

Tension Sculptures

Park Avenue

Joseph La Piana



Tension is a concept that exists in both the material and mental realm. As a force in the physical world, tension calls to mind the stretching of something between fixed points, perhaps to the moment of rupture. In the realm of psychological, it is used to convey a highly strained state of emotional being. For his latest body of work, "Tension Art Basel" artist Joseph La Piana aims to interrogate these existing definitions, making manifest the underlying dynamic at play in both.

La Piana's interest in exploring the boundaries of tensile strength and the genealogy of each body of work that links them altogether. Comprised of rubber stretched between, and wrapped around the existing volleyball structures on Ocean and 7th Street in the heart of South Beach further investigates his Tension body of work creating what he refers to as an "active environment". I want the existing life and identity of the environment and it's function to remain yet imbuing life and function in another form. La Piana's installations brings to the fore the forces of tension, evincing them through the material process of the rubber's elasticity and potential for change. Exposed to the elements as well as the constant pressures being applied through their taut state, the potential fragmentation of the stretched material allows for a transformative experience at the hand of the forces of tension is a central theme of La Piana's work. The sculptures continuous need to remain in a state of tension is essential to their identity and physical composition, as a result the artist refers to them as living sculptures.

Here with the Tension Art Basel installation, LaPiana focuses space and environment and it's active participants whereby the volleyball acts as an obiter, transferrng tension between them. With these sculptures, the rigid, linear nature of La Piana's "Tension Paintings" is translated into three dimensions, inviting the viewer to observe the forces of gravity and tension as they act upon, and alter the form of, each of the five sculptures. But the "Tension Sculptures" also extend the conceptual dialogue that has come to define La Piana's ongoing body of work. With the sculptures, he finds parallels between his work and the current experiences of individuals on a global, social scale. Every day, tensions are promulgated by conflicts—whether political, social, environmental, or interpersonal. These enduring disputes intensify the divisions among us. La Piana's sculptures, stretched to their capacity, echo this state of cultural and emotional disruption.

Ultimately, it is La Piana's hope that we explore the parallels between his sculptures and the current state of affairs. Tension is a powerful force: it is a source of internal and external agonism that brings to the fore questions, real and metaphorical, about states of integrity in the face of growing dissonance and countervailing pressures placed on our collective identities.

Tension Park Avenue Statement

Tension is a concept that exists in both the material and mental realm. As a force in the physical world, tension calls to mind the stretching of something between fixed points, perhaps to the moment of rupture. In the realm of psychological, it is used to convey a highly strained state of emotional being. For his latest body of work, "Tension Sculptures" artist Joseph La Piana aims to interrogate these existing definitions, making manifest the underlying dynamic at play in both.

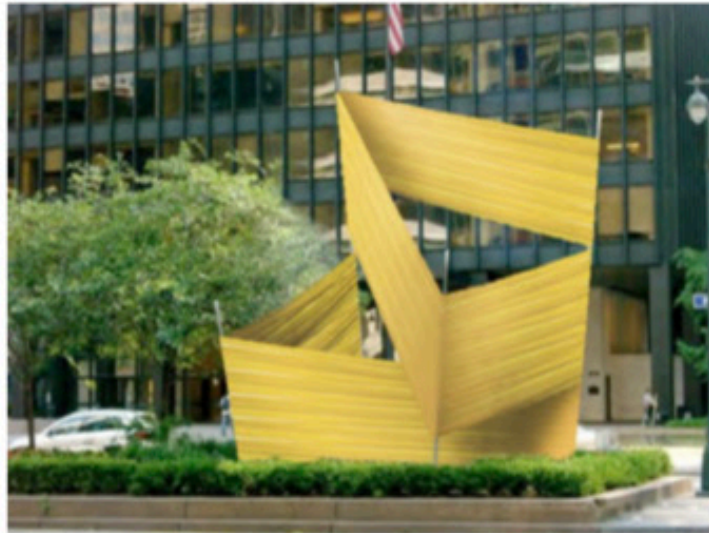
Located on the meridians of Park Avenue—beginning at 53rd and continuing to 70th—five sculptures of varying dimensions bring together La Piana's interest in exploring the boundaries of tensile strength and the genealogy of each body of work that links them altogether. Comprised of rubber stretched between, and wrapped around stainless steel armatures akin to a cats-cradle, La Piana's installations brings to the fore the forces of tension, evincing them through the material process of the rubber's elasticity and potential for change. Exposed to the elements as well as the constant pressures being applied through their taut state, the potential fragmentation of the stretched material allows for a transformative experience at the hand of the forces of tension is a central theme of La Piana's work. The sculptures continuous need to remain in a state of tension is essential to their identity and physical composition, as a result the artist refers to them as living sculptures.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ARTIST JOSEPH LA PIANA UNVEILS “TENSION SCULPTURES”
ALONG PARK AVENUE IN NEW YORK CITY



