



# Association for Public Art

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## **Internationally Acclaimed Artist Martin Puryear's Largest Temporary Public Sculpture to Date, *Big Bling*, to be Installed along Philadelphia's Kelly Drive**

A public celebration will welcome the artwork to the city

PHILADELPHIA — The **Association for Public Art (aPA)**, working with New York's Madison Square Park Conservancy in a first-time collaboration, will bring internationally acclaimed artist Martin Puryear's *Big Bling* to Philadelphia as a temporary installation. The sculpture will be installed along Kelly Drive, between Fountain Green Drive and the Connecting Railway and Girard Avenue Bridges ([see map](#)) in May and remain on site through November 2017.

The Association for Public Art will host a public celebration welcoming *Big Bling* on **Thursday, June 8, 2017 from 4:30pm to 7pm**. This event is free, but please register at [associationforpublicart.org/bigbling](http://associationforpublicart.org/bigbling). During the event, Puryear will be awarded aPA's Medal of Honor, which recognizes outstanding achievement in the field of art through notable public service. Previous recipients include artists Mark di Suvero, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, and Isamu Noguchi, among others. The sculpture will be located near Daniel Chester French and Edward C. Potter's *General Ulysses S. Grant*, Frederic Remington's *Cowboy*, and Carl Milles' *Playing Angels*, which were installed by aPA in 1898, 1908, and 1972, respectively.

"Installing *Big Bling* within an expanse between Kelly Drive and the Schuylkill River will offer a totally different setting from Madison Square Park," says Penny Balkin Bach, Executive Director and Chief Curator of aPA. "It will provide an opportunity to see the sculpture in a very different context along the riverfront with the Pennsylvania Railroad, Connecting Railway Bridge in the background. Interestingly, the historic stone bridge was built to connect Philadelphia to New York and Washington DC. It's also the stone bridge that Thomas Eakins painted in *Max Schmitt in a Single Scull*."

Rising forty feet high and eliciting many interpretations, *Big Bling* is Puryear's largest temporary outdoor sculpture to date. The colossal multi-tiered wood structure is wrapped in chain-link fence and anchored with a gold-leafed shackle near the top. Layers of laminated timbers and plywood stack together to create a form

that is both animal-like and abstract with an amoeboid shape in the center. “I tend not to tell people what they’re looking at when they’re in the presence of my work,” says Puryear. “I trust people’s eyes. I trust their imagination.”

Martin Puryear (b. 1941) is an American artist known for creating sculpture that combines modernist abstraction with the traditions of crafts and woodworking. In the 1960s, he volunteered with the Peace Corps in West Africa, where he schooled himself in the region’s indigenous crafts, and his interest in Scandinavian design led him to study at the Royal Academy in Stockholm, Sweden.

“We are thrilled that the sculpture is traveling to Philadelphia through the Association for Public Art,” says Brooke Kamin Rapaport, Martin Friedman Senior Curator of Mad. Sq. Art. “Public art is viewed in the context of full democracy: no admission fees, complete accessibility, open to all. By collaborating with aPA, the sculpture will inspire, engage, and challenge the public from New York to Philadelphia and beyond.” *Big Bling* was commissioned by Madison Square Park Conservancy’s contemporary art program, Mad. Sq. Art, and was first exhibited in Madison Square Park, New York in 2016.

Philadelphia is home to one of Puryear’s early public works, *Pavilion in the Trees*. *Pavilion* was conceived in 1981 as part of the *Form and Function* program of the Fairmount Park Art Association (now the Association for Public Art) and installed at the Horticulture Center in 1993. Inspired by the universal longing for a tree house, *Pavilion* consists of an open structure that uses materials similarly found in *Big Bling*. The work has become a favorite destination to relax and contemplate nature from a bird’s-eye view. Information about *Big Bling* and *Pavilion in the Trees* will be available through the Association for Public Art’s Museum Without Walls™: AUDIO program.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art will display a recently acquired intaglio print by Martin Puryear, *Untitled (State 1)*, 2016, published by Universal Limited Art Editions, Inc. The print will be displayed in Gallery 124 of the Museum from Tuesday, June 27, through Sunday, October 15. Additionally, in conjunction with aPA, The Print Center will exhibit *Martin Puryear Prints: 1962 – 2016*, guest curated by Ruth Fine. “The forms explored in Puryear’s sculpture, often rooted in nature, are equally powerful in his prints,” says Ruth Fine. The exhibition will be on view September 8 – November 18, 2017. An opening reception will be held at The Print Center on Thursday, September 7, 2017. More information at [printcenter.org](http://printcenter.org).

