



## interview with jaume plensa as monumental white resin head unveiled in newport pier park

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### THE ARTIST'S TALLEST PUBLIC SCULPTURE TO-DATE

GRAY gallery announces the unveiling of 'water's soul,' 2020, a new site-specific sculpture by internationally renowned artist **jaume plensa**. the white resin head rises 80 feet (24 meters) above newport pier park, across from downtown manhattan and marks **the artist's tallest public sculpture to-date** (as a comparison, the statue of liberty is 150 feet/ 46 meters tall from the top of the base to her torch). organized by GRAY gallery, the permanent installation depicts the **serene face** of a young subject holding a finger to her lips in a **state of silent contemplation**. the **sculptural** portrait, though **monumental in scale**, humbly gestures for quietude, a beckoning towards **empathetic self-reflection**. 'water's soul' will be permanently installed in the newport development on the hudson river in jersey city, new jersey, and dedicated on site in a ceremony **tomorrow, thursday, october 21, 2021**.

in addition to 'water's soul', plensa has also been commissioned to develop **his largest indoor project to date**, **UTOPIA**, which will be installed in the lobby of a new welcome center for the **frederik meijer gardens & sculpture park**, in grand rapids, michigan. composed of portraits that are rendered in relief from **pure white marble**, UTOPIA opens in **november 2021**. finally, **galerie lelong & co., new york**, presents a **solo exhibition** featuring new sculptures by the artist, including the debut of the new **NEST series**, **alabaster sculptures** about five feet (one and a half meters) tall that see portraits emerge from the **stone**. the exhibition opens on **friday, october 29**, and will be on view until **december 23, 2021**.

designboom spoke with **jaume plensa** to find out more about his recently-unveiled projects, as well as his current interests and themes that drive his work. read our [interview](#) in full below.



jaume plensa, water's soul, 2020, courtesy gray chicago/new york  
artwork © jaume plensa studio | photo by timothy schenck

### INTERVIEW WITH JAUME PLENSA

**designboom (DB):** water's soul, your latest site-specific sculpture, will be unveiled soon as a permanent addition to the newport pier park on the hudson river. what is the relation of the sculpture to the surrounding body of water?

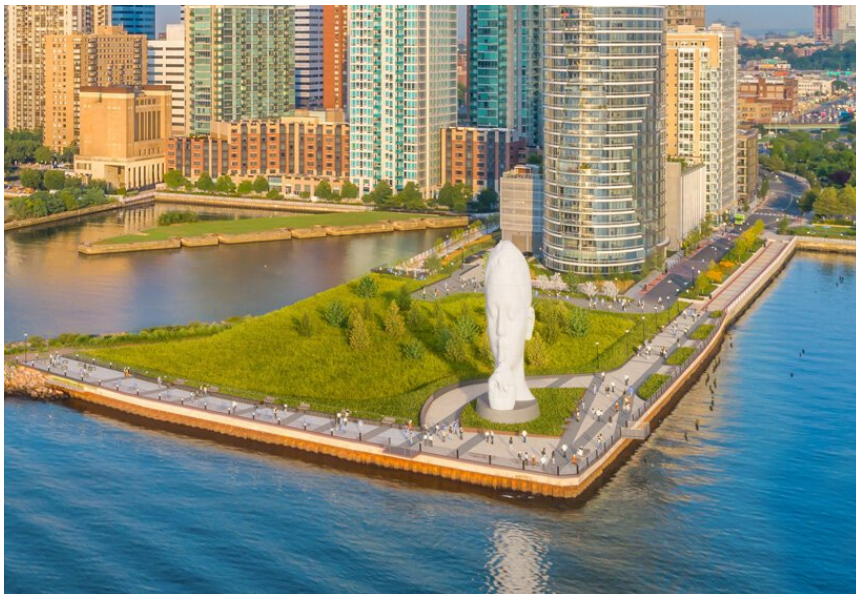
**jaume plensa (JP):** water's soul pays homage to water. the project asks for silence—for us to listen to the profound voice of the water speaking to us. water is the source of life, and water's soul is a celebration of life.



jaume plensa, water's soul, 2020, courtesy gray chicago/new york  
artwork © jaume plensa studio | photo by timothy schenck

**DB:** can you tell us more about **UTOPIA**, your largest indoor project to date, set to open soon as part of the new welcome center for the frederik meijer gardens & sculpture park in grand rapids, michigan?

