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NEWS

The High Line Wants You to Weigh in on Its Next Public Sculptures

From playful to political, there are 80 options by artists including Nick Cave, Mona Hatoum, and Wang Sishun.

Hakim Bishara August 13, 2020



Nick Cave, "A·mal·gam". A proposal for the High Line's public art Plinth commissions (all images courtesy of High Line Art)

The High Line in New York wants to hear your opinion on 80 proposals for two of its future public art commissions. The public's feedback will have some weight in the shortlisting process, but the final call will still be made by High Line Art, the nonprofit overseeing the elevated park's art exhibits.

The proposed artworks are slated for the High Line's third and fourth "Plinth" commissions in 2022 and 2024. The "Plinth" is located on 30th Street and 10th Avenue in Chelsea at a new section of the High Line called the "Spur."

The first Plinth commission was inaugurated in June of 2019 with artist Simone Leigh's "Brick House." Towering over the Manhattan intersection, the 16-foot-tall bronze features a bust of a Black woman with a torso that combines the forms of a skirt and a clay house. The work was chosen out of 12 proposals shortlisted in 2017. The second Plinth commission will be announced in the coming months once Leigh's sculpture concludes its 18-month run.

Mona Hatoum, Nick Cave, and Alfredo Jaar are among the established artists vying for the Plinth commission. Additional contenders include Alia Farid, Meriem Bennani, Andreas Angelidakis, Rafa Esparza, Iván Argote, Wang Sishun, and other artists at various stages of their careers.



Alfredo Jaar, "When the Music Stops"

Starting with the somber, Hatoum's "Hot Spot (stand)" is a metal globe lit with red LED lights to outline conflict zones around the world. But in Hatoum's vision, all continents are included in that category, signaling that conflict spots "are not limited to certain areas of disputed borders."



Mona Hatoum, "Hot Spot (stand)"



Andreas Angelidakis, "Are We Happy to Serve You?"

The artists come from 40 countries and from all corners of the United States, according to High Line Art. Their proposals vary from somber and political to playful and cartoonish. You're invited to leave a comment on each proposal on the [High Line's website](#).

Starting with the somber, Hatoum's "Hot Spot (stand)" is a metal globe lit with red LED lights to outline

Jaar's installation, "[When the Music Stops](#)," features a hovering cloud trapped in a cage. Clouds are a leitmotif in Jaar's work, wherein they represent hope, freedom, or the lack thereof.

Cave's heart-stirring proposal, titled "[A-mal-gam](#)", harkens back to his first "[Soundsuit](#)" in 1992, made in response to the murder of Rodney King a year earlier (he has created over 500 since then). The bronze features a tree sprouting out of a man's body. Toile flowers cover the figure's body and ceramic birds perch on its leafless branches.

On the more playful side, Farid is proposing a giant "[LOL](#)" steel sculpture in a surface-level comment on our communication patterns in the age of social media. Angelidakis is suggesting a colossal [Anthora](#)

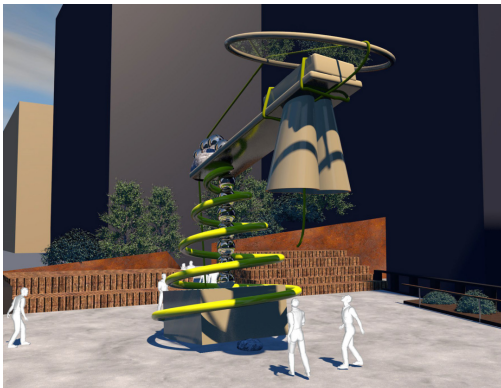
[coffee cup](#) that reads "We Are Happy to Serve You" on one side and, inverted, "Are We Happy to Serve You?" on the other. The work aims to convey "the cyclical nature of human migration," according to the proposal.



Alia Farid, "LOL"



Wang Sishun, "Apocalypse 12.20.18"



Meriem Bennani, "Bouncy Storm"



Iván Argote, "Dinosaur"

Bennani's "[Bouncy Storm](#)" is an elaborate mechanical contraption wrapped in a yellow compression spring. There's a lot going on in this piece, but its main feature is huge downward-looking binoculars through which you can see "videos of strangers."

Some proposals edge on the bizarre: Wang's "[Apocalypse 12.20.18](#)" features a menacing rock-like creature which she describes as a "warped city hero" although it's bound to scare some children. And Argote submitted a sculpture of a giant, realistic pigeon that he cheekily titled "[Dinosaur](#)."

These proposals and others were nominated by an advisory committee of 23 international artists, curators, and art world professionals including names like Bao Dong (Beijing-based curator), Naomi Beckwith (Senior Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago), Myriam Ben Salah (Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago), and Raphael Chikukwa (Zimbabwe-based artist).

In fall of 2020, the High Line Art's curatorial team will select a shortlist of artists after reviewing the public's comments. These artists will be invited to present maquettes of their proposals in a public exhibition in early 2021. The final selection will be

made by Cecilia Alemani, the director and chief curator of High Line Art, and

her staff.

The High Line's outreach gesture comes at a moment of reckoning over the meaning of public monuments to the lives of communities. As offensive statues around the country fall down, this commission offers New Yorkers a unique opportunity to participate in the selection of their city's next major public artwork.

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