

For immediate release

## YUTAKA SONE ISLAND

September 20 – October 29, 2011

Opening reception: Tuesday, September 20, 6 – 8 PM

Press preview with the artist: 5:30 PM



*Little Manhattan* (detail), 2007-2009. Marble.  
21 ¾ x 104 ¾ x 33 ½ inches (55 x 265 x 85 cm).

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of recent work by Yutaka Sone, on view at the gallery's 533 West 19<sup>th</sup> Street space. This will be the artist's fifth solo show since his first exhibition at the gallery in 1999.

Working in a wide range of media—predominantly sculpture but also painting, drawing, photography, video, and performance—Yutaka Sone's work revolves around a tension between realism and perfection. The artist originally trained as an architect and an almost obsessive attention to detail and its relationship to a larger whole underpin his practice at large.

Whether architectural or natural, landscapes occur throughout the artist's oeuvre, and he frequently picks his subjects from actual locations—Hong Kong Island, Los Angeles highway junctions, a mountain range, a section of a rainforest, ski resorts, and his own backyard—recreating these to scale in paint, marble, and crystal, or using organic materials such as plants and soil.

Whether using miniaturization or magnification, Sone's three-dimensional work conjures up an imaginary realm, which in turn forms part of a larger effort to extend the idea of sculpture to encompass landscape. In previous projects, including his reconstruction of an entertainment park rollercoaster in actual scale (*Amusement Romana*, 2002), Sone has invited spectators to actively participate in the artwork, thus offering an experience of movement implicit in much of his subject matter. In other works, he has used real snow and created micro-habitats with running rivers, blurring the distinction between natural and artificial construction.

This exhibition brings together marble sculptures and trees made predominantly from rattan, a natural plant fiber. The largest of the marble sculptures is the two-and-a-half ton *Little Manhattan* (2007-2009), which from a distance appears to present a large, weightless sheet of drapery, yet upon closer inspection reveals a detailed, intricately carved model of the island of Manhattan. Avenue by avenue, block by block, and building by building, Sone, aided by photographic reproductions, imagery from Google Earth, and several helicopter rides, has rendered the densely-populated metropolis to scale, showing the city's many skyscrapers as well as the intricate paths through Central Park and the bridges to the east and west. The artist's adept handling of his medium recalls the classical sculptures of antiquity and offers a commemorative portrait of the ever-changing island—a physical replica of its present formation and diverse architectural landscape.

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Other marble works, including three works from 2010 that bear the title *Light in between Trees*, epitomize the tension within Sone's work between the natural and the man-made. Here, he has delicately carved out individual rays of light, giving explosive, concrete shape to the immaterial qualities of the sun's reflections. The result is a precarious balance between transience and stasis, or ephemerality and durability, which, more so than providing an illusory, *trompe-l'oeil* effect, creates a sense of enchantment.

The dialogue between natural and artificial structures is intensified by Sone's synthetic trees: six banana plants (2008-2010) and one so-called "traveler's palm" (2011), with its characteristic flat, fan-like shape. Made from rattan woven around a metal armature, the trees are meticulously crafted; leaves and stems have been carefully painted with acrylic paint and even include naturally occurring flaws in their pigmentation. From a distance, they look like their living counterparts, and their almost perfect mimesis offers a poignant counterpoint to the marble re-creations, which flaunt the notion of the handcrafted (Sone creates the sculptures in hands-on collaboration with marble artisans in a village in southwest China). Individually and collectively, they appear like self-contained environments.

The blurred line that exists within the artist's practice between organic and synthetic materials (and in turn between nature and architecture, jungle and city) brings to mind a century-old art historical debate between the relative virtues of (flawed) realism and (artificial) perfection, which most recently appeared in the context of Pop art and the clean hyper-realism of many of its manifestations. With their exquisite attention to detail, emphasis on finished contours and surfaces, and ability to capture light, Sone's sculptures transform their non-natural surroundings into illusory micro-landscapes, effectively embracing a genre typically associated with paintings, works on paper, and photographs.

**Yutaka Sone** was born in 1965 in Shizuoka, Japan, and studied at the Tokyo Geijutsu University. His work was recently the subject of two solo exhibitions in Tokyo: *Yutaka Sone: Snow* at Maison Hermès Le Forum in 2010 and *Yutaka Sone: Perfect Moment* at Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery in 2011. In 2009, *Baby Banana Tree*, the artist's 25-foot tall hand-painted sculpture, was installed as a major public artwork at the Boone Sculpture Garden, Pasadena City College, Pasadena, California. Other recent solo exhibitions include the Parasol unit foundation for contemporary art, London (2007); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; Aspen Art Museum, Colorado; The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (all 2006); and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2003). The artist represented Japan, along with Motohiko Odani, at the 50<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2003).

Sone's work has been included in a number of group exhibitions in the United States and abroad and is currently featured in *Glasstress 2011*, which was organized as part of the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, at the Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti (on view through November 27). Other group exhibitions include *BadLands: New Horizons in Landscape*, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Massachusetts (2008); *Whitney Biennial 2004*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 25<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial (2003); 7<sup>th</sup> Istanbul Biennial (2001); among others.

Work by the artist is held in international museum collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago; High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia; Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Tate Gallery, London. He lives and works in Los Angeles.

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