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Anish Kapoor Sues the NRA for Featuring ‘Cloud Gate’ as the Backdrop for a Pro-Gun Ad

The artist is seeking damages for copyright infringement for the National Rifle Association's unauthorized use of his Chicago sculpture.

Sarah Cascone, June 20, 2018



Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate* (2004) in Millennium Park, Chicago. Photo by by Patrick L. Pyszka, courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels. ©Anish Kapoor.

Anish Kapoor is going after the National Rifle Association (NRA), filing a copyright infringement lawsuit in the US in response to a 2017 NRA ad featuring *Cloud Gate*, his famed public sculpture in Chicago's Millennium Park. The artist filed the complaint on June 19 in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

The NRA advertisement, titled "The Clenched Fist of Truth" or "The Violence of Lies," denounced the US media and its "liberal agenda" in an effort to recruit new members and solicit donations. *Cloud Gate* is among several landmarks and monuments across the country featured in the video. Kapoor contends this unauthorized usage infringes on his copyright for the sculpture.

In March of this year, the artist spoke out against the ad in an open letter released in collaboration with the nonprofit organization Everytown for Gun Safety. Kapoor asked the NRA to remove his work from the video, a demand that was not met.



Anish Kapoor. Photo by Jillian Edelstein.

The ad "seeks to whip up fear and hate. It plays to the basest and most primal impulses of paranoia, conflict and violence, and uses them in an effort to create a schism to justify its most regressive attitudes," said Kapoor. "I am disgusted to see

my work—in truth the sculpture of the people of Chicago—used by the NRA to promote their vile message.”

In a new statement, Kapoor claimed that it was the “solidarity and support” of the public that encouraged him to take action against the NRA, and urged everyone “to stand up to the dark and aggressive forces in society that seek, out of fear and hatred, to lead us backward into a primitive, paranoid, and defensive worldview.”



Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate* (2004) in Millennium Park, Chicago. Copyright the artist. Photo by Patrick L. Pyszka, courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

The lawsuit is seeking statutory damages of \$150,000 per infringement and attorneys’ fees. He has also asked for a share of the NRA’s profits from donations made or new members recruited thanks to the ad, and demands that the court to stop the NRA from running the ad, which the complaint calls “a clear call to armed violence against liberals and the media.” As of press time, the NRA had not responded to artnet News’s request for comment.

Since its installation in 2006, *Cloud Gate*, affectionately nicknamed “The Bean,” has become a Chicago landmark and a popular tourist destination.



Anish Kapoor, *Cloud Gate* (2004) in Millennium Park, Chicago. Copyright the artist. Photo by Susan May Romano, courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

According to the complaint, Kapoor “was shocked and outraged to learn that his sculpture had been used by NRA to support its despicable platform of promoting violence, private ownership of all manner of firearms in the United States, including military assault weapons, and using its money and political power to block any kind of meaningful gun control.”

In his March statement, Kapoor denounced recent shootings in Florida and Las Vegas, claiming that speaking out against the NRA is more urgent than ever. “The NRA’s nightmarish, intolerant, divisive vision perverts everything that *Cloud Gate*—and America—stands for,” he wrote. “Art must stand clear in its mission to recognize the dignity and humanity of all, irrespective of creed or racial origin.”

