



News Release | September 11, 2017

New season begins Thursday, October 12, 2017, at the Walker Art Center, presented by Minnesota Public Radio
Trio of powerful place-makers headlines the Minneapolis Parks Foundation's 2017-2018 Next Generation of Parks™ event series
Studio Gang's Gia Biagi, Barefoot Artists' Lily Yeh, and Toronto's Sabina Ali transform lives and communities through their work in parks and public space

Minneapolis, Minn. – The [Minneapolis Parks Foundation](#) debuts the [2017-2018 Next Generation of Parks™ event series](#) with renowned urbanist and designer **Gia Biagi**, Thursday, October 12, at the [Walker Art Center](#). The free event starts at 7:00pm, and tickets will be available at the door from 6:00 that evening. Biagi, principal at Chicago-based Studio Gang, is the first speaker among the trio of powerful placemakers the Parks Foundation has invited to share their stories about transforming the public realm into vibrant common ground. Barefoot Artists' **Lily Yeh** and Toronto's **Sabina Ali** continue the season in 2018.

Among Biagi's recent work is [Polis Station](#), a neighborhood redevelopment project in Chicago that's uniting local police and the community they serve. The goal of the project was to demonstrate how "design can help people imagine changes in police-community relations," [writes Studio Gang](#). Following an extensive community engagement process that revealed the community sought safe places to play, Biagi and her team created a basketball half-court on a section of the 10th District Police Station's parking lot. By reimagining the station as a civic asset, a place of conflict and disconnect instead became "where police officers and neighborhood residents can find many opportunities to interact in non-enforcement situations."

Biagi was previously the Director of Planning and Development and later Chief of Staff for the Chicago Park District. While there, she led multiyear planning, design, and engagement efforts that produced signature civic projects like Maggie Daley Park and [Northerly Island](#). At Studio Gang, she's also leading a design team working on [Edge Effect](#), which conceptualizes Milwaukee's industrial harbor as an estuarine condition that balances commercial, residential, and open space development.

"As Minneapolis forges ahead with generational parks projects like [Water Works](#) and [RiverFirst](#), the Parks Foundation is committed to looking beyond the physical characteristics of each site to how these parks can bring people and peoples together in community," says Tom Evers, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation. "Biagi, Yeh, and Ali each have led inspired parks and public realm projects that transformed the lives of people in the United States and around the world. Their insights help the Parks Foundation and our partners bring the best thinking in design and community engagement to our work here in Minneapolis."

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The 2016-2017 Next Generation of Parks™ Lecture Series is presented by Minnesota Public Radio and produced in partnership with the [Walker Art Center](#), [Minneapolis Institute of Art](#), and [Minneapolis College of Art & Design](#).

2017-2018 SERIES CONTINUES

The Parks Foundation's exploration of how parks transform human life continues in 2018, with events featuring international artist and placemaker-healer **Lily Yeh** and Toronto parks- and community activist **Sabina Ali**:

Lily Yeh, Barefoot Artists: The intersection of art and place

Thursday, March 22, 2018 • Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Presented in partnership with **MiA** and **MCAD**

Lily Yeh is an internationally celebrated artist whose work has taken her to communities throughout the world. As founder and executive director of the Village of Arts and Humanities in North Philadelphia from 1968 to 2004, she helped create a national model in creative place-making and community building through the arts. In 2002, Yeh pursued her work internationally, founding [Barefoot Artists, Inc.](#), to bring the transformative power of art to impoverished communities around the globe through participatory, multifaceted projects that foster community empowerment, improve the physical environment, promote economic development and preserve indigenous art and culture. In addition to the United States, she has carried out projects in multiple countries including Kenya, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Rwanda, China, Taiwan, Ecuador, Syria, Republic of Georgia, Haiti, and Palestine.

Sabina Ali, Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee: Engaging communities through parks

May 2018 • Date and location TBA

Sabina Ali is the Chair and founding member of [Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee](#) – created by residents to advance a transformative vision for Thorncliffe Park and the surrounding community. Under Ali's leadership, the Women's Committee revitalized the local park and created a healthy, engaged and inclusive community. Sabina has worked to build the capacity and economic opportunities of residents and manages a wide variety of food, art, fitness, markets and garden programs. Sabina is the recipient of the Elizabeth Coke award for excellence in leadership in 2011, the 2014 Jane Jacobs Prize, and the 2014 Phenomenal Woman Award. She was selected as one of the Top Ten Torontonians to get the things done by Globe and Mail. She recently was awarded for her excellence in civic action.

ABOUT THE MINNEAPOLIS PARKS FOUNDATION

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is an independent, donor-supported nonprofit organization that helps envision and execute transformative parks and public spaces. The Parks Foundation co-leads the [RiverFirst Initiative](#) with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and is responsible for private fundraising and implementation of the [Water Works](#) and [Great Northern Greenway River Link](#) projects. The Parks Foundation also supports innovative Minneapolis parks projects through equity funding and champions world-class design through its [Next Generation of Parks™ Event Series](#). Learn more at [MplsParksFoundation.org](#).

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