

CREATIVETIME

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HIGH LINE'S TRANSFORMATION IS EXPLORED IN *THE PLAIN OF HEAVEN*



Southern end of the High Line, Photo: Shane Brennan

THE PLAIN OF HEAVEN

OCTOBER 14 – NOVEMBER 20, 2005

820 WASHINGTON STREET @ THE END OF THE HIGH LINE, NYC

12-6 PM, FRIDAY-SUNDAY

ARTIST CONVERSATIONS SATURDAYS AT 2 P.M.

(August 31, 2005 New York, NY) This fall, Creative Time is proud to present *The Plain of Heaven*, an international exhibition inspired by the impending redevelopment of the High Line, the disused elevated rail structure that runs up the west side of Manhattan. *The Plain of Heaven* takes off from this elegiac and exciting moment of transformation to consider how we imagine, and long for, inaccessible spaces; the relationships between transfiguration, destruction and rebirth; the opposition between nature and the urban environment; and more generally, the way in which we re-mystify the world we already know.

Artists **Adam Cvijanovic, Song Dong, Trisha Donnelly, Shannon Ebner, Leandro Erlich, William Forsythe, Sol LeWitt, O. Winston Link, Gordon Matta-Clark, Corey McCorkle, Helen Mirra, Saskia Olde Wolbers, Adam Putnam, and Paul Ramirez Jonas**, contribute works that relate to the complex nature of transformation through sound, drawing, film, video, photography, performance and installation. The majority of the fourteen artists are creating new work specifically for the exhibition.

The twin legacies of Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson -- artists who refigured the industrial and urban landscape of the 1970s -- animate much of the show, expanding upon similar concerns about the natural environment that we find in 19th-century sublime landscape painting and 18th-century notions of the "picturesque." The exhibition's title, *The Plain of Heaven*, adapted from a painting by British artist John Martin (1789 – 1854), refers to the idea of an elevated, sublime environment that lies just beyond our reach, yet is firmly planted in our aspirations and imagination.

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The artworks evoke a range of sensory experiences throughout the building; the relative darkness of the first floor shifts to natural light on the third floor, which includes skylights and a view of the High Line. Song Dong's video *Burning Photograph* explores the subject of creation through destruction. Running in reverse and slow motion, the flames of the burning tourist photograph constitute the image instead of consuming it. Referencing both spiritual and physical transformation, Corey McCorkle will create a new video work documenting his journey to Cambodia this September in search of Preah, a cow rumored to have the magical ability to heal by licking. Exploring our desire and idealizing anticipation for inaccessible spaces, Leandro Erlich creates a psychologically charged, illusory encounter with his installation *Las Puertas*, while Helen Mirra's sound piece seduces visitors into an enormous darkened freezer room but allows no visual or physical access. Gordon Matta-Clark employed a dematerializing process of imaginative urban reuse that opened up disused architecture both physically and metaphorically. The projection of his film *Day's End* (1975) has particular relevance in *The Plain of Heaven*, as it documents the "cutting" work of the same name that Matta-Clark created using a warehouse (now destroyed) on Pier 52 at the end of Gansevoort Street, one block from *The Plain of Heaven*. Sol LeWitt's new wall drawing speaks to the current state and condition of the site, working with the architectural givens of the room--as always, inhabiting the space between permanence and impermanence. Saskia Olde Wolbers' *Kilowatt Dynasty* creates a crystalline filmic space and hallucinatory narrative whose artifice is always in danger of crumbling under its own weight. Trisha Donnelly provides the grand finale for the exhibition. Keeping with the artist's interest in operating at the edges of exhibition parameters, Donnelly's sound installation of organ music will play only once, during the final twenty minutes on the last day of the show, marking the collapse of the space and the project.

Gordon Matta-Clark described his work as an effort "to convert a place into a state of mind." An abandoned space of the type that appealed to Matta-Clark, the High Line finds itself in the opposite situation, as a varied and enthusiastic collection of ideas and states of mind on their way to becoming a place. For just a bit longer, the Line remains an idealized plain overhead, suspended between its industrial history and its cultivated future as a singular designed place that will be finally made accessible.

The Plain of Heaven is organized by Creative Time curator Peter Eleey, and will be housed in a vacant meatpacking warehouse located at the southern end of the Line at Gansevoort Street, which has been its effective terminus since developers demolished the lower portion in 1991. The warehouse was constructed around the High Line in 1939, and includes a loading platform at rail level from which visitors to the exhibition can view the Line. Dia Art Foundation hopes to construct a new museum on this site. This year, the City expects to break ground on a design by Field Operations and Diller, Scofidio + Renfro that will remake the wild, post-industrial pastoral of the High Line into a public open space.

The exhibition is organized with the cooperation of the City of New York and Friends of the High Line. A catalog of *The Plain of Heaven* is available. For more information visit creativetime.org.

