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Storm King to Add a New Commission to Its Permanent Collection

Sara Aidi



A rendering of “Fallen Sky” by Sarah Sze. © Sarah Sze/Storm King Art Center

Storm King Art Center has announced it will add its first site-specific commission to its collection in nearly a decade with a new work by Sarah Sze.

The piece, “Fallen Sky,” will be installed at the 500-acre sculpture park in 2020. It will join 10 other site-specific commissions, including works by Richard Serra and Maya Lin.

Rather than reaching for the heavens like many sculptures at Storm King, “Fallen Sky” will include a 36-foot diameter spherical cavity pressed into the earth. An envelope of mirrored stainless steel will give it a glistening veneer.

“I wanted to do something potentially radical in form,” Ms. Sze said. “Something that was much more interwoven, intertwined — that imitates nature rather than marks it.”

That boldness also comes across in the piece’s location.

“One of the things I love about Sarah Sze’s work is, often in her exhibitions, she finds unusual spaces in museums or wherever she’s working,” said John P. Stern, the president of Storm King.

While scouting the park’s lush landscape, Ms. Sze, 49, was drawn to a hollow near the base of Museum Hill. After consulting with curators, she learned that a tree had died there and that its trunk had left a bowl in the earth.

“I kind of responded to that negative space that was created and I was really interested in this idea of how what is not there also defines what’s there,” Ms. Sze said. “How do you make inanimate material live?”

Ms. Sze hopes the mirrored surface of “Fallen Sky” would breath new life into that pit by reflecting “the evolution and the changing seasons in the landscape.” She added that its seemingly unfinished design gives it a potential for change, much like her installation “Corner Plot.”

Ms. Sze, a 2003 MacArthur fellow and professor of visual arts at Columbia University, is known for employing everyday materials to create multimedia installations. Her work is held in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim and the Whitney Museum of Modern Art.

Over the years, she’s created several works that revolve around circularity, most notably planetariums and timekeepers. That theme continues with her upcoming exhibition in a round room at the Gagosian Gallery in Rome.

“That is going to be all about this idea of how a circular shape can encompass you in a way where your directionality is not clear,” Ms. Sze said. “Where you as the viewer sort of become central and try to decide what that means.”