



ISSUE THREE  
PLANTING  
AMARYLLIS

# Polaris

THE EDINBURGH PARK  
LITERARY ZINE

# POETRY FROM ART AT EDINBURGH PARK

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# Polaris

## EDITORIAL

### **Issue Three**

Planting Amaryllis

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Kevin Williamson  
Yvonne Reddick  
Olivia Calderón

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It was ironic to start the new year thinking about rewilding and researching the amaryllis flower as it symbolises determination and creative achievement; something I was grasping to confirm as a resolution for my poetic practice. It made me think of what Maya Angelou said, 'You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.' It's true; our wells are only full if we keep filling them; our urban environments are only thriving if we keep planting, and love will keep arriving as long as we keep sending it: and even in the most unlikely spaces, life finds a way to grow.

Guerrilla gardening is the act of individuals or groups cultivating vegetation in unused or neglected spaces to promote growth and greenery to raise awareness about the climate. A beautiful metaphor for creativity, which showcases endurance and transformation blooming in our landscapes and lives, as well as our communities. The important work is done together, so I welcome you into our nature edition of ekphrastic poetry to connect, reflect and be inspired by the power of art and words so we can envision a world where beauty and expansion emerge from struggle; where we always get a chance for new radiant beginnings.

*Janette Ayachi, Editorial  
Poet-in-Residence at Edinburgh Park*



# PLANTING AMARYLLIS

In celebration of Louise Plant's 'Amarylla Guerrilla', Polaris is dedicating its third issue to exploring the intersections of guerrilla gardening and the myth of the Amaryllis flower. Our selected poets are invited to respond to themes of resilience, transformation and humanity's relationship with nature. They looked at how the symbolism of the Amaryllis flower resonated with their own experiences of love, sacrifice and personal revolution. From a playful retelling of the myth of the flower to a father's a memory of walking his young curious daughter through a woodland as the shifting changes in landscape allowed him to think about presence and absence: to an invocation of the flower in delectable language and a celebration of love in friendships. This collaboration bridges the gap between sculpture, poetry and community, offering new interpretations of the Amaryllis legend.

This season our spotlit artist Louise Plant created an immersive artistic universe where science, mathematics, and eco-environment coalesce into sculptural expressions of philosophical charm. She cleverly uses Corten steel for her sculpture which is housed at Edinburgh Park, a material known for its weathering and developing rust-like appearances. Plant is a thinker and observer deeply attuned to the natural world's rhythms, the perfect inspiration for a poet. Her ability to manipulate unforgiving materials into shapes that evoke movement and fluidity fashion a powerful visual paradox whereby onlookers are invited to contemplate the relationship between the solid and the transient.



# LOUISE PLANT BIOGRAPHY

LOUISE PLANT began her journey in sculpture while balancing a full-time teaching career, studying with the Open College of the Arts. She later left teaching to fully dedicate herself to her craft. Now an Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Sculptors, her work has been exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. Among her accolades are the Artist of the Year Award from the Arts Council of England, the Brian Mercer Marble Scholarship, Studio Sem in Italy, and the Swedish KKV Bohuslän Scholarship. Her most recent public installation can be found at 1 New Park Square in Edinburgh Park's new cultural quarter. Plant's sculptures are part of private collections worldwide, and she has been commissioned by prestigious organisations, including the MOD Northwood, the RNIB in Loughborough, Durham County Council, Somerset County Council, and the Waldorf Astoria Bangkok.

Her sculptures are celebrated for their striking visual presence and dynamic sense of life. Inspired by the mathematics of form and motion, Plant approaches her work with a unique perspective, continually pushing the limits of what can be achieved with stone, marble and steel. Through dedicated research and experimentation, she crafts pieces that reflect the beauty, harmony, and complexity of nature. Renowned for her exceptional artistry and technical skill, Louise Plant's sculptures transcend mere aesthetics. While their elegant and seamless forms captivate at first glance, a closer look reveals a profound exploration of natural movement, symmetry, and balance. Beneath the polished surfaces lies a conceptual depth, as her works reflect an intricate study of nature's fluidity and structure. Each piece embodies the harmony of organic chaos and symmetry, evoking the transformative beauty found in the natural world.

