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Ryan Gander, *The Happy Prince*, 2010. (Model detail)

Public Art Fund
announces
Ryan Gander
The Happy Prince

Doris C. Freedman Plaza
Central Park, New York City
September 15, 2010 – February 13, 2011

JULY 9, 2010, NEW YORK, NY—Public Art Fund is pleased to announce its commission of a new project by **Ryan Gander** entitled *The Happy Prince*, on view in **Doris C. Freedman Plaza** at the **southeast corner of Central Park, September 15, 2010 – February 13, 2011**. “Ryan Gander, one of the brightest young artists in Europe, has conceived a brilliant new work for one of New York’s most prominent public spaces. Taking inspiration from Oscar Wilde’s beloved children’s story, *The Happy Prince*, Gander has transformed the parable of a noble statue into an arresting work of contemporary art,” said **Nicholas Baume**, Public Art Fund Director and Chief Curator. In conjunction with the Public Art Fund project, the **Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum** will present a new commission by Gander in its Aye Simon Reading Room as part of the museum’s *Intervals* series.

In Wilde’s story, the Prince, a gilded and bejeweled statue standing atop a column, observes the daily suffering of his city’s poor. One afternoon, he befriends a swallow, who he convinces to strip the jewels and gold from his body to distribute to the people, alleviating their misery. After helping the Prince, the swallow, who has grown increasingly cold with the onset of winter, dies at the Prince’s feet, and the Prince, who is no longer covered in riches, is toppled from his place of honor by the Town Councillors who no longer deem him a fitting and beautiful statue for their town square.

In creating a work after Wilde’s story, Gander follows in the footsteps of other notable artists who have drawn inspiration from literature. In the story, the image of the destroyed monument is never described but is left to the imagination; Gander’s *The Happy Prince* captures the moment as a sculpture. Using a sophisticated casting process with glass-reinforced concrete, the artist depicts the scene of the fallen statue at life size. Like a romantic ruin, elements of the original statue remain visible: the Prince’s heart, sword, and helmet, as well as the body of the dead swallow. As a reminder of the statue’s former grandeur, the base of the column is still visible and protrudes through the surrounding debris. However, unlike the fragments of an actual ruin, Gander’s work is one single, massive form. His work is not a literal illustration of Wilde’s story so much as a representation of the ruin as an idea. We see that all the elements are made from the same material and that they belong to a whole. The artist presents not a ruin but a sculpture of a ruin.

A conceptual artist whose past works have included elements of architecture, language, typography, design, and city planning, Gander often weaves together narratives that grapple with the nature of art and object making, polemical ideas, and social norms. In *The Happy Prince*, he draws on Wilde's tale about a public monument as well as the history of sculpture and the urban context of New York City, to create a poetic and lyrical sculpture that re-imagines public art. Sited in Doris C. Freedman Plaza, the sculpture resonates with the surrounding civic monuments; it also invites comparisons between the inequalities of wealth in the gilded age of Wilde's fictional city and modern-day New York. If the writer's parable takes up the themes of privilege and charity, the artist overlays those with questions about the nature of public art and our contemporary experience of the monument. *The Happy Prince* is Ryan Gander's first public art commission.

RYAN GANDER : LOOSE ASSOCIATIONS

Ryan Gander will launch the fall 2010 *Public Art Fund Talks* series on **Thursday, September 16 at 6:30pm** with one of his celebrated **Loose Associations** presentations. In the form of a narrated PowerPoint presentation, the artist strings together a series of images, memories, facts, and histories in a hybrid performance-lecture. These intense and sometimes comedic presentations have taken place across Europe, most recently as part of Art Basel's new Art Parcours project.

All *Public Art Fund Talks* take place at The New School's John Tishman Auditorium, 66 West 12th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Tickets to a single talk are \$10 or \$20 to the full series of three. Students are admitted free. Tickets will become available in late summer. *Public Art Fund Talks* are organized by the Public Art Fund in collaboration with the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School.

RYAN GANDER AT THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

As part of the museum's *Intervals* series, Gander has created a new, site-specific installation for the Aye Simon Reading Room, a small library and study space located on Rotunda Level 2. Here visitors will encounter a scene of apparent catastrophe that relates to Gander's ongoing exploration of the schism between the Dutch artists Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) and Theo van Doesburg (1883–1931), who ended their friendship and creative collaboration over a disagreement about the validity of the diagonal line as an element in abstract art. Fast-paced and modest in scale, *Intervals* is an experimental series at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum designed to reflect the spirit of today's most innovative practices. Conceived to take place in the interstices of the museum's exhibition spaces, in individual galleries, or beyond the physical confines of the building, the program invites a diverse range of artists to create new work for a succession of solo presentations. For more information, visit www.guggenheim.org.

