

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**FIVE GIANT MASKS BY ARTIST THOMAS HOUSEAGO
TO BE INSTALLED AT ROCKEFELLER CENTER® THIS SPRING
FORMING AN IMMERSIVE ROOM-LIKE SPACE IN THE PLAZA**



***THOMAS HOUSEAGO:
MASKS (PENTAGON)***

**April 28 – June 12, 2015
Rockefeller Center
New York City**

**Organized by Public Art Fund
and Tishman Speyer**

April 10, 2015, NEW YORK, NY—For six weeks this spring, Thomas Houseago’s new commission *Masks (Pentagon)*, featuring five large sculptural masks forming a pentagonal space that visitors may enter, will be on view in Rockefeller Plaza. From within, the mask’s eyes will create windows that frame views of the landscape and skyscrapers of Midtown Manhattan. *Thomas Houseago: Masks (Pentagon)* will be free to the public and on view April 28 through June 12, 2015 at Rockefeller Center between 49th and 50th Streets. The exhibition is organized by [Public Art Fund](#) and [Tishman Speyer](#).

Designed specifically for this plaza, *Masks (Pentagon)* consists of five masks ranging in height from about 14 ½ to 16 ½ feet, each of which reflects a different approach to the stylized representation of the human face, from clearly recognizable to highly abstracted. Standing vertically with their edges connected at key points, the monumental elements bring Houseago’s striking sculptural language into a dialogue with public space and architectural scale. As each colossal face looks out toward the surrounding cityscape, the spaces between them become “doorways” that give access to an interior “room.”

The five masks, which were cast from clay in industrial-strength synthetic plaster, stand on a stepped base made from massive beams of unfinished redwood. The back of each element of the sculpture reveals the artist’s method of construction – a grid-like armature of rebar inlaid with hemp and plaster. The resulting five-sided form evokes an archaic temple, the ritual function of which has been lost in time.

"Throughout its history, Rockefeller Center has been a destination for the public to experience incredible artwork and architecture firsthand," said **Tishman Speyer Co-Chief Executive Officers Jerry Speyer and Rob Speyer**. "We are thrilled to partner with the Public Art Fund to unveil Thomas Houseago's *Masks (Pentagon)*, a project that was created specifically to be exhibited in the Plaza, where it will be enjoyed by both New Yorkers and visitors alike."

"In his most experimental and spatially immersive work to date, Thomas Houseago presents us with five indelible yet mysterious faces. They are recognizable only as belonging to the mythical realm of gods and monsters, reinvented for a contemporary moment obsessed with fantasies of both a primitive past and a dystopian future," said **Nicholas Baume, Public Art Fund Director & Chief Curator**.

"In this piece I wanted to bring the activity and the feel of the studio into public space as an experience. The public gets to 'see' the work both from the outside as an image but then also from the inside as an insight into its construction. It becomes a kind of retreat from the city but also a porous viewing space. The public becomes part of the experience of looking and also an integral part of the work," said **Thomas Houseago**.

Houseago creates monumental, often figurative sculptures that combine classical and modernist references and techniques. With a handmade sensibility, he utilizes materials from carved wood, clay, plaster, and bronze to steel rods, concrete, and burlap to create works that intentionally reveal traces of their making. In *Masks (Pentagon)*, planar surfaces like the cheeks or forehead of a face adjoin articulated features like eyebrows or a nose, creating an interplay between flat and three-dimensional elements. The artist's hand—as well as the footprints of his young daughter—is visible in many of the cast surfaces, while the roughhewn reverse of each face bears metal elements that form connections between the masks. Evoking a visceral response, these abstracted yet iconic faces convey both an elemental sense of power and an open vulnerability.

Since 1998, Public Art Fund and Tishman Speyer have collaborated to present internationally acclaimed works of art to the millions of people who visit and work at Rockefeller Center. Recent projects include Jeff Koons' massive topiary sculpture *Split-Rocker* (2000) presented in 2014; Ugo Rondinone's *Human Nature* (2013), nine 16-to 20-foot-tall, human-shaped stone figures; Chris Burden's *What My Dad Gave Me* (2008), a 65-foot tall skyscraper made up entirely of construction parts; and Anish Kapoor's *Sky Mirror* (2006), which received the award for "Best Show in a Public Space" by the U.S. Art Critics Association. In 2003, Takashi Murakami's *Reversed Double Helix* featured his 30-foot-tall "Mr Pointy" sculpture, two giant floating balloons, and a forest of mushroom seating; in 2001, Louise Bourgeois presented three massive bronze spiders, including the 30-foot-tall *Maman*; and in 2000 Jeff Koons' first monumental topiary, *Puppy*, blossomed at the foot of 30 Rockefeller Plaza.

