

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC ART FUND PRESENTS MAJOR NEW EXHIBITION
ACROSS TWO BOROUGHS
UNITING DANH VO'S *WE THE PEOPLE*
WITH ITS POINT OF INSPIRATION—THE STATUE OF LIBERTY



Danh Vo, *We the People (detail)*, 2011-2013. Copper. Dimensions Variable. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

DANH VO: WE THE PEOPLE
May 17 – December 5, 2014
City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan &
Brooklyn Bridge Park
New York City

February 28, 2014, NEW YORK, NY—Public Art Fund announces *Danh Vo: We the People*, a major dual-site exhibition inspired by the **Statue of Liberty**. *We the People* is a life-size copper replica of the statue in over 250 individual parts fabricated over the course of three years using the original techniques and materials. As a conceptual artist, Vo does not stipulate how many of the components should be shown together and refers to each presentation as a “detail” of the entire project. However, Public Art Fund’s exhibition featuring more than 50 pieces in Lower Manhattan’s City Hall Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park **represents the largest public presentation of *We the People* to date**. While components have been shown in exhibitions across the globe, this presentation of the work at two of New York City’s quintessential outdoor spaces invites audiences to consider the symbolic resonance of the Statue of Liberty in the city that is its home. ***Danh Vo: We the People* will be on view May 17 – December 5, 2014 at City Hall Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park, Pier 3 Greenway Terrace.**

“Danh Vo’s ingenious project takes what is arguably the world’s most recognizable figurative monument and allows us to experience every detail of its vast surface as if through a magnifying glass—each detail stands alone as a compelling work of art, yet each part also implies the whole,” said **Nicholas Baume, Public Art Fund Director & Chief Curator**. “Vo plays with our perceptions of a global icon, making it surprising once again, engaging our imagination with the storied monument and all that it represents.”

The components of this work, on view at both City Hall Park and Brooklyn Bridge Park, are linked by the Brooklyn Bridge, allowing visitors to cross the East River by foot while taking in views of the original statue. The exhibition invites us to think anew about the contemporary meaning and relevance of familiar monuments like this one. It also offers visitors an opportunity to see this American landmark as never before—and to interact with individual sections of the colossal figure on an intimate, human scale. Among the 40 components on view in **City Hall Park** will be a curl of the statue’s hair, folds of the figure’s drapery, a ray from the crown, and some 20 fragments of the plinth on which the statue stands. In addition, the rarely seen chain at figure’s feet, which is linked to a broken shackle symbolizing American independence and the end of oppression, will be shown for the first time in the U.S. In contrast to this diverse grouping of sculptures, visitors to the Pier 3 Greenway Terrace in **Brooklyn Bridge Park** will encounter a never-before-exhibited section of the statue—the newly fabricated, draped sleeve of the statue’s right arm, which holds the golden torch. For the first time, this colossal, 13-piece section will be assembled into three forms and presented alongside the ear of the statue.

We the People was fabricated by a workshop outside of Shanghai and like the actual monument, it is fashioned from copper sheets that have a thickness of less than two pennies. The roughly 250 separate pieces correspond to the components of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi’s original design and were created using the sculptor’s repoussé technique, a method by which thin, malleable metal is hammered from its reverse to shape the design on the surface. The individual parts, which extend from the thin pedestal supporting the figure to the torch held aloft in her right hand, translate the colossal size of the original monument into forms that are approachable on a human scale.

“Lady Liberty is ever-present in our imaginations, but through this work, Vo provides us with an opportunity to encounter the monumental statue in a completely new way, encouraging a sense of discovery and creating a dialogue about the ways that cultural values are embodied in objects,” said **Public Art Fund’s Andria Hickey, who curated the exhibition**. “This project illuminates not only the unique beauty of each specific part of the statue, but by calling the details into focus, Vo’s work mirrors the impact that diverse and individual perspectives have on attributing collective cultural values to national icons.”

Vo’s personal history is often reflected in works that by extension address broader issues of cultural identity. In 1979, his father arranged for the family and some 100 others to leave South Vietnam by boat. While at sea, the boat was picked up by a Danish freighter, leading the family to eventually immigrate to Denmark. That experience—both historically and personally—is often reflected in his work in subtle ways. Exploring themes of colonialism, migration, and cultural identity his endeavors have included importing the frame of an entire 200-year-old Catholic church from Vietnam into the Arsenale for the 55th Venice Biennale (2013) and purchasing, dismantling, and exhibiting four crystal chandeliers from the former ballroom and rotunda of the Hotel Majestic in Paris, where delegates from the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the Viet Cong signed the Paris Peace Accords in 1973 (2009). While many of these projects have forged delicate connections between elements of his own biography and geopolitical events, *We the People* is his first work to connect Vo’s intimate approach to history with an icon of global significance.

