2014. Photo by Thelma Garcia.

The title aims to invoke the immigrant dream of a democratic United States by borrowing from the 1940 Woody Guthrie folk song, "This Land Is Your Land." The title was carefully chosen by Navarro as it "represents the vast expanse of the American landscape and a democratic society pursued by millions of people... "

Navarro's hope is for access to this country by those who are foreign-born, according to the installation release.

The towers, which measure about seven feet in diameter and stand on eight-foot-tall supports, are intended by the artist to serve as vessels for a vocabulary of the political and personal experience of immigration, according to a release from Mad. Sq. Art.

The interior of one tower features the words "me" and "we", another has the word "bed", and a third displays the image of a ladder—all of which are composed of neon light. The internal arrangement of mirrors enables the words and the image to repeat countless times through a

seemingly endless vertical space.

The artist has said he selected water towers for the installation because he likes "...the idea of a reservoir of water."

"This simple and timeless wooden structure contains water—the most primitive and elemental resource, the essence of human sustenance, and a reminder of the basic condition that all humanity shares," said Navarro. "We must guarantee our water in order to survive."

"In that sense the water tanks are containers of primordial knowledge. Their form and material are equally archaic: they are simple circular huts with conical roofs, made of wood. Less obvious but nonetheless important is their reference to watchtowers due to their elevated position," he said.

"Although they are benign objects, there is the sense that they are quietly surrounding us, surveying the city below," states Navarro. "These water towers metaphorically function as tall ornamental crowns on the tops of the large buildings that dominate the urban landscape. They punctuate the glory of modern civilization while reclaiming its humanity."

Brooke Kamin Rapaport, the Martin Friedman Senior Curator of the Madison Square Park Conservancy, noted in the release, "Iván Navarro uses memory—as a child during the brutal Pinochet regime in Chile—and reflection—on the freedoms of the American experience—to create *This Land Is Your Land*."

"This project is significant for our program because Navarro's work tackles issues pertaining to democracy, social structure and how language can simultaneously manifest liberation and oppression," said Rapaport. "While wood water tanks are a ubiquitous sight on New York City's rooftops, the artist loads them with substantive content demonstrating how sculpture can function as object and as a messenger of critical issues today."

Navarro was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1972 and lives and works in Brooklyn. He has gained an international reputation for his socio-politically charged sculptures of neon, fluorescent and incandescent light. In 2009, he represented Chile in at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Navarro is represented by the [Paul Kasmin Gallery](#).

The opening of the Madison Square Park installation coincided with the February release of the first monograph on Navarro. Written by Cay Sophie Rabinowitz with contributions by Hilarie M. Sheets and Paul Kasmin Gallery, *Iván Navarro* is published by Skira Rizzoli.

Navarro's work has been exhibited at the Frost Museum of Art in Miami (2012); the Prospect.2 Biennial in New Orleans (2011); Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York (2010); Distrito 4 in Madrid (2010); Museum on the Seam in Jerusalem, Israel (2010); Tierra de Nadie in Caja de Burgos, Spain (2010); Towner Contemporary Art Museum in Eastbourne, UK and Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris (2009), among others.

His work is part of public and private collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, DC), Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (Richmond, VA), Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris), Towner Contemporary Art Museum, (Eastbourne, UK), LVMH Collection (Paris), Saatchi

Collection (London), Martin Z. Margulies Warehouse (Miami, FL), and Centro Galego de Arte Contemporanea (Santiago de Compostela, Spain).

Mad. Sq. Art is a free, contemporary art program of the Madison Square Park Conservancy. Since 2004, the program has commissioned and presented over 20 premier installations in the park by acclaimed artists ranging in practice and media.

Artists include Bill Beirne, Jim Campbell, Richard Deacon, Mark di Suvero, Bill Fontana, Ernie Gehr, Orly Genger, Sandra Gibson & Luis Recoder, Antony Gormley, Jene Highstein, Tadashi Kawamata, Mel Kendrick, Sol LeWitt, Olia Lialina & Dragan Espenschied, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Charles Long, Jacco Olivier, Roxy Paine, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Shannon Plumb, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Alison Saar, Jessica Stockholder, Leo Villareal, and William Wegman.

BASIC INFO: *This Land Is Your Land* by Iván Navarro is on view from Feb. 20 to April 13, 2014 at Madison Square Park, 23rd to 26th Street between Madison and Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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