**Your sculptures beautifully capture the fluidity and movement found in nature, almost as if they are breathing with life, transcending traditional boundaries by juxtaposing the immense solidity of steel (or marble, stone, bronze and cast iron – all of which carry a particular feel for the direction the material wants to go with the fleeting, ephemeral qualities of nature.) How do you approach the challenge of transforming rigid materials like corten steel into something dynamic and natural?**

It's very much a visceral response. At one time I studied dance, so access to this expression, the movement I feel within me is channelled into my work. Looking around I see shapes and patterns created by the earth's elements and the movement of the earth itself; this inspires me too. Nothing is fixed. Everything moves, even fractionally. It is a challenge to capture the movement of intangible elements in my work, making those elements touchable; this is something I strive to do.

**Your piece Amaraylla Guerrilla resonates deeply with the legend of the Amaryllis flower – sacrifice, resilience, and beauty emerging from struggle. Was this symbolism something you considered while creating the piece, and how do myths or natural stories inspire your creative process, if at all?**

Art is good when we know that it works. It's clear from what you say that AG is working for you as it takes you to another place, unearthing thoughts borne from stories pertinent to everyday life and our struggle to live as well as we can. AG is a political piece, it represents many things, one set of ideas being about saving green spaces, preserving public gardens, parks and keeping land open for all to enjoy. Generated by the politically inspired craze in my local park to rip out plants from flower beds to save money on gardeners, cultivation and the whole system of providing a well-kept flower bed for everybody to enjoy, prompted this piece and the soundscape that accompanies it.

**The interplay of light and shadow across your sculptures seems to change their essence throughout the day, much like nature itself. How important is the element of shifting light and atmosphere in your design considerations?**

Thank you for this observation. Light is very important. Visually, the full-on power of light and the way it might dim and cast shadows can change our perspectives, quite radically at times, as it shifts the shape, texture and meaning of what we actually

see. Some of my work in corten steel takes pathways of light as the first sculptural element and everything then is made or built from that. The result is a sort of multifaceted cuboid on a stick, with corridors, windows and a chance to see the light move through the piece, depending on where the viewer stands and the time of day.

**Your sculptures, much like poetry, evoke emotion and invite contemplation through their form and transition. Do you see a connection between poetry and your artistic practice, and how do you think your work speaks in a poetic language of its own?**

For me, poetry is an art which helps us grasp the ungraspable – it can rock our soul! I make work that tries to reach out in some way to the observer, at a very personal level. I don't think of my work as lofty or inaccessible, but an attempt to portray lived moments in life. I would hope that through the individual's response to my work the same processes of grasping, or at least sensing the abstract, might be made available. The fact that what I make can be touched is important to me. I guess that might be a poetic language made solid.

**Edinburgh Park, with its evolving cultural landscape, provides a unique setting for your work. How does this environment complement or enhance the themes within Amarylla Guerrilla, and what do you hope people take away from encountering it there?**

The political aspirations of AG are to the fore in Edinburgh Park, hopefully reminding us that we are fortunate and probably lucky to have the grass, trees, flowers and the human desire to cultivate both natural life through vegetation, alongside industry, commerce and technology. The machine made corten steel of AG, might reflect the human desire to manufacture whilst the experience one might gain from AG's political message may highlight the importance of nature, organic growth, and perhaps offering something of a balance.

The inspiration for 'Amarylla Guerrilla' stems from the guerrilla gardening movement and the political fight to preserve public green spaces. Sparked by local policies that saw flower beds removed to cut costs, this piece embodies resistance, resilience, and the essential balance between nature and urban development. Through its form it challenges viewers to consider the role of public land, the politics of preservation, and the enduring need for human connection with nature.