We the People draws its title from the first three words of the Constitution of the United States, but this is just one of a number of facts and stories that are part of the narrative of the project. Vo’s interest in the ideas symbolized by the statue lies in its possibility of cultural transmission on a global scale, and it is no coincidence that he has chosen to explore an icon with a complex history. It is rarely observed that the design of the statue first emerged in the late 1860’s as an

unrealized proposal by the sculptor Bartholdi for a lighthouse to mark the completion of the Suez Canal. Some decades later, the French statesman and anti-slavery activist, Edouard de Laboulaye, proposed a remarkably similar statue designed by Bartholdi—the Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World—as a gift of friendship from France to the U.S. The statue was ultimately erected in 1886 with the hope that she would shed her light across the Atlantic, symbolically extending America's democratic values across the globe, and welcoming immigrants to Ellis Island. More than 100 years later, the statue is seen as a national and international symbol that has inspired contemplation and the debate of such ideals as liberty, human rights, friendship, feminism, migration, democracy, and opportunity.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Danh Vo (b. 1975, Bà Rịa, Vietnam) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, and the Städelschule, Frankfurt. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at institutions including Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2013); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2013); Porto Culturgest, Porto, Portugal (2013); The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (2012); The Art Institute of Chicago (2012); National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2012, 2010); Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2012); Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (2011); Kunsthalle Basel (2009); Kadist Art Foundation, San Francisco (2009); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2008); and Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2006). His works are also included in numerous public collections including those of the Tate Modern (London), Museum of Modern Art (New York), The Centre Pompidou (Paris), National Gallery of Denmark (Copenhagen), and Walker Art Center (Minneapolis). In 2012, he was named the winner of the Hugo Boss Prize. Danh Vo is represented by Marian Goodman Gallery in New York, Galerie Chantal Crousel in Paris, Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi in Berlin, and Galerie Buchholz in Cologne.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

City Hall Park is located in Lower Manhattan, and is bordered by Broadway, Chambers Street, Centre Street, and Park Row.

Hours: 7:00am – 12:00am daily

Subways: A, C, E to Chambers Street; 4, 5, 6, J, Z to Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall; N, R to City Hall; 2, 3 to Park Place

City Hall visitor information is available by calling 311.

Brooklyn Bridge Park is an 85-acre sustainable waterfront park stretching 1.3 miles along Brooklyn's East River shoreline. The park was designed by the award-winning firm of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. and features expansive lawns, waterfront promenades, innovative playgrounds, a greenway, sports facilities and the popular Jane's Carousel. Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation, known as Brooklyn Bridge Park, is the not-for-profit entity responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance and operation of the park.

The exhibition is located at the Pier 3 Greenway Terrace, which is accessible from park entrances at Atlantic Avenue, Joralemon Street, Old Fulton Street and Squibb Bridge.

Hours: 6:00am – 1:00am daily

Subways: A, C to High Street; F to York Street; 2, 3 to Clark Street; R to Court Street; 4, 5, 2, 3 to Borough Hall.

Buses: B63 to Pier 6; B61 to Atlantic Ave and Hicks Street; B25 to Front Street.

EXHIBITION SUPPORT

This exhibition is generously supported by the AllianceBernstein Foundation, the Kraus Family Foundation, and Billie Tsien & Tod Williams.

Additional support is provided by Mickey Cartin, Wendy Fisher, Linda Lennon & Stuart Baskin, and Patricia & Howard Silverstein.

Public Art Fund exhibitions are supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

We the People is courtesy of the artist and presented with the generous support of Galerie Chantal Crousel.

Public Art Fund gratefully acknowledges the partnership of The Office of the Mayor, City of New York; Office of the Manhattan Borough President; Office of the Brooklyn Borough President; Department of Cultural Affairs; Department of Parks & Recreation; and Brooklyn Bridge Park.

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment.

#

Media Contact:

Kellie Honeycutt | [212.223.7810](tel:212.223.7810) | khoneycutt@publicartfund.org | PublicArtFund.org