



**WADSWORTH ATHENEUM**  
MUSEUM OF ART

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Two Immersive Sculpture Installations  
by Leonardo Drew at the Wadsworth**

Hartford, Conn. (May 13, 2021)—Two monumental installations of site-specific sculpture by contemporary artist Leonardo Drew will be on view at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in June 2021. Raised in Bridgeport, Connecticut, now residing in Brooklyn, New York, Drew responds to a longstanding fascination with the life cycle by simulating material decomposition and transformation in his work. In this two-part project he has planned an interactive, outdoor sculptural landscape spanning the museum’s Main Street lawn and an expansive three-dimensional work that the artist refers to as an “explosion” for the museum’s Main Street lobby. The exterior sculpture will be on view June 4 through November 14, 2021 and the interior sculpture will be on view June 18 through January 2, 2022.

“The Wadsworth is thrilled to be presenting two major, site-specific projects with internationally-recognized artist Leonardo Drew,” said Patricia Hickson, the Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art at the Wadsworth. “His upbringing in Connecticut provided pivotal experiences that are central to his way of working, which we celebrate in these ambitious, monumental installations.”

At the Wadsworth’s Main Street entrance, Drew’s dramatic “explosion” sculpture, *Number 82S*, rises twenty-four feet into the three-story atrium. A funnel-shaped wall punctured with windows bursts with solid and patterned fragments that extend three-dimensionally into the space. While Drew has been making these “explosions” since

2012, their form has evolved over time, from carefully ordered arrangements into their current excitation of chaos. They envelope and overtake the viewer with their physical immensity and visual complexity. According to the artist, the most recent of these works exercise new materials and color relationships. “They become the hieroglyphs of everything [I’ve] touched and are about [my] language expanding as [I] continue to explore other possibilities,” stated Drew. “That is the wonderment of these types of works.”

Outdoors, *Number 81S*, a reimagined version of *City in the Grass*, originally realized in 2019 as a commission for Madison Square Park Conservancy in New York, will occupy the Wadsworth’s Main Street lawn. This participatory art sculpture is created for public interaction. The sculpture takes the form of an expansive and undulating Persian carpet. Various color patterns activate the textured, rolling surface, which is interrupted by a dramatic tower reaching nearly twenty feet. The vertical structure simultaneously evokes an urban skyscraper and Buddhist stupa, a unification of intellectual and spiritual concepts. The artist cites children playing in his Brooklyn neighborhood as the impetus for the interactive work, which suggests an experience parallel to Jonathan Swift’s classic literary satire *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) in which the shipwrecked Gulliver appears giant-like among the diminutive people of the island nation. Emulating such changes in scale, Drew has created an environment where the reduced-size towers rise from an oversized carpet inviting and encouraging visitors to engage with it directly to fulfill its purpose as a place for rest and reflection as much as performance and play.

In addition to the two temporary installations, a newly acquired work by Drew is on view in the contemporary art gallery on the first floor of the Wadsworth building. The wall sculpture, *Number 83S*, incorporates fragments of the Persian-carpet-inspired pattern, made with colored sand and paint on wood, that also appears in the works in the Main Street lobby and on the front lawn. Organized on an open-grid framework, black-painted branches extend from the edges of the overall form, like singed branch parts emanating from the deconstructed trunk of a tree. *Number 83S* embodies the hallmarks of Drew’s work, emulating the appearance of found materials although everything is new, employing the minimalist grid, and playing upon the tension between order and chaos. It joins the Wadsworth’s current contemporary art installation in dialogue with works by Antony Gormley, Sol LeWitt, Glenn Ligon, Rona Pondick, and Jack Whitten. Whitten, who died three years ago, was Drew’s teacher at the Cooper Union and an important inspiration who loaned the young artist his studio in 1992. The space facilitated Drew’s making of *Number 25* (1992), a signature, groundbreaking work: a sculptural grid of raw bales of cotton, invoking both Minimalism and the history of slavery.