Masks (Pentagon) is courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery.

VISITING THE EXHIBITION

Thomas Houseago: Masks (Pentagon) is on view April 28 through June 12 in Rockefeller Center Plaza in Midtown Manhattan between 5th and 6th Avenues and 49th and 50th Streets.

Hours: 24 hours, 7 days a week

Subway: F, D, B, V to 47-50th Street Rockefeller Center; N, R, W to 49th Street; 1 to 50th Street; 6 to 51st Street

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Thomas Houseago (b. 1972, Leeds, England) lives and works in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include *As I Went Out One Morning* at Storm King Art Center, Mountainville, New York (2013); *Thomas Houseago: Striding Figure/Standing Figure* at Galleria Borghese, Rome (2013); *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Thomas Houseago: Hermaphrodite* at Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts, Norwich (2012); *The World Belongs to You* at Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2011); *The Beat of the Show* at Inverleith House, Edinburgh (2011); *What Went Down* at Modern Art Oxford (2010, traveled to Ashmolean Museum, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, and Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de l'Île de Vassivière, through 2011); and *The Artist's Museum* at MOCA, Los Angeles (2010). Also in 2010, his work was included in the Whitney Biennial as well as Public Art Fund's group exhibition *Statuesque* in City Hall Park. He earned his BA from the Central Saint Martins College of Art, London in 1994, and studied at De Ateliers, Amsterdam from 1994-1996. Houseago is represented by Gagosian Gallery, Hauser + Wirth, and Xavier Hufkens Gallery.

ABOUT PUBLIC ART FUND

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

Since its inception in 1977, Public Art Fund has presented more than four hundred artists' exhibitions and projects at sites throughout New York City's five boroughs, making it possible for artists to engage diverse audiences and, along the way, redefine public art in relation to the changing nature of contemporary art. Early Public Art Fund projects include *Messages to the Public* (1982-1990), an exhibition series that ran on an 800-square foot animated lightboard in Times Square and featured more than 70 artists, among them Guerrilla Girls, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, Richard Prince, Kiki Smith, and David Wojnarowicz. More recent exhibitions include Olafur Eliasson's *The New York City Waterfalls* (2008) along the East River; Kate Gilmore's *Walk the Walk* (2010) in Bryant Park; Rob Pruitt's *The Andy Monument* (2011) in Union Square; the career sculpture retrospective *Sol LeWitt: Structures, 1965-2006* (2011) in City Hall Park; *Tatzu Nishi: Discovering Columbus* (2012) in Columbus Circle; *Danh Vo: We The People* (2014) in Brooklyn Bridge Park and City Hall Park; and *Tatiana Trouvé: Desire Lines* (2015) in Doris C. Freedman Plaza, Central Park. For more information, visit PublicArtFund.org.

Public Art Fund is a nonprofit organization supported by contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations and, in part, with funds from government agencies, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Public Art Fund Talks at The New School

Thomas Houseago: Artist Talk
Wednesday, April 29, 6:30pm
The New School 12th Street Auditorium
66 West 12th Street (between 5th and 6th Avenues)

ABOUT TISHMAN SPEYER

Tishman Speyer is one of the leading developers, owners, operators, and asset managers of first class real estate worldwide. Active across North America, Europe, South America and Asia, Tishman Speyer is relied upon by many of the world's most prestigious corporations to meet their office space needs. As of September 30, 2012, the firm has acquired, developed and/or managed a portfolio of over 125 million sq. ft. with a total value of over USD \$61.3 billion since its founding in 1978. Signature assets include New York's Rockefeller Center and the Chrysler Center, Sao Paulo's Torre Norte, Ventura Corporate Towers in Rio de Janeiro, and Opernturm in Frankfurt. Tishman Speyer also has projects at different stages of development currently in Brasília, Chengdu, Frankfurt, Gurgaon, Hyderabad, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, São Paolo, San Francisco, Shanghai, Suzhou and Tianjin.

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Image: Thomas Houseago, *Masks (Pentagon)*, 2015. Tuf-Cal, hemp, iron rebar, steel, redwood. 18' .75" x 23' 1.125" x 24' 3.5" Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery. Photography © Fredrik Nilsen, Courtesy Public Art Fund, NY

#MasksRockCenter @PublicArtFund

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