ABOUT THE HIGH LINE

The High Line was constructed from 1929 – 1934 and remained operational for almost fifty years. It now spans twenty-two blocks from 34th Street to Gansevoort Street, and exists as a reminder of New York's industrial past. In its prime, the Line ran from 35th Street down to Saint John's Park Terminal, which covered four riverfront blocks between Clarkson and Spring Streets. It was built to support two fully loaded freight trains and was designed to go through the center of blocks and to connect factories and warehouses, such as 820 Washington Street. At one time treated as an obsolete piece of New York City scenery, the trestle is a rare piece of industrial archeology amidst the increasingly developed West Side. In its state of disuse, the old railroad line proved that out of death emerges life: sky-gazing passersby see that the elevated track is overgrown with greenery and wildflowers; a secret paradise suspended just thirty feet above everyday life, but out of reach.

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In the late eighties, the owners of properties under the line began lobbying for demolition of the entire structure, and in 1991, a five-block long southern part of the Line was torn down. In 1999, **Friends of the High Line** was formed with the intention of preserving the Line. A series of photographs taken by Joel Sternfeld on the Line in 2000 and published in *The New Yorker* the following year introduced a national audience to the beauty of the High Line's terrain, igniting the popular imagination to the possibilities inherent in this romantic landscape, which many New Yorkers had never realized was there. To learn more about the High line and see the current design plans go to www.thehighline.org.

NOTE: The High Line is currently private property, owned by CSX railroad. It is not open to the public. Trespassers will be subject to prosecution.

ARTISTS

Adam Cvijanovic (b. 1960, Cambridge, MA) is creating a new landscape painting installation for the exhibition. A self-taught artist, Cvijanovic lives in New York, and is an adjunct professor at Rhode Island School of Design. He recently exhibited *Glacier* in a solo project at the UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; *Ideal City* at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, Philadelphia, PA (2004); and *On the Wall: Wallpaper and Tableau* at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA (2003). *Love Poem, Ten Minutes After the End of Gravity* opens at Bellwether Gallery on September 8, 2005.

Song Dong (b. 1966, Beijing, China) is contributing *Burning Photograph*, a video installation. He lives in Beijing. Recent exhibitions include *Between Past and Future: New Photography and Video from China* (2004-2006) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and *Oalors, a chine: Chinese Contemporary Art* (2003) at the Center Pompidou in Paris. His work was included in the 2004 São Paulo Bienal and the 2003 Istanbul Bienal. Creative Time is concurrently featuring another video work by Song Dong, *Broken Mirror*, on *The 59th Minute: Video Art* on the NBC Astrovision by Panasonic in Times Square from September 26 – December 31, 2005.

Trisha Donnelly (b. 1974, San Francisco, CA) is installing a sound work of organ music, which will be played once at the conclusion of the exhibition. She lives and works in San Francisco, is the recipient of the Central Insurance Prize, Cologne. Donnelly had solo shows this year at Art Pace in San Antonio and Kölnischer Kunstverein, Köln, Germany; she was included in the 54th Carnegie International and the first Moscow Biennale. A major solo exhibition of Donnelly's work at Kunsthalle Zurich runs through October.

Shannon Ebner (b. 1971, Englewood, NJ) is making a new photograph *Exit Glacier* for the exhibition, which will be distributed to visitors. Ebner lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches at USC. Her work was recently included in *Monuments to the USA*, curated by Ralph Rugoff at CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art; *Manufactured Self* at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; and featured in a solo show earlier this year at Wallspace Gallery, New York.

Leandro Erlich (b. 1973, Buenos Aires, Argentina) is contributing an installation called *Las Puertas* (The Doors). He lives both in Paris and Buenos Aires, and had a solo exhibition earlier this year at Galería Nogueras Blanchard, Barcelona, Spain. Erlich's work was featured in the Italian Pavilion at the 51st Venice Biennale this year; he represented Argentina at Venice in 2001. He has also been included in the 2000 Whitney Biennial, the 2000 Havana Bienal, the 2001 Istanbul Bienal, and the 2004 São Paulo Bienal.

William Forsythe (b. 1949, New York, NY) has choreographed a new performance installation for the exhibition called *Nowhere and Everywhere at the Same Time*. Forsythe is recognized worldwide as the foremost choreographer of contemporary ballet, and lives in Frankfurt, Germany. After the closure at the end of the 2003/2004 season of the Ballett Frankfurt, which he directed for twenty

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years, Forsythe established his own private company. The company's fall season includes *You made me a monster* at Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, Germany, which premiered at the Venice Biennale's 3rd International Festival of Contemporary Dance earlier this year; and *Kammer/Kammer* and *Human Writes*, both at Schauspielhaus Zürich, Schiffbauhalle.

