ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM:
INTEGRATING AUDIENCE, PLACE, AND PROCESS

by

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ABSTRACT

The role of art within the city can be a determinant of, or be determined by, its public spaces. Since the public realm is complex, filled with multiple uses and values, what role does public art play in our experience of the city? Historically, public art has served a wide array of functions: memorial and monument, abstract vision, functional embellishment, community catalyst, and social and political intervention. I will establish a typology emanating from these traditions, and advance companion case studies to illustrate the limitations and possibilities of the traditions in integrating audience, place and process toward an increasingly diverse public realm. Special attention will be extended to the relationship between artistic form and the streets, plazas, districts, corridors and traces that comprise today's public domain. Finally, I will consider current integrative solutions to art in public spaces including temporary installations, collaborative endeavors, and "Culture in Action". If artwork is to be truly a public opportunity the relationship between audience and artwork must matter on par with the relationship of formal elements. I believe that art can and should provide content to public spaces through the creation of a discourse -- interpreting, translating, and mediating the social, historical and political environment it inhabits.

Thesis Supervisor: Dennis Frenchman
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My interest in the public realm has been invaluably broadened through participation in the DUSP Environmental Design Seminar over the past two years. The opportunity to deliberate, reflect, and create with Lois Craig, Dennis Frenchman, Gary Hack, Michael Joroff, Roger Simmonds, Larry Vale and fellow students Elizabeth Morton and Vishaan Chakrabarti is something I will long remember and treasure.

My gratitude to Dennis Frenchman, my advisor and mentor, for his encouragement, intuition and boundless enthusiasm. Many thanks to my readers, Michael Moore for his fine insights, and Wellington Reiter for a glimpse into his artistic and architectural vision.

Finally, with love and admiration, to my parents who have instilled in me a belief in community and an appreciation of all things artistic; to Sharon who is a most excellent cohort; and to Eric -- who was my incentive to finish on time so that we could tend garden and enjoy all the growth that the summer will bring.
A highly developed art of urban design is linked to the creation of a critical and attentive audience. If art and audience grow together, then our cities will be a source of daily enjoyment to millions of their inhabitants.

Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City
# Table Of Contents

## Chapter 1. Introduction
- A Personal Vision of Public Art
- Definitions of Public Art
- The Public in Public Art

## Chapter 2. A Typology of Public Art
- Monumental and Memorial Art
- Abstract Art
- Functional Art
- Community Art
- Interventional Art

## Chapter 3. Case Studies: Exceptions That Prove The Rule
- John Ahearn - The South Bronx Bronzes
- Richard Serra - Tilted Arc
- Buster Simpson - On the Avenue to Social Change
- Art In Transit: The Southwest Corridor
- Martha Rosler - "If You Lived Here..."

## Chapter 4. Spatial Context
- Streets, Plazas, Districts, Corridors, Traces

## Chapter 5. Current Trends and Proposed Solutions
- Temporary Installations
- Collaborations
- "Culture In Action"
- Conclusion

Bibliography
Chapter 1
Introduction

Perhaps the best definition of the city in its higher aspects is to say that it is a place designed to offer significant conversation. The dialogue is one of the ultimate expressions of life in the city. -- Lewis Mumford, The City In History

This thesis is concerned with the social and participatory attributes of art. It is my intent to explore the effectiveness with which public art and artists are engaging in the building of a public, a community and public places in the urban environment. I would like to re-examine the role of public art, and to probe a different understanding of the "public". To begin the analysis, it is critical to establish a working definition of public art and creating public spaces. These definitions will underlie a typology of five public art traditions, a discussion of a series of outstanding companion case studies of recent public art pieces and projects, and an appraisal of the spatial context in which this public art exists. This thesis is a statement about the need for a more communicative and interactive art; one which is capable of engaging a city's people. It's interest is in the difference between an official and representational art and a culturally diverse and experiential one.

The function of art in contemporary urbanism is to foster the social processes that produce the built environment.

"In fact, public art needs to be seen as a function not of art, but of urbanism. It needs to be thought of in relation to, rather than insulated from the numerous other functions, activities and imperatives that condition the fabric of city life." (Eric Gibson)

But what notions of urbanism should be considered in the production of new public art -- aesthetics reminiscent of the city beautiful movement, place making, functional artifacts of daily life, or even redevelopment of urban spaces in the name of public art but with the face of gentrification? How is this menu affected by the audience of the public versus the community that may favor functional art
that helps adorn the environment and draws together members of their community for social functions, i.e. furniture, play spaces, etc. What types of collaborations are involved in the designing of public art that facilitates social processes...architects, landscape architect, engineers, community boards, other artists?

I am most intrigued to look at public art projects that have addressed contested areas of cities -- contested by historic community differences, political development proposals, overlapping claims of special interest groups, or efforts to claim sacred spaces. The effectiveness of each project will be appraised according to form, content, placement, process, and to the extent possible, public response. In addition to joining the current discussion on the role of public art, I am interested in the nexus between public art and its spacial context toward the creation of new content laden places. My critique will be that of an urbanist and activist planner.

A Personal Vision of Public Art

In 1972 Robert Smithson noted, "Art should not be considered as merely a luxury but should work within the process of actual production and reclamation." (Holt 1979, 221)

A public art should speak of the moments, memories and images that influence a person's relation to their environment. It should enrich the fiber of those images that produce the "city". Rather than look inward, it should create a dialogue. "Culture" which has been so carefully constructed and guarded should be dismantled, and replaced by an unofficial and adaptable gathering of cultures. Public art should be localized, not universal. It should reflect an open and flexible city which reveals the complexity and singularity of its many parts and peoples. Rather than using public art to freeze a historical moment, a public art should challenge the glorified representation of the sculptural monument with the
experiential image, object, and event toward an increasingly inclusive art.

The basis for this new art should provide touchstones for the public to contemplate, respond, and alter their everyday experiences. The exclusive preservation of an official culture and art serve to continue outlived values and perceptions that counteract a diverse public realm. A public art therefore, should evolve as does its constituents. In its multiplicity, art is no longer understood through one culture, but many cultures. Public art might reinforce an official culture, but also encourage a spontaneous one.

The public is not a mass, the public is an individual. It cannot be viewed as an undifferentiated group of people who have determined group needs. The "public" in Boston, New York and Cleveland is each very different -- as are the various "public" in Boston’s South End, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain. A public is defined through an individual's intimacy with their environment and each other. "Through the naming of this environment, common memories and symbols bind the group together allowing them to communicate." (Lynch 1960, ch.1)

Finally, a public art is more than art which is out of doors, a monument to a common cause, or work commissioned and funded by the government. A public art must be based on more than the reputation of and the recognizable images produced by the artist. Both the concept of the "public" and the concept of "public art" need a thorough reinvestigation; as an interdisciplinary approach to the built forms that we live in and through.

Definitions of Public Art
In a recent edition of the "Public Art Review" several prominent artists, critics and arts administrators were asked to define public art and identify potential new directions. What follows are a selection of responses that provide a context for consideration of art in the public realm.
"Public art is accessible art of any kind that cares about/challenges/involves and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment; the other stuff is still private art, no matter how big or exposed or intrusive or hyped it may be" -- Lucy Lippard, art critic and activist.

"Public art, as opposed to art in public spaces, is designed in theme, format, and form language to take advantage of the particular limitations and possibilities of a context the involves interactions with the nonart public." -- Eleanor Heartney, art critic.

"Public art is artwork that depends on its context; it is an amalgamation of events -- the physical appearance of the site, its history, the socio-economic dimensions of the community, and the artist's intervention." -- James Clark, Executive Director of The Public Art Fund, New York.

These opinions each elucidate the need for public art to be accessible not only in context but content as well. Accessibility may be encouraged by a dynamic relationship between the work and the audience, context, and process. The value of aesthetics are not specifically mentioned, I believe, because the quality of the work in its own right does not directly contribute to the public nature of the work. There should not be a two tiered measure of aesthetic quality of art that is private or public, nor should the context and process by which art becomes public compromise the works integrity.

**The Public in Public Art**

At a recent symposium at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, entitled, "Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art", Patricia Phillips posed the dilemma of understanding the nexus of the public in public art by introducing a quotation from John Dewey in 1927:

> Whatever the future may have in store, one thing is certain: unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately solve its most urgent problem -- to find and identify itself.

Phillips continued, "In spite of the many signs of retreat and withdrawal, most people remain in need and even desirous of an invigorated, active idea of public.
But what the contemporary polis will be is inconclusive." (Lacy Public Art Review 1993, 14) While this sets an awesome task for artists, public art activists, and planners, I agree that public art has a unique role to play in the development of community identity and the re-definition of place toward a new diverse and integrated public.

As contemporary public art evolved, the definition and the role of the public in public art became increasingly important. The search for a meaningful definition of the public has been treated theoretically in recent critical literature and, in a more pragmatic way in the burgeoning public art community. In traditional public art the audience was assumed to be just about everyone. Yet, now an investigation in practice as well as theory inquires: Is "public" a qualifying description of place, ownership, or access? Is "public" a subject, a characterization of the audience? Does it explain the intention of the artist? Or does "public" refer to a quality of the work in process? In each case, the relationship between artist and audience is contemplated. (see Suzanne Lacy, "Mapping The Terrain: The New Public Art", Hal Foster, "Discussions in Contemporary Culture", and Arlene Raven, "Art in the Public Interest")

The general public is now being recognized as increasingly diverse and composed of special interest groups whose commitment to self-determination may overshadow their sense of participation in the broader fabric of society. In addition, the community development movement during the past thirty years has placed an emphasis on creating a public out of place-based interests of the neighborhood. Each of these dynamics has altered and challenged prevailing definitions of the public place. How best to communicate and institute a dialogue with this complex public, and in doing so establish essential public places is a central challenge facing urban planners today who are interested in the integration of public art into the urban environment.
The effort to include the public in public art has been addresses through patronage, process, and audience. "Public art in overt and covert ways, embodies the ideals and aspirations of its patron, be it national government, a local community, an individual, or a corporation." Art in the public domain is part of a complex matrix where the patron, politics and economic agendas often merge. These non-art factors influence and determine the appearance, siting, and interpretation of public art, at times compromising its public or democratic nature. (Senie and Webster 1992) For example, public art has taken the form of corporate sponsored outdoor projects, where the work is used to manipulate the viewers perception of the institution. Public art professionals may also utilize public art works to legitimize fine art, new venues, and avant-garde art as a public good.

