

# SEANKELLY

Editor. "Jose Dávila reimagines Central Wharf Park to bring community together in time of pandemic isolation." *artdaily*. November 16, 2020.

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Jose Dávila, "To Each Era, Its Art. To Art, Its Freedom". Photo: © Dominic Chavez.

**BOSTON, MASS.-** Inside Central Wharf Park, an urban park lined with mature oak trees between Boston Harbor and the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Mexican artist Jose Dávila is designing a contemplative sculptural sanctuary with his installation, *To Each Era, Its Art. To Art, Its Freedom* so visitors can come together and experience the space and its meaning in the time of the pandemic. The work was unveiled this week and was guest curated by Pedro Alonzo for [Now + There](#), a public art organization that brings site-specific, temporary works of art to all neighborhoods of Boston.

Composed of 21 custom-made concrete shapes that are variations of a standard cube with river boulders balancing on top, *To Each Era, Its Art. To Art, Its Freedom*, creates a field of vibrant red-colored geometric forms that punctuate and accentuate Central Wharf Park. The work, which intentionally invites the public to sit, rest and play, on and among the sculptural shapes, explores publicness in a time of social and physical distancing and encourages passers-by and visitors to decide for themselves the function and purpose of the installation located at 250 Atlantic Avenue in Downtown Boston.

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Positioned in four clusters throughout the park, each sculptural group forms its own urban mini-oasis with unique vantage points for appreciating both the park and the city from new perspectives. “They are responsive to both Central Wharf Park’s identity as a metropolitan refuge and its physical placement in one of the city’s busiest commercial districts,” Alonzo said. “The concrete forms are arranged in a deliberately eclectic manner by the artist as a way of channeling the diverse, chaotic, and multi-dimensional ways the public interacts with the space.”

“Public art is inherently democratic by nature yet emerges from the imagination and observation of individual artists,” said Now + There’s Executive Director Kate Gilbert. “Jose Dávila’s work interrupts our usual patterns in Central Wharf Park in a way that encourages us to consider our individual choices and collective actions as we create a new future in a new reality.”

Calling on the visual vocabularies of Minimalist art traditions as well as brutalist urban architecture, the installation offers a striking reflection on the ideas of balance, design, development, nature, and perception. Inspired by the effects of the global lockdown and limited access to art-filled spaces, *To Each Era Its Art. To Art, Its Freedom* draws its title directly from the motto of the Vienna Secession movement of the late 19th century. Building on the concepts originally posed by the collective of artists, designers, and architects at the center of the Vienna Secession, this new work by Dávila is actively exploring what must be done to create a more representative and democratic art-system post-pandemic.

“I am very interested in the uniqueness of natural materials, their unique and unrepeatable state,” said Dávila. “However, human beings have always had the desire to control the stone, carving it to give it a shape according to their own will. And so concrete enters history. I call it ‘the stone that man created.’ And I am very much interested in the opposite, the contrast in comparison with materials that are industrialized and that you can find being identical in China, France, Brazil or Mexico as a convention of human communication, so those materials can be used to build in equal measures and sizes. Which is the total opposite of building with stones and natural elements. It seems to me that the smooth texture of concrete is in some way the neutralization of singularity, while the stone is the vestige and strength of the origin.”

Jose Dávila’s work originates from the symbolic languages that function within art history and Western visual culture. These pictorial, graphic and sculptural languages are reconfigured as contradictory and contrasting relations, taking the correspondence between form and content to its limit. He represents these oppositions through different perspectives: the association between images and words; the structural disposition of materials which entails the possibility of a harmonious balance or disarray; the use of peripheral routes in order to define architectural space and the presence of objects.

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475 TENTH AVE NEW YORK NY 10018 T 212.239.1181 SKNY.COM