

ART PARKS

10 PLACES *to* ENJOY PUBLIC ART
in the GREAT OUTDOORS

BY
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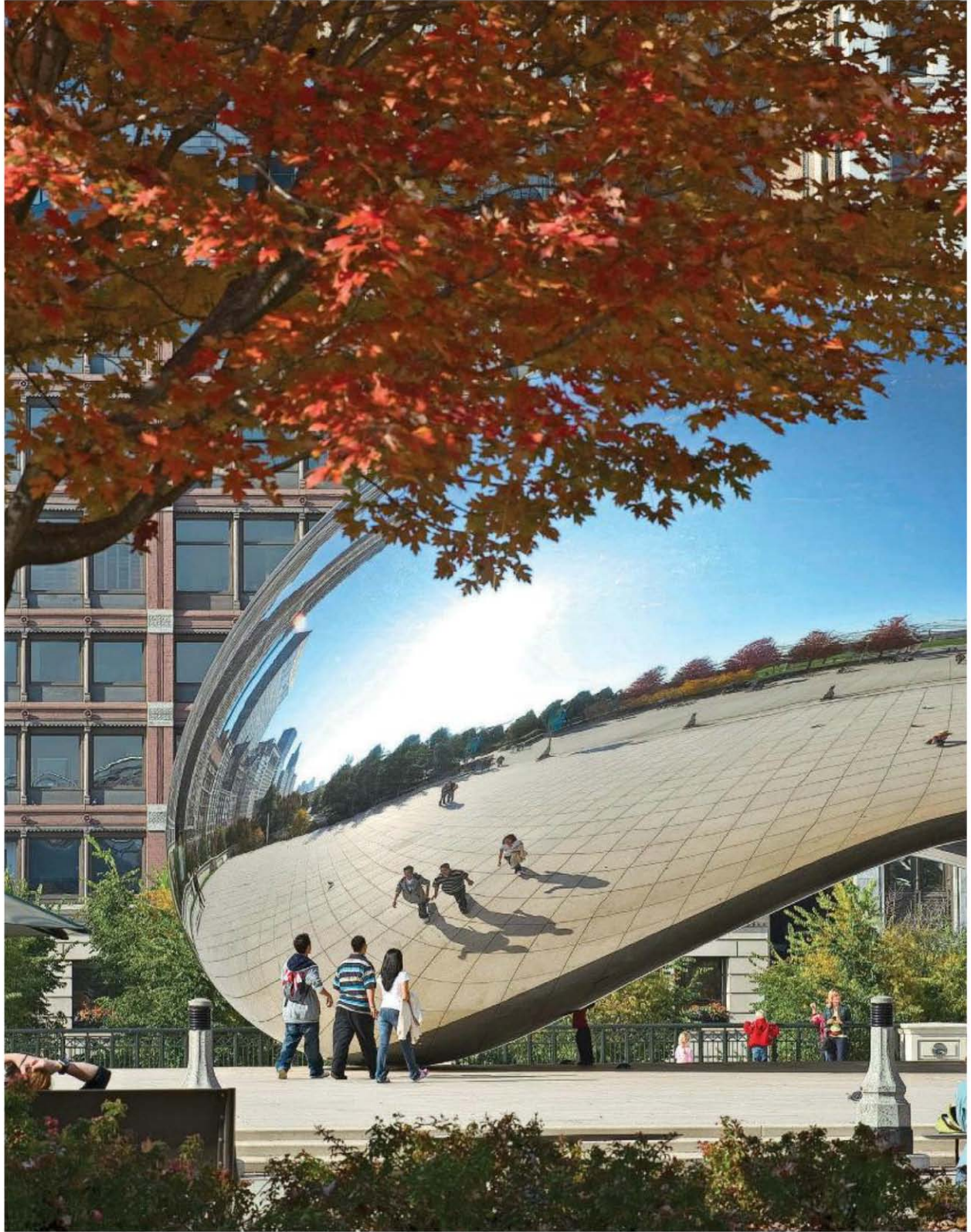
VIEWING A MASTERPIECE in a museum can be exhilarating, but discovering art in the open air brings its own rush of delight. Walls drop away, hovering guards disappear, and the view expands to include blue skies and leafy trees.