Creating an audience or public for public art may be traced to the 1930s when sponsorship of public art became national policy as part of the larger economic relief and jobs program undertaken in response to the 1929 depression. The Works Projects Administration/Federal Art Project expected that art projects would help create a national culture. The New Deal envisioned a change in the relationship between the artist and society by democratizing art and culture. The projects during the New Deal aimed for a uniquely American blend, combining an
elitist belief in the value of high culture with the democratic ideal that everyone
in the society could and should be the beneficiary of such efforts. In many ways
this blend is at the crux of the discourse in public art today. (See Park and
Markowitz, Senie and Webster 1992)

In the 1960s the General Services Administration introduced the percent-for-arts
program which allocated one percent of the capital building costs to art, based on
the assumption that art is a necessary and desirable part of architecture and, by
extension, of the built environment. (See Wetenthal, Senie and Webster 1992)
Today the National Endowment for the Arts’ Art in Public Places program is
philosophically similar, but operates differently through a granting process,
offering matching funds to local organizations for art intended for specific sites.
Art is thus purchased or created in response to local demand and becomes
property of the local patron rather than the federal government. Federal support
for public art set a precedent for the proliferation of public art programs
throughout the country, supported with public as well as private funds.

Public art has traditionally been linked to public institutions, the state, and
commercial industries. These institutions have for the most part, determined the
symbology of the work and restricted its interpretations. It is difficult to separate
the public monument from the cause it represents, the public sculpture from the
building it adorns, public art from the individual producer. Public art functions
either to glorify or challenge state ideals, official events, and, to validate the taste
of the patron. The public monuments are marked by their inability to perform as
anything other than illustrative, decorative, or allegorical statues to historic or
personal events. They stop short of involving individuals with their environment.

Only in the past decade, with the emergence of publicly funded arts organizations,
are culturally diverse voices being heard and recognized. "Fashion Moda" as well
as Tim Rollins and the Kids of Survival, both collaboratives from the South Bronx
in New York City, created important precedents by popularizing graffiti, and the art of local and the ethnic communities under the umbrella of public art. Artists were working to establish a local rather than a universal base; involving and drawing from their immediate communities, rather than engaging universal ideas.

This new direction; the beginning of a local, ethnic and public-conscious art has paralleled a similar development in the applied arts. "Modernism", representing the transcendent and the ideal in both the fine and applied arts, is being replaced with a more humanistic and local understanding of the built environment. For example, the presentation of the American vernacular of the commercial strip and suburban development has become an important measure of American values and desires. The banal, the ordinary, and the narrative provide a valid model for architecture and urban design. Kevin Lynch recognized the critical need for rich and vivid images in the city environment, which can function to link a personal with a social identity. In providing a theory of "Good City Form", Lynch has inspired architects, planners as well as artists.

There is a symbiotic relationship between many artists and those working in the applied arts; architecture, furniture, graphic, fashion and theater design to reinvest artistic form with social significance. By calling into question the usefulness and necessity of their collective work, they search for art's place in individual and social experience. Artists, in redefining a concept of public art, hope to redefine its structure, meaning and context. Public art may not be looking for a new place in the "avant-garde", but rather for an aesthetic of daily life that envelops both a didactic and artistic capacity.
Chapter 2
A Public Art Typology

"The image is the product of both immediate sensation and the memory of past experience, and is used to interpret information and guide action...and as an organizer of belief, or activity or knowledge." (Lynch 1960, 4)

Public art has evolved and surpassed the original notion that it is either art that is outdoors, or work that is selected, programmed and funded by government sources. I have established a typology to address the question of what public art is and can be. While this typology focused on the distinct artistic and social priorities of five public art conventions, it is primarily focuses on the intent of the artistic work. I expect that this structure will improve my ability to analyze how public art functions in creating a sense of community (where appropriate), initiating diverse public realms, and illuminating the social and political nature of public places.

Recognizing that art is primarily a work of private self expression, there are several possibilities of transferring such art into the public realm. In 1981, an essay entitled "Personal Sensibilities in Public Places," by John Beardsley, who worked for the Art in Public Places Program at the National Endowment for the Arts and was commissioned to write a book by the same name, explains how the artists’ private concerns can be made palatable for the public:

An artwork can become significant to its public through the incorporation of content relevant to the local audience, or by the assumption of an identifiable function. Assimilation can also be encouraged through a work’s role in a larger civic improvement program. In the first case, recognizable content or function provides a means by which the public can become engaged with the work, though its style or form might be unfamiliar to them. In the latter, the work’s identity as art is subsumed by a more general public purpose, helping to assure validity. In both cases, the personal sensibilities of the artist are presented in ways that encourage widespread public empathy. (Beardsley 1981, 44)

Beardsley’s straight forward expectations of engendering public empathy still highlight the intent and process of incorporation of public art pieces. Yet, there are additional possibilities for the incorporation of art into the public realm that defines content and
function of art as a means to discourse not "assimilation". The typology that I will put forth attempts to include the spectrum of public art initiatives and motivations toward a broader, inclusive and more experimental cultural policy.

**Previous Categorizations of Public Art**

Public artworks have been categorized according to location, artistic medium employed, and stylistic maturity. Fundaburk and Davenport present one typology to illustrate how public artworks differ in museums, schools, civic and corporate buildings, and outdoor areas. But this catalogue of photos reveals no significant differences between the artworks from location to location. (Fundaburk and Davenport 1975) Louis Redstone presents a similar typology, characterizing artworks by sponsorship: governmental, educational, commercial. Again, the photographs reveal no insights except that most of the artworks displayed are contemporary or abstract, lacking in identifiable ichnography. (Redstone 1981)

In "Art For Millions", a discussion of the WPA Federal Arts Project, Francis O'Conner advances a typology differentiating between murals, sculptures and easel painting. (O'Connor 1973) Although this categorizing scheme describes the variety of public art more carefully than others, it masks the important cultural and artistic priorities within the medium. Murals, for example, can have many functions ranging from the abstract to civic decoration and place making, or more direct applications of social 'street' themes. The same applies to sculpture.

One common typology which compares abstract artworks to 19th century monuments and memorials implies that abstract types of art are stylistically more mature than others. Campen's "Out door Sculpture in Ohio" highlights the "movement from studied realism" to the "artistic achievements" of non-objective expression. (Campen 1980, 43-45) And Beardsley says that "commemorative" artwork as traditional forms of public expression in art "appear inadequate to the contemporary situation." (Beardsly 1981, Introduction) This typology is also inadequate since artists in every
art form make stylistic improvements on the past to maintain stylistic maturity.

How does public art play a role in the content and form of a public urban place and the definition of community identity? The aforementioned public art typologies do not answer this question, around which the public art debate is becoming increasingly focused. The following section is a typology based on what I consider to be the artistic intent and social priorities of five categories of public art. The discussion will include the role of audience, relationship to site, and the necessary process and politics. In the next chapter, each category will be illustrated through an artist's work that exemplifies the tradition and centrally addresses issues of community and public space.

The traditions: Monumental/Memorial, Abstract, Functional, Community Art, and Interventional -- appear in roughly chronological order; effecting the order in which they were recognized as part of the American art scene. As an immediate disclaimer, it is critical to consider how the production of artworks may vary from the mainstream recognition of a public art tradition, and the intent of the commissioning patron. This is especially true of Community Art and Interventional work that is still not easily considered part of the public art cannon. In addition, the traditions are organized on a scale of perceived effectiveness in creating new conversations incorporating the diversity of the public realm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Public Content</th>
<th>Spatial Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monumental/</td>
<td>A unifying symbol of an idea, event, or person.</td>
<td>John Ahearn</td>
<td>Public active in production process, symbolic community identity.</td>
<td>Symbolic content, concentration, focus on place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>To display individual creative expression.</td>
<td>Richard Serra</td>
<td>Orientation to space and place, social/political context, education process.</td>
<td>Focus creates a place w/ existing content and boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Artistic enrichment to useful objects and environments.</td>
<td>Buster Simpson</td>
<td>Utilize history, social nature of place.</td>
<td>Thematic content, dispersion and occurrence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Support and challenge local traditions and values, inform and inspire.</td>
<td>Art In Transit:</td>
<td>Generate community involvement and education, statement of identity and &quot;thereness&quot;.</td>
<td>Linear versus local nodes, consolidation and site specificity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corridor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventional</td>
<td>Integrate art and space to explore the social/political context of public space.</td>
<td>Martha Rosler</td>
<td>Creation of multi-level discourse by direct action, documentation, presentation. City as social form.</td>
<td>Concentration in dispersed nodes, new content and idea based paths.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monumental and Memorial Art:

"Traditional [public artworks] have been commemorative of great events or people, or illustrative of common socio-political goals. They have been brought into being to express values and beliefs assumed to be those of the audience, through a content and symbolism readily understandable to all." (Beardsly 1981, Introduction)

As the introductory quotation suggests, artists and sponsors in this tradition see immortalizing civic leaders and creating monuments to commonly shared ideals. The sculptor's artistry in this tradition is measured by the immediacy and vitality with which the artwork reveals its subject. Throughout the 19th century and continuing to the present, bronze has been recognized as the best medium for these artists. The additive process of creating a clay or plaster form from which the final bronze figure is cast, provides for more variety in composition and more freedom in modeling a direct and vigorous figure.

To cast a monument or statue is to cause an event or person to be perpetually remembered, historically prominent and conspicuous to posterity. A monument is proof of identity -- an icon or effigy. These images convey cultural or ideological messages; as civic monuments they instruct and inform their audience. Formally these sculptural objects are representational, illustrative, and pictorial. They describe or depict events, causes and personages. They reinforce an established "culture" and elevate that culture above the individual. "Culture" is defined through the state, and an artistic compromise ensues. The public becomes a mass, a mass of people who are asked to identify and collectively act -- conform. The traditional sculptural monument rather than containing daily reality and perception, serves to symbolize and embody an ideal. Not only sculpture, but culture is understood through an auto-dialectical process, a final and verified history; one which may have little to do with the everyday common experiences of people. Change is denied through a bronzed replica of reality. The "authentic" object is the object which is verified by the state.

Bela Lyon Pratt, *Edward Everett Hale*, 1913, Boston, MA.

Abstract Art:

These take the form of enlarged objects, figures or abstractions. Many artists in the past 60 years have contributed to a growing decoration of public streets with inert, often pleasing sculptures. They are recognizable through their names -- a Calder, a Nevelson, a Moore, an Oldenburg. The problem with these public works is largely their inception in the studio and transferral to a public location, or their consideration of location without recognition of the broader civic agenda. They are "portable" objects -- dislocated. Their connection to a public is superficial, neutralized by a foreign location, a lack of specificity or purpose.

Public sculpture or monuments are commissioned by civic bodies, and architectural or corporate firms to decorate the public facades, plazas and walkways. The attention paid to structure and context is evident only in the decorative element of the work, implying that the high cultural aesthetic possessed by the work is sufficient. The effort of this work is compromised, through the artist and client. These works serve to glorify and disseminate the artistic personality. The cult of the artistic personality is championed above any individual or collective interest. Again the artwork, rather than engaging its public in collective memory and experience, looks inward, isolates itself, and celebrates the celebrity.

