

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAYA LIN: SYSTEMATIC LANDSCAPES
CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART
March 14, 2009-July 12, 2009



WASHINGTON, D.C.—This spring, the Corcoran Gallery of Art will present *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes*—a dramatic installation of major new works by this renowned contemporary artist and architect. On view from March 14 through July 12, the exhibition addresses contemporary ideas about landscape and geologic phenomena. Lin's second nationally-traveling exhibition in 10 years, *Systematic Landscapes* explores how people perceive and experience the

landscape in a time of heightened technological influence and environmental awareness.

Lin (b. 1959) came to prominence in 1981 with her design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. and has since achieved a high degree of recognition for a body of work that includes monuments, buildings, earthworks, sculpture and installations. Traversing Lin's constructed landscapes in this exhibition—moving around, under, and through them—we encounter a world that has been mapped, digitized, analyzed, and then reintroduced by Lin as actual, physical structures. Her work blends a typology of natural forms, from rivers to mountains to seas, with a visual language of scientific analysis represented by grids, models and maps. In doing so, Lin merges an understanding of the ideal and the real, as well as encourages an encounter with conceptual, sculptural and architectural modeling.

Systematic Landscapes is centered on a trio of large-scale sculptural installations: *2x4 Landscape* (2006), *Water Line* (2006) and *Blue Lake Pass* (2006). Each sculpture offers a different means for viewers to engage with and comprehend a schematic representation of landscape forms. In these projects, Lin examines how people's modern relationships to the land are extended, condensed, distorted and interpreted through new computer technologies. She translates a series of dramatic landscape environments selected for their inspiring beauty and connection to life-supporting habitats into spatial environments where viewers can engage with them in an art gallery setting.

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The first and largest of these installations, *2x4 Landscape* (2006), is a vast hill or wave built of more than 50,000 fir and hemlock boards, cut at various lengths and set on end. Conjuring images of an earthen mound or an ocean swell, this work presents a model landscape on a grand scale. Shifting between hill and wave, the installation was partly inspired by the Palouse hills of Eastern Washington, an undulating landscape formed by volcanic lava flows. It measures approximately 60 by 20 by 10 feet and suggests a pixelated, digital rendering of an actual form.

Water Line (2006) maps an underwater landmass located in the South Atlantic Ocean, a volcanic island near Antarctica. Conceived as a large-scale “line drawing” in space, it can be walked around and viewed from different angles. To construct this skeletal, topographical model, Lin collaborated with scientists at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute to fabricate a computer rendering of this largely invisible landscape, which Lin then reconfigured into its physical contoured form using wire. Suspended from above, *Water Line* provides an unexpected view of the natural world.

Blue Lake Pass (2006) models an actual mountain range near the artist’s Colorado home that she has sliced into a grid. The gaps created by this series of nine-cubic-foot particle-board sections of recreated terrain provide new passageways through which the visitor can pass.

Other series represented in the exhibition: *Bodies of Water Series (Caspian Sea, Red Sea, and Black Sea)*, 2006; *Atlas Landscapes (Rand McNally New International Atlas, Rand McNally Cosmopolitan World Atlas, and The University Atlas)*, published 1981–1987, altered 2006; *Sketch Tablets (Wanås, Kentucky, and Colorado)*, 2004–2005; *Wire Landscape*, 2006, and *Plaster Relief Landscapes*, 2005.

In addition to these installations, Lin has created a new piece specifically for the Corcoran, entitled *Pin River–Potomac* (2009). Made entirely of straight pins, this topographic representation is based on the Potomac River. *Pin River–Potomac* links *Systematic Landscapes* to the mid-Atlantic landscape in a unique way that enhances the viewing experience and resonates with regional visitors. This piece will be installed by students at the Corcoran College of Art + Design.

ABOUT MAYA LIN

Born 1959 in Athens, Ohio, to Chinese immigrants, Maya Lin had an American upbringing and her childhood reflects a blend of eastern and Western aesthetics that can still be seen in her work today. Lin’s nearly 30-year career has been a prominent and prolific one. She often crosses the border between artist and architect. While still an undergraduate at Yale University (BA 1981, MA 1986), she notably designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1981), celebrated for its union of simplicity and strength, landscape and human emotion. Lin’s design, although originally controversial for its abstract form, has since received wide acclaim. Located less than a mile from the Corcoran, it is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

Since the early 1980s, whether in public monuments, private commissions or works of art for gallery and museum spaces, Lin has continued to investigate the power of the landscape to evoke meaning and the processes that connect us back to the land. Lin has also received high profile architectural commissions, including the Civil Rights Memorial for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, the interior for the Museum for African Art in New York in 1993 and the Langston Hughes Library for the Children's Defense Fund at the Haley Farm in Clinton, Tennessee in 1999. Most recently, she created the *Confluence Project* (2000-2008), a series of seven art installations along the Columbia River basin for the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and *Wave Field* (2008), an 11-acre earthwork installation for Storm King Art Center, New York. Lin was a finalist in the contest to design the Olympic torch for the 2008 summer games in Beijing. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including her induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame (2005). She was named one of *Time* magazine's "50 for the Future" (1994), and she is the subject of the 1995 Academy Award winning film for Best Documentary, *Maya Lin: A Strong, Clear Vision*.

ORGANIZATION

Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes is organized by the Henry Art Gallery and curated by former Director Richard Andrews. Major support for this exhibition was provided by the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts and The Peter Norton Family Foundation. The presentation at the Corcoran is supported by The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and Frederick and Jane Knops.

PRESS PREVIEW

Media are invited to a press preview for *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes* on **Wednesday, March 11 at 10 a.m.** at the Corcoran, 500 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. Please RSVP by March 9 to kguiter@corcoran.org.

HOURS

The Corcoran's hours of operation are as follows: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; closed Monday and Tuesday.

TICKETS

Tickets to *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes* cost \$10 for adults/seniors/military, \$8 for students and children under six enter for free. To purchase tickets, visit www.corcoran.org, www.ticketmaster.com or call (202) 639-1700.

MEMBERSHIP

Corcoran Gallery of Art membership offers special access to the Corcoran's renowned permanent collection, traveling exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and an array of social events. Members also receive valuable discounts at the Corcoran Shop and the Corcoran College of Art + Design. A Corcoran Member may visit *Maya Lin: Systematic Landscapes* an unlimited number of times for free. The *Systematic Landscapes* Member Preview Day is Thursday, March 12 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information, contact the Membership office at (202) 639-1753, membership@corcoran.org or online at www.corcoran.org/membership.

ABOUT THE CORCORAN

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, a privately funded institution, was founded in 1869 as Washington's first and largest non-federal museum of art. It is known internationally for its distinguished collection of historical and modern American art as well as contemporary art, photography, European painting, sculpture and the decorative arts. Founded in 1890, the Corcoran College of Art + Design is Washington's only four-year college of art and design offering BFA degrees in Digital Media Design, Fine Art, Graphic Design and Photography; a five-year Bachelor of Fine Arts/ Master of Arts in Teaching (BFA/MAT); and a two-year Master of Arts (MA) in Interior Design or History of Decorative Arts. The College's Continuing Education program offers part-time credit and non-credit classes for children and adults and draws more than 2,500 participants each year.

Image credit: *2x4 Landscape*, 2006, Courtesy of PaceWildenstein.

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