# AMARYLLIS MYTH

The name Amaryllis originates from the shepherdess in Virgil's Eclogues, derived from the Greek word ἀμαρύσσω (amarysso), meaning 'to sparkle'. Its mythology tells the poignant tale of a young maiden who sacrificed herself to win the love of the shepherd, Alteo. He was too focused on tending to his flock and had no interest in romance. Captivated by his strength and love for beauty, Amaryllis prayed to Aphrodite for guidance. The goddess instructed her to pierce her heart with a golden arrow at Alteo's door. If he truly loved her, the blood from her heart would sprout into a beautiful flower that would capture his heart.

For thirty nights, her blood spilt onto the earth, and on the final morning, a brilliant red flower bloomed – the Amaryllis – symbolising love, sacrifice and the transformative artistry that can emerge from pain. It was a stunning red flower with long delicate petals and a golden centre. The flower has since become a beacon of renewal and hope, often linked to themes of rebirth and resilience. Its fiery petals embody passion, while its ability to bloom even in harsh conditions mirror humanity's capacity to grow and flourish amidst adversity.

The story of the Amaryllis resonates deeply with the concept of guerrilla gardening: the act of reclaiming forgotten or neglected urban spaces by planting seeds of life and beauty. This practice, both radical and nurturing, transforms barren landscapes into thriving ecosystems, symbolising resilience and hope in unexpected places. As we face mounting environmental challenges, these acts of planting and nurturing become even more urgent. They serve as reminders that humanity's coexistence with nature is essential. Sustainable development like Edinburgh Park and eco-conscious urban

planning can create a harmonious balance, showing that civilisation and the natural world can thrive together.

Louise Plant's 'Amarylla Guerrilla' is a sculpture of resilience, capturing both the essence of the Amaryllis myth and guerrilla gardening. Her work, known for its striking forms and conceptual depth transforms the story of love and sacrifice into a call for action. By situating her piece in an urban environment, Plant invites viewers to reflect on their relationship with nature and their ability to cultivate beauty in neglected spaces.

The Amaryllis flower has long been a source of inspiration in art and literature. Its vibrant Trafalgar red petals and striking form have enchanted painters, sculptors, and writers alike. In art, it has been immortalised by Vincent van Gogh in his passionate and dramatic painting 'Amaryllis in Red', where its vivid hue stands out against a sombre background. Georgia O'Keeffe and Claude Monet also explored its beauty in their work, signalling its elegance and natural power. In literature, the flower serves as a powerful metaphor. Poets such as John Milton in 'Paradise Lost' describe the Amaryllis as a symbol of purity and innocence. In the novel, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' by Oscar Wilde, The Amaryllis is used to represent the fleeting nature of beauty and the destructive power of vanity. Its enduring symbolism has inspired countless works, and continues to captivate today, reminding us of the delicate balance between fragility and strength.

*Janette Ayachi, Editorial  
Poet-in-Residence at Edinburgh Park*

# YVONNE REDDICK

## GUERRILLA



**YVONNE REDDICK** is an award-winning writer, editor, ecopoetry scholar and climber. She is the author of *Burning Season* (Bloodaxe, 2023), which won the Laurel Prize for Best First UK Collection. It was a BBC Radio 4 Poetry Extra Book of the Month for January 2024. Her other books include Ted Hughes: *Environmentalism and Ecopoet and Anthropocene Poetry*. With the wildlife filmmaker Aleksander Domanski, she made the film *Searching for Snow Hares*, shortlisted for the BMC's Women in Adventure film awards.

[www.yvonnereddick.org](http://www.yvonnereddick.org)

Arterial blood pulses her petals.  
Amaryllis, brazen starburst,  
she springs from frost, spear-shoot  
thrown for the sky – pistil an explosion,  
the bulb a paper-wrapped grenade.

I invoke her: Easter Lily, Belladonna, Naked Lady.  
Firework. Supernova. I'd give  
my heart's blood for her boldness.  
Her cultivars: Minerva, Aphrodite, Dancing Queen.