While the monument encourages an imposed collectivity, the abstract work encourages an exposed individuality. In either case there is a form of social control, the former encouraging a belief in collective action, the later promoting the myth of the individual over society. In addition, these public works are marked by their inability to perform as anything other than illustrative, decorative or allegorical statues of historical or personal events. Their large scale is modelled by neighboring buildings or open space, their materials are industrial and durable. A space is cleared in parks, terraces, courtyards or plazas, where the piece occupies space inertly. Such spaces are often pruned and immaculate, emulating a museum or

Claes Olenburg, *Spoonbridge and Cherry*, 1988, Minneapolis, Minn.

gallery space. As such they do not begin to touch the complexity involved in individual response to an environment.

The Vietnam Memorial is an interesting abstract memorial that aims to deal with the complex notion of an American public discourse. The sculpture is able to reach a broad audience despite the multiplicity of reactions and realities held by Americans on the Vietnam War. Authorized by the United States Fine Arts Commission and the Department of the Interior, but funded through private contributions, the memorial to 58,000 American soldiers who died in Vietnam was neither to justify nor discount U.S. involvement in the war. The seemingly neutral status of the memorial (although the memorial is definitely not neutral) was dictated by the criteria established for the design competition. The criteria were that the monument (1) be reflective and contemplative in character, (2) be harmonious with its site and surroundings, (3) provide for the inscription of the names of the nearly 58,000 who gave their lives or remain missing, (4) make no political statement about the war, and (5) occupy up to two acres of land. (Griswold, in Seine and Webster 1992, 99) The sponsors of the memorial/monument selected Maya Lin's proposal on this basis. Lin proposed two black marble slabs set at a 125 degree angle and resting below ground level at its apex, on which the 58,000 names were inscribed in chronological order of death beginning and ending at the center of the memorial.

The memorial is invisible from a distance, demanding that the viewer enter into its space or miss it altogether. Vietnam veterans and civilians alike feel the conflicting emotions of "grief, pride, anger, remorse" that the war embodies in the abstract form of the monument. The architectural as well as sculptured nature of Lin's design reflects that conflict. While the piece collects its viewers into a space, the focus is on the individual, not on a representation of a mythic unity. Faced with the names of dead soldiers inscribed on austere black marble, the viewer retreats to "personal reflection and private reconciliation." (Savage 1984, 24-25) In addition, the wall provides an opportunity for the visitor to initiate a personal ritual -- the tracing of a
name, or leaving a memento.

After the antagonistic and fervent debate between supporters and opponents of the Lin design, it was finally agreed to add a bronze sculpture of three servicemen and a flagpole to the memorial site. This was to recognize the heroism of the veterans and the nobility of the cause felt by some in the political leadership, in a more palpable and traditional manner. This act fulfilled a necessity to retain an established unifying elements for the masses -- the flag and the customary bronze war figure. The inclusion of these more "political" elements to the greater memorial site is considered in the comments by artist and conscientious objector Richard Posner:

"There are nearly 300 Vietnam memorials that are in the planning stage, under construction, or already built across the United States. These range from classical stadium brass plaques to traffic island bronze nativity creches. Missing-in-action from much of this commemorative sculpture, however, is the element of prophesy. Not fire and brimstone prophesy. More a simple reminder and a warning: The dead can speak. The Vietnam war cannot be abracadabraed into a Noble Cause." (Posner, in O'Brien and Little 1990, 329)

There are, at least, three elements of the memorial site that directly address the issue of the individual and the public: the inclusion on the National Mall, the juxtaposition to other memorial monuments, and the veteran's vigil. The Mall has a formal unity constructed out of memorials. The Mall is the place where the nation conserves its past through selective recollection, honor, and practice (the White House, Capitol and surrounding museums). Therefore it is also a place meant to educated and edify the present and future citizen by encouraging them to live out the virtues of the past as expressed by communal aspirations toward wholeness. The axis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial point to the Washington and Lincoln monuments, the former an abstract obelisk, the latter a classical statue of immortality and divinization. Washington speaks to the initiation of the United States, while Lincoln was central to the reunification and an articulation of equality. The positioning of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial references these national symbols without demanding deference. Finally, upon entering the memorial site the viewer encounters a stand manned by


veterans seeking support for the continued search for those missing in action. While not formally part of the work, their presence reinforces that this is a living monument. While it is clearly not a space that invites casual use, it is nonetheless active and open to discourse. (Griswold, in Senie and Webster 1992, 75-94)

Functional Art:

"This art which is so utilitarian in its purpose as to be civic first and art afterwards [is] proper for the comfort of the citizens" -- Charles Mulford Robinson, 1903

Beyond the many fountains that adorn plazas and parks, Functional artworks have traditionally included stylized benches, drinking fountains, decorative statuary clinging to building facades, etc. Not all decorative functional objects in a locale could be called artworks. A multitude of ordinary cement benches and fountains exist. What distinguishes artworks in this tradition from ordinary civic objects is the care taken by an artist or craftsman in enriching a functional object beyond mere civic necessity.

Work in this tradition has not been widely controversial, perhaps due to a perceived civic purpose -- beautification, place identification, utilitarian nature. A current exception presently deliberated is functional art that is employed (or perceived) to play a role in the gentrification or marketing of specific areas in the city. Many of these efforts are characterized by collaborations between architects, planners, and artists.

In the 1980s the issue of public sculpture and utility was addressed by an emerging generation of public artists who saw their responsibility in the public realm as more closely akin to an urban designer. The public art of the late Scott Burton took the form of hybrid sculpture/furniture that provided much welcome seating in urban context while maintaining an artistic character. Burton created still-life performances with furniture, bronzes or casts in cold-rolled steel imitation chairs, rustic camp tables, and desk chair sets. Burton was specifically interested in the re-integration of

Scott Burton, *Untitled*, 1985-86, NYC

the fine and applied arts. He was interested in his work being mass produced, and reintegrated into home use. Burton, an artist emerging in the 1960's from performance art, developed a syntax, using precisely crafted chairs, tables and ensembles, often reproduced from the vernacular, mass produced styles. Burton took on the role of an "impersonator of design, to transform the reductivist tendencies of minimalist art, into a socially reflective one. His work was populist in intent, but definitely not homemade. His surfaces and craftmanship were immaculate, his images clean and entire. He isolated household and family objects and gave them the specificity and identity of their owners. They are furniture, but do not blend into a setting. Like a person, they create their own space. They dislodge our familiar and repetitive understanding of furniture with an unfamiliarity which furnishes our memory and experience with contradictory signals. We are forced again to "experience" a chair or table.

Burton's performance pieces of the 1960's and 1970's of the Iowa Furniture Landscape, included tables, chairs, and sofas in forest clearings the size of rooms and recorded in photographs. They brought to mind the American act of clearing the forest, of clearing nature in order to make room for the comfortable house or dwelling. As a culture, the act of tearing down and taming the wilderness is integrally tied to our identity and concept of freedom. This was a central metaphor of Burton's work.

The bronzing of the cheapest kind of fake Queen Ann mass produced chair, or the bronzing of a rustic camp-table is an authentication and enunciation of what those objects embody or represent. The desk and chair set which are reproduced and cast in cold-rolled steel, also begin to immortalize a simple, human activity. (We will return to this notion in an analysis of John Ahearn’s South Bronx Bronzes in chapter 3.) In both his furniture objects and performance, Burton's works reveal in their veneers, structures and positioning the peculiar psychology of our everyday and familiar world. A desk, chair or sofa all speak of both cultural and personal

psychology. He points out that the arrangement and rearrangement of these objects is not a casual circumstance but dictated by specific needs and desires. Burton was not interested in a crafted or folk design, but rather imitating style in order to crystallize the image, the materiality and psychology of the object. His was an aesthetic of everyday life. Burton's work revealed many metaphors concerning American experience. His vehicle was the clarity of richness of the image.

Community Art:

There are many standards which can be used in judging street art. The most logical ones include whether the work improves the immediate environment, the extent to which it involves neighborhood people, and its role in developing a community identity." (Sommer 1975, 8)

This tradition re-emphasizes place by advocating that public art should establish a relationship with the local community that surrounds it. This creates an environment that attempts to define what it means to be part of a community through a grass roots procedure and greater democratization of public art. Because of its grass roots nature, street art illustrates regional and ethnic diversity more than other public art traditions. Street art provides identity and a creative outlet to groups systematically outside America's mainstream. Street murals, ad-hoc sculptures, decorative exterior house and store front painting, bill board art, and some instances of graffiti begin to define the parameters of this varied art form. The distinctive characteristic of the tradition is that community art steps beyond artistic enhancement by originating from and referring directly to the character, people and history of a place.

Community Art takes a position on the value of art that includes the abstract and aesthetic, but also attempts to develop socially and culturally functional art that is inclusive rather than exclusive. The artists display a willingness to break from the modern heroic expression and adopt a postheroic search for the role of art in the broader spectrum of cultural needs. This type of public art, "represents a peaceful protest against the negative forces of society that impact the quality of life of
vulnerable people." (Bingler, in Senie and Webster 1992, 277) In these ways Community Art searches to address the needs, aspirations and ideals of public art's mandate for the public realm.

The Community Art tradition found a foothold in the "legitimate" art world of funding and government patronage through "Place Makers", a public art form coined by Ronald Lee Fleming and Renata von Tscharner in their book by the same name. Fleming argues that, "These artworks can affirm pride and strengthen identity with a locale and, by examining our connections to it, help us understand where we come from, what we care for, and correspondingly who we are." They continue by saying that "by populating the mind with images of the community, its history, characters, stages of development...place makers help us to restore a feeling of belonging, and with it perhaps a sort of inner harmony." (Fleming and Von Tscharner 1981, 7-8)

Although these descriptions assert a new form of unity expected to arise out of public places, the divergent forms of street art maintain consistent opportunities for diversity and discourse.

A well know Boston example of Place Making is the work of Mags Harries, who in 1975 won the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission competition seeking an artwork that identified the character of Boston in a non-traditional manner -- that is, not a monument or memorial. They commissioned Harries for $10,000 to create "Araston 1976". Harries bronzed debris including newspapers, vegetables, cardboard box sections to reflect the character of Boston's Haymarket. The work identifies place in very local terms, referring the viewer to a section of a city rather than to a whole city or region. Since that commission, Harries has been involved in several works that attempt to capture the viewers attention by relating the piece to the history of the place, process of production of a space, or humor.

In a very different venue, Tim Rollins, a New York artist and art teacher, has applied his skills to educating emotionally handicapped and learning disabled children in the
Calvin Jones, *Mural*, 1990, Atlanta, GA.

Derrick Webster, detail of yard art, 1990, Chicago, IL.
South Bronx, known as "Kids of Survival." KOS produce collaborative paintings that are an innovative mode for learning. Together, they travel to other communities where they pass on ideas and empower students and teachers. The students feel that their work helps to build community identity through conveying positive images and by their own industrious work example.