**JP:** four horizontally elongated faces will cover the four walls of the room creating a surreal monochrome landscape and emotional experience. when visitors enter the space, they will be completely embraced by **UTOPIA**!



jaume plensa, 'water's soul', 2020, newport development, jersey city, new jersey | image courtesy of gray

**DB:** what are the new works that you are presenting in your upcoming gallery exhibition **NEST** at galerie lelong & co.?

**JP:** the exhibition **NEST** explores the head as a poetical shelter that embraces and protects our inner world. for me, the head is the nest where our dreams are born.



jaume plensa, 'water's soul' rendering, 2020, newport development, jersey city, new jersey | image courtesy of gray



**DB: what aspects of your background and upbringing have shaped your creative principles and philosophies?**

**JP:** perhaps my mediterranean origin has influenced my passion for poetry and music, as well as the permanent desire to work with and for the community.

**DB: where do you work on your projects, and how is your studio activated on a day to day basis?**

**JP:** I have always said that my study is located in my head, in the nomadic displacement, and in the multiple activities between materials and ideas.



jaume plensa, UTOPIA model for frederik meijer gardens & sculpture park, in grand rapids, michigan | image courtesy of the artist

**DB: what is the best moment of the day?**

**JP:** I have always liked the dawn, the awakening of the day. it seems that everything is still possible.

**DB: you've long explored an interest in philosophical and spiritual expressions of the human body — can you recall the moment you first acknowledged your interest in the human condition, and what impact that had on you at the time?**

**JP:** I believe that the most important things in life are always invisible; connections that embrace our body in its mysterious relationship with nature and community.



jaume plensa, UTOPIA | image courtesy of the artist

**DB: your work has ranged from public sculpture monumental in scale, to more intimate drawings that voice a private search for expression — how does your approach to a project change depending on medium and form?**

**JP:** I can use a large telescope to see the stars illuminating the cosmos or a small microscope to contemplate the humble cells that give life to a simple organism. I am inspired by the wonderful friction of opposites that seeks to fuse body and soul, matter and spirit.

**DB: why has it been important for you to create work that is accessible to the general public, and that can reach audiences outside of gallery settings?**

**JP:** I think that art in the public space has the extraordinary function of introducing beauty into the daily life of the community, creating spaces of intimacy and silence.



jaume plensa, LUCIA (nest), 2021 | alabaster 571/2×401/8×201/2in(146x102x52cm) 874 kg © jaume plensa | courtesy of galerie lelong & co.

**DB:** how do you intend your work to engage with the cities in which they reside? what impressions do you hope it conjures? what dialogue do you hope it provokes?

**JP:** each public space asks for a different answer. there is no single formula for intervention. in any case, I always try to integrate my personal tradition and experience with the specific tradition of the site, to create a dialogue between my work and the place, between my dreams and the dreams of the community.

**DB:** what are you currently fascinated by, and how is it feeding into your artistic practice?

**JP:** I am currently working in stone. the ancestral memory of this material condensed over multiple centuries turns a simple boulder into a sophisticated time capsule.

**project info:**

**artist:** jaume plensa

**galleries:** richard gray gallery and galerie lelong & co.

**water's soul**

**location:** newport development, jersey city, new jersey

**developers:** LeFrak and simon

**UTOPIA**

**location:** frederik meijer gardens & sculpture park, grand rapids, michigan

**NEST**

**location:** galerie lelong & co., new york

**duration:** october 29 - december 23, 2021