



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Moeinedin Shashaei, Interlocutor, 2015-ongoing. Courtesy the artist.*

### **THE SOCRATES ANNUAL, FEATURING NEW WORK BY 15 ARTISTS, TO OPEN OCTOBER 1 AT SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK**

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**New York, NY, (August 23, 2017)** – A failed Presidential amusement park, 18th century Chippendale and Queen Anne design motifs, mobile home landscape and architecture, and New York City’s urban soccer leagues are among the points of departure for the 15 distinct artist projects selected for ***The Socrates Annual, opening at Socrates Sculpture Park on October 1, and running through March 11, 2018.*** Participating artists, whose diverse range of medium include mosaic, cast concrete, glass, and painting, were selected by Socrates Director of Exhibitions, **Jess Wilcox**, and the Park’s 2017 Curatorial Advisors: **Eugenie Tsai**, the Barbara and John Vogelstein Curator of Contemporary Art, Brooklyn Museum, and **Melissa Levin**, former Vice President, Cultural Programs, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

The 2017 *Socrates Annual* participating artists are:

**Joe Bochynski**

**Gordon Hall**

**Amy Ritter**

**Paul Branca**

**Tali Keren & Alex Strada**

**Moeinedin Shashaei**

**Tanda Francis**

**Valerie Piraino**

**David B. Smith**

**Devra Frelander**

**Sreshta Rit Premnath**

**Laura Swanson**

**Doreen Garner**

**Ronny Quevedo**

**Wang Xu**



*The Socrates Annual* - formerly known as *The Emerging Artist Fellowship Exhibition* - is an annual exhibition of new public art that addresses the most urgent issues of today. It is distinct in its mission to foster individual artist projects rather than present an overarching theme. The 2017 participating artists join the ranks of over 250 artists who have received artist fellowships for producing work at Socrates since the Park's inaugural artist grant in 1995.

Artist fellowships at Socrates Sculpture Park present a singular opportunity to create ambitiously scaled outdoor works by offering studio and fabrication facilities on site; past fellows include Hank Willis Thomas (2006), Wade Guyton (2003), Orly Genger (2004), and Sanford Biggers (2001).

Artist projects featured in the 2017 *Socrates Annual* will be:

Evoking the excavation or burial of a United States presidential seal, **Joe Bochynski's** *POTUS* is at once an exploration of contemporary civics, faux artifacts, and political symbols. With its partial concealment and traditional medium, Bochynski's work interrogates the aesthetics of power and speculates about the future of American politics.

Marrying the historically private practice of painting with imagery associated with the public farmer's market, **Paul Branca's** *The Fruit Stand at 4 p.m. (d'apres Giacometti)* features oil paintings of food that that artist will change throughout the exhibition. Inspired by Alberto Giacometti's 1932 sculpture *The Palace at 4 a.m.*, Branca's piece builds upon the literal and figurative scaffolding provided by art history to generate new narratives about public consumption and the circulation of art objects.

**Tanda Francis's** *Take Me With You* depicts a head emerging from a pool positioned as if anticipating a drop of water from the sky. Placed in sharp contrast with New York City's East River and monumental in scale, Francis's work brings awareness to basic human needs and the resources that are too often taken for granted.

**Gordon Hall's** *FOUR HANDS* enlarges the Ball and Claw design motif, commonly found at the bottom of 18th century furniture, incorporating materials that recall Brutalist design and Minimalist aesthetics. Originally thought to be a Chinese symbol of a living being protecting wisdom and power, the Ball and Claw became an intriguing point of departure for Hall, whose work has long considered the moment of contact between body and object.

**Doreen Garner's** hanging glass sculptures reference show globes, which during early 20th century were displayed in pharmacy windows as symbolic markers. Their opulent exteriors belie abject contents: cast silicone body fragments floating in whiskey, alluding to appalling histories of medical violence inflicted upon black bodies.