An interesting part of this tradition that bridges fine art and folk art, includes the "yard artist", a term coined by art historian Robert F. Thompson, for artists who transform space not in any special sculpture garden but in residential areas or front and back yards. Yard art may include sculptures, whirligigs, painting and even new buildings. Although Thompson points to characteristics that are reminiscent of West African traditions, similar projects are seen in the Latino community of New York's East Harlem through the development of Casitas. Yard artists are motivated by tradition and spirit in the creation of meaningful places out of spaces of desperation.

Functional and Community Art each attempt to combat the ecumenical intentions often attributed to public art. Artists striving to meet the needs of their public audience have subscribed to the notion that these needs can best be met through an art of the widest possible relevance. This goal of unanimity has also led to the establishment of what is considered a more democratic composition of public art selection committees. As we will see in the Functional and Community Art case studies, there has been a well intentioned effort to include on these committees not only panelists with arts backgrounds, but also representatives from the local community in which the public installation will be situated. While there are many positive aspects to this process as will be discussed, followed to its logical conclusion, the concept of public that this action implies may be far fetched. For public space is either communal -- a part of the collective citizenry, or it is not. Yet, the democratic process has presumed that the members of the community "on location" should be granted greater significance.
This suggests that there is a reliable formula for articulating the radius that distinguishes that community’s interests from the larger field of public life. (In the case of Boston’s Southwest Corridor, the distance for involvement was mandated at a quarter of a mile from any given station.) Thus the ideas of the local community and of the general public are put into an adversarial relationship, implying a fundamental conflict between those inside a neighborhood, district, or city, and those outside. This endorsement of community opinion, sometimes at the expense of larger public concerns, affirms the notion of ownership -- at least on geographic terms. Yet, this begs the issue of how we might choose to define community beyond simplistic geographic location. Given the previously discussed case of the Vietnam Memorial, is the community the residents of Washington, the family members of those killed or missing in action, the office workers who work nearby, or the public at large who will be affected by the poignancy of the place?

Functional and Community Art commissions rarely examine the implications of this question of community versus public, I suspect, because there is a great appreciation for the enlivened processes which try to engage everyone and offend no one. The final component of the typology, Interventionist Art, is explicit in its attention to the meaning of the public as it relates to audience, place and process.

**Interventional Art:**

During the 1960s, a public art began to be formally recognized which embraced the "experiential", and understood history not as a written declaration of deeds and events, but rather as a function in the individual through memory and experience. This work asks an open-ended question: how do we perceive, what are the formal and cultural properties of the materials we use, is it possible to perceive without preconceptions? Art was understood as being intrinsically political and therefore inseparable from its context. This art type rejected the emotionality and individualism of Abstract Expressionism, and sought instead to establish an art based
Barbara Kruger, *Untitled*, 1991, 130th Street, NYC.
on the experiential, the contextual, the vernacular, and the social. It was rational, idea based and cut off from craft. It abandoned the museum and gallery as the sole context for exhibition, and instead located in urban, industrial, rural and temporary sites. Its materials were clearly not descriptive or decorative as earlier public sculpture; its content not allegorical or monumental. The work juxtaposed its formal concerns with those of the applied arts -- architecture, furniture, theater design etc.

Within this tradition, landscapes and parks ceased to function as a backdrop or still-life for the sculptural object, and were transformed into contested grounds to address the politics of public spaces. A dialogue was attempted through the individual and their environment. Nothing was taken for granted -- this public work redefined both the understanding of "public" and the understanding of "art". Artists gave up a strict formalist interpretation of their work, in exchange for forms which might draw out new understandings and better communication with their audience. Work of environmental artists may be an example of this intent, although their work was often publicly inaccessible due to the available or chosen far flung sites.

Although the current diversity of Interventional work might be characterized as chaotic and lacking cohesion and quality, such diversity actively challenges a centralized understanding and definition of culture. Work in different mediums and contexts exists along side one another, produced by many cultures. Rather than being disseminated solely through the gallery or museum, it is multiplied in print, performance, or on the streets. An official and standardized culture is replaced by a multiplicative one. In politicizing the context of art, this public work actively challenges an official culture, and redefines the aim of public places.

Common to Community Art and Interventional Art is the siting of public art outside of, or in competition with traditionally significant locations associated with existing power structures and a unified sense of a public. The notions of site-specificity in this work includes the formal elements of space, scale and time, plus the existential
properties of the site including topography, light, and season. In addition, many respond to the historical, political, and social features of the place to shape the work and the process of creativity. In a new anthology, *Critical Issues In Public Art* (Seine and Webster 1992), two essays by Robert Morris and Rosalyn Deutsche addresses the changing ideas of site-specificity that are influential in the array of Interventional Art.

Writing in 1979, Robert Morris discussed making work more locally relevant by making it inextricably a part of its time and place by using formal elements as well as local conditions of place to inform the artwork. According to Morris, "such usages derive from the context of place, and form the art with what can once again be called a theme." (Morris, in Senie and Webster, 1992, 254) Writing almost a decade later, Deutsche states, "the new public art, by contrast, moves beyond decoration into a field of spatial design in order to create, rather than question, the site, to conceal its constitutive social relations. Such work moves from the notion of art that is in but independent of its space to one that views art as integrated with its space and users but in which all three elements are independent of urban politics." (Deutsche, in Senie and Webster 1992, 166) As such she challenges work that claims to respond to urban environments to commit to comprehend them. This entails artists -- and urban designers to develop the capacity to understand the city as more than a physical form, but also a social form.

The work of Krzystof Wodiczko intersects the prevailing notions of public monuments and space through the contents of his images, the sites on which they are projected, and the temporary nature of the installations. His work is "public" both in the usual sense that it inhabits public space, and in a more particular sense where the identity of the space is its real subject matter. For Wodiczko, the notion of "public" is synonymous with, among other things, "contested". He has worked in and on a wide variety of public spaces, mainly in urban areas around the world, in each case assisting the site to reveal its unique framework of social and political conflict.
Rosalyn Deutsche, in an article entitled "Krzystof Wodiczko's Homeless Projection and the Site of Urban Revitalization" states,

"Wodiczko's project reinserts architectural objects into the surrounding city understood in its broadest sense as a site of economic, social, and political processes. Consequently, it contests the belief that monumental buildings are stable, transcendent, permanent structures containing essential and universal meanings; it proclaims, on the contrary, the mutability of their symbolic language and the changing uses to which they are put as they are continually recast in varying historical circumstances and social frameworks." (Deutsche 1986, 66)

In addition to Wodiczko's projections and gallery installation which explore the relationship between urban real estate and the social environment, he has also designed a Homeless Vehicle. Similar to a shopping cart in size, shape, and materials, this vehicle opens out into a protected sleeping space and provides for storage of redeemable cans, a washbasin, and a compartment for valuables. The vehicle as a work of public art insists that the viewer consider the reality of the homeless as a permanent feature of the industrial economy and city spaces. The design process employed by Wodiczko incorporated the thoughts, trials and use of the pieces by homeless people, therefor creating a new "non-traditional" audience of public art, as well as an altered notion of Functional Art. Due to the transient nature of the piece when in use, the work addresses the larger social form of the city as the site.

In addition to challenging public spaces, Interventional Art also confronts the operations of huge systems and the stories of invisible individuals. For example, artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles' work with the New York City Sanitation Department engages city residents in one of the most crucial yet maligned operations of urban life -- garbage collection. Her project, Flow City, brought people into the huge marine transfer facility at 59th Street and the Hudson River for what was a multimedia performance of trucks dumping their loads of waste into barges destined for landfills. Other projects included Ukeles' shaking the hands of every sanitation worker in the force, humanizing their position, and cladding garbage trucks with mirrors, turning the public attention back to the producers rather than the collectors. Ukeles' work
proposes that the public in public art is defined by subject rather than object.

In these cases, the Interventional Art in public space calls for agile and ephemeral interventions, addressing brief, specific configurations of power, requiring a form of address that triggers response at new levels of emotion and action. If earlier monumental sculpture was marked by its uniformity of scale, subject matter and intent, the experiential public work is characterized by its diversity. If earlier sculpture illustrated official events in order to make them real, this new public work intentionally politicizes its context, denies institutional symbology, and is directed towards the individual. It emphasizes the meaning of an environment through the experiences of its participants. If a principle of monumental sculpture was its advertisement of a system, the experiential work questions that system, and advances a new system.
Chapter 3
Case Studies: Exceptions That Prove The Rule

I have chosen the work of artists John Ahearn, Richard Serra, Buster Simpson, selected artists involved on Boston's Arts In Transit project, and Martha Rosler as case studies to elucidate my typology of public art. Although I will argue that each art work is "interventionist", the work is allied with a traditional category by the choice of medium, form, content, or process. In each case, I believe that these artists have worked to clarify the debate on issues of defining "community" and "publicness" possible in today's urban public spaces. In addition, the case studies address a variety of urban forms that will be addressed in Chapter four including, the street, the plaza, the district, a corridor, and finally, a trace. Each presents an opportunity to consider the effects of art in creating improved opportunities for spaces to become enhanced public places.

I. Monumental Art

*John Ahearn - South Bronx Bronzes*

This case study analyzes one role of the artist in the community. How does John Ahearn's work define the community and the public realm in the South Bronx through the process of creation and the work? What was the impact of the site -- an area in front of a new police station, on the work and the community response? What was the role of the percent for arts process in the development of the work and the community reaction? Was a public sphere created by the placement and subsequent removal of the work by providing for a community discourse?

John Ahearn and his assistant/collaborator Rigoberto Torres may be seen as contemporary additions to a historic genre of humanistic naturalism. For over ten years Ahearn has operated a sculpture workshop in the South Bronx, and from there he has challenged the stereotypes of those he depicts in venues both inside
and outside of the community. Ahearn's evolving sculptural projects have essentially been to cast life sized oil painted fiberglass sculptures of members of his South Bronx community. The nature of his portraiture is the effort to give those he depicts a personal sense of their own identity by allowing them to see themselves as special rather than as outcasts of mainstream society.

Ahearn combats cultural stereotypes on two fronts, the internal alienation and self-doubt of the slum, and the "liberal" preconceptions of his art-world audience. He tries to bridge that gap by playing off the racial fear of the "downtown" art audience, as well as his South Bronx "community audience". Although many of his works are joyous, at times, his figures depict a kind of threatening, agitated violence and are as disturbing as they seem discontentedly disturbed. The art, however, does not reinforce the bigoted image, rather it undermines this image by adding a human dimension to it. In his exhibits, Ahearn brings the neglected dwellers of the South Bronx into a simulated one-on-one encounter with the gallery audience, as the viewer stares into the sculptures intense and vacant faces.

