

Globe Trotter

With her new residency at Madison Square Park, **Paula Hayes** introduces a new kind of magic in glass: *Gazing Globes*.

BY JULIE BAUMGARDNER



Hayes' *Gazing Globes* (left) will be on view in Madison Square Park through April 19.

It's hard to imagine a time when terrariums didn't grace the catalogs of West Elm, Urban Outfitters and Etsy. Sure, their Victorian sensibility has carried on since their invention in 1829 by English botanist Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward, but their recent popularity can easily be traced to artist Paula Hayes. "I started it!" exclaims the sculptor, landscape designer and horticulturist, whose first public presentation of terrariums came in 2004 at Salon94, the New York gallery which still represents her today.

"My desire was to create a tribe of caregivers," Hayes continues. "I had a political feeling about my work—that I was creating art that you had to keep alive, that it wasn't the artwork unless you cared for it." She laughed when her niece gave Hayes' mother a mass-produced imitation as a present. "What was bad was the commodification of something that was spiritualized. Anyone who works with plants, animals and the seasons knows that you see the wonder of life—and that in itself is miraculous," she says cheerily. "And this wonder, despite things becoming so consumed by technology, feels pretty magical."

Beyond the beautiful, Hayes' political commitment reigns supreme and has been a catalyst for a new body of work. This month, she unveiled the first 18 of her *Gazing Globes* as part of her winter residency for the public art initiative in Madison Square Park. "What we've done to the world has not been as a tribe of caregivers," she says. "We've been a tribe of litterers

and polluters." Hayes may be moving on from living worlds, but she has not completely abandoned the concept of microenvironments. Inside the spheres, she illuminates industrial materials—batteries, CDs, computer parts—"that are never, ever, going to decompose or be digested by the earth naturally, barring a meteor strike or nuclear meltdown," she says. "It's very much a poetic interaction between illumination and light and that which we don't really want to look at."

The objects bear a lineage that "coincides with the Victorian era, a particular part of history that I'm pretty obsessed with, but more specifically, the Industrial Revolution," she says. First created in 13th-century Venice as a totem to ward off evil, then reprised in the 19th century by Mad King Ludwig of Bavaria, the reflective balls often were regarded as mystical objects through which one could their past and future.

Nowadays, gazing globes are relegated to kitschy garden-supply stores. "Mystics, madmen, kitsch lovers and me!" Hayes squeals of her current obsession, which surely, like terrariums, are guaranteed to become a cultural object of desire (even Jeff Koons and Lady Gaga have played around with them). But for Hayes, it's more important that her works "help the complexity of the world. It's a good time to be a sculptor," she says. "Sculpture is so tactile and everything else is so flat!" Her eye may be in the past, but leave it to Hayes to see the future through her crystal ball.

Paula Hayes's work—from landscape design to sculpture—has been rooted in nature. For her Birdhouse series, Hayes worked with an ornithologist to design trees, including this one, specifically for bluebirds.

