



For Immediate Release



Simone Leigh, *Brick House*, 2018 (in progress).
Photo by Timothy Schenck

SIMONE LEIGH *Brick House*

The inaugural commission for the High Line Plinth

April 2019 – September 2020

On the High Line at the Spur, at 30th St. and 10th Ave.

New York, NY (August 29, 2018) – Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art announced today that *Brick House* by artist Simone Leigh will be the first commission for the High Line Plinth. Located on the High Line at West 30th Street and 10th Avenue, the Plinth is a new landmark destination for major public art commissions in New York City. Designed as the focal point of the Spur, the newest section of the park which will open in April 2019, the Plinth will be the first space on the High Line dedicated solely to visual art, featuring a rotating program of new commissions. Leigh's artwork will be installed in April 2019 to coincide with the opening of the Spur, and will be on view for 18 months, through September 2020.

For the Plinth, Leigh presents *Brick House*, a sixteen-foot-tall bronze bust of a black woman

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whose torso is conflated with the forms of a skirt and a clay house. The figure stands tall and monumental atop the Plinth, gazing resolutely down 10th Avenue. Her head is crowned with an afro, framed by cornrow braids along her hairline that extend off her scalp into four braids, each ending with a cowrie shell. The domed shape of her shoulders and bust are adorned with a pattern of elongated ridges. *Brick House* is the first monumental work in *Anatomy of Architecture*, Leigh's continuing series of sculptures that combine architectural forms from regions as varied as West Africa and the American South with the human body. The sculpture references numerous architectural styles: Batammaliba architecture from Benin and Togo; the teleuk of the Mousgoum people of Cameroon and Chad; and the restaurant Mammy's Cupboard from the southern U.S. All three references inform both the formal elements of the work—the conflated image of woman and architecture—and its conceptual framework.

Leigh's *Brick House* will be centered on the Spur, standing in sharp contrast to the disparate elements of the immediate architectural landscape. The Plinth is the focal point of the Spur, a site whose architectural and human scales are in constant vertiginous negotiation, surrounded by a competitive landscape of glass-and-steel towers shooting up from among older industrial-era brick buildings. In this space, Leigh's magnificent black female figure challenges visitors to think more immediately about the architecture around them, and how it reflects customs, values, priorities, and society as a whole.

Simone Leigh works across sculpture, video, installation, and social practice, stitching together references from different historical periods and distant geographical locations. In her densely researched practice, Leigh focuses on how the body, society, and architecture inform and reveal one another. In tandem, Leigh examines the construction of black female subjectivity, both through specific historical figures such as Josephine Baker and Katherine Dunham, and more generally through overlapping historical lineages across Europe, Africa, the U.S., and the Caribbean. Her intersectional practice draws on a range of disciplines, including the history of architecture, ethnography, feminist discourse, folklore, dance, and histories of political resistance. For Leigh, "architecture is a text that we can read to understand the ontological, philosophical, and psychological expressions of a culture."

"We're thrilled to present Simone Leigh's *Brick House* as the first commission for the High Line Plinth," says Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art. "The sculpture's majestic poise will cast a sense of calm determination over the plaza and buzzing streets below. Leigh's practice conveys a reckoning with contemporary and historical relationships between the body, architecture, and society, as well as with questions as to whose visages and experiences we monumentalize in our public squares."

Leigh's work was selected from a short list of 12 proposals by artists Jonathan Berger, Minerva Cuevas, Jeremy Deller, Sam Durant, Charles Gaines, Lena Henke, Matthew Day Jackson, Simone Leigh, Roman Ondak, Paola Pivi, Haim Steinbach, and Cosima von Bonin, narrowed down from over 50 total proposals.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Simone Leigh (b. 1968, Chicago, Illinois) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at institutions including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California (2016); The Studio Museum in Harlem in Marcus Garvey Park, New York, New York (2016); Tate Exchange at Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2016); Kansas



City Art Institute, Kansas City, Missouri (2016); New Museum, New York, New York (2016); and Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, Georgia (2014). Notable group exhibitions include *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum, New York, New York (2017-2018); *Regarding the Figure*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York (2017); *Round 46: BWA for BLM*, curated by Leigh, Project Row Houses, Houston, Texas (2015); *The Grace Jones Project*, Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, California (2016); *Unconventional Clay: Engaged in Change*, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (2016); *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York (2015); and *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art*, traveling to Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, Texas; Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York, New York; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California (2012-2015). Leigh's work has been presented in international group exhibitions including *Dak'art 2014*, the 11th Biennial of Contemporary African Art, Dakar, Senegal (2014) and the Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2012).

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. Curated 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 uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape.

Major support for the High Line Plinth comes from the High Line Plinth Committee, a group of contemporary art leaders committed to realizing major commissions and engaging in the public success of the Plinth. The High Line Plinth Committee includes Shelley Fox Aarons, Fairfax Dorn, Andrew Hall, Hermine Rieger Heller, J. Tomilson Hill, Dorothy Lichtenstein, Donald R. Mullen, Jr., Mario J. Palumbo, Jr., and Anonymous.

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

ABOUT FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE

Friends of the High Line raises nearly 100% of the High Line's annual budget. Owned by the City of New York, the High Line is a public park programmed, maintained, and operated by Friends of the High Line, in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.



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