Previously, Ahearn's sculptures were one sided busts that hung as wall pieces, a composition slightly more quirky than the standing floor pieces in the tradition of George Segal. The change from murals and hung casts to floor pieces, and in the case of the South Bronx bronzes, statues on pedestals, provided Ahearn with a new scale and format to bring across the personality of his subjects. Throughout his career, Ahearn has displayed his work on gallery walls as well as on slum building facades. On the street, the works function as guardians, projecting over the people they represent. They make subtle use of the architecture which they adorn, adding artistic life to grim surroundings, by pointing to the vibrant life within the buildings. The reliefs constitute a kind of homage to the people, made by an artist who lives among them and to a some extent shares their lifestyle through the reality of a common physical surrounding.

John Ahearn with Rigoberto Torres, *We Are Family*, 1983, NYC.
Whereas George Segal, the master of body-cast sculpture, generally presents his figures without color -- bleached white perhaps suggesting an existential character -- the life-cast figures of Ahearn are painted in vital, natural color. There is an aliveness and exhilaration to many of Ahearn’s works, they are life affirming rather than destitute. This emotion felt in the work is premised on a complicated sense of the relationship between the artist and the model. The casts are produced with the collaboration of residents from his chosen neighborhood of the South Bronx. Ahearn casts on the sidewalk in front of his ground floor studio, waiting for interested subjects to pass-by.

Yet his attempt to overcome the problems facing today’s socially concerned artist, creates some serious ideological conflicts of its own. In part, this conflict evolves around the casting of disenfranchised people of the community to become part of the art marketplace. Thus the work may end up perpetuating, so far as art can, the social class structure responsible for the conditions in which the subjects live. That is to say, Ahearn has potentially provided the collector with an effigy that embodies the patron’s good conscience, the work of art, serving as a token of absolution, glosses over the contradiction, and thus undermines its goal of radical social change.

**Raymond, Corey and Daleesha**

The South Bronx bronzes of Raymond and his pit bull, Daleesha on her roller skates, and Corey with his boom box and basketball represent a different ideological conflict -- that between the community as subject as well as object, and the artist as credible interpreter. In April, 1986, the New York City Percent For Arts Program convened a panel to choose an artist for the 44th Precinct police station on the South Bronx. The art site was a traffic triangle at the intersection of Jerome, Gerard and 169th Streets in front of where the new police station would be built. As with any physical site in New York City, this was also a political site. In Ahearn’s view, the traffic island was a no man’s land that could
become a community focus where the relationship between the police and the neighbors could lose some of the pervasive tension. (Kramer 1992, 90)

The lengthy approval process began with Ahearn’s designation by a Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) panel which included an artist, architect, deputy commissioner from DCA, the design director from the Department of General Services (DGS) which was responsible for building the police station, a captain from the precinct, and the chief curator from the Bronx Museum. In addition several ex-officio members sat on the panel including city representatives from the planning department, Office of Construction, Borough President’s office, and City Council, as well as advisers from the Public Art Fund. The designation was based not on the race of the artists, rather on what the artist could bring to the neighborhood. Using this criteria, Ahearn was a probable choice for the project given that he lived in the community, had installed several murals and life-casts on local buildings, and worked with neighborhood "models" who retained their plaster "portraits" in their homes.

The initial idea for the work was to organize a huge neighborhood casting that would provide a crowd of concrete figures to inhabit the triangle. The DCA and DGS advised against concrete due to likely damage and destruction that might occur (although Ahearn’s work had never been disrupted in the neighborhood previously). In addition, budget and time constraints burdened the concept. Ahearn began to consider using bronze as the choice material, elevating his subjects to a heroic stature in the traditional material of the monument. This would afford Raymond and his pit bull to become formal guardians of the Bronx, and Corey and Daleesha to be perceived as symbols. According to a New Yorker article, Ahearn, "thought that it would be interesting -- or at least accurate to life on the calamitous South Bronx street, a street of survivors -- to commemorate a few of the people he knew who were having trouble surviving the street, even if they were trouble themselves." (Kramer 1992, 80) Cast in bronze and raised atop
four foot pedestals the police as well as the neighbors might reconsider who the three kids were and their "South Bronx attitude".

The initial complaints concerning the work surfaced only a week before the bronzes were scheduled to be installed. The project came unintentionally to the attention of the assistant commissioner in charge of design and construction at DGS and the executive assistant to the DGS commissioner who had appropriately been outside of the arts process. Each are black, and felt that the work was "racist and subjective" placing "negative elements on a pedestal." (Kramer 1992, 96) The assistant commissioner felt that the pieces were monuments to the drugs and crime that he had been trying to save "his community" from. They challenged Ahearn's role -- as a white man -- in the community, the nature of his friendship with the three kids, and the possible alternative avenues for intervention that he might have taken. At the root of their concern was the issue of who is a legitimate voice to interpret the community. In this instance, I feel that Ahearn has earned the right to interpret the community through his long term residence and network of relationships, but I would not hold these attributes as the measure by which legitimacy is to be judged. In fact, this may be an issue that can only be resolved by the community at the time of the intervention.

In September of 1991, five years after the commission was awarded, the bronzes were installed, and the mood of "the community" that was present (in fact, comprised of just those who were present) was decidedly mixed. A few local neighbors agreed with the DGS commissioner's sentiments, that the images were negative, that they represented factors destroying the area, and that it was bad enough trying to daily deal with the real people -- never mind being reminded of them whenever one passed the site. Although Ahearn had intended the statues to challenge the police to deal humanely with the neighborhood, they seemed to be an affront. Many felt that the figures would affirm the police's stereotypes, and in turn would disrupt potential protection for people from the "Raymonds and
Ahearn stated that when he started making his bronzes he was determined, "to make art, make a statement," something with edge and irony and "complications." In hindsight his goals have shifted -- now his interest is "in making the people of the community happy." (Kramer 1992, 81) Yet this may be an impossible goal when dealing with representations and images of individuals with whom you have a continuing relationship. Ahearn commented that it was "the art world against the community". Ahearn gains his artistic vision through the process of working within the neighborhood dynamic, and as such, he feels responsible for producing a popular work. But it is arguable that this was the art world in the community, staking a claim to increase the discourse concerning the place of the public.

Five days after the bronzes were installed, they were removed (at Ahearn's request) and placed in the sculpture yard at P.S. 1, a contemporary art museum in Long Island City, New York. Within the gallery space the work indeed fulfills Ahearn's goal of making an ironic and complicated statement. As such, it provides the art world with an opportunity to vicariously look at the Bronx world. In a review of an earlier exhibition at Oberlin College, David Deitcher reflects on the exhibit pieces as art objects and commodities, and how the artists deal with that condition; how they respond to it, resist or counteract its effects, and most importantly, how the artists conceive of art work that intervenes in the conditions of life in this society. Deitcher gives great credit to Ahearn's early work praising the manner in which he attempts to, "supersede the muteness of late modern purity with a more aggressive program of interventional art," through the production of plaster life casts. (Deitcher 1982-83, p.78)

Ahearn successfully (although perhaps not intentionally) intervened in the discourse of the nature of community and self definition in the South Bronx. Neighbors were encouraged to decide if Raymond, Corey and Daleesha belonged
to their community, or if the images were confrontational, or an insult. At the core of the debate was Ahearn's definition of community -- which includes the people on his block with whom he has successfully nurtured relationships. For example, Ahearn felt that the statue of Daleesha on roller skates, "was a great image, if you treated it with respect. It was all about youth, energy, physical aggressiveness -- about putting on skates and suddenly being four inches taller." (Kramer 1992, 91) Yet, these relationships, given a voice by Ahearn's work, could not be translated though his art into other people's perceptions. While Ahearn understood the fear that people felt of the three kids, he felt it was wrongly uni-dimensional.

In that case, given the monumental medium, should the subject have been a unifying hero such as Martin Luther King or Malcolm X, or an obvious advance to the police presence, or a positive image of a neighborhood youth college bound? As Bill Aguado, chairman of the Bronx Council on the Arts, commented, "Art is who we are -- it's exactly who we are. Corey and Raymond are 'life' whether you like them or not, and if we can't look at life, at what's real life, how can we get beyond it? What are our alternatives? Some safe abstract thing? Garibaldi on a horse?" (Kramer 1992, 104) Aguado would have supported a decision to retain the bronzes on the site to encourage a continuation of the dialogue begun at the installation. This dialogue might have addressed the realities of the neighborhood and the conditions that produce the fear of images such as Raymond, Corey and Daleesha.

Although Ahearn is interested in replacing the statues it is unclear what process might be used to choose subjects of "correct" representation under the multiple scrutiny of the neighborhood, the community board, the police and the city bureaucracy. Ahearn had been completely successful at navigating through the review boards and approval processes on the first try. Even at the community board, the thirty-five member panel supported the proposed work, perhaps, as has
been suggested, because a discussion on art was a welcome relief from the usual issues of drugs and street crime, or because they are no more representative of the "community" than are the people on Ahearn's block.

What is the difference between Ahearn's intervention and the work of Tim Rollins and the Kids Of Survival? Ahearn appears to care a great deal about getting close to the people in his community, not only to discover a subject to cast, but through his commitment to the creation of art in the life of his block. He works through an open studio process, exhibiting work in progress in the studio, sharing duplicate casts with his models. As a result, Ahearn's work is widely "owned" throughout the South Bronx. Although he does not formally train students in life-cast production or run after-school programs, he does provide a permanent distraction on the block. He is a stable, long term and recognized member of his community.

The street is a central public space in the environment. Ahearn's use of the street is essential to the process by which he finds subjects to cast, his relationships with neighbors, and his acceptance into the community itself. In the South Bronx, Ahearn understands and participates in use the street as a business place and social club. It provides him with continuing relationships with his subjects, affording opportunities to design new work as well as adapt work at the subjects request.

