

Anish Kapoor's New York bean is finally rising at 56 Leonard

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Once complete, the as-of-yet unnamed mirrored bean will "inflate" outwards from the base of the tower towards the sidewalk, as if it were being squashed. (Jonathan Hilburg/AN)

Long live the new bean: The long-delayed New York version of Anish Kapoor's Cloud Gate in Chicago (colloquially known as The Bean) is finally rising at the foot of the Jenga-like Herzog & de Meuron's 56 Leonard in Tribeca.

Prep work for the mirrored sculpture began last summer, as the sculpture's outline was marked out on the concrete plaza below the tower. Installation proper began in October, and the piece, a bean similar to Cloud Gate but squished below 56 Leonard's mass, has steadily been arriving in pieces since then. Although the building above was completed in 2016, the bean, which was always intended as part of 56 Leonard (featuring into renderings as far back as 2008) has been repeatedly delayed.



Looking south down Church Street. (Jonathan Hilburg/AN)

As Tribeca Citizen explains in an excerpt from fabricators Performance Structures, Inc. to the building's developer in 2018:

The Leonard Street sculpture requires equivalent accuracy and precision, but with an added component. Cloud Gate was assembled in Chicago from the finished plate sections and support framework, built at our facility, and then all the joining seams were welded together on site. After the seams were welded, they all needed to be ground down, and the seam zones sanded and polished to match the rest of the plate surfaces. This on-site seam welding was very laborious and extremely costly. [...]

[...] In order to make the Leonard Street sculpture installation more expeditious, and to save costs, it was decided to build the precision components such that they could be tightly fit together, with the seams thereby becoming nearly invisible hair line cracks. This concept was successfully tested in a sample piece produced by us, and presented to the Artist for his approval prior to beginning the project. In addition to needing to mill and test extremely precise, interlocking metal plates, each segment will need to be bolted to the concrete plaza, then a system of tension cables for each section will need to be installed and properly calibrated. This will allow the bean to sway with the wind and expand and contract safely with fluctuations in temperature.



The sculpture is slowly growing to cover what was once an open passageway on the sidewalk. (Jonathan Hilburg/AN)

Although at the time of writing the sculpture is sitting approximately half-finished with the exposed opening covered in plywood, it looks like 56 Leonard will finally be finished.

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