The Association for Public Art has two other exciting installations debuting in 2017. This September, aPA, working with guest curator Lance Fung of Fung Collaboratives will present *Cai Guo-Qiang: Fireflies* to celebrate the centennial of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. A major new work created for Philadelphia by internationally acclaimed artist Cai Guo-Qiang, *Fireflies* will consist of 27 customized pedi-cabs with clusters of luminous colorful lanterns that will invite the public to actively experience the Parkway at night. Members

of the public will be invited to board the vehicles to take free rides from Sister Cities Park to Iroquois Park. In December, *Winter Fountains for the Parkway* by artist Jennifer Steinkamp will serve as the centerpiece for the Parkway 100 celebration. Commissioned by the Parkway Council with aPA, the installation will include five dazzling and enchanting *Winter Fountains*, inspired by the signature fountains of the Parkway landscape, glowing with animated video projections informed by the botanical, horticultural, and related collections found in the cultural and educational institutions that line Philadelphia's grand boulevard.

Join the conversation on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook via **#MartinPuryear** and **#BigBlingPhilly**. For more information, visit [associationforpublicart.org/bigbling](http://associationforpublicart.org/bigbling).



#### **About Martin Puryear:**

Martin Puryear (American, b. 1941) earned his B.A. from Catholic University of America, Washington, DC (1963) and his M.F.A. from Yale University (1971). He served in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone (1964-66) and attended the Swedish Royal Academy of Art (1966-68). Puryear's 2007 retrospective was organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York and traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. An exhibition of his drawings, *Martin Puryear: Multiple Dimensions*, will be on view at New York's Morgan Library & Museum from October 9, 2015 through January 10, 2016. He has received many distinguished awards, including the Skowhegan Medal for Sculpture (1980), a Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant (1982), and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1989). He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1992) and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Yale University (1994). Puryear lives and works in the Hudson Valley region of New York.

**The Association for Public Art** (aPA, formerly Fairmount Park Art Association) commissions, preserves, interprets, and promotes public art in Philadelphia. The aPA is the nation's first private nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a "Museum Without Walls" that informs, engages, and inspires diverse audiences. We honor the past while supporting originality and innovation, and we advance opportunities for creative people to contribute to the city's places and spaces. Established in 1872, aPA integrates public art and urban design through exemplary programs and advocacy efforts that connect people with public art. We respond to the conditions of our time, adding new perspectives to the civic landscape and maintaining a legacy for future generations, while promoting Philadelphia as a premier city for public art. [associationforpublicart.org](http://associationforpublicart.org)

#### **About Mad. Sq. Art and Madison Square Park Conservancy:**

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

**Madison Square Park Conservancy** is the not-for-profit organization whose mission is to protect, nurture, and enhance Madison Square Park, a dynamic seven-acre public green space, creating an environment that fosters moments of inspiration. The Conservancy is committed to engaging the community through its beautiful gardens, inviting amenities, and world-class programming. Madison Square Park Conservancy is licensed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to manage Madison Square Park and is responsible for raising 98% of the funds necessary to operate the

Park, including the brilliant horticulture, park maintenance, sanitation, security, and free cultural programs for Park visitors of all ages.

**Support:**

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**Credit:**

Martin Puryear, *Big Bling*, 2016. Collection of the artist, courtesy Matthew Marks Gallery. © Martin Puryear. The exhibition was organized by Madison Square Park Conservancy, New York. Major exhibition support for *Big Bling* is provided by the Ford Foundation, Matthew Marks Gallery, the Henry Luce Foundation, The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Foundation, J.P. Morgan Securities, and Unalam of Unadilla, New York, with substantial exhibition support provided by the Association for Public Art.

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**To request high-resolution images, interviews, and more information, please contact:**

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