There is in interesting comparison to be drawn between the South Bronx Bronzes and Richard Serra's 1977 project, Terminal, erected in the central hub of commuter traffic in Bochum, Germany. The work was four identical trapezoidal plates of Cor-Ten steel, forty-one feet high. Although Terminal was initially built for Documenta 6, Serra meant the work for the Bochum location, in part because he envisioned it located at the center of the steel producing district where its plates were manufactured. This desire resulted in the social specificity of the site,
the was both the rational for, and the cause of furor over the work. The controversy over the piece was taken up by the political parties vying for the votes of steel workers in the region. The basis for their displeasure was as follows:

The supporters of the sculpture refer to its great symbolic value for the Revier region...as the home of coal and steel. We believe the sculpture lacks important qualities that would enable it to function as such a symbol. Steel is a special material whose production demands great craftsmanship, professional and technical know-how. The material has virtually unlimited possibilities for...both the simplest and the most artistically expressive forms. We do not feel this sculpture expresses any of these things....No steelworker can point to it positively, with pride. (Crimp 1986, 80)

The political party felt that the artwork was not responsible cultural policy as it did not provide a positive identification for people in the area. Central to the issue is the nature of the demand made on public art to provide the working class with symbols to which they can point with pride, with which they can positively identify. But as pointed out by Douglas Crimp in,"Serra’s Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity", there is also a hidden demand that the artist symbolically reconcile the steelworkers to their working conditions. (Crimp 1986, 50-51) I would assert that Ahearn is also being asked to only represent positive images of the South Bronx community, denying the social specificity of the realities of the local economic and social conditions including that the community contains the disenfranchised. Alternative subject matter for the 44th Precinct location risks mythologizing the people of the area in order to achieve acceptance within the community. In this event, I would maintain that the "public" nature of the piece has been compromised by diminishing the opportunity for the community to analyze its condition and scenarios for improvement.
II. Abstract Art

Richard Serra - Tilted Arc

Usually you're offered places which have specific ideological connotations, from parks to corporate and public buildings and their extensions such as lawns and plazas. It's difficult to subvert those contexts. That's why you have so many corporate baubles on Sixth Avenue [New York], so much bad plaza art that smacks of IBM, signifying its cultural awareness...But there is no neutral site. Every context has its frame and its ideological overtones. It's a matter of degree. -- Richard Serra (Crimp 1986, 49)

In 1979 the General Services Administration's Art-In-Architecture Program (GSA) awarded world-renowned artist Richard Serra a $175,000 commission to produce a sculpture at the Jacob Javitz Federal Building in Lower Manhattan, a government building housing federal bureaucracies and the United States Court of International Trade. Serra's Tilted Arc, a 120 foot long, 12 foot high work in Cor-Ten steel, was installed in the plaza which fronts the building in July 1981. Eight years later, the piece was removed to a car pound in Brooklyn.

The paradigmatic Serra incident was not the first such controversy to arise in conjunction with the Art-In-Architecture Program. In fact, given the program's stormy history, it is somewhat surprising that a deaccessioning had not occurred earlier. Tilted Arc offers an example of the inherent problems and necessary alliances among a public art sponsor, the artist community and the public in producing new works of public art.

The Art-In-Architecture Program grew out of a recommendation made by the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space assembled by President John F. Kennedy in August 1961. The Committee noted that "the Federal Government, no less than other public and private organizations concerned with the construction of new buildings, should take advantage of the increasingly fruitful collaboration between architecture and the fine arts," and that "where appropriate, fine art should be incorporated in the designs [of federal buildings], with emphasis
on the work of living American artists." (US Congress, Committee on Public Works 1962, 11) As such, a policy was approved setting an allowance for art of one-half of one percent of the estimated cost of each new federal building.

At the start of the program, the procedures for awarding a commission were uncomplicated. The work of art was incidental to the building under construction. It was in fact left to the architect to choose both the site for the artwork and the medium and also to nominate the artist. First officials of the GSA and then the Fine Arts Commission, seven judges of fine art appointed by the President, reviewed the nominations. While the Commission indicated a preference, the final choice was left to the administrator of the GSA.

As the program grew under various administrations in 1973 and 1977, the procedures were revised. They were reissued in more detail, while the responsibility for awarding an artist a commission became more diffused. In a first attempt to deflect criticism from the Art-In-Architecture Program, the GSA tried to ensure the artistic quality of the works of art commissioned under the program. Although after 1973, the architect, as before, proposed both the location and medium for the work of art, it was to be an ad hoc panel of art professionals appointed by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) that nominated the artist. One of the members of the panel was to be drawn from the geographical area of the project. Representatives of both the GSA and the NEA, along with the panel met with the architect at the site to consider artists whose work would be appropriate for the commission. A second panel, a Design Review Panel drawn from GSA's Public Building Service, then evaluated the work of the artist nominated, with the GSA administrator.

When these revisions failed to stem criticism of the program, more were made in an effort to allow greater community involvement in the selection of the artist. Accordingly, after 1977, the panel nominating artists was to include a
representative selected by the NEA from nominations made by either the mayor or another official of the local government. At the same time civic and arts groups were to be invited to attend the panel meeting as non-voting participants. In 1979, the year of Serra’s designation, the procedures employed by the GSA came under fire due to the existing strong role of the GSA administrator, and the persistent lack of meaningful community involvement.

The defense of the GSA process was made on the basis of the consistent quality of its commissions: "Because the General Services Administration has made a commitment to quality, the work chosen through the art-in-architecture program has a lasting and growing appeal." (United States, Art-In-Architecture, p.21) At the time a joint GSA-NEA task force was at work on further revisions to the program’s procedures with a view to widening community involvement and participation in the selection process. Recognizing that local decision making would not necessarily result in works of art free of controversy, the task force did not, however, recommend changes in the composition of the nominating panels.

In its report issued in 1980, the task force acknowledged that the unfavorable response to works of art commissioned under the program stemmed from a perception on the part of the public that there was no "relationship between the community and the Art-In-Architecture Program’s goals and procedures..." (Jordan 1987, 24) It concluded that public education and information programs undertaken before and during the installation of a work of art could alter the public’s response to it. Unfortunately, this recommendation was not applied to Serra’s Tilted Arc, which had already been commissioned but was not yet in place in Federal Plaza.

"To remove the work is to destroy the work."
The still controversial case of Serra’s Tilted Arc in many ways represents a landmark in the development of public art programs in the United States. It
illustrates well the difficulties involved with determining how to commission public art successfully -- to the satisfaction of the patron/government agency, the public and the artist. Whereas in the past the GSA had never faltered in backing an artist whose work was challenged, this was the first time that the GSA was, in effect, manipulated for the political gain of one individual at the expense of the artist.

The events leading up to the installation of Tilted Arc in front of the Jacob Javitz Building in Lower Manhattan by the GSA were procedurally standard. Upon recommendation of the building's architect in 1979, a three member NEA appointed panel of art professionals was assembled to select an artist for a sculpture to be placed in Federal Plaza. This panel recommended Richard Serra for the project, who was consequently commissioned by the GSA to execute the work.

In the initial phase, Serra pointedly pursued the idea of permanence with regard to his work, "although permanency is implicit in the commission of any site-specific work." (Serra 1989, 35) When Serra pressed the issue, Donald Thalacker, then head of the Art-In Architecture Program responded, "You get one chance in your lifetime to build one permanent work for one federal building. There is one permanent Oldenburg, one permanent Segal, one permanent Stella, one permanent Calder, and this is your one opportunity to build a permanent work for a federal site in America." (Serra 1989, 35) Clearly, the issue of permanence was vitally important to Serra as it is with other artists who are commissioned to create works for the Art-In-Architecture Program. Participating artists often take monetary losses on the projects in view of the opportunity to create a lasting work of art for the public. Stated Serra, "I felt that it was crucial for the issue of permanence to be fully understood, and I accepted the commission only after I had been assured repeatedly that my work would be, as stated in the GSA Manual, incorporated as 'an integral part of the total architectural design'". (Serra
An evaluation/design period ensued during which Serra addressed GSA concerns about lighting, maintenance, placement -- even slightly changing the location of the piece on the plaza at the GSA’s request. The GSA New York also requested a detailed environmental impact study of the sculpture in order to answer questions regarding effects on existing pedestrian traffic patterns, on hinderance of surveillance, on lighting demands, on drainage demands, among other issues. Serra underwent a process of continual review, submitting sketches and marquettes of the intended work throughout. The concept for Tilted Arc was officially approved by the GSA in 1980.

Once the final placement of the sculpture was agreed upon, Tilted Arc was installed in 1981, meeting with hostility from many of the workers in the building and mixed reviews from art critics. The piece evoked strong emotions from its audience, whether favorable or otherwise, though the media focused largely on the dissenting voices. That the sculpture came to be known to many as "the Berlin Wall" and "the Iron Curtain" is particularly ironic today. New York Times art critic Grace Glueck went so far as to describe Tilted Arc as, "an awkward, bulling piece that may be the ugliest outdoor work of art in the city" in her review of the work. (Glueck 1981, C1) Despite the uproar, GSA Washington defended the work's installation, and in time, criticism dwindled.

The sculpture raised little more than an eyebrow or two during the following three years until newly-appointed regional GSA administrator William Diamond stirred things up again in 1984. Circulating a petition at Federal Plaza headed "For Relocation" which requested that signatories place an asterisk next to their names if they found "no artistic merit in the Serra work", Diamond was able to obtain some 4,000 signatures. Diamond insisted that his judgement was not aesthetic and that he was not censoring a work of art. His public argument

58
concentrated on the alleged destructive effects of the sculpture on the social function of the plaza. In 1985, Diamond called a public hearing in the matter of Tilted Arc in order to decide whether or not the piece should be relocated, appointing himself chair of the five person panel and installing two other GSA administrators, thereby ensuring a majority vote.

Scores of supporters including some of the most prominent art figures in the world, spoke in support of the sculpture, urging the GSA not to jeopardize the agency's credibility by breaking its contract with Serra. Unfortunately, the testimony of many who spoke in the artist's favor was diminished because they were viewed as representatives of the art community interests which had turned the Art-In-Architecture Program into a "captive agency" to further their own special needs -- not those of the public. Even those who disliked the work came to its defense on moral and legal grounds, fearing repercussions that the act of breaking the contract would have on future public art commissions, particularly those of the GSA. The case became more than one artist's fight against a hostile system, instead symbolizing a breach of trust between the artist and the patron.

After reviewing 180 testimonies, 122 in favor of retention of the work, Diamond officially recommended to acting GSA Administrator Dwight Ink that Tilted Arc be removed in the name of "public interest", promoting improved health and safety of the plaza users. Ink did not question Diamond's findings, but did require that relocation of the sculpture be contingent upon approval by another NEA panel appointed to work with Serra. The artist took GSA to court on charges of breach of contract, trademark violations, copyright infringement and violation of his First and Fifth Amendment Rights, but all of the charges were dismissed. In 1987 the review panel reported that Tilted Arc could not be removed without destroying the artistic integrity and intent of the work, and recommended that the GSA discontinue its search for an alternative site. Diamond disregarded the panel's findings and resolved to relocate the sculpture anyway. Serra filed an appeal of
the earlier court ruling in 1988, which was also dismissed. Thwarted in every
direction, Serra was left with no recourse but to see his work destroyed on the
night of March 15, 1989.

Tilted Arc is confrontational art; it was never meant to merely adorn Federal
Plaza and anyone even vaguely familiar with Serra's oeuvre, as the GSA and NEA
panelists surely were, must have realized that the piece could be nothing but
confrontational. Serra stated in his testimony that,

Tilted Arc was constructed so as to engage the public in a dialogue that
would perceptually and conceptually enhance its relation to the entire
plaza. The sculpture involves the viewer rationally and emotionally. A
multitude of readings is possible. My hope is that the viewer can learn
something about sculptural orientation to space and place. The work,
through its location, height, length horizontality, and lean, grounds one into
the physical condition of the place. The viewer becomes aware of himself,
his environment, and his movement through the plaza. As he moves the
sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from
the viewer's movement. Step by step, the perception, not only of the
sculpture, but of the entire environment, changes." (Jordan 1987, 148)

Had the greater public prior knowledge of Sera's work, it might have been less
resistant to the piece and let it remain on the site for which it had been designed.

