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For Immediate Release

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Flatiron Partnership and Van Alen Institute Announce Selection of 7th Annual Flatiron Public Plaza Design Installation:

***Point of Action* by Studio Cooke John**



Image courtesy of Studio Cooke John

NEW YORK, September 29, 2020 – The Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership and Van Alen Institute today announced their selection for the seventh annual Flatiron Public Plaza Design Installation: *Point of Action* by Studio Cooke John. *Point of Action* will be on view November 23, 2020–January 1, 2021 in the Flatiron Public Plazas on Broadway, Fifth Avenue, and 23rd Street in Manhattan, creating a highly visible landmark throughout the holidays.

Point of Action invites New Yorkers and visitors to contemplate the experience of seeing one another—and being seen. Once the viewer steps out of their usual routine and into the installation’s threshold, there are multiple opportunities for connection with fellow viewers and with passersby. Six-foot circles affixed onto the Flatiron Public Plazas create nine “spotlights,” each with its own vertical metal frame. Ropes weave through each frame and part, like a curtain

figuratively pulled aside, to make room for the viewer to take the spotlight, connect with other viewers across the Plazas, and take action as they move out and beyond. Lighting emitted from a halo above each circle strengthens the framing; lights embedded into the sides of each frame add another layer to the viewer.

"We are at a threshold during this pandemic. Now that our eyes have been opened to realities that have been with us all along, how do we move forward? My hope is that *Point of Action* makes people think about how we connect to the people we see every day so that we can move forward together," said **Nina Cooke John, Principal and Founder of Studio Cooke John**.

As the first Flatiron Public Design Installation to be spread throughout both the North and South Plazas, *Point of Action*'s larger footprint allows for more socially distanced engagement. However, the installation's concentric circles ripple out from each spot, eventually connecting with other circles, and thus other viewers, across the Plazas.

"*Point of Action* beautifully meets our city's current moment of uncertainty, provoking us to think not only about our interconnectedness with one another, but the role of our public spaces in creating connected, healthy, and resilient communities as we look toward collective recovery," said **James Mettham, Executive Director of the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership**. "There is no better place for this installation than the Flatiron Public Plazas, world-renown public spaces for meeting friends, participating in our public programming, and enjoying art and architecture. We are proud to partner with Van Alen Institute to present *Point of Action* and we invite visitors from near and far to visit Flatiron this season."

"This year has been a profound exercise in finding new ways of connecting, from embracing video calls to coming together in social action. With *Point of Action*, Studio Cooke John powerfully captures the importance of building new connections and community, which are critical to our city's resilience," said **Deborah Marton, Executive Director, Van Alen Institute**. "The Flatiron Public Plaza Design Installation is an important part of Van Alen Institute's Public Realm R&D program, intended to surface the work of emerging designers and test new strategies to bring people together in public space. We're honored to collaborate with the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership to activate this iconic plaza, especially as our outdoor public spaces have proven essential to our wellbeing."

"This year DOT Art is especially appreciative of Studio Cooke John's highly interactive response in a time when our city is craving connection," said **Wendy Feuer, DOT Assistant Commissioner of Urban Design + Art + Wayfinding**. "For the first time, work will be installed on both the North and South Plazas, which strengthens the theme of connectivity and allows space for reflection."

Studio Cooke John is a multidisciplinary design studio with a broad range of expertise that values placemaking as a way to transform relationships between people and the built environment. Led by Studio Cooke John founder Nina Cooke John, the *Point of Action* project team includes fabricator Charlie Spademan of Spademan Fabrication; NY Lighting Group, which is donating in-kind fabrication services; lighting consultant Jimmie Drummond of Drummond Projects; and installation contractor Kathy Lysikowska-Diaz of KLD NY Inc.

Studio Cooke John was selected by the Partnership and Van Alen Institute from a shortlist of seven firms, each recommended by design experts in Van Alen's network. The other shortlisted

firms were Architensions, Austin + Mergold, Bryony Roberts Studio, Office Lou Arencibia, Studio ljeoma, and Studio Zewde.

Nominations for the shortlisted firms were provided by Benjamin Cadena, Founder, Studio Cadena; Justin Garrett Moore, Executive Director, New York City Public Design Commission; Toni L. Griffin, Founder, urbanAC; Nancy Hou & Josh De Sousa, Founders, Hou de Sousa; Jing Liu, Principal, SO-IL; V. Mitch McEwen, Principal, Atelier Office; Ashley Mendelsohn, Architecture Curator and Educator; Leni Schwendinger, Founder, Leni Schwendinger Light Projects; and Jae Shin, Partner, HECTOR.

Since its inception in 2014, the Flatiron Public Plaza Holiday Design Competition has been a platform for the Partnership and Van Alen Institute to deepen their connections with emerging designers, bring people together, and support inventive visions for an iconic urban plaza. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's installation will offer the neighborhood continuity in uncertain times.

The installation is permitted through NYC DOT Art and will be open to the public daily, weather permitting. The Partnership is encouraging visitors to use **#PointofAction** on Twitter and Instagram to share images of the installation.

About the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership

The Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership, formed in 2006, is a nonprofit organization and Business Improvement District whose mission is to enhance the reputation of Flatiron and NoMad as two of New York's most vital and exciting neighborhoods. This is accomplished by maintaining a clean and safe environment for the district's businesses, residents and visitors; by spearheading area improvement projects; and by marketing the diverse business and retail options in this vibrant and historic neighborhood.

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About Van Alen Institute

Van Alen Institute helps create equitable cities through inclusive design. In an equitable city, every person is civically engaged, regardless of income or personal circumstances. To achieve that goal, inclusive design supports a community-driven public realm.

For more than 125 years, our purposeful community engagement, convening capacity, and global interdisciplinary network have produced profound transformations in the public realm of New York City and beyond. With a core belief in an interdisciplinary approach to design, the Van Alen team has backgrounds in architecture, urban planning, public health, civic advocacy, community engagement, and arts and culture.

vanalen.org
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About the NYC DOT Art Program

The New York City Department of Transportation's Art Program (DOT Art) partners with community-based, nonprofit organizations and professional artists to present temporary public

art on NYC DOT property throughout the five boroughs for up to eleven months. Artists transform streets with colorful murals, dynamic projections and eye-catching sculptures. Sidewalks, fences, triangles, medians, bridges, jersey barriers, step streets, public plazas and pedestrianized spaces serve as canvases and foundations for temporary art. Over the past 12 years, DOT Art has produced over 300 temporary artworks citywide.

nyc.gov/dotart

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About Studio Cooke John

Studio Cooke John is a New York-based design studio with a strong focus on high-impact, residential architecture, as well as design for international cultural institutions. With a broad range of expertise, Studio Cooke John values placemaking as a way to transform relationships between people and the built environment. Throughout the design process, its collaborations with clients yield insights that inform how we, alongside a network of craftsmen, fabricators and consultants, transform spaces within the home and in the public sphere. For more information, visit cookejohn.com.

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