Public art can be big, bold, and iconic—like at Chicago’s Millennium Park, where the reflective surface of Anish Kapoor’s massive silver Cloud Gate mirrors and makes an instant community of captivated viewers below. Or it can be more quiet—an Andy Goldsworthy sculpture waiting around the bend on a solitary wooded trail.

Whatever the setting, access to art has a liberating effect. “Art can bring beauty and hope into public spaces and transform people’s perceptions,” says Ellen Ryan, program director for creative placemaking at The Trust for Public Land. “Moving art out of the museum and making it free to everyone opens up a flow of ideas and a sense of belonging.”

As researchers have found, time in nature and time with art both have positive effects on mood and well-being. So if you’re ready for a double dose, check out these ten art parks where you can exercise both mind and body for free.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE ARTS ORGANIZATIONS





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1 Millennium Park

Chicago, Illinois

Once a grimy railyard on the Lake Michigan shorefront, Millennium Park has transformed an eyesore of a site into a celebration of urban renewal—and public art has played a huge part in the reinvention. Pieces like Spanish artist Jaume Plensa's *Crown Fountain* represent the new face of the city quite literally: the 50-foot glass towers glow with video of Chicago residents pursing their lips and, like modern gargoyles, spouting plumes of water into a black granite pool below. British artist Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate*, a 110-ton, bean-shaped sculpture beloved by art critics and tourists alike, entertains with its funhouse reflections of passersby shimmering against the city skyline. Crowds pack the Frank Gehry–designed Jay Pritzker Pavilion for symphonies, festivals, and movie nights—and if visitors need to stretch their legs, they can always try free tai chi on the Great Lawn or a guided plant walk in the Lurie Garden.



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Socrates Sculpture Park

Queens, New York

In 1986, sculptor and Queens local Mark di Suvero spearheaded the conversion of an abandoned East River landfill into an outdoor art experiment. In a nod to the surrounding Greek community, di Suvero named the spot after Socrates, the classical philosopher. Today the park serves as a public square where cutting-edge art coexists with farmers' markets, film nights, and cooking classes. Exhibits change frequently. One season, a giant inflatable Buddha bobbed serenely on the park's shoreline; the next, three giant industrial cherry-picker machines loomed on the grass, their buckets full of tropical bamboo and palm plants. Look for provocative pieces, too—these artists don't shy away from social commentary. After the park flooded during Superstorm Sandy, climate change became the topic *du jour*. Here, though, the sweeping vistas and open skies encourage a contemplative view of even the most contentious issues.

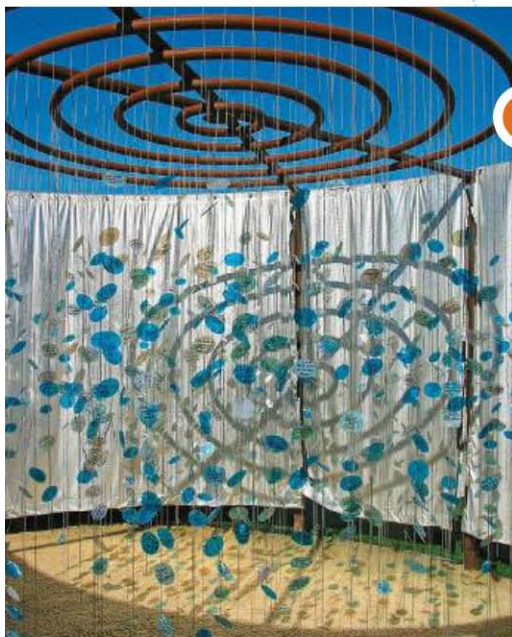
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Cornerstone Gardens

