



## art and about in may

museums & galleries

by James Gaddy, 04/27/2011



During the month of May, New York City's public spaces begin to sprout sculptures and installations in earnest, giving both visitors and locals a perfect chance to experience stunning work by major artists—all while soaking up warmer weather in some of the City's most iconic alfresco settings. Here's a look at four brand-new outdoor projects, each accompanied by a selection of indoor exhibitions with related styles, themes or materials. For more info on current art and culture highlights, check out our Must-See Arts & Culture slideshow.

Following in the footsteps of high-profile City projects such as Christo's *The Gates* and Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfalls*, Ai Weiwei's new public installation, *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, is an especially potent flash point: the artist was arrested last month by the Chinese government and was not in attendance when the installation opened on May 4 at the Pulitzer Fountain in Grand Army Plaza (at Fifth Avenue and West 59th Street, next to The Plaza hotel). Inspired by the fountain-clock of the Yuanming Yuan, an 18th-century imperial retreat just outside of Beijing, the work is a prescient, witty act of nationalistic reconstruction even as the artist's own government refuses to confirm his detainment.

The latest Martin Kippenberger exhibition at Luhring Augustine, opening May 7, doesn't embrace loaded politics as much as Ai Weiwei's piece, but it does revel in a similarly subversive naughtiness. It steals its title—*I Had a Vision*—from a catalog that accompanied the artist's 1991 exhibition in San Francisco and consists of work culled from that show and another show of his from the same year, in Vienna, where Kippenberger displayed a Dumpster full of broken paintings (among other things) in an abandoned tunnel. And through May 26, Josephine Meckseper's highly politicized retail environments at Flag Art Foundation conflate consumerism and aesthetics using reflective surfaces like chrome wheels and cellophane.

Oversize reflective surfaces are a bit of a theme this month: the largest, by far, belongs to Jaume Plensa's *Echo*, a 44-foot-tall fiberglass-reinforced plastic sculpture of the head and neck of a 9-year-old girl. Opening May 5 in Madison Square Park, it will rival the surrounding trees in terms of scale. A close second is Leo Villareal's *Volume*, a 12-by-8-foot installation composed of white LEDs encased in mirror-finished, stainless-steel rods, opening at Gering & López on May 4. In *Cyclical Tales of Mother's Unmentionables*, Dionisios Fragias has installed at Chelsea gallery Rare a similarly sized series of sculptures that reference centuries-old myths like Icarus and the Trojan Horse. (The show closes on May 19.)

Meanwhile, three of the most innovative artists of the past 40 years will all be exhibiting sculptures this month. Sol LeWitt's *Structures, 1965–2006*, which opens on May 24 in City Hall Park, sets a number of the artist's larger conceptual, geometric studies—some of which have never been shown before in the United States—against the skyscrapers and cityscape of downtown New York. Two shows open on May 7: in *New Sculpture and Works on Paper*, Jasper Johns will exhibit 11 new pieces of sculpture at Matthew Marks, focusing on his ongoing fascination with the shape of numerals; and at The Pace Gallery, Richard Tuttle's show *What's the Wind* challenges the artist's reputation for small, subtle, intimate works with a collection of six larger, freestanding sculptures.

The most outlandish event of the month will be the Festival of Ideas for the New City and its StreetFest, on May 7. The makeshift community-organizing, locally grown, self-help art space takes over the Bowery with street theater, food and artisanal sodas, workshops, art in odd places (courtesy of the group Art in Odd Places), sessions on sustainable living and urban ecology, and parkour training (for the more active). Opening a week later, on May 14, at Dodge gallery is Rebecca Chamberlain's *...Wouldn't It Be Sublime....* Her black-and-white paintings are concerned with a different type of architecture—interiors between the wars—but transcend their time and place. A similar sense of purposeful play runs through the paintings of Michael Williams, whose second show at the Lower East Side gallery Canada, opening on May 8, juxtaposes slapstick with painterly repetitive patterns. One painting from his previous show, entitled *Surf N Turf*, depicts a clam and a lobster using a computer against undulating red and lime-green lines, a handy morality tale this time of year for those workaholics who stay inside during the summer. Now go!