Winter rebel, help me mine this lawn  
with fragrant-scented crocus and narcissi,  
overrun this drab brown park  
with a flash mob of flamenco petals.  
Amarylla, plant your red flag here.

# AMARYLLA GUERRILLA

















**“THE RESULT IS A SORT OF MULTIFACETED CUBOID ON A STICK, WITH CORRIDORS, WINDOWS AND A CHANCE TO SEE THE LIGHT MOVE THROUGH THE PIECE, DEPENDING ON WHERE THE VIEWER STANDS AND THE TIME OF DAY.”**

Louise Plant

# JANETTE AYACHI

## BIRTHING WOODLANDS



**JANETTE AYACHI** is a Scottish-Algerian poet with an MSc in Creative Writing from Edinburgh University. She's a regular on BBC Scotland arts programmes & she collaborates with artists & performs at festivals internationally. Her book *Hand Over Mouth Music* (Pavilion, Liverpool University Press) won the Saltire Poetry Book of the Year Literary Award in 2019, then *QuickFire, Slow Burning* (Pavilion, LUP) was shortlisted for *The Laurel Prize* and for *Scotland's National Book Awards 2024*. She's now writing her travel memoir *Lonerlust* & debut fiction novel *Sweet Figs*.

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For true love, I stabbed myself  
& grew an Amaryllis flower  
from the dormant bulb of my heart.  
I left the gift of me on his doorstep  
& each drop of blood lit up an arterial red path  
shooting up impeccably every January to March  
~ my perennial passion keeps Alteo regretful  
but I was only beautiful to him as a corpse  
birthing woodlands from my bones.

~

My fight in this life  
has been with unrequited love  
& although self-sacrifice might win over  
the object of your affection  
you can't taste their kisses  
or feel their touch  
after all the rejections,  
so don't take the advice of Aphrodite  
& listen to her tales of metamorphosis  
(even if your man has the beauty of Apollo  
& the strength of Hercules.)

Keep all your gold daggers  
locked away in kitchen drawers  
love shouldn't be a battlefield  
stained grim with such gore  
not if you can learn to alchemise  
great pain into great power evermore  
& if you could only see  
how love can bloom again & again  
where, despite the barren years in between  
nature is resilient & raw & velveteen.  
Periods of dormancy  
keep you suspended  
in cool, dark places  
watered sparingly.

~

So Alteo replaced his headboard  
with a Carrara marble chiseled stone  
'Here lies the prettiest woman I've ever known'  
but he didn't know me  
& now from ruin to blossom I rise  
powdering the air with my scent  
freeing eternal empires of colour afar  
under each new firework of dawn  
or the moon's constant hollow  
grey husk, which descends  
when I compass my Horseman's star  
& I come back to bleed for him.

From my afterlife, I watch him live  
his torso gleaming in the half-light  
blonde hair melting into white gold;  
I'm a bit of a stalker,  
but this is what I'm made of, I'm told  
& Devil rouge hair freezing into apricot clots.  
Underneath, flushes of lust propagate  
& salivate my soft petals  
like a hot breeze ciphering the sand  
& I hold my breath to resist him.

~

When it's time for him to finally still  
I will lay my long-stemmed body down  
over the pagan plush of his rigor mortis  
bunching flowers to commemorate roots  
on our mattress of stone, water & soil as home  
where we will balloon through all the cracks together.

~

Belladonna, Naked Lady, Amarillo, Easter Lily  
trumpet-shaped, velvet-petalled, mouth-pouted  
I will grow in the most unusual & abandoned places, rewilding hearts.  
I may be a fool, a slave & a prisoner to love  
but I cultivate gardens in captivity  
reclaim autonomy, link homelands  
& at least I'm not toxic like the foxglove!

