



For Immediate Release



Lubaina Himid, *Five Conversations*, 2019.
Photo by Timothy Schenck.

EN PLEIN AIR

**Featuring works by Ei Arakawa, Firelei Báez, Daniel Buren,
Sam Falls, Lubaina Himid, Lara Schnitger, Ryan Sullivan,
Vivian Suter**

A group exhibition that examines and expands the tradition of outdoor painting

April 2019 – March 2020

Various locations along the High Line

New York, NY (February 5, 2019) — High Line Art announces *En Plein Air*, a group exhibition that broadens and challenges historical ideas of outdoor painting. The exhibition is on view along the length of the park April 2019 – March 2020. *En Plein Air* features newly commissioned artworks by Ei Arakawa, Firelei Báez, Daniel Buren, Sam Falls, Lubaina Himid, Lara Schnitger, Ryan Sullivan, and Vivian Suter. Presented by Friends of the High Line, the exhibition is organized by Cecilia Alemani, Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator, with Melanie Kress, High Line Art Associate Curator.

HIGH LINE ART



This group exhibition, inspired by the unique site of the High Line, examines and expands the tradition of outdoor painting. The title refers to the mid-19th century practice of *en plein air* painting (French for “in the open air”). When pre-mixed paints became readily available in tubes, and thus could be easily transported along with canvases and easels, artists brought their studios outside. The act of painting outdoors became associated with the Impressionist movement, which emphasized capturing nature and the fleeting qualities of light while depicting new perceptual and social experiences accelerated by the Industrial Revolution. The inclination to paint outside was one reaction to the overwhelming transformations of life in urban centers, as nature and cities redefined each other under the pressure of modernization—a history that connects to that of the High Line, a remnant of the industrial era of the neighborhood.

The artists in the exhibition expand well beyond the historical plein air lineage. They not only bring painting outside but imagine nature as context, subject, and collaborator. The eight featured artists approach the history, methodologies, and content of outdoor painting from a variety of perspectives. Some of the artists make work exclusively to be shown outside, while others turn nature into both the subject and the medium used to create their paintings. Still others challenge elementary distinctions between nature and the artificial. The High Line is an apt site for the consideration of the importance of landscape painting in our time, as the natural features of the park juxtapose with the artificial scenery of the surrounding billboards, building facades and walls, and variety of advertisements.

Through the participation of an international group of artists, *En Plein Air* challenges the kinds of work traditionally associated with public art—sculptures and murals—by presenting freestanding, outdoor paintings that can be viewed in the round and in dialogue with the surrounding landscapes.

Ei Arakawa (b. 1977, Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, Japan) is known for performances that often incorporate previous artwork or collaborations with other artists. For the High Line, Arakawa installs at 26th Street a new singing LED painting, a translation of Gustave Courbet’s 1872/73 painting *The Trout*. Brought to life by an electric current, the trout emerges from the lush vegetation of the park as an illuminated canvas. The painting performs a song that suggests connections between the art world of 19th century France—contemporary to Courbet—and the global art world today.

Firelei Báez (b. 1981, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic) references European decorative arts spread by colonial empires. Located at 20th Street, Báez’s work depicts a Haitian Sans-Souci Palace ruin that appears to sink into the ground. In this ongoing body of work, Báez examines incarnations of Sanssouci: the 18th century Rococo palace built by Frederick the Great, the palace of Haitian Revolution leader and proclaimed first King of Haiti Henri Christophe, and Haitian revolution leader Jean-Baptiste Sans Souci, who was assassinated by Henri Christophe.

Daniel Buren (b. 1938, Boulogne-Billancourt, France) is best known for his use of alternating stripes—in the form of industrial awning fabric, colored glass, painted columns, and more, alternating with 8.7-cm-wide stripes of white and bold colors—that he began in the 1960s. For the High Line, Buren installs hundreds of striped flags organized in 16 sections that crisscross the Western Rail Yards, turning this section of the park into a three dimensional painting that



can be inhabited by the viewers. The work continues a project presented first for documenta VII in 1982. Originally titled *Les Guirlandes* ("The Garlands," or tinsel), Buren responded to the arbitrary and absurd organizing principle of documenta VII exhibition's catalogue—the featured artists were listed by date of birth. Buren included a sound component that alternately played a voice reading the names of the colors of the flags in 14 different languages and excerpts of classical musical works arranged in chronological order by the composer's date of birth. Thirty-five years after the original display, the work evokes a commentary on national flags and the nationalism rising everywhere in the world.