Sonoma, California

3 Cornerstone's nine acres contain more than a dozen gardens by noted California landscape architects. Strolling through the grounds, you'll find much more than tea roses and picket fences. In the Mediterranean Meadow, grasses of varied height and colors move in the breeze like a living sculpture, while a sweeping windscreen woven from eucalyptus bark and branches creates an elegant sightline to the Sonoma hills. Look for whimsy, too: hundreds of kitschy, spinning pinwheels blossom from a plot of AstroTurf, and when the holidays roll around, a field of hundreds of glowing snowmen lights the night. The grounds also include galleries, shops, and—this being Sonoma—wine-tasting rooms. When it's time to put your feet up, look for the Big Blue Chair, a towering Adirondack at the entranceway that dwarfs anyone intrepid enough to climb in.



South Carolina Botanical Garden

Clemson, South Carolina

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Fans of innovative environmental artist Andy Goldsworthy will appreciate the Nature-Based Sculpture Program at the South Carolina Botanical Garden. Local and international talent have used the space to mold a dozen site-specific works from materials found on-site—stones, vegetation, and soil. The result is sculptures that seem to sprout from the landscape, like the impressive *Clemson Clay Nest*, a whirling tangle of pine logs rising from a deep pit in the red Carolina clay. This is one museum where curators don't have to worry about wear and tear on the collection: decay and rebirth just come with the territory. Almost 20 years ago, artist Patrick Dougherty re-created a famous Renaissance temple by twisting dry tree branches tightly around a framework of saplings. Today, the young trees have pushed through the walls, transforming what once resembled an elegantly woven bird's nest into a verdant crown of leaves.



5



Caponi Art Park

Eagan, Minnesota

In the 1950s, Italian-born sculptor Anthony Caponi built himself a house on a wooded plot 20 minutes south of St. Paul and filled the backyard with his distinctive stone carvings. Caponi had a lifelong mission to “bring art to the people”: during his years as an art professor at Macalester College, he often invited students to find inspiration in his outdoor studio, and in 1987 he opened a full 60 acres to the public. Permanently conserved with help from The Trust for Public Land in 2005, the Caponi property now invites visitors to stroll on miles of wooded trails, discovering foliage and fine art in seamless combination. A concrete serpent curls up on a grassy slope, while a stone bust nestles half-hidden among wild columbine. At the Theater in the Woods, a circular stage blends into a leafy grove where spectators lounge and revel in Shakespeare, poetry slams, and symphonies.

The Fields Sculpture Park

Ghent, New York

Surrounded by the dairies and apple orchards of upstate New York, The Fields Sculpture Park produces a fresh crop of unique pieces each year. More incubator than museum, the center's exhibits change frequently, with artists from around the world taking up residence and opening their studios to the public. Nearly 80 works dot the meadowlands: favorites range from an elegant (but none too comfy) chaise-lounge crafted from steel and river stones to a cluster of skeletal white towers, toppled in a field like the ruins of an alien civilization. A special architecture program spotlights structures that really push the envelope, such as a space-age RV and a spooky, subterranean maze of cinderblock tunnels. The LEED-certified visitors center hosts summertime concerts, readings, and dance, while the park itself is open year-round. In wintertime, adventurous art-lovers can even glide the grounds on groomed cross-country ski tracks.



