

## Alligator Alert! Union Square Unveils NYC Legend Art Installation

*Public art piece by Swedish artist Alexander Klingspor pays tribute to New York City by portraying one of its most popular urban legends*



Photo credit: Jane Kratochvil

**NEW YORK (October 17, 2023)** — An urban myth came to life in Union Square Park today with the unveiling of public art installation, “NYC Legend.” The bronze sculpture by Swedish artist Alexander Klingspor, in collaboration with Mollbrinks Gallery, features a life-sized alligator on the back of a manhole cover lid, drawing on the century-old myth of sewer alligators inhabiting the underbelly of New York City. The installation will be on display from October 2023 to June 2024.

Originating a century ago, the legend suggests that New Yorkers once abandoned baby alligators—imported as pets from Louisiana and Florida—in the sewers when they became too large to manage. Over time, this story has evolved into tales of subterranean monsters, capturing the city’s imagination.

Inspired by the resilience of both alligators and New Yorkers, “NYC Legend” merges ancient mythological symbolism with modern urban folklore. The sculpture pays tribute to New York City’s enduring capacity to adapt and survive, a quality embodied by the alligator—a creature revered across many ancient cultures for its armor of scales and ability to regrow limbs.

“Stories are the very backbone of human civilization giving shape to our shared consciousness through sculptures, paintings, and architecture,” says Klingspor. “This piece is a testament to our timeless drive to find icons in nature, and to the bridge that myth builds between the ancient and modern that still echoes today.”

Presented in partnership with New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and Union Square Partnership, and funded by Swedish Mollbrinks Gallery, the sculpture was cast by Perseo Foundry in Switzerland in, which is known for top-quality materials and advanced casting techniques, such as Lost Wax and Vacuum.

“Alexander Klingspor's striking bronze sculpture, “NYC Legend,” joins the impressive collection of iconic public sculptures proudly on display throughout New York City. Its placement in Union Square, one of Manhattan's most prominent and bustling locations, for a period of eight months allows for widespread and meaningful engagement with the public,” said Joseph Douek, a member of the NYC Planning Commission. “We take great pride in showcasing Klingspor's masterpiece and are hopeful for its permanent installation following the exhibition period.”

“Union Square is a local destination where New Yorkers celebrate community, culture and spirited expression, as well as a global destination for artists from around the world to share their public works for all to enjoy in New York City,” said Julie Stein, Executive Director, Union Square Partnership. “We look forward to sharing this legendary work of art with the Union Square community and encourage all city visitors to come to Union Square to see this magnificent sculpture for themselves.”

With a rich history rooted in the power of public expression, Union Square Park has presented renowned works of public art in recent years, from New York City artist MIDABI's “The Only Other” to street murals by Spanish artist Vanesa Álvarez and Sunset Park artist Ji Yong Kim to the critically-acclaimed Confront Art's SEEINJUSTICE series, presented in the fall of 2021. The series featured three 12 foot bronze sculptures of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Congressman John Lewis by Chris Carnabuci.

“This sculpture is a beautiful representation of our enduring resilience as New Yorkers, and embodies one of the most famous urban legends about our city,” said Anthony Perez, New York City Parks Manhattan Borough Commissioner. “Public art installations like this are one of the many ways we use our public parks to celebrate the stories and spirit that make our city so unique. I'm so excited to see this sculpture take its place in iconic Union Square Park, where I'm sure it will surprise and delight both New Yorkers and visitors.”

A quick jaunt uptown from Union Square, Thompson Central Park New York is the official host hotel of Alexander Klingspor's highly-anticipated public art exhibition. In celebration of the artwork, Thompson Central Park will introduce an intimate look behind Klingspor's creative process to bring his sculpture NYC Legend to life. The display, open through November, will be the debut work exhibited within the hotel's newly-unveiled ground floor atrium, inviting hotel guests and visitors to learn more about New York's City's most intriguing urban legend, as well as Klingspor's tactical artistic process. In celebration of the partnership, Thompson Central Park is offering friends and supporters of NYC Legend a preferred rate when booking at the hotel by using code GATOR.

“At Thompson Central Park, we thrive on bringing local culture and storytelling to life, and what could be more intriguing than one of New York City’s most curious urban legends?,” said Justin Kellerman, Area Vice President & General Manager, Thompson Central Park New York. “We were drawn to Alexander Klingspor’s fresh interpretation of New York folklore, and we look forward to welcoming our hotel guests to explore the conversation and his process as Thompson Central Park’s first exhibition in the atrium, where we hope to have many more thought-provoking installations from globally renowned and emerging artists alike, in the years to come.”