ABOUT RYAN GANDER

Born in 1976 in Chester, United Kingdom, Ryan Gander received his BA from Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom (1999) and has undertaken graduate studies at Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht (2000) and Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam (2002), both in The Netherlands. Recent solo exhibitions include *G-Tokyo* 2010, Mori Art Center Gallery, Tokyo Japan, collaboration with Aurelien Froment, Los Angeles (2010); *As it presents itself – Somewhere vague*, Art Unlimited, Basel, Switzerland (2010); *It's a right Heath Robinson affair (A stuttering exhibition in two parts)*, gbAgency and Kadist, Paris, France (2009); and

Heralded as the New Black, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, United Kingdom, and South London Gallery, London, United Kingdom (2008-9). Group exhibitions include *Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside and Out*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2010); *Manifesta 8*, Mercia, Spain (2010); *Chasing Napoleon*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2009); *Space at Medium*, Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL (2009); *The Malady of Writing*, MACBA, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain (2009); *Younger than Jesus*, New Museum, New York (2009); and *Wouldn't It be Nice*, Somerset House, London, Museum für Gestaltung, Zurich (2008) and Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2007). He is also the recent recipient of the Zurich Art Prize. Ryan Gander lives and works in London.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

Doris C. Freedman Plaza is located at the southeast entrance to Central Park at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 60th Street.

Subways: N, R, Q to Fifth Avenue; 4, 5, 6 to 59th Street/Lexington Avenue

A free *Guide By Cell* explanation of the work will be available by calling 646.862.0933.

The work is free to the public and on view daily.

Doris C. Freedman Plaza is named for the founder of the Public Art Fund and has been the site of more than 50 artist projects and commissions since 1977. The site has featured works by both internationally-known and emerging artists including Keith Edmier, Mark Handforth, Liz Larner, Sarah Lucas, Paul McCarthy, Damián Ortega, Sarah Sze, Franz West, and James Yamada.

SPONSORSHIP

Major support provided by the Kraus Family Foundation.

Additional support from Lisson Gallery, and from James Keith Brown & Eric G. Diefenbach.

Made possible through the cooperation of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg; First Deputy Mayor Patricia E. Harris; Parks and Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe; Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin; and the Central Park Conservancy.

Public Art Fund is a non-profit organization supported by contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations and, in part, with funds from government agencies, including the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

Public Art Fund is New York's leading presenter of artists' projects, new commissions, installations, and exhibitions in public spaces. Since 1977, the Public Art Fund has worked with over 500 emerging and established artists to produce innovative temporary exhibitions of contemporary art throughout New York City. By bringing artworks outside the traditional context of museums and galleries, the Public Art Fund provides a unique platform for an unparalleled encounter with the art of our time.

ABOUT NICHOLAS BAUME

Nicholas Baume was appointed Public Art Fund's sixth Director and Chief Curator in September 2009. Under his leadership, two projects opened this spring: *Statuesque*, a group exhibition currently on view in City Hall Park that reinvigorates figurative sculpture and includes ten works by six artists, and Kate Gilmore: *Walk the Walk*, the artist's first public work, which was on view in Bryant Park in May. Baume came to the Public Art Fund from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, which he joined as Chief Curator in 2003. A native of Sydney, Australia, Baume has also held positions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut. His past exhibitions include *About Face: Andy Warhol Portraits*; *Sol LeWitt: Incomplete Open Cubes*; the Wadsworth Atheneum's *Matrix* series, which included first U.S. solo museum shows by Francis Alÿs, Sam Durant, Thomas Eggerer, Christian Jankowski, Catherine Sullivan, and Fiona Tan. For the ICA, Baume curated exhibitions by Kai Althoff, Kader Attia, Carol Bove, Gerard Byrne, Tara Donovan (with Jen Mergel), Thomas Hirschhorn (with Ralph Rugoff), Anish Kapoor, Lucy McKenzie, and Rodney McMillian, and the group exhibitions *Getting Emotional* and *Super Vision*, which launched the ICA's award-winning new building by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in December 2006.

For more information, please visit www.publicartfund.org.