Sam Falls (b. 1984, San Diego, California) makes dynamic layered paintings, ceramic sculptures, video, and dance works that reflect the natural elements he uses to make them. For the High Line, Falls creates four ceramic archways supported by the steel rail tracks from the High Line's original railway; each archway is dedicated to a different season in the park. For one year, Falls collected plants from the High Line, embedded them in ceramic, and fossilized them with colorful pigments.

Lubaina Himid (b. 1954, Zanzibar, Tanzania) creates life-size portraits cut into silhouettes that stand freely as flat sculptures. These works have a theatrical quality, referencing stage sets and the flatness of the simplified histories that dominate our world. With *Five Conversations*, Himid introduces five reclaimed wooden doors from traditional Georgian townhouses painted with portraits of everyday stylish women who enjoy talking to each other. The doors are installed at the Gansevoort Woodlands, where a small birch grove provides an intimate setting for communing with and learning from Himid's figures. In her signature way, Himid brings the two-dimensional medium of painting into our three-dimensional world.

Lara Schnitger's (b. 1969, Haarlem, Netherlands) work crosses the boundaries of installation, sculpture, fashion, architecture, and collage. The physicality of her works celebrates the female body and frames femininity as a complex and powerful force. Schnitger's large-scale sculpture *Sister of the Road*, made in fabric and aluminum, floats along her own path, unconfined by the structures around her. With her head thrown back in a moment of ecstasy, the towering figure appears worry free, breaking loose from the train tracks laid before her on the Northern Spur Preserve at 16th St.

Ryan Sullivan (b. 1983, Malone, New York) makes work that reflects a dynamic approach to abstract painting. His latest paintings are the result of an industrial casting process guided by spontaneity and improvisation: he applies pigment and resin in multiple layers to an open-faced mold. The resulting works use traditional painting concepts of figure and space, while also probing the limits of the medium. For the High Line, Sullivan installs three new resin paintings in conversation with the surrounding cityscape and plantings at 29th Street.

Vivian Suter (b. 1949, Buenos Aires, Argentina) creates abstract paintings that mirror the lush landscape of Panajachel, Guatemala, her home of over 30 years. Suter makes her paintings outside where they are transformed by the changing elements. In this way, the artist actively invites the natural elements to become a part of her paintings, allowing mud, leaves, wind, rain, and falling fruit to leave marks on her canvases. In *Xocomil*, Suter introduces a series of unstretched canvases to the landscape above the southernmost entrance to the park. "Xocomil" is the name for the wind that blows over Lake Atitlán near Suter's home, and translates to "the wind that carried away sin" in the indigenous Mesoamerican language



Kaqchikel. Suter installs her unframed canvases one in front of the other as joyful welcome banners to visitors entering the park that echo the gardens' changing colors.

ABOUT HIGH LINE ART

Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art commissions and produces public art projects on and around the High Line. Founded in 2009, High Line Art presents a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Led by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and produced by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the unique architecture, history, and design of the High Line, and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

For further information about High Line Art, please visit thehighline.org/art.

ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE

Friends of the High Line is the nonprofit organization responsible for the High Line. We raise nearly 100% of the High Line's annual budget. Owned by the City of New York, the High Line is programmed, maintained, and operated by Friends of the High Line, in partnership with the NYC Parks.

Through excellence in operations, stewardship, innovative programming, and world-class design, we seek to engage the vibrant and diverse community on and around the High Line, to raise the essential private funding to help complete the High Line's construction, and to create an endowment for its future operations.

SUPPORT

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SOCIAL MEDIA

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