NYC Legend will be on display at Union Square’s Triangle Park, opposite 10 Union Square East through June 2024. For more information and to plan your visit, see [www.unionsquarenyc.org](http://www.unionsquarenyc.org).

A selection of NYC Legend images can be found [here](#).

## **ABOUT ALEXANDER KLINGSPOR**

Alexander Klingspor (b. 1977) was born in Stockholm and worked for over 20 years between New York’s Union Square and Stockholm’s Royal Academy. With gallery representation in New York, Stockholm, and London, his large-scale canvas paintings have been exhibited at Christie’s Stockholm, the LA Art Show, the Miami Art Fair, and Sweden’s Waldermasudde and VIDA museums. In 2018, Klingspor collaborated with novelist Sir Salman Rushdie and composer Ittai Shapira on “The Midnight’s Children Project,” a visual and musical project that was an official selection at numerous film festivals. Beginning in 2020, Klingspor expanded to bronze sculpture, casting his work at the Perseo Foundry in Switzerland. Early pieces were shown at the London Art Fair in 2022, with the largest on display from October 2023 to June 2024 in New York’s Union Square Park. Notable collectors of Klingspor’s work include Sir Salman Rushdie, Iris Cantor, Whoopie Goldberg, and Stellan Skarsgård.

## **ABOUT MOLLBRINKS**

MOLLBRINKS was established in 1957 in Sweden by Lars Mollbrink and has continuously operated as a family owned business. Today, the gallery is run by Lars Mollbrink’s son and grandson, Jan Mollbrink and Johan Hauffman. Historically, the gallery has exhibited a wide range of modern masters of the 20th century with focus on Salvador Dali and Marc Chagall original artworks. Mollbrinks is also a world renowned expert on Anders Zorn etchings. Since its opening, the gallery has built up an international clientele and a reputation for its high quality exhibitions.

Mollbrinks made their first presence in the US during the 1990’s with the exhibition ‘Scandinavian Masters’. The exhibition toured for a decade in museums across the US, from Seattle to Chicago and further out east to Philadelphia.

In more recent years, Mollbrinks has increased its focus on international contemporary artists with an emphasis on international art fairs and public sculpture exhibitions. Alexander Klingspor's 'NYC Legend' is the gallery's first public sculpture project in New York. For more information visit [www.molbrinks.se](http://www.molbrinks.se).

#### **ABOUT UNION SQUARE PARTNERSHIP**

For over 45 years, Union Square Partnership has worked to ensure the best possible quality of life for its residents, businesses and visitors. USP's programs include sanitation, public safety, economic development, public programming, and marketing services, and we invest in the beautification and maintenance of Union Square Park - the district's crown jewel. USP is dedicated to the neighborhood, and work 24/7 to make sure that Union Square-14th Street remains a phenomenal place to live, work and visit. With millions of annual visitors, residents and commuters accessing Union Square and the astounding transit options, the Union Square-14th Street district of Manhattan is a thriving hub of culture, food, fashion, tech and cutting-edge businesses. For more information visit [unionsquarenyc.org](http://unionsquarenyc.org).

#### **ABOUT THOMPSON CENTRAL PARK NEW YORK**

[Thompson Central Park New York](#) delivers the Thompson Hotels brand's award-winning hospitality in Midtown New York, steps from the southern edge of Central Park on West 56th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. The property opened in 2021 with guestrooms and suites by Stonehill Taylor as well as the lobby, atrium and public spaces by Thomas Juul-Hansen. Last year, Thompson Central Park New York introduced The Upper Stories and Upper Stories Lounge, a luxurious hotel-within-a-hotel concept, and a first for the Thompson Hotels brand. Throughout the hotel, guests will find music-centric artwork and programming, paying homage to the musical history of the landmark property. On site, guests and locals alike enjoy beloved culinary spot Burger Joint along with the hotel's lobby bar and restaurant, Parker's. Thompson Central Park New York redefines the New York City experience for sophisticated, contemporary global travelers, joining Thompson's additional New York City properties, The Beekman, a Thompson Hotel and Gild Hall. Follow @thompsoncentralpark on Instagram and visit [thompsoncentralpark.com](http://thompsoncentralpark.com) for more information.

#### **ABOUT ART IN THE PARKS**

For over 50 years, NYC Parks' Art in the Parks program has brought contemporary public artworks to over 200 of the city's parks, collaborating with arts organizations and artists to produce over 2,000 works by 1,300 notable and emerging artists. For more information on works currently on view, and for tips on how to exhibit with Parks, visit [nyc.gov/parks/art](http://nyc.gov/parks/art).

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