The role of education and local involvement in curtailing public resistance is an
area of major concern which had arisen in the past but was largely ignored in the
commissioning of Tilted Arc. Serra himself advocates public education in the
appreciation of contemporary art, as do many other artists whose abstract work is
somewhat less "accessible" than representational art. Harriet Senie describes it
this way: "Feelings of helplessness frequently result in expressions of hostility.
Over and over again, we see the public rendered helpless and hostile by art they
don't or can't understand." (Senie 1989, 299) Senie suggests that had a video
program been established in the building lobby, its changing audience might have
seen and experienced the sculpture differently. Such information is, as a matter
of course, provided for museums audiences, and is all the more necessary at a
public site. Viewers need a knowledge of context and visual and verbal vocabulary with which to understand a work of art, though not necessarily to like it. There is no question that the downtown community and Tilted Arc would have profited greatly from commissioning procedures which included an education program to familiarize the public with Serra's art.

After Tilted Arc, the GSA's Art-in-Architecture Program entered a period of reduced productivity and unending commissioning procedure review which continues as of today. These efforts are focused, not surprisingly, on methods of bringing about more and earlier community involvement and education, as well as a greater degree of artist-architect collaboration. For the Art-in-Architecture Program to establish a long term harmony between artist and the public, however, the perception that the program is the captive of the "high art" community must be dispelled. One approach that has been suggested to achieve this is the decoupling of the administrative process from the selection process. However it is brought about, any movement in this direction will go a long way toward creating a durable relationship among the Art-in-Architecture Program, the artistic community and the public.

The Plaza as Public Space
In response to questions concerning the recent acts of art censorship and perceived changing attitudes toward public art, William H. Whyte draws on the example of Tilted Arc.

"I think some mistakes have been made. Richard Serra's Tilted Arc was one, and I don't mean the sculpture but its placement in what was essentially one of the worst urban spaces in New York. It wasn't very solicitous....I think the disagreement was very justified in the case of Serra; [the Federal Plaza workers] felt it was almost an insult. Here was this dark and gloomy plaza they didn't like very much anyway -- it was no place for a great slab of Corten steel. Walls are the worst thing you can put in an open space. It was just a bad decision on the part of the jury....You've got to expect controversy when you're dealing with the public with anything that subjective." (Whyte, in On View 1990)
Public expectations for a site often begin with public amenities. Unfortunately, these were neither addressed by the GSA nor included as part of Serra's commission. Federal employees expressed the desire for trees, benches, and more open space -- all at a premium in lower Manhattan. Public sculpture in an urban site is not a panacea for aesthetic, social and economic development, although it is often expected to function in that manner. A site-specific sculpture will not obviate the need for landscaping or street furniture. These clearly should be considered as part of the site design. To varying degrees, it may be undertaken by an artist, architect, or landscape architect at the initial planning stages of the project.

In a statement made by Serra to the GSA Advisory Panel, December 15, 1987, he articulated his intention at Federal Plaza was to "1) structure the plaza and create directions, accentuating existing pedestrian patterns, 2) link the two sites of the federal enclave in that the sculpture should act as a bridge, connecting and visually gathering the different federal architectures, and 3) create a sculptural space within the plaza which could be experienced by those crossing the plaza on their way into and out of the buildings." (Seine 1989) Indeed, Tilted Arc realized Serra's aims from the changing views to the lyrical nature of the form. But, this was not the art experience of many who could not see beyond the size, material, and perceived blockages to one's desired path. Finally, its placement was seen as an obstacle to public use of the space.

What emerged at the hearings and in Diamond's subsequent statements was a vision of the Federal Plaza without the Tilted Arc as an idyllic open space, fulfilling the needs for social interaction of the office workers and general public. In reality, the fountain, which predated Serra's sculpture, flooded part of the plaza depending on the wind direction, and the furniture was sparse and poorly located. While no sculpture can make up for inhuman architecture and inhospitable urban design, Tilted Arc was successful in exposing these site issues.
Process versus Product

There are several interesting comparisons to be drawn between the described works of John Ahearn and Richard Serra. In each case the artists were designated through a prescribed process by a government agency, and the art work was approved by all necessary review boards. Despite the attention to process, the works were removed -- albeit at Ahearn’s request and Serra’s disdain. Each of the sculptures was perceived as threatening to the audience, user, and public. Seine asserts, "If we can't place a work of art in an understandable context, we are emotionally and intellectually threatened. Much of the pervasive unease evoked by new works of art in the public domain can only be understood in that context." (Seine 1989, 299) In a museum or gallery setting this quality would be praised as powerful, but in a public space it is interpreted by many as hostile. Others appreciate these works as heroic, expressions of the potential of sculpture to function as a dramatic visual and perceptual element in the urban context, and therefore, in life.

In addition to the placement, sponsorship and funding of public art, publicness may also be assessed by the manner of production utilized by the artist. In the case of Richard Serra, the work required the professional labor of others, not only for the manufacture of the sculpture’s material elements but also to "make" the sculpture, that is, to put it in its condition or position for use, to constitute the material as sculpture. This exclusive reliance on the industrial labor force that distinguishes Serra’s production as public in scope, not only because the scale of the work had dramatically increased, but because the private domain of the artists studio could no longer be the site of production. The place where the art work stands would be the place where it was made; thus making it the work of others. This is a common thread in the work of Ahearn and Rosler as well. Ahearn’s need for participation in the modeling for pieces and the casting of the work provides a public dimension to the work. Rosler’s inclusion of the advocacy group Homeward Bound, as well as the Mad Housers allowed a broader definition of
"exhibit" and public action beyond the walls of a gallery.

Had the South Bronx Bronzes and Tilted Arc the benefit of different commissioning procedures with expanded community input and a thoughtful education program, a careful consideration of public amenities at the site or in the neighborhood, and the ultimate right of due process, the results might have been different. Since the removal of Tilted Arc in 1989, few of the policy and procedural issues raised seem to have been addressed -- at least in a manner able to combat the withdrawal of the South Bronx Bronzes. Critical questions include: Should a removal procedure be an official part of the public art process? If so, what are the justifiable grounds? Does it depend on who initiates the removal scheme? Should there be time constraints? (Many foreign cities demand a minimum display time for a piece of publicly funded art regardless of the public reaction to the work.) Who should decide and how? In providing answers to these questions consideration should be weighed on the side of an open, democratic and public process.

III. Functional Art

_Buster Simpson: On the Avenue to Social Change_

Art may be one of the most effective avenues for social change -- non-linear thinking applied to public works. My approach to social and environmental concerns stems from the belief that we should act in concert with the planet rather than assume we are the beneficiaries of all its riches. We are only one of its components, unique in our intelligence.

- Buster Simpson, from a 1989 interview at the Hirshhorn Museum

Since the mid-1970s, acting in official and unofficial capacities, Buster Simpson has aspired to provoke citizens into progressive actions afforded by the integration of art and social consciousness. Simpson works collaboratively, an instigator in the team approach now routinely employed in public urban design projects. His art is aimed more towards the general public than the art world. Over a twenty
year span Simpson has accomplished being a street-based activist/artist as well as an innovator of public art based on social realities and environmental consciousness. This is evident in the breadth of his work from the *West Sixth Streetscaps* to the *Viewlands-Hoffman Substation*. The complex, amorphous physical conditions and social organizations of street culture have been the focus and resource for Simpson’s activism.

The tactics of Simpson's public work is one of dispersion and occurrence rather than formal consolidation and site specificity. There are no monuments to the presence of the artist, with a possible exception of the *Seattle George Monument* that comes closest to that typology. Instead, his art is a retrofit intended as a form of recovery that takes the route of least additional impact to a space. He tries not to expend additional resources in the effort to produce his work or to generate this ecological recovery process. The history of place, which is an essential concept for Simpson’s public work, is perhaps the most socially relevant ingredient of his work. Simpson battles against the perception of the city-scape as a crowd of isolated people, by taking steps to revitalize the feeling of relationship to place within the urban social-scape.

Simpson moved to Seattle in 1972, at a time when the city was initiating its highly regarded art-in-public-places programs and whose general art scene was growing. His arrival coincided with the civic and historical preservation decision to preserve and renovate the Pike Place Market. A farmer’s market located in downtown Seattle since 1906, the seven acre Pike Place area was threatened by high density speculative office and condominium development. Simpson, who had moved into a nearby inner city neighborhood, became a leading advocate for the Market’s traditional status as a working-class "people's place".

His first encounter with the politics of urban development revolved around the issue of an old, unpruned cherry tree which was removed as part of the Market
Urban Renewal Project. Though the tree was no great botanical specimen, it was a well-loved icon of the neighborhood. Simpson acquired the dead tree and resited it at the market with a piece inserted into its branches entitled *Crow's Nest* -- an assemblage of salvaged building materials made into an ad hoc shelter that became a highly visible comment on displacement. Since that time, Simpson has worked with neighborhood groups to preserve the historic ambience of the Market through membership on the Design Review Commission and the Pike Place Historic District Commission that were established. His works in the Market also included a *Shared Clothesline*, dramatizing the resettlement of the downtown area. The lines represented the rejoining of the neighborhood by actually tying together a public housing project and a new condominium across a street. The lines acted as banners of the re-occupation of the downtown area by a diverse residency.

His most extensive and continuing public project has occurred along an eleven block stretch of Seattle's First Avenue. Simpson worked as part of a team of two artists, a landscape architect and an urban planner, who introduced a variety of street trees, placed public seating at eleven bus stops, and added other amenities to establish an "urban arboretum". The goal of the design team was to create public seating that was innovative, historically connected and cost effective. The street now makes passersby and residents aware of the history, memories, and shifting human conditions of the downtown thoroughfare leading from the Pike Place Market. The trees when fully grown will identify the various bus zones by their change in foliage color and cover (purple-leaf maples and flowering plums) creating a linear park.

Another project along First Avenue designed to assist urban trees along with urban street people was Simpson's composting commode. Much of the subsoil on First Avenue was hard pan clay, which is not conducive to tree growth, and at the same time the homeless people on the street had a great need for restrooms. So
Buster Simpson, tree supports - post composting commode, Seattle, Wash.
the composting commode was introduced as a way to deal with both issues. The "Johnny-on-the-Spot" style commode sat over a tree pit until it was full, at which point it was moved to another site and the pit would be ready for the planting of a new tree. In this manner, several blocks of the city that had been identified with homelessness and desperation, were transformed for the "residents" and the public through the greening of the area that inspired an improved ethic of the neighborhood.