# KEVIN WILLIAMSON WALKING THROUGH CARRIFRAN WITH SASCHA



**KEVIN WILLIAMSON** was born in Kirkwall, grew up in Thurso, and has lived in Edinburgh for over forty years. His first collection of poetry *In A Room Darkened* was published by Two Ravens. His second is at the editing stage. He has read/performed poetry throughout Scotland, Europe and beyond. He founded Rebel Inc. and co-founded Neu! Reekie! and Push The Boat Out international poetry festival.

Will you remember today  
the way I remember today.  
We hike through a haze of midges,  
those airborne Scottish piranhas,  
scratching frantic at arms & necks.

The melodic gurgle of a stream below  
is all that's left  
of an unimaginable weight of ice.  
Pleistocene ghost. Prismatic light.  
Where does everything go?

We stop for a glug of juice,  
admire the self-contained perfection  
of a glen where your mother & me  
once drank tea from a flask, ate biscuits,  
planted Caledonian trees.

You skip along at my side,  
eight years old,  
curious about everything.  
You stop at random points.  
Poke at black slugs with a stick.

*Imagine if I pick up all the slugs  
and take them home  
to make a slug coat.  
We could do that.*

There are neither sheep nor deer nor goats  
to nibble on the shoots.  
Good fences make for wild woods.  
I'm guessing the bracken  
won't be full of blood-sucking ticks.

We walk real slow, chat about snakes,  
why they don't have legs,  
enjoy the cast of our brightsome star.  
Summer smells catapult us back  
to a time before steam engines  
or enclosed farms.

This is holy land.  
These are ancient woods, born again  
to an urgency, a global bourach.

We zigzag through a maze of junipers.  
rowan, aspen, hawthorn & elder.  
Goat willow. Tea leaf willow.  
A parliament of indigenous flora.

We reach a gentle slope where trees  
have grown from saplings  
to something more important  
than the time we have left.  
They've done us proud. Sunk roots.

They carry our mark.  
We pushed them into the earth,  
your mother & me.  
They'll be here when we're gone.  
They will grow with a need to be.

Praise the birds who nest in their branches.  
Praise the wolves who roam in their shade.  
I hope you will return. To this echo in time.  
To this garden. To remember this day.

*On the 1st of January 2000, the first tree was planted at Carrifran in the Moffat Hills. A previously bare valley has since become home to a Caledonian wildwood of over 750,000 native trees. These woods will be allowed to grow without the imposition of human structures; live and die at their own natural pace; and communicate with themselves, the returning fauna, and the elements. Carrifran Wildwood is a gift to the world.*

# OLIVIA CALDERÓN

## A HARVEST'S INTERLUDE (FOR SOPHIE)



**OLIVIA CALDERÓN** is a queer Cuban American poet based in Edinburgh, whose work focuses on the intersection of culture, identity and senses of place. Her work appears in *Gutter*, *Interpret*, *Moss Puppy Magazine*, and various local anthologies. In 2023, she was shortlisted for the Grierson Verse Prize and graduated with a writing MSc. Her debut poetry zine, *Florida Woman*, was self-published last year.

I think about how it will be summer again.

How we sow our loves in others –  
flowering fertile, everywhere we go.

They call it guerrilla gardening:

irregular  
    misfit  
        unexpected  
        but  
        united.

Guerrilla,  
as in freely bleeding, heart on  
    the sleeve dripping  
        down,  
                                down

Guerrilla,  
as in purely pounded alloy,  
    puncture, release  
        quietly,  
                                quietly