### **Related Programs**

A lively roster of programs will creatively and physically activate Drew’s indoor and outdoor sculptures throughout the summer and fall. Visit [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org) for the most up to date list of related programs.

## **Second Saturdays for Families: Weathered Materials**

*Saturday, July 10*

Join Lego enthusiasts from ConnLUG on the museum's front lawn and explore Leonardo Drew's outdoor, interactive sculptural landscape. Then grab a free art pack and design your own sculptural play-scape. Can your creation withstand the natural elements? Museum admission is free noon–5pm and accompanying virtual activities are available via [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

## **Summer Lawn Parties**

*Fridays, July 2 & August 6; 5–8pm*

Two outdoor celebrations of the Leonardo Drew sculpture installed on the museum's Main Street lawn. Free and open to the public. Visit [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org) for details.

## **Live Music and Summer Film Series**

*Fridays, July 30–August 20; 7–8:15pm: live music; 8:15pm: film screening*

A lover of cinema, artist Leonardo Drew curated this summer film series. Shown on the museum's Main Street lawn, each film is preceded by live music performed by local musicians. Bring your own seating or rest on Drew's interactive sculpture installed on the grass. Events will move indoors in the case of inclement weather. Free. Cash bar provided.

**King Kong** | *Friday, July 30*

**A Raisin in the Sun** | *Friday, August 6*

**Gloria** | *Friday, August 13*

**Beasts of the Southern Wild** | *Friday, August 20*

## **The Annual Emily Hall Tremain Lecture in Contemporary Art: Leonardo Drew**

*Thursday, October 14*

Leonardo Drew discusses his artistic practice and the arc of his career leading to the installations on view at the Wadsworth.

## **About the Artist**

Leonardo Drew (American, born 1961) lives and works in New York, NY. Drew attended Parsons School of Design, New York, NY from 1981–82 and received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1985 from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York, NY. Drew was commissioned for an outdoor project for Madison Square Park in summer 2019, marking the artist's first major public art project. Recent solo museum exhibitions include shows at the Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS (2020); North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC (2020); de Young Museum, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, CA (2017); Palazzo delle Papesse, Centro Arte Contemporanea, Siena, Italy (2006); and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2000). Drew's mid-career survey, *Existed*, premiered at the Blaffer Gallery at the University of Houston, TX, in 2009, and traveled to the Weatherspoon Art Museum in Greensboro, NC, and the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, MA. Selected public collections include Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY; Caldic

Collectie, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, MI; Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, PA; Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge MA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; McNay Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; Miami Art Museum, Miami, FL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Sorigué Foundation Collection, Lérida, Spain; St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; Tate, London, UK; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; and Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC.

### **Exhibition and Program Support**

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### **About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842 with a vision for infusing art into the American experience, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is home to a collection of nearly 50,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years and encompassing European art from antiquity through contemporary as well as American art from the 1600s to today. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles including Gothic Revival, modern International Style, and 1960s Brutalism—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn.

The Wadsworth is operating on a reduced schedule with timed entry. Hours are noon–8pm Fridays, and noon–5pm Saturdays, and Sundays. Visitors are required to wear a face mask/covering while inside the museum. The library, food service, and Austin House are currently closed to the public. Admission is free through June 2021. Advance ticket registration via [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org) is encouraged, not required. Phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

Image captions (left to right): Leonardo Drew, *City in the Grass*, 2019. Aluminum, sand, wood, cotton, and mastic. Collection the artist. Courtesy Talley Dunn Gallery, Galerie Lelong & Co., and Anthony Meier Fine Arts. © Leonardo Drew. Photograph by Julian Raiford/Madison Square Park Conservancy; Leonardo Drew, *Number 215A*, 2019. Wood, paint, and sand. Installation view at Galerie Lelong & Co., New York. © Leonardo Drew. Courtesy Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

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