NEW YORK, NY – On March 4th, 2019, **The Fund for Park Avenue’s** Sculpture Advisory Committee together with **NYC Parks** will unveil artist **Joseph La Piana’s** “**Tension Sculptures**” – a series of five sculptures of varying dimensions that bring together La Piana’s conceptual heredity and interest in activating passive materiality. Located on the meridians of Park Avenue, beginning at 53rd Street and continuing to 70th Street, the installation is on view through July 2019.

Celebrated for his paintings, sculptures, drawings, and photographs, La Piana draws on the continued relationship connecting the genealogy in his work. Like DNA, the artist pulls from the origin of objects, pairing them together with new elements and material, essentially developing a new identity, function and purpose. With “Tension Sculptures”, the rigid, linear nature of La Piana’s ongoing “Tension Paintings” series exploring the boundaries of tensile strength is translated into three dimensions, comprising monochromatic yellow rubber stretched between and wrapped around stainless steel armatures, akin to a cats-cradle. The sculptures’ need to remain in a constant state of tension is essential to their physical composition, and as a result the artist refers to them as “living sculptures”.

Yet, the “Tension Sculptures” extend the conceptual dialogue that has come to define La Piana’s ongoing body of work. The artist finds parallels between the sculptures and the current experiences of individuals on a global, social scale. Every day, tensions are promulgated by conflicts—whether political, social, environmental, or interpersonal. Tension is a powerful force: it is a source of internal and external agonism that brings to the forefront the countervailing pressures placed on our collective identities in the face of growing dissonance. La Piana’s sculptures, stretched to their capacity, echo this state of cultural and emotional disruption.

La Piana’s monumental sculptures range from roughly 12 to 16 feet in height, 12 to 22 feet in length, and 10 to 12 feet in depth. The enormity of *Tension Sculptures* gives the viewer the opportunity to observe the power of energetic strain that exists as these vibrant artworks cohabitate with flora that have been part of Park Avenue’s history for decades. The five sculptures within the series are located at the north corners of the cross streets: Park Avenue and East 53rd Street, Park Avenue and East 57th Street, Park Avenue and East 60th Street, Park Avenue and East 67th Street, and Park Avenue and E 70th Street.

Tension Sculptures are on view to the public from March 4th through July 2019.



About Joseph La Piana:

Joseph La Piana (b.1966) is a visual artist who lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. La Piana works with multi-media sculpture, painting, drawing, and photography. He is a dedicated philanthropist, supporting and donating works to organizations such as: The Center (LGBT Community Center NYC), Coalition for the Homeless, CITYarts Inc., and Lamba Legal. Work by the artist has been presented worldwide, including: The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; The Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut; Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy; Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, New York; The Watermill Center, Watermill, New York, Dia Center, New York, New York; The Whitney Museum, New York, New York; Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, New York; Long House Museum, East Hampton, New York.

www.josephlapiana.com

About NYC Parks:

For over 50 years, NYC Parks' Art in the Parks program has brought contemporary public artworks to the city's parks, making New York City one of the world's largest open-air galleries. The agency has consistently fostered the creation and installation of temporary public art in parks throughout the five boroughs. Since 1967, NYC Parks has collaborated with arts organizations and artists to produce over 2,000 public artworks by 1,300 notable and emerging artists in over 200 parks.

www.nyc.gov/parks/art

About The Fund for Park Avenue:

The Fund for Park Avenue relies solely on contributions from the community to plant, light and maintain the trees and flowers on the Park Avenue Malls. The Fund's Sculpture Advisory Committee was formed in 2000 to recommend artwork for temporary display on the Park Avenue Malls.

www.fundforparkavenue.org

Sculpture Locations:

- Park Avenue and East 53rd Street
- Park Avenue and East 57th Street
- Park Avenue and East 60th Street
- Park Avenue and East 67th Street
- Park Avenue and East 70th Street

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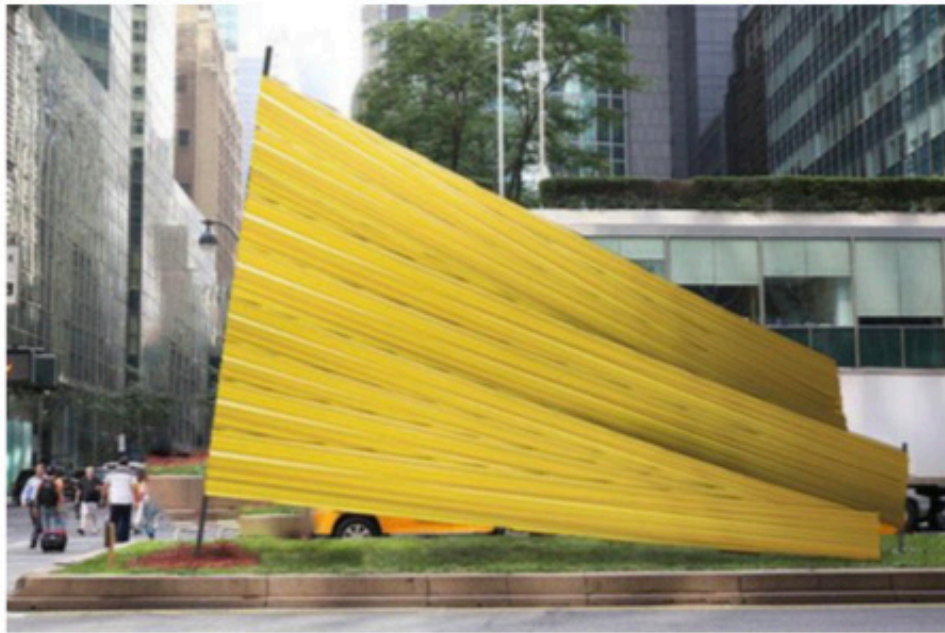
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The New York Times

February 27, 2019

'Tension Sculptures' Explore Limits, Political and Physical

by Sophie Hagney



*A rendering of the one of the Brooklyn-based artist Joseph La Piana's "Tension Sculptures."
Credit: Courtesy of Joseph La Piana*

Five large-scale, primary yellow sculptures, made of an extremely durable synthetic rubber stretched between stainless steel armatures, will be open to the public on Park Avenue on Monday.

This series, by the Brooklyn-based artist Joseph La Piana, is called "Tension Sculptures," and will be installed on five corners between 53rd Street and 70th Street.

"I generally like working with material that's passive in nature, that can be activated through force, like gravity or suspension, that gives it another life," he said. The rubber of these sculptures, he said, "will outlive who we are."

The dimensions of the artworks vary, but they're all sizable; the tallest is 16 feet high and the widest is 22 feet long. The installation is presented by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and the Fund for Park Avenue's Sculpture Advisory Committee. The art will remain on display until the end of July.

“The committee was initially drawn to Joseph’s concept of tension and the energy that these pieces will bring to the Avenue,” Barbara McLaughlin, president of the Fund for Park Avenue wrote in an email. The tulips, she noted, won’t bloom until late April — something Mr. La Piana said he looks forward to as well, as a chance to see how the colors will interact with the living environment.

Of the sculptures, Mr. La Piana said: “The material is being pushed to its limits. They’re not going to snap, but they’re pushed to the limits.”

Mr. La Piana said he sees the “Tension Sculptures” as having societal implications. “Politically and societally and environmentally, we’re being pushed to the point of collapse like the materials,” he said. “But in the sense that these sculptures will not collapse, there’s some hope.”

Also picked up by: [The Architect’s Newspaper](#)

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Outdoor Voices

NEW PUBLIC WORKS BY ESTEEMED GLOBAL ARTISTS TURN THE STREETS OF NEW YORK INTO AN ALFRESCO MUSEUM

Above: Artist Joseph La Piana (inset) staged an earlier iteration of his work *Tension* in a Red Hook, Brooklyn, warehouse in 2015.