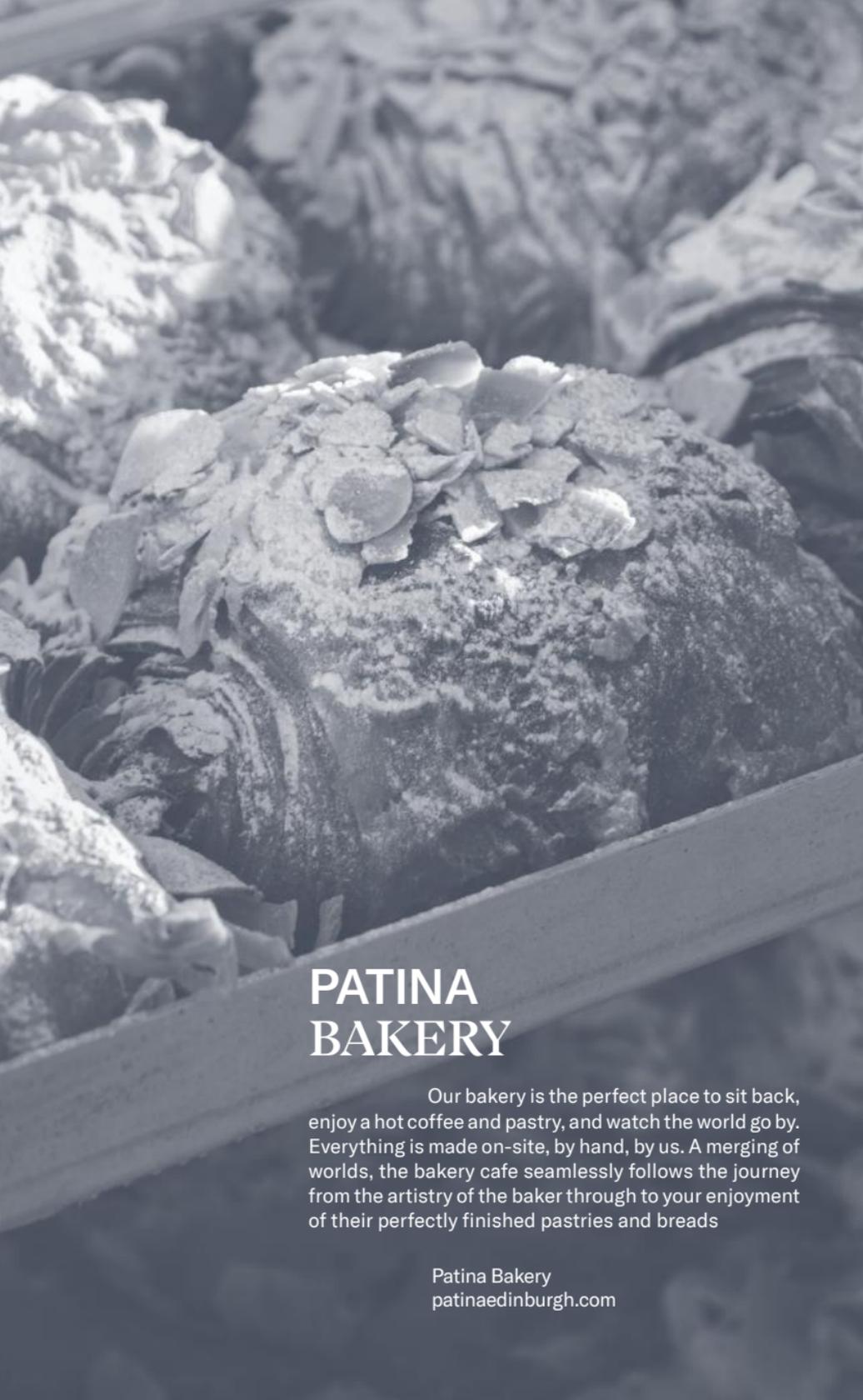
They call it guerrilla gardening:

An amaryllic devotion, we  
grow hardy through this frost.

With you, I know it will be summer again.

# MAKING AMARYLLA GUERRILLA





# PATINA BAKERY

Our bakery is the perfect place to sit back, enjoy a hot coffee and pastry, and watch the world go by. Everything is made on-site, by hand, by us. A merging of worlds, the bakery cafe seamlessly follows the journey from the artistry of the baker through to your enjoyment of their perfectly finished pastries and breads

Patina Bakery  
[patinaedinburgh.com](http://patinaedinburgh.com)

# VISIT 1 NEW PARK SQUARE

