

by Xarina Stella Gary

Millenium Park and Cloud Gate

Millenium Park is an urban park located in the Loop community area of Chicago and operated by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. It was designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in 1998, but later on other artists and architects like Frank Gehry and Thomas Beeby took part in the creation. The opening of this park was originally planned for the turn of the millennium, but it was opened on July 16th, 2004, so it was under construction for six



years in total. The area is 24.4 acres (9.9 ha) large and replaced an unsightly wasteland of railroad tracks. Additionally, it helped bring residential development as well as tourism to the Loop and its surrounding neighbourhoods. That is why it is considered to be one of the largest green roofs in the world. The park attracts millions of tourists each year and offers a huge variety of free popular cultural programming. Travellers love picnicking in the grass, cooling off in the fountain and catching free concerts or movie screenings. A few examples for public events are Summer Music Series, Chicago Blues Festival and rock climbing. A lot of public art can be seen as well, like the Screenhouse by Edgar Soto or the famous Cloud Gate.

Cloud Gate is designed by an internationally claimed artist Anish Kapoor. He usually does not title his work until he is finished. But while it was still under construction, Chicagoans saw the curved structure and called it “The Bean”. That is how the nickname stuck but the original title of the masterpiece called “Cloud Gate”. It has a shiny exterior which reflects the city’s skyline, people walking around in the park and the surrounding green space. Its polished



surface invites many visitors to observe their reflection and even take many pictures. The curved underside of The Bean serves as an entrance that visitors can walk under to enter the park. This attraction is one of the world’s largest permanent outdoor art installations which was unveiled in 2004. It is 33 feet high, 42 feet wide as well as 66 feet long and weighs about 110 tons. The exterior is made of stainless steel and inside it is made of a network of two large metal rings, which are connected via a truss framework. This allows the sculptures massive weight to be directed to its two base points, creating the iconic “bean” shape and allowing for the large concave area beneath the structure.