Design Stars 2015

These six firms are creating the new must-see destinations in cities across the world—plazas transformed into majestic urban sculptures, restaurants that feel like time capsules, run with the tools of tomorrow, light-filled museums that upend our expectations about how to view art. Plus: six more much-anticipated design-driven openings. BY CHEE PEARLMAN

JOSE SELGAS AND LUCIA CANO OF SELGASCANO, CREATORS OF THIS YEAR’S SERPENTINE PAVILION, IN THEIR HOME OFFICE OUTSIDE MADRID.
Cities often commission large-scale public art to create events that draw visitors and give locals a fresh perspective on their environs. Few are better at delivering such experiences than Janet Echelman. Urban space is her canvas, and rope—miles and miles of it—is her brush. With these tools, the Boston-based artist fashion multihued installations that hover over once-ordinary plazas like airborne fishing nets. Her latest, inspired by a cat’s cradle, floats above Boston’s Rose Kennedy Greenway (rosekennedygreenway.org), a zone reclaimed from car traffic after the Big Dig. Echelman says she conceived the project, on view through mid-October, as a way to “link the city back together along the gash that had been a six-lane highway.”

Echelman, who developed her technique after watching fishermen construct nets in the Indian village of Mahaballipuram, has in recent years created undulating works in cities from San Francisco to Singapore. Their construction is not simple: the one-ton installation in Boston required more than 100 miles of specially braided twine and half a million knots, not to mention custom software to model the sculpture’s joints and predict the effects of weather. Most visitors lie on the grass to view it, watching as it ripples against the sky.

**COMING SOON**

In November, Echelman will exhibit a sculpture inspired by the Japanese tsunami at the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Renwick Gallery, followed by projects in West Hollywood and Greensboro, North Carolina.

**GOODS LINE, SYDNEY**

Architecture firms Aspect Studios and Chrofi are transforming an old railway corridor near the new Frank Gehry–designed UTS Business School into a verdant 1,640-foot-long strip, opening this fall.

**SEOUL SKYGARDEN**

Dutch architectural firm MVRDV is converting an abandoned 2.4-acre, 3,000-foot-long overpass into a pedestrian walkway. When it is completed in 2017, it will have cafes, shops, and 254 species of trees, shrubs, and flowers.

**11TH STREET BRIDGE PARK, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

This greenbelt planned for late 2018 by OMA and Olin, on a former freeway bridge over the Anacostia River, will have flexible venues for markets, festivals, and performances.

**CHILDREN OF THE HIGH LINE**

Three linear park concepts coming soon to a city near you.