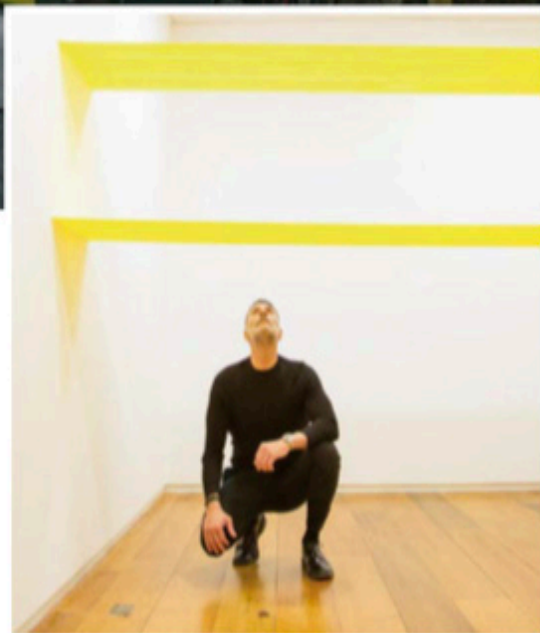
With genre-defining permanent outdoor sculptures and a history of attention-grabbing exhibitions, New York may be one of the greatest destinations for public art. Installations range from honorary monuments, such as David Rockefeller's commission of Jean Dubuffet's *Group of Four Trees* in 1969, to contemporary pieces, such as Isa Genzken's *Rose III* in Zuccotti Park (2018). In recent years, impermanent works, such as Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfalls* (2008) and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *The Gates* (2005), have created citywide buzz.

The most democratic of genres, public art has no lines, tickets, or viewing hours to speak of—and this spring marks one of Manhattan's most invigorating seasons. From Doris C. Freedman Plaza and Park Avenue's grass medians to 2019's newcomer, the High Line Plinth, the path's first space dedicated to a rotating display of commissions, there will be a wealth of new outdoor sculptures on view.

Here, a look at three defining public projects coming to the city this season.

JOSEPH LA PIANA, *TENSION* PARK AVENUE

Selected by the Park Avenue Sculpture Committee, Joseph La Piana unveils his first large-scale public project, *Tension* Park



Avenue: six vivid, primary-yellow installations along the storied East Side thoroughfare from March through July. "Given politics and environmental issues, our limits are being pushed to a breaking point on a day-to-day basis," he says of the work, which strains material boundaries with rubber and stainless steel. "The sculptures will not collapse, but they are being pushed to the point of collapse."

According to the artist, *Tension* also references daily pressure. "We all have gone through fragile periods that have pushed us to personal emotional limits," says La Piana, whose 2015 variation of the project stretched 11,000 feet of yellow latex across a 20,000-square-foot warehouse in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

Despite the manicured tulip backdrop of Park Avenue, *Tension* is not meant to be pristine. "I don't like shiny objects," explains La Piana, who cites Louise Bourgeois's raw, rusted

CAA's Huvane Pitches In for Public Art on Park Avenue

Art Scene

With help from CAA's Kevin Huvane, artist Joseph La Piana's *Tension Sculptures* (composed of rubber wrapped around steel armatures) will be unveiled March 4 along the median of New York's Park Avenue, via the city's Art in the Parks program. "I refer to these as living sculptures because to maintain their

composition they need to be under constant duress," says La Piana, 52, a Brooklyn native whose collectors include Donna Karan, Darren Star and business manager Harley Neuman. NYC's Parks department covers installation, with private donors pitching in for fabrication: Huvane picked up a "significant portion," says La Piana, who formed close ties

with the agent, along with designer Thom Browne and director Kathryn Bigelow, during his decade living in L.A. 20 years ago. Each of the five sculptures, on view through July, will become part of a private collection. "The archival nature of the sculptures was a huge consideration for the materials," says La Piana. "They need to outlive me." —PETER KUPER

