



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC ART FUND TO DEBUT *ATTRITION*, CANNUPA HANSKA LUGER'S NEW SCULPTURE CONFRONTING THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICAN BISON



Cannupa Hanska Luger: Attrition

June 5, 2024–November 17, 2024

City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan, New York City

[LINK TO DROPBOX MEDIA ROOM](#)

April 22, 2024, NEW YORK, NY—On June 5, World Environment Day, Public Art Fund will debut *Attrition*, a site-specific sculptural installation by interdisciplinary artist Cannupa Hanska Luger. Situated in City Hall Park in Lower Manhattan, Luger's 10-foot-long steel bison skeleton will lie within a bed of grasses native to this region, highlighting the profound interdependence between animals, humans, and the land. Placed on the pathway to City Hall,



Attrition symbolically engages with New York City’s heart of policy-making, bringing to light the history of the bison’s survival.

Luger, an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold from the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara and Lakota cultures, is a descendant of buffalo people. In his artistic practice, he presents new ways of seeing our humanity while foregrounding an Indigenous worldview. For Luger, the bison is a symbol of Indigenous resilience and sovereignty.

Between 1845 and 1895, settlers of European descent slaughtered millions of bison in the United States for profit, dominion over land, and westward expansion. The bison population declined from tens of millions to a mere 1500, driving the species to near extinction. The strategic removal of this vital source of food, clothing, shelter, and spiritual reverence for the Great Plains Native American populations forced their assimilation into Western culture. The destruction of the bison is deeply interconnected with an entire ecosystem, including the loss of plant populations naturally germinated by bison migration, and the systematic erasure of Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems.

“Displayed at the entrance to City Hall Park, *Attrition* invites viewers to consider how the destruction of the bison demands a larger call to reframe our relationship with nature and humanity,” said **Public Art Fund Adjunct Curator Katerina Stathopoulou**. “Cannupa Hanska Luger’s ongoing engagement with the bison examines the loss, displacement, and trauma that can result from a single disruption in an ecosystem and brings to light the history of the bison’s survival and regeneration.”

The sculptural work’s material composition also alludes to the romanticized “Wild West” narrative of expansion and industrialization in the United States: the steel skeleton references the production of calcium carbonate from burned bison bones, which was used for building and railroad materials and agricultural fertilizer. Engraved star-shaped symbols on the sculpture highlight the interconnectedness of land, life, and the cosmos, while alluding to the devastating ongoing consequences stemming from expansionist practices and human intervention in natural ecosystems.

The steel material and ash black color of the sculpture reference how in the 1800s millions of bison bones scattered across the Great Plains were collected and incinerated to create materials such as calcium bicarbonate, an important component to steel production in the



United States. The steel industry went on to serve a critical role in propelling U.S. domination of global markets and technological growth during a period of rapid industrialization. The historic images of this era document towering pyramids of bison skulls; these were testaments to settler force and monuments of conquest. They communicated a warning to Native Americans, asserting a haunting commitment to our destruction - and yet, we have survived,” said **Luger**.

Luger's research draws on insights from diverse historical sources, including the 1869 *American Navy Journal* which contained a hunting directive that would see the bison population dwindle from tens of millions to near eradication by 1895, in an effort to claim land and weaken the Great Plains Indigenous populations through a war of attrition that removed this vital source of food, shelter, clothing and tool-making material. In addition to the usage of bison bones, their hides were traded by non-natives and preferred to cows' for industrial machinery belts, due to their increased strength and elasticity.

“My ongoing exploration of bison aims to bring awareness to the importance of their impact as an apex species in the environment. Over the course of my life, I've developed a personal relationship with this animal – one that is on the verge of survivor's guilt – because I know their eradication was put in place to create dominance in the Central Plains,” **Luger** said. “We've oversimplified our kinship with nature, and you can't have a whole, complete relationship without complexity.”

Luger invites viewers to engage with *Attrition* through their own unique perspectives, fostering open-ended dialogue and inspiring collective action towards a more sustainable and equitable future. By weaving together past narratives with contemporary discourse, *Attrition* will serve as a catalyst for deeper exploration into environmental stewardship, Indigenous land history, and humanity's true position and responsibility: not as a possessor of the land, but as an extension of it.

Cannupa Hanska Luger: Attrition is curated by Public Art Fund Adjunct Curator Katerina Stathopoulou.

@PublicArtFund #CannupaHanskaLuger



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Cannupa Hanska Luger (b. 1979, Standing Rock Reservation, North Dakota) is an enrolled member of the Three Affiliated Tribes of Fort Berthold and is Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara and Lakota - an identity that deeply informs his works in sculpture, installation, performance and video. His bold style of visual storytelling presents new ways of seeing our humanity while foregrounding an Indigenous worldview. Luger holds a BFA in studio arts from the Institute of American Indian Arts and is represented by Garth Greenan Gallery in New York.

Cannupa Hanska Luger's work is currently on view as a part of the 2024 Whitney Biennial; he was a 2023 Soros Award Fellow, 2022 Guggenheim Fellow, 2020 Creative Capital Fellow, a 2020 Smithsonian Artist Research Fellow, and the recipient of the Museum of Arts and Design's 2018 inaugural Burke Prize, among others. He was also the recipient of a 2021 United States Artists Fellowship Award for Craft, and was named a 2021 GRIST Fixer. Luger has exhibited nationally and internationally including at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gardiner Museum, Kunsthal KAdE, Washington Project for the Arts, Art Mûr, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights.

WHEN & WHERE: Starting on June 5 through November 17, 2024, *Cannupa Hanska Luger: Attrition* will be on view in City Hall Park in Lower Manhattan. The exhibition can be explored anytime, anywhere, on the free **Bloomberg Connects** app.

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 to Brooklyn Bridge-City Hall; R to City Hall; 2, 3 to Park Place

RELATED FREE PROGRAMMING

Opening Celebration

June 4, 2024

6:00 pm ET

City Hall Park, Lower Manhattan, New York City

Free and Open to the Public



Public Art Fund Talks: Cannupa Hanska Luger

October 2024 (TBC)

6:30 pm to 7:30 pm ET

The Cooper Union, Frederick P. Rose Auditorium

41 Cooper Sq, New York, NY 10008

Free and Open to the Public

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

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

SUPPORTS

Bloomberg Philanthropies is the presenting sponsor of *Cannupa Hanska Luger: Attrition*.

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IMAGE CREDITS:

Cannupa Hanska Luger

Photo: courtesy of SandenWolff for Public Art Fund, 2024.

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