

TEMPLON

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IVAN NAVARRO

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Iván Navarro

'This Land is Your Land'

*Madison Square Park
23rd Street at Fifth Avenue
Through April 20*

The outdoor-sculpture season is just beginning, but Iván Navarro's installation will be departing in about a week. It's worth a visit because it strikes an instructive balance between spectacle and subtle intervention.

Mr. Navarro, known for neon sculptures that refer to repressive regimes like the one he experienced as a child living in Chile under Pinochet, would not seem to be the likeliest choice for a project in a small park frequented by lunching office workers. His first idea for the Madison Square commission was a carousel of neon war machinery paired with a tall watchtower.

The final project, fortunately, invokes surveillance operations in ways that are less obvious and more specific to New York: three miniature wooden water towers outfitted with mirrors, similar to the false-bottomed wells he has been making in recent years. Viewers stand underneath each to see neon texts inside — one says "BED," the other "ME/WE" — and a third piece that takes the form of a ladder. All seem to recede into an infinite distance. It's easy to write off those interiors as cute (the ladder) or derivative (the texts remind you of Bruce Nauman's neon wordplay). But there's something charming about the way these sculptures combine features of the urban landscape, the rooftop water tower and the street-level neon sign, while drawing parkgoers into small, intimate huddles. **KAREN ROSENBERG**



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Features of the urban landscape: one of Iván Navarro's water towers at Madison Square Park. Viewers standing directly beneath them can see neon lettering.