

CITYLAB

The Meaning Behind the New Statue Towering Over New York's Hudson River

Sculptor Jaume Plensa's newest installation, "Water's Soul, 2020," aims to inspire global action to protect "the most public space in the world."

By [Doyinsola Oladipo](#) +Follow

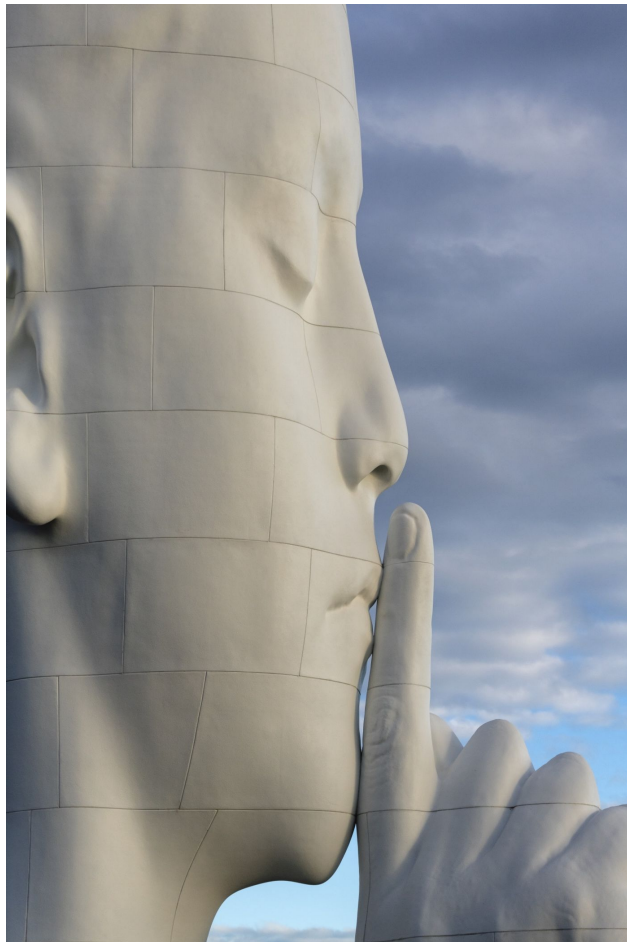
21 de octubre de 2021 22:52 CEST



Water's Soul, 2020 on Newport Pier in Jersey City, New Jersey. Photographer: Tim Schenck. Courtesy Gray, Chicago/New York

The 80-foot "Water's Soul, 2020" by Spanish sculptor Jaume Plensa depicts the head of a young person with an index finger pressed against her lips, her eyes closed in a "gesture for quietude."

The massive installation sits on the edge of the Hudson River, in Jersey City, New Jersey, paying tribute to the river and created as a call to protect all water, which Plensa calls "the most public space in the world."

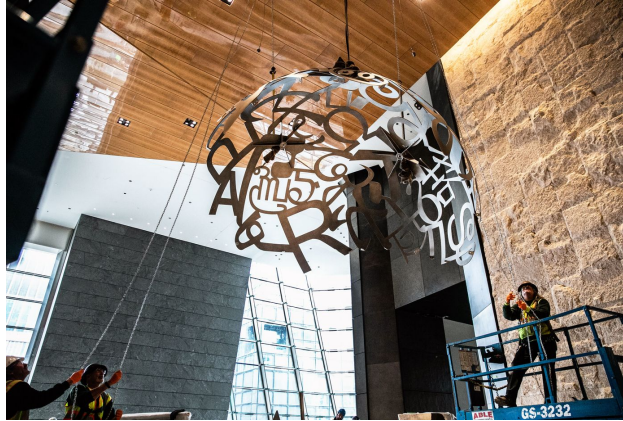


A close-up view of "Water's Soul, 2020," made of polyester resin, fiberglass and marble dust. Photographer: Tim Schenck. Courtesy Gray, Chicago/New York

Plensa's piece was dedicated Thursday, the most recent example of public art that strives to inspire its audience to take action on a social issue, such as the "Fearless Girl" statue in 2017 that called on companies to add more female board members. Recent works have included a focus on the environment, such as Maya Lin's "Ghost Forest."

"As climate change already threatens to take hold of our beautiful planet, we must join together to protect water as one of the most precious elements in nature," Plensa said in a written statement. "Water is the source of life, and 'Water's Soul' is a tribute to that, it's a celebration of life."

Plensa, who is based in his native Barcelona, creates pieces to bring people together through what he calls "activation of public spaces." His most recent installations include "Voices" at Hudson Yards in Manhattan and "Dreaming" in Toronto.



Workers install Jaime Plensa's "Voices" sculpture at Hudson Yard in New York, on Jan. 16. *Photographer: Jeenah Moon*

"Water's Soul," which is made of polyester resin, fiberglass and marble dust, was shipped to the U.S. in 23 containers and is intended to appear "like a drawing in space."

For Jersey City, across the Hudson River from Manhattan, "Water's Soul" is a reminder of how far it's come from a barren area of abandoned rail yards that overlooked trade in New York Harbor during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, it is a growing community that has attracted financial firms looking for office space outside Manhattan post-9/11, and residents looking for more room and affordability than in New York City.



Water's Soul, 2020 is a tribute to the Hudson River. *Photographer: Tim Schenck. Courtesy Gray, Chicago/New York*

"Water's Soul, 2020" was commissioned by the LeFrak Organization Inc. and Simon Property Group Inc., the developers of the Newport residential complex that helped transform the waterfront on the New Jersey side of the Hudson.

"Just as 'Water's Soul' acts to unite the city of Jersey City and New York City, we are reminded that water is the great public space that unites and embraces communities as well as people around the world," Plensa said.