Sol LeWitt (b. 1928, Hartford, CT) is making a new wall drawing for the exhibition. LeWitt is one of the key artists of the 1960s, bridging Minimal and Conceptual art, and has been the subject of hundreds of museum and gallery exhibitions since 1965. Over 1100 of his wall drawings have been executed, including two featured this summer in a solo exhibition at Pace Wildenstein Gallery, New York. LeWitt showed *Splotches, Whirls and Twirls* on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art earlier this year. He currently has sculpture in Madison Square Park, and a new show at Paula Cooper Gallery opens in September. He resides in New York City and Connecticut.

O. Winston Link (1914-2001, Brooklyn, NY) is represented by one of his sound recordings of steam engine trains. A life-long New Yorker, Link is best known for his photographs, beginning in the 1950s, that documented the final days of steam engines on the last main line to use them, the Norfolk and Western Railway. These images were collected into a book *The Last Steam Railroad in America*, published by Harry N. Abrams in 1995, and have been included in many museum exhibitions. To make his recordings, Link used an 80-pound tape recorder hooked up to a custom-built portable power supply, and recorded on and beside the trains. He died in Westchester County in 2001.

Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978, New York, NY) made *Day's End*, one of his famous "cutting" projects, using a warehouse (now destroyed) on Pier 52 at the end of Gansevoort Street in 1975, one block from the location of this exhibition. The silent film of the same name that he shot documenting the creation of the work is projected in *The Plain of Heaven*. He has been the subject of numerous museum and gallery exhibitions since his death in 1978. Exhibitions this fall organized by Cabinet Magazine, White Columns and the Queens Museum of Art will examine his *Fake Estates* project, 1973-74.

Corey McCorkle (b. 1969, La Crosse, WI) is making a new video installation called *Preah*, for which he will be journeying to Cambodia to visit a cow that is believed to be endowed with magical healing powers. His work was recently included in the surveys *Make It Now* at Sculpture Center and *Greater New York 2005* at PS1, and was featured in solo exhibitions this year at Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; and at the Marres in Maastricht, the Netherlands. McCorkle is included in *Monopolis* at Witte de With, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, this fall. He lives in New York.

Helen Mirra (b. 1970, Rochester, NY) is installing a new sound work, created specifically for this exhibition, in a large darkened refrigeration room. Mirra recently joined the Harvard faculty, and is a recipient of the DAAD Fellowship in Berlin, where she is currently based. Mirra has had solo exhibitions at the Dallas Museum of Art; UC Berkeley; the Whitney Museum; the Renaissance Society, Chicago; and with Meyer Riegger, Karlsruhe, Germany; and Peter Freeman, New York. Her work was most recently included in a group show at Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo.

Saskia Olde Wolbers (b. 1971, Breda, The Netherlands) is showing *Kilowatt Dynasty*, a video installation from 2000. Olde Wolbers lives and works in London. In 2003, she won the Baloise Art prize at the Basel Art Fair, and in 2004 received the Becks' Futures Award at the ICA London. She had a solo show at South London Gallery last spring, and exhibits with Maureen Paley. *The Plain of Heaven* marks the first time Olde Wolbers' work will be shown in New York.

Adam Putnam (b. 1973, New York, NY) is creating a new video for the exhibition that is related to his investigations of empty interiors. He lives in New York, and was recently in residence at Grizedale Arts, Cumbria, UK. Putnam had a solo exhibition earlier this year at Sandroni Rey, Los Angeles, and has shown his Magic Lanterns at Artists Space and in *I Still Believe in Miracles* at the

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Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. His work has also been shown at the Center of Contemporary Art in Seattle and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

Paul Ramírez Jonas (b. 1965, Pomona, CA) is creating a new work involving texts typed into wet clay tablets. Raised in Honduras, the artist lives in New York, and teaches at Bard College. He was the subject of a survey solo show last year at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK, and had solo exhibitions at Zach Feuer Gallery, New York; Roger Björkholmen Galleri, Stockholm, Sweden; and the Miami Art Museum in 2003.

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Oct 15 Helen Mirra
Shannon Ebner
Saskia Olde Wolbers
Oct 22 Adam Putnam
Oct 29 William Forsythe
Nov 5 Corey McCorkle
Nov 12 Adam Cvijanovic
Nov 19 Paul Ramírez Jonas

SUNDAY, NOV 20, 5:40 – 6:00 p.m. Trisha Donnelly's sound installation will be played once only, during the final 20 minutes of the exhibition.

CREATIVE TIME

Over the past 33 years, Creative Time has presented the most innovative art in the public realm. From our base in New York, we work with artists who ignite the imagination and explore ideas that shape society. We initiate a dynamic conversation among artists, sites, and audiences, in projects that enliven public spaces with free and powerful expression. Our work has taken us all over the city from Times Square, the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, Coney Island, the skies over Manhattan with *Tribute in Light* and cloud skywriting, to storefronts, milk cartons, deli cups, and billboards.

Creative Time is a consultant to the team led by Field Operations and Diller, Scofidio + Renfro that is redesigning the High Line for public use. The organization also consulted to the Zaha Hadid team that was a finalist in last summer's competition.

SUPPORT

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SPECIAL THANKS

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