



High Notes | New Art on the High Line

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June 7, 2011, 12:06 pm [1 Comment](#)



Sarah Sze, courtesy of Friends of the High Line

Section 2 of the High Line, which opens to the public tomorrow, passes just beyond Frank Gehry's IAC

building and Jean Nouvel's 100 11th Avenue Residences one block to the west. With the installation of Sarah Sze's "Still Life with Landscape (Model for a Habitat)," some of the more modest denizens of the neighborhood will have a piece of starchitecture to call their own. The sculpture, a dynamic steel and wood complex of bird, ladybug and butterfly condos, sits between 20th and 21st Streets, and serves as a sort of gateway onto the High Line microclimate known as the Chelsea Thicket. Among its noteworthy amenities are feeding trays that will be regularly restocked with seeds and nectar, and miniature troughs designed to catch rainwater. But as with any luxury real estate development — even one with a boldfaced name attached to it — its occupancy rate is not a guarantee. "It's really an experiment," says Lauren Ross, the curator and director of arts programs at Friends of the High Line, adding that Sze consulted various urban birding groups but received conflicting predictions. "It functions first and foremost as sculpture. We are not sure how wildlife will respond to it."



It's also unclear how human visitors to the High Line will respond to another new piece of public art, Julianne Swartz's "Digital Empathy." The sound piece, which is installed throughout the High Line in the elevators, at the drinking fountains and in the public restrooms, is intentionally subtle in its delivery and hilariously mixed in its messages — equal parts infomercial, public service announcement and motivational mantra. Take a drink from a fountain at 18th Street, for example, and a chorus of computer-generated voices chimes in to advertise the quality of the water, remind you to please not to lick the fountain, and finally promote kissing as a form of oral hygiene.

"Teeth (fountain)" by Julianne Swartz

At 30th Street, the same voices congratulate you for making time in your busy day to visit the High Line. "You work. *So* hard. And *you*. Deserve. To be pampered. Go out there and get some sun! You look a little pale."

"Relaxation (fountain)" by Julianne Swartz

And you know what? You should take their word for it.