The commode was first placed on the street without official approval of the city, although ultimately Simpson did fulfill all the requirements of the City, County and State Health Departments, the Board of Public Works and the Engineering Department, who had become advocates of the project. As Simpson has tried to use indigenous materials and trees on the street, he has also worked with indigenous organizations such as shelters for the homeless and mentally ill. The organization staff and Simpson provide the residents with activities that foster stewardship of their neighborhoods and the environment.

**West Sixth Streetscape**

My set of foolscap sketches provide another plan for social and physical involvement in the warehouse district, not meant to impose upon but rather to become part of the District. The layers of urban patina are subtle elements; direct, sincere and homespun. Because of the years it has taken to build up this aesthetic, a framework is necessary to allow the community to continue siting elements.

Any place which has a strong sense about itself acquires an indigenous aesthetic, which makes visiting and living far more meaningful. The process takes time and commitment.

(Buster Simpson, "Foolscap", SPACES Exhibition Document, 1988.)

The Committee for Public Art in Cleveland was formed to address the concern for public art in Cleveland's Historic Warehouse District. The Committee was composed of artists, art professionals, advocates, art institutions, area residents and developers. They were committed to make art a part of the daily life of the
street and neighborhood throughout the district by commissioning works that were
knit into the urban visual landscape. In 1986 the Committee sponsored a national
competition to select an artist to work on a streetscape commission that was being
funded through reconstruction and redevelopment resources of Cleveland's
Economic Development Department. The committee recognized the difficult
parameters of the artist commission, as the extensive site had already been
substantially designed in a 1985 plan, a design that made minimal allowances for
the inclusion of art. These existing designs established a "look" for the district's
streets and sidewalks that had little to do with the historic nature of the area.

The $30,000 commission awarded to Buster Simpson specified that he was to work
as a collaborator with the planning team in place and the City of Cleveland
members of a design team, and also to design sculptural components for the
streetscape in the form of functional pedestrian amenities. Although the master
plan for the District had been designed and approved, there were design questions
and selections that were still undetermined. The design team discussed a variety
of issues in establishing the look of the street -- the nature of the lighting and
design fixtures, sidewalk materials, seating, signage, marking the crosswalks,
landscaping and trash barrels. Because Simpson views the street as the history of
the district told through artifacts remaining from overlapping periods, manhole
covers, call boxes, and brass grills in the sidewalk were saved, cleaned and
repositioned to inject the project with a more contextual concept.

The historic context was rediscovered through several efforts. The costly granite
pavers were replaced with an indigenous sandstone material. The use of
sandstone also enabled Simpson to modify the districts planned "amenity strip" to
make reference to the crosswalk pavement patterns typical of the area's past.
Also, Simpson discovered that since Cleveland is a steel town, slag from the iron
factories was often used as an additive in the concrete sidewalks, along with
limestone aggregate. This "Cleveland mix" gave a distinctive tint and texture to
much of the district's pavement, and was used in the restoration for all sidewalk patching while retaining as much of the original surface as possible.

One of the first characteristics of the district neighborhood was that, in keeping with the historic and continued function of warehousing, the businesses still stockpile boxes of inventory along the sidewalk. Simpson designed seating elements that were in response to this concept of inventory. From full quarry blocks, measuring 4x4x8 feet, Simpson extracted modular 16 inch cubes and cut beams in 16 inch increments, efficiently using the sandstone allowing for no wasted material. These "boxes" and "beams" were arranged to suggest stockpiles casually sited on the street, and have been grouped to provide benches, tables and platforms for the district. Although the modules are now fixed to the sidewalk, they can be rearranged -- the idea is that they are only elements to work with as the social nature of the space changes.

The benches act as social catalysts providing the idea of stoops around which people can gather. This solution also avoided the standard cliches - Victorian cast-iron reproductions, wooden slat benches, or abstract artistic approaches that would not fit the character of the surroundings. The initial seating configurations were designed for one segment of the area, geared toward the use of the building in front of which it was to be placed. Owners of the buildings were included in the design process, and agreed to carry the necessary permits and liability insurance on the benches. Having established these seating blocks as a design element in the District, there was concern that they not be limited to a single block, but be placed throughout the District for continuity. To this end, funding was found to extend the project addressing the areas aspirations.

The treatment of the lighting in the district was a further way to acknowledge and nurture a historically-responsive streetscape. The existing overhead lights are cobra heads which were mounted on turn-of-the-century trolley poles in the
WILL CALL

Buster Simpson, West Sixth Street Benches, Cleveland, Ohio.
1950's, informally displaying the buildup of history. This ad hoc retrofit was indicative of the no-frills approach taken in the Warehouse District. Instead of installing a completely modern system, Simpson recommended that the city simply add new fixtures to the trolley poles extending the pragmatic historic development. This approach would represent the city's own updating of the neighborhood.

Finally, Simpson's interest in historic research lead to an interesting discovery about Cleveland that lead to another district design idea. Since Cleveland was a part of the Western Reserve, it was one of the first areas surveyed with the new rectilinear grid system, which later extended across the United States. The Warehouse District contains some of the first blocks plotted in the city, and from the field notes of the original city surveyor, they were able to determine the exact locations of both survey monuments and witness trees. The term "witness tree" was used by surveyors to identify trees near survey points -- references chosen for their unusual physical characteristics. Simpson proposed that all the historic witness tree locations be resurveyed and marked in order to create the basis for a new landscape plan with strong historical references. This approach provided a response to the increasingly ordered and self-contained cityscape, often characterized by uniform tree types planted in regimented rows.

Also as a result of the historical survey information, Simpson proposed a series of "monuments" or, more appropriately perhaps, markers, to be sited as the posts of past surveys. Like a monument, they would become a "historic anchor to the past", changing the proposed sites which were without buildings, landmarks and definition. Simpson hoped that as the monuments bear witness to past structures, they would invite future architectural incorporation of transitional monuments. The monuments would function as street signage posts, host to historical anecdotes, and support for temporary or permanent sculpture.
Simpson's goal was to help the Warehouse District develop a genuine sense of vitality that might assist in the future development of several blocks of vacant land and parking lots. He realized that the renovation of the built environment would not provide enough momentum to alter people’s perceptions of the District, so he suggested new programmatic ideas to draw pedestrians to merchants in the neighborhood. He proposed transforming empty lots into markets on the weekends, and using spaces along the street frontage as day stalls during the week. This low cost notion also acts as a visual buffer between the street and the parking lots.

As with many of Simpson’s other projects, the overlay of social actions over artistic approaches to functional design problems led to innovative and enjoyable new spaces in the city. Through the reinterpretation of history, he developed the district without applying a theme or formula that the community might tire of in coming years, instead, instilling a feeling of stewardship. Each of the design interventions proposed by Simpson improves the quality of public space in the district in an area where no urban parks are available or characteristic. The new streetscape gives the district the needed repairs, and more importantly, seating and paving elements that turned the streets into a public space. In augmentation to the streetscape, completed in 1988, Simpson also made several proposals for further projects to evolve as the district develops.

In addition to artistic quality and sensibility toward spacial issues, Simpson has shown a talent for maneuvering through the bureaucratic framework of a civic improvement project. The plans were reviewed by five committees including those for public art, design review, landmarks, and planning. To facilitate the process several "town meetings" were held to explore the idea of public art, the role of preservation, the work of Buster Simpson, and finally, the design proposals for the streetscape project. While community collaboration was not the main objective of the work, it was critical that all involved understood the design
components and aspirations. The result of the artistic approach and the involved project process gave the neighborhood a whole set of new issues to discuss that will continue to insure that the Warehouse District will not look like any other restored district anywhere.

When the Committee for Public Art selected Buster Simpson there were many who questioned why local artists had been overlooked in the process. The Committee responded that Cleveland had no previous experience in a public art project of this nature, and looked to Simpson's experience to help create a framework for future collaborative efforts. Indeed, Cleveland now has a percent for arts program, and has initiated a network of new public art efforts.

IV. Community Art

*Arts in Transit: The Southwest Corridor*

Through an exploration of Arts in Transit: The Southwest Corridor Project, I will explore the dynamic between art, community development and the creation of a sense of place. How did the process provide for community involvement, and did that involvement allow for a discourse on the contested nature of the site. I will assert that the regard given to the new public recreational and open spaces as a community development tool, could have been applied to the public art with great success, rather then the creation of station art projects.

Seitu Jones considers the meaning of public art in African-American communities in a fascinating essay on Chicago's "Wall of Respect". (Senie and Webster 1992, 280-286) He focuses on the following three functions of community based public art: public art challenges and supports values and traditions; public art inspires; and public art informs. "Public art documents our place in time by visually rendering issues, ideas, traditions, and history...Unlike work displayed in museums
and galleries, public art is a shared and common experience." These sentiments give credence to the challenge of art to advance and reconcile feelings of conflict held by citizens in contested areas of the city. Although Jones hails a unified notion of a public, it is one that is informed and formed by a process and discourse.

The Southwest Corridor Arts on the Line Project involves a discussion of how communities decide how to use their public spaces. Self-evident uses, such as transportation, aesthetic uses as isolated from the social functions -- or unified social-political functions of a contested space? There appears to be a confluence of interest in utilizing art to answer these questions and as a medium towards community development. This includes the interest of artists to "reconnect" to community building efforts, perhaps improving the vitality and relevance of their work, as well as an interest by community development professionals to regard the arts as more than an "extra".

Public art in the context of transportation systems is admittedly an odd place to search for a community aesthetic -- these are places which are viewed as environments people pass through on their way to some place else without considering them as places for artistic expression. In addition, the inclusion of art and good design in the subways is expected to make underground environments more appealing, gentrifying their image to increase ridership. But in the case of the Orange Line Program, there was an articulated goal that the art was to serve as a generator of community participation and education -- to foster pride in the community culture of the neighborhoods through which the corridor passes.

**The History of the Southwest Corridor**

Boston's Southwest Corridor of 1976, reached from the Back Bay to Forest Hills, a stretch of over four miles, was the legacy of terrible single purpose transportation planning. The Corridor had been identified in the 1950s and 60's
as the ideal alignment for completion of Interstate 95, locally to have been designated as the Southwest Expressway. It was an element of the proposed Boston urban expressway system known as the "Inner Belt", which did and would have continued to destroy the inner-city neighborhoods and their environment in Boston, Cambridge and parts of Brookline.

While the expressway program was still alive, the State had taken by eminent domain over 100 acres of homes and other properties in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, widening its holdings along the Penn Central railroad right-of-way -- the spine of the corridor -- to accommodate the expressway and its interchanges. The fury over the takings and the growing awareness of the impending social, economic, political and environmental impacts of neighborhood displacement and other adversities led to protest. Coming on the heels of political activism in Cambridge, and riots in Dorchester, in which dozens of businesses had been burned down in an outburst of frustration and anger, the land takings of the Expressway furthered mistrust of and antagonism to government in the city's inner