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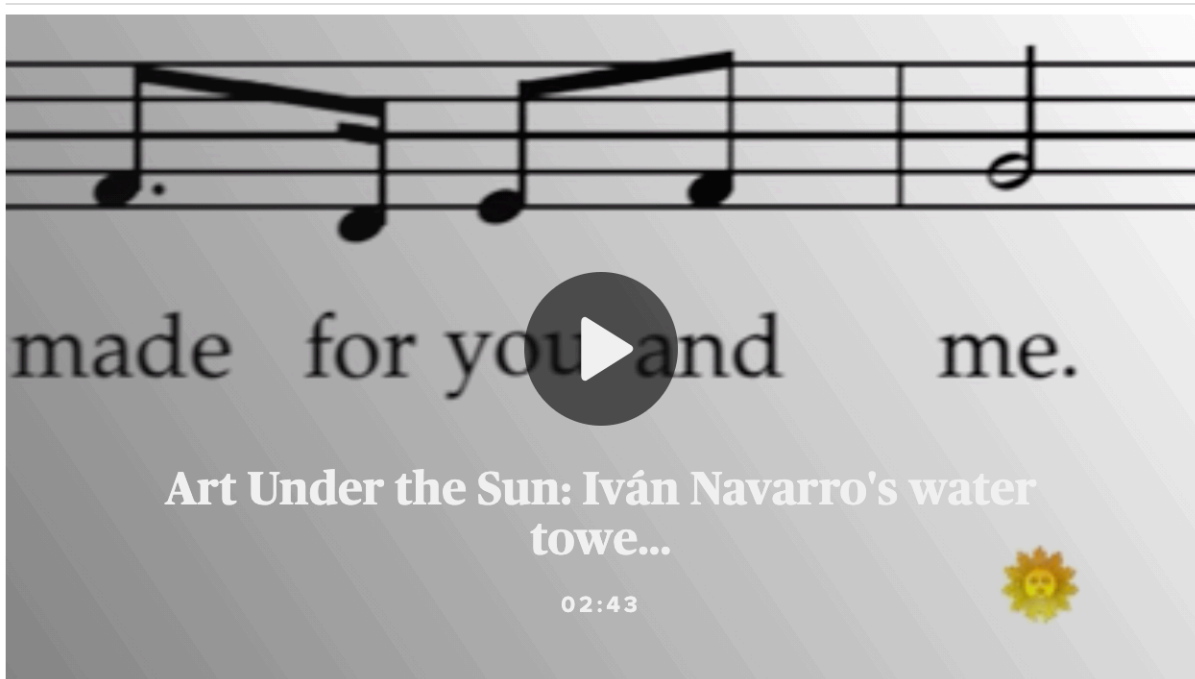
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IVAN NAVARRO

CBS NEWS, 26 August 2019

CBS NEWS / August 26, 2019, 1:00 PM

Water towers as art: Iconic urban fixtures decorate a Chicago park



Chicago's Navy Pier park is now home to an eye-catching sight: water towers, which are sculptures created by Iván Navarro back in 2014. The artist was inspired by the water towers found throughout New York City, and named his piece after the Woody Guthrie song, "[This Land Is Your Land.](#)"

IVAN NAVARRO

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Iván Navarro's neon-decorated sculptures, titled "This Land Is Your Land," speak of a society chasing dreams of economic advancement, social mobility, and home. / **CBS NEWS**

Navarro said his piece, which replicates iconic urban fixtures, is a commentary on migration: "I realize that that song is connected to the nomadic workers that were very common at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States. And they would travel from city to city to look for work. And every time they saw a water tower, they would jump out of the train. Because that's where work was, or [where] something was happening. There was some economical activity in that town."

Look inside the first water tower and you'll notice a word or two reflected in a mirror.

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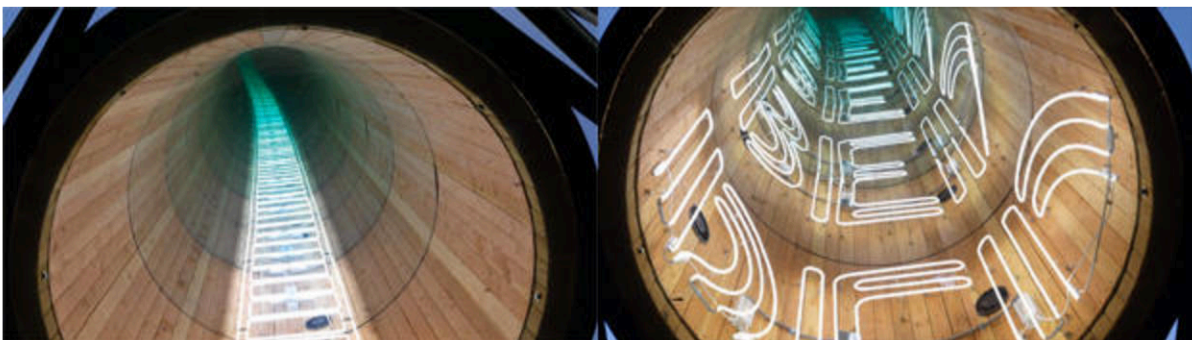


Inside one of Navarro's water tower sculptures. / ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN/COURTESY OF IVÁN NAVARRO, PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

"When you read the lyrics of the song, each paragraph ends with a 'me,'" Navarro said. "So, I took the *me* from the lyrics. Because I work with the idea of the reflection of the *me* into the mirror, the *me* turns into *we*."

