



# FREDERIK MEIJER Gardens & Sculpture Park

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## **FREDERIK MEIJER GARDENS & SCULPTURE PARK ANNOUNCES MONUMENTAL, SITE-SPECIFIC SCULPTURE BY SPANISH ARTIST JAUME PLENSA**

*The massive new piece, titled 'Utopia', was commissioned for the new Meijer Gardens Welcome Center designed by Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners, opening in 2021.*

**GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., – February 28, 2019** – Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park is honored to announce the acquisition and permanent siting of a major site-specific commission by Spanish artist Jaume Plensa. Designed and created to be an integral element of the new Meijer Gardens Welcome Center, *Utopia* consists of 19-foot tall portraits of four young women of different backgrounds and nationalities. *Utopia* will be located in the Welcome Center's spectacular new 7,400 square-foot Garden Pavilion room. The iconic sculpture is being created in Barcelona, Spain and carved from white marble. This immense sculpture is unique to the Meijer Gardens collection and to Plensa's prestigious body of work.

Over the past thirty years, Plensa has produced a multifaceted body of work that speaks to the capacity and beauty of humanity, often using the human figure as a universal symbol. Celebrating the similarities and shared humanity of the world's seemingly divergent cultures, the artist seeks to connect with his viewers on an intuitive level. Meijer Gardens is privileged to enjoy a very special relationship with Plensa. Since 2006, Meijer Gardens has been home to Plensa's *I, you, she or he...*, a gift from Fred & Lena Meijer. *I, you, she or he...*, another site-specific commission for Meijer Gardens, includes a composition of three figures seated on boulders, whose shells are made of stainless-steel letters. Faces are left open to encourage the universality of the forms, and visitors are encouraged to walk among the sculptures. The composition and setting for *I, you, she or he...* were selected by Plensa and he intends it to represent an ongoing, silent conversation.

"Meijer Gardens is thrilled beyond words to be once again working with Jaume to secure what I know will be an iconic work of art celebrating art, the diversity of life brought by people from around the world and how beauty can truly make the world a better place," said David Hooker, President & CEO at Frederik Meijer Gardens &

Sculpture Park. "Our hope is that the whole world will be able to experience *Utopia* and have their lives enriched."

"*Utopia* is our human landscape, a space to embrace humanity and our collective dreams." said Plensa.

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### **About Jaume Plensa**

Born in 1955, Jaume Plensa is one of the world's foremost sculptors and highly active in public spaces with celebrated projects spanning the globe in such cities as Chicago, San Diego, Seattle, Miami, Montréal, London, Paris, Dubai, Bangkok, Shanghai and Tokyo.

The winner of many national and international awards including the prestigious Velazquez Prize awarded by the Spanish Cultural Ministry (2013) and the Medaille de Chevalier des Arts and des Lettres awarded by the French Ministry of Culture (1993), Plensa has had solo museum exhibitions at the MACBA: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid Spain; Yorkshire Sculpture Park, England; Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas; and the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio among many others. Jaume Plensa's *Together* was presented at the Basilica San Giorgio Maggiore in Italy as a collateral event of the 56th Venice Biennale.

Plensa has been a teacher at the Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and given lectures at universities, museums and cultural institutions around the world. He lives and works in Barcelona.

### **About Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners**

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien have been working together since 1977 and founded their New York architecture practice in 1986. Their studio focuses on work for institutions such as schools, museums and not-for-profits. Their buildings are carefully made from the inside out in ways that speak to both efficiency and the spirit. A sense of rootedness, light, texture, detail, and most of all experience are at the heart of what they design. Over the past three decades, their dedication to this work has been recognized by numerous national and international citations including the 2013 Firm of the Year Award from the American Institute of Architects. In parallel with their practice, Tod and Billie are devoted participants in the broader cultural community with longstanding associations with many arts organizations. They both maintain active academic careers and lecture

worldwide. As educators and practitioners, they are deeply committed to creating a better world through architecture.

Progressive AE is supporting Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects | Partners and the building is being constructed by Owen-Ames-Kimball Co.

### **About Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park**

One of the world's most significant botanic and sculpture experiences, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park served 696,000 visitors in 2018 and was recently listed in the top 30 most visited museums in the United States by *The Art Newspaper*, the leading publication in global art news. The 158-acre main campus features Michigan's largest tropical conservatory; one of the largest interactive children's gardens in the country; arid and Victorian gardens with bronze sculptures by Edgar Degas and Auguste Rodin; a carnivorous plant house; outdoor gardens; and a 1900-seat outdoor amphitheater, featuring an eclectic mix of world-renowned musicians every summer. The internationally acclaimed Sculpture Park features a permanent collection including works by Claes Oldenburg & Coosje van Bruggen, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Richard Serra, Louise Bourgeois, Ai Weiwei and Jaume Plensa, among others. Indoor galleries host changing sculpture exhibitions with exhibitions by Ai Weiwei, Pablo Picasso, Edgar Degas, Mark di Suvero, Jonathan Borofsky, Alexander Calder, Jim Dine and others. In June 2015, the eight-acre Richard & Helen DeVos Japanese Garden at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park opened. Created by renowned designer Hoichi Kurisu, the garden features sculpture by Anish Kapoor, Jenny Holzer, David Nash, George Rickey, Masayuki Koorida, Zhang Huan, Guiseppe Penone, among others.

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