**Devra Frelander's** *Fluorescent Sun* pairs the sublime image of a sunset with the sensation of looking at an LCD screen. Cast in pigmented resin, the semicircle seems to exist in a digital space made tangible. The sun's orange-pink color gradient echoes the sedimentary accumulation of the earth's geology, conjuring various time frames--the 8-second digital media attention span, the 24-hour daily cycle, and the eons of the earth's life--and eliciting questions about the sustainability of contemporary living.

*National Park* by collaborative duo **Tali Keren** and **Alex Strada** is a photographic and audio piece that brings to Socrates the story the defunct Presidents Park in Williamsburg, Virginia. Visitors are invited to treat the work as a kind of theatrical stage where one can



stand next to an image of past presidents, take selfies, and examine oneself in relation to these dilapidated yet steadfast symbolic monuments. By combining narrative and image, the work aims to question the promise and stability of political representation and mythology.

In *A Year Around the Sun*, **Valerie Piraino** evokes mourning with the use of a ghostly overturned lifeboat overlain with maritime objects in a shrine-like arrangement—a memorial to the current refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea. Suggestive of both an aftermath of a wreck and a shelter, the piece is a poignant appeal for empathy.

**Sreshta Rit Premnath's** *Only One Way* reveals the ever-present but rarely acknowledged dichotomy between the aspirational allure of luxury developments and the living and working conditions of those who build them. Combining imagery from real estate advertising with limp body-like silhouettes of sand and rubber, the piece questions what it means to occupy, rent, or own space.

**Ronny Quevedo's** installation mimics the space of an indoor basketball court with milk-carton crate hoops that reference both improvisational means of playing the game using materials at hand and the decagonal structures found in the playing fields of ancient Mayan temples. By simultaneously employing and destabilizing visual vocabularies associated with games and architecture, Quevedo examines how displaced cultures shape the urban landscape of New York City.

**Amy Ritter's** *Single Wide* transforms a portion of the park into an empty mobile home plot complete with shrubbery, an oil tank, front steps and lawn ornaments. Displacing a home associated with rural America inside an urban park, Ritter's work employs a visual language of impermanence and absence to address broader U.S. housing politics.

Over the course of his fellowship, **Moeinedin Shashaei** cast the mouths of dozens of Socrates visitors in a commemorative salute to ephemeral conversations and interactions for a large-scale sculpture. *Unum* becomes a celebration of the plurality of the public, with hundreds of individual smiles and other expressions coming together to form a unified mass.

**David B. Smith's** *Digital Skin* places visitors in the role of scientific explorers encountering a creature that appears to hail from both the biological and digital realms. Composed of modular wooden parts and recycled Socrates billboards that give the work the textural composition of bone and flesh, the piece transforms familiar shapes and images into eccentric three-dimensional bodies that invite multiple associative interpretations.

**Laura Swanson** pairs two street clocks of contrasting heights that mirror the statures of herself and her partner. By adapting clocks typically found in communal metropolitan spaces to function as portraiture, the artist challenges assumptions about normative size in the public sphere while also producing a whimsical image of difference.

**Wang Xu** conceived of *Rain Bird* after months in the park shadowing the Socrates grounds crew as they tended to the Park's five acres. Focused on the site of the park and the people who know it best, the artist casts aluminum masks as portraits using materials found on site.



The exhibition will be accompanied by a digital catalogue to be added to a growing digital library of e-publications and videos available at [socratessculpturepark.org/digital](http://socratessculpturepark.org/digital).

### **SUPPORT**

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### **ABOUT SOCRATES SCULPTURE PARK**

Since 1986 Socrates Sculpture Park has been a model of public art production, community activism, and socially inspired place-making. Known for fostering experimental and visionary artworks, the Park has exhibited more than 1,000 artists on its five waterfront acres, providing them financial and material resources and outdoor studio facilities to create large-scale artworks on site. Socrates is free and open to the public 365 days a year from 9am to sunset and is located at the intersection of Broadway and Vernon Boulevard in Long Island City, New York.

- [socratessculpturepark.org](http://socratessculpturepark.org)

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