That flip reflects the song's call for unity. "You realize that the song is not just about me, the singer, but he's talking about society."

The second tower features a ladder, representing progress; and the third spells out "bed," which to Navarro represents the idea of home. "That's also an inspiration from the idea of inhabiting space, a home, and how bed is the most basic idea of inhabiting space," he said.



/ ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN/COURTESY OF IVÁN NAVARRO, PAUL KASMIN GALLERY

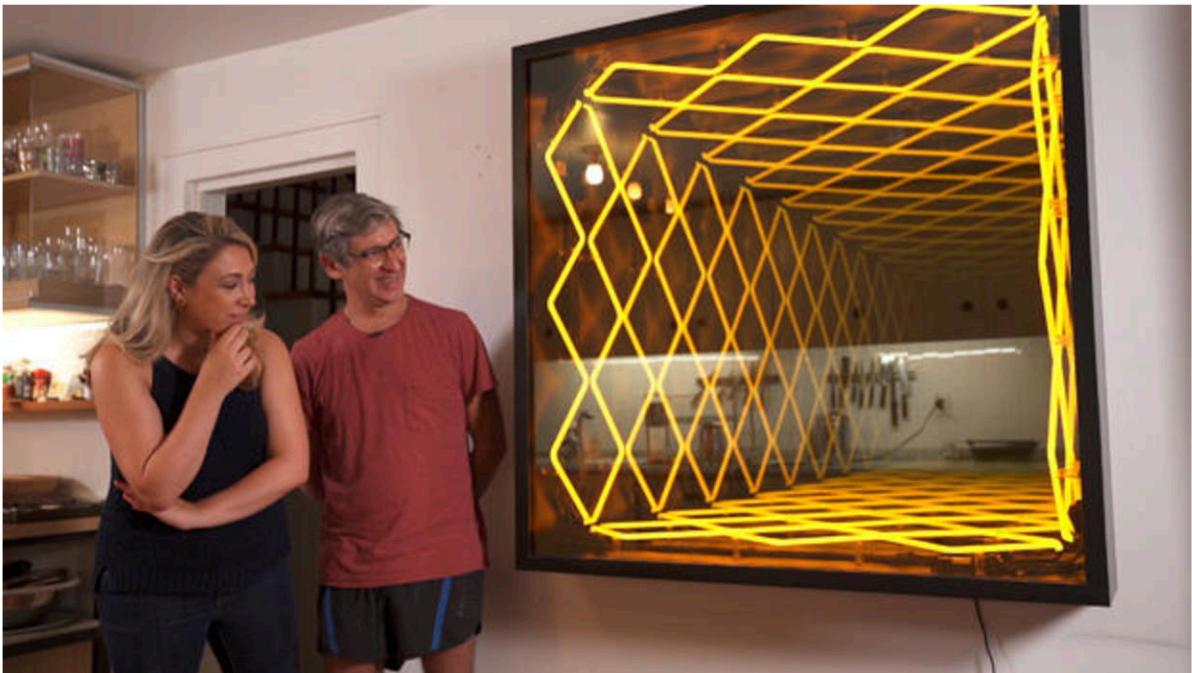
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After Chicago, the sculptures will head to The Momentary, a new contemporary art space opening in 2020 at the [Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art](#) in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Meanwhile, Navarro continues to create. "Sunday Morning" producer Sara Kugel got a sneak peek at his latest work, temporarily on display in his kitchen in Brooklyn, New York.

Navarro said, "Just the first line of neon is the real neon. And then everything else is a reflection. So, that's why it's interesting. It's similar to the idea of the *me* and *we*, how the *me* is reflected, and the opposite narrative is *we*. This angle is reflected. And then the second is reflected again, and again, and again, and again, and it creates the pattern."



Iván Navarro shows Sara Kugel his neon illusion artwork. / **CBS NEWS**

"And it really makes the room look bigger, like it goes on forever!" said Kugel.

Those mirrors and neon lights have become trademarks for Iván Navarro, an artist looking to challenge viewers' perspectives in more ways than one.

"It creates many different meanings to people," he said. "And I love that, you know? Because it's not that I'm telling you that it means one specific thing. For me, always, art is more up to the viewer than to the artist."

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Navarro's 2009 neon artwork "Threshold." / COURTESY IVAN NAVARRO/KASMIN GALLERY

"This Land Is Your Land" by Iván Navarro will be at Chicago's Navy Pier through September 3, 2019.