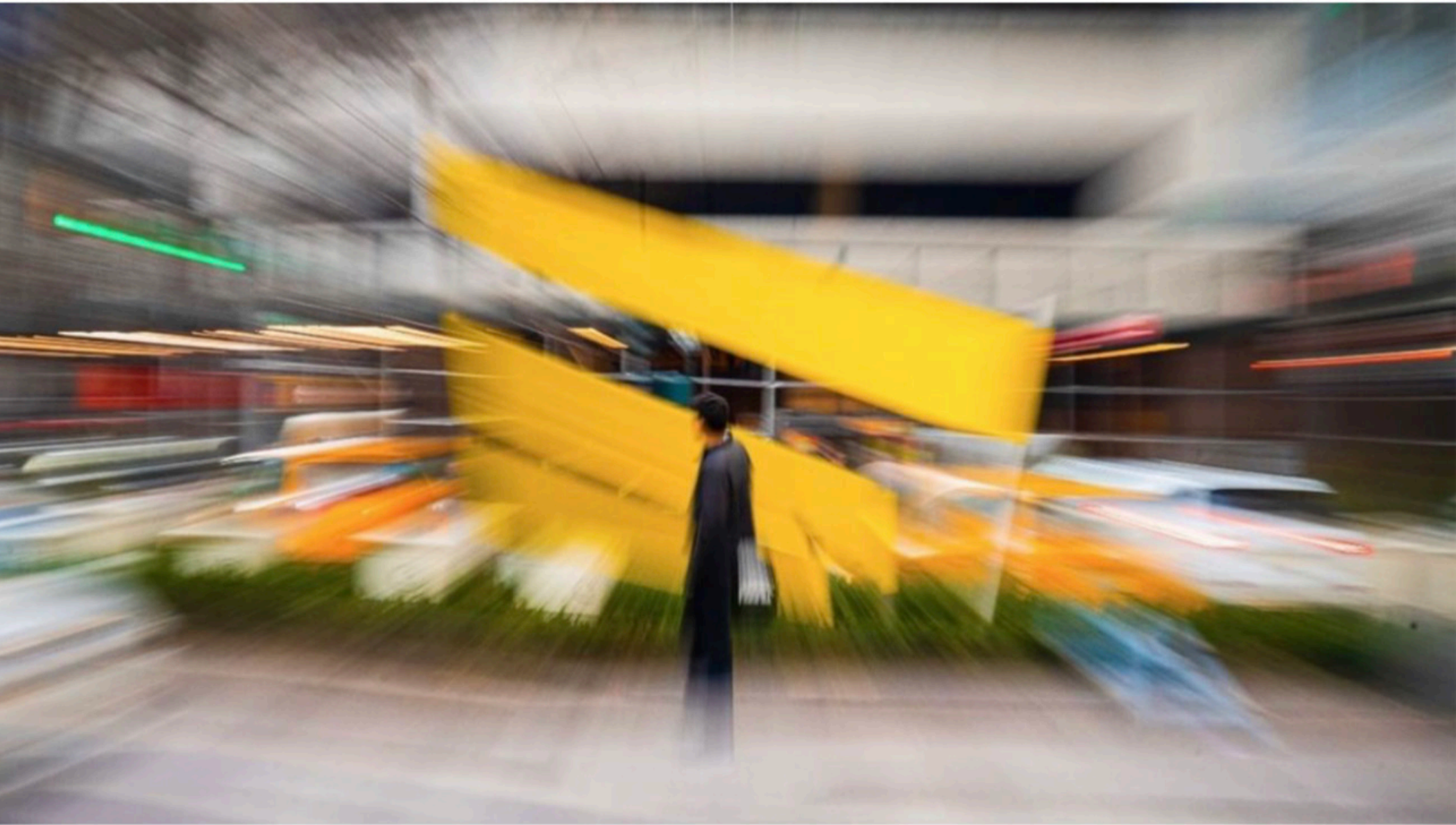


Rendering of one of Joseph La Piana's *Tension Sculptures* as it will appear in NYC; inset, the artist (right) with Kevin Huvane in 2011

Watch Parker talk about the exact moment she wanted to become an actress at THR.COM/VIDEO



Sculpture A







Sculpture B

ARTS CENTER
1000 10th St
New York, NY 10018
www.artscenter.org



Joseph La Piana
Tension Sculpture B, 2019

Rubber and stainless steel

March–July 2019

#ArtintheParks

This installation was made possible by Kevin Hovens.

MTC Parks has been showing public art in city parks since 1992.
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Sculpture C





Sculpture E



Joseph La Piana
Tension Sculpture E, 2019

Rubber and stainless steel
March–July 2019
#ArtInTheParks

This installation is in memory of Charles C. Bergman.
NYC Parks has been sharing public art in city parks since 1962.
For information on our temporary public art program, please call
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