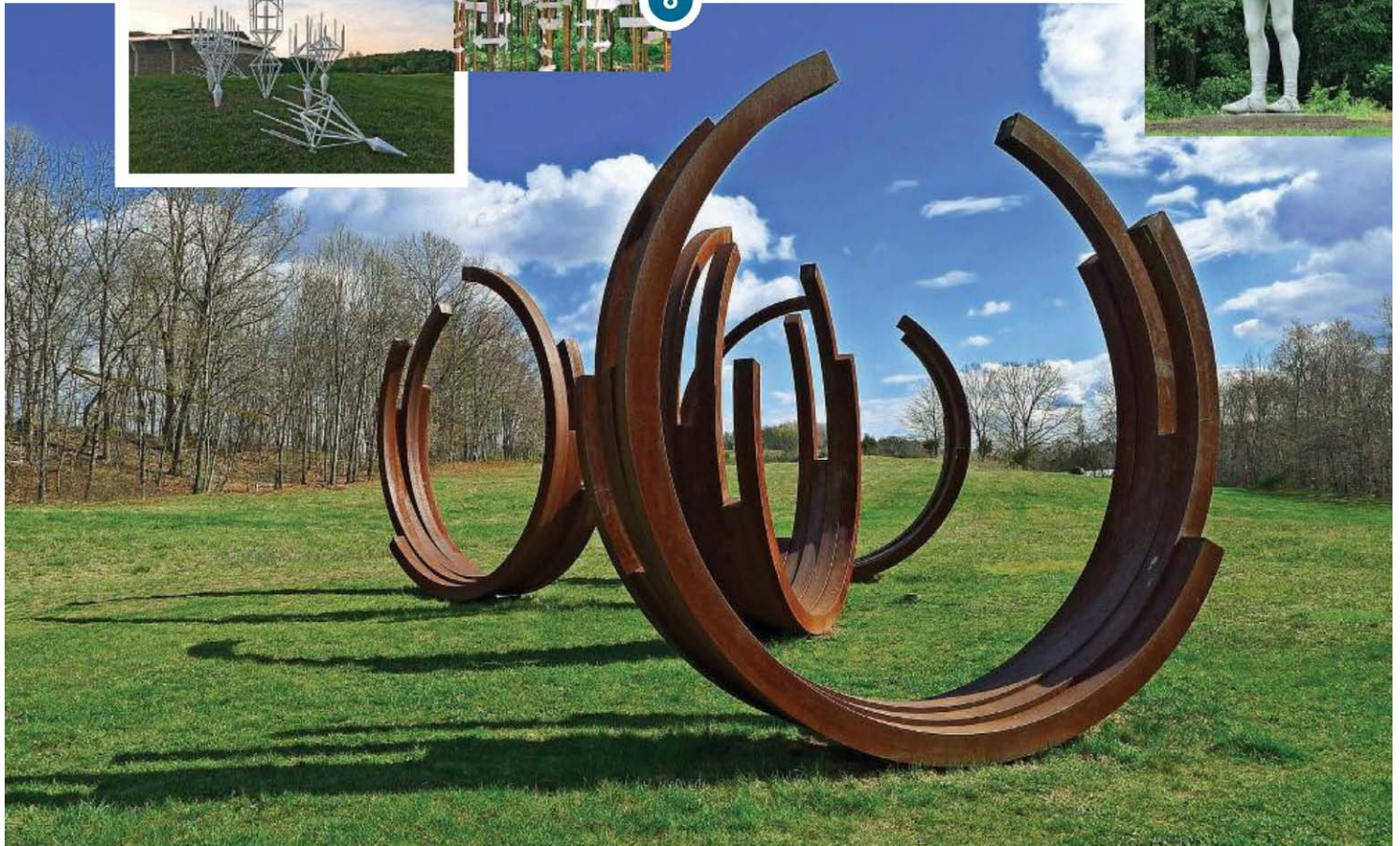
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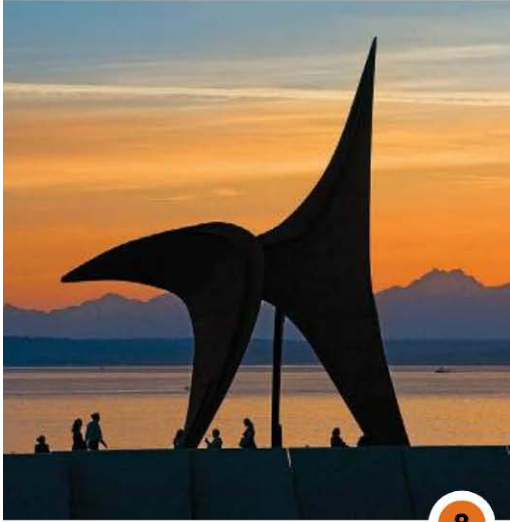
Laumeier Sculpture Park

St. Louis, Missouri

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Dubbed a “living lab,” Laumeier offers curious visitors a place to contemplate the natural chemistry between art and environment. The iconic red cylinders of the park's prize piece, Alexander Liberman's *The Way*, greet visitors in a central meadow. From there, more than a hundred acres offer something for everyone: crowd-pleasers like Niki de Saint Phalle's mosaic-encrusted cat (named Ricardo) and Tony Tasset's spooky, 12-foot-high eyeball mix with abstract work by Ernest Trova, Donald Judd, and Mark di Suvero. Don't miss Donald Lipski's whimsically named *Ball? Ball! Wall? Wall!* a 300-foot-long parade of massive steel buoys that wind along a tree-lined trail. For an insider's perspective, take the “How'd They Do That?” tour and learn about the creation, care, and installation of large-scale work—or enjoy the multisensory experience of the “Site/Sound” audio tour, which pairs each sculpture with an experimental soundscape from a local musician.





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Olympic Sculpture Park

Seattle, Washington

In 1998, the Seattle Art Museum teamed up with The Trust for Public Land to turn a defunct petroleum transfer site into a striking open space. When the Olympic Sculpture Park opened on the waterfront a decade later, locals secured a front-row seat to both big-name art and a city shoreline that had long been closed off from the public. Today, an elegant promenade zigzags across green lawns and artwork, passing over a highway and train tracks before sloping down to the waters of Elliott Bay. The collection settles comfortably into the harbor landscape and features works by Richard Serra, Alexander Calder, Mark di Suvero, and Louise Nevelson. When pleasure-seekers have their fill of sculpture, they can head down to the beach to relax, explore a salmon-habitat restoration project, or climb a platform for views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains.

THE FENCE

New York, Boston, Atlanta

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There's a traveling gallery you'll only find along a chain-link fence. The centerpiece of this peripatetic event is a thousand-foot-long banner of images by photographers from around the globe, displayed in various public green spaces. Begun in 2012 by a coalition of photography organizations, "THE FENCE" has appeared in New York's Brooklyn Bridge Park, Boston's Rose F. Kennedy Greenway, and the Atlanta Beltline. The project celebrates all kinds of diversity, with past shows spotlighting unique communities from Russian bodybuilders to the vanishing tradespeople of Hoboken, New Jersey. At a distance, passersby might mistake this pop-up spectacle for a glossy ad campaign—but up close they'll discover candid, commercial-free imagery in a delightfully unexpected spot.



The Fran and Ray Stark Sculpture Garden at the Getty Center

Los Angeles, California

Perched in the Santa Monica Mountains and with sweeping views of downtown Los Angeles, the Getty Center feels a world away from the tangled freeways below. Its cream-colored travertine walkways wind between galleries and lush greenery, giving the complex a Mediterranean feel. The Stark Sculpture Garden, a gift from Hollywood producer Ray Stark and his wife, offers arriving visitors a peaceful spot to transition from the bustle of the city to the contemplative mood of the museum. The garden's designers have created an intimate outdoor room, with trees and myrtle hedges suggesting walls and tufted fescue grass for a carpeted floor. It's the perfect setting to survey sculptures by Isamu Noguchi, Elisabeth Frink, and Barbara Hepworth—arranged like actors on a stage—and take in the massive bronze by Henry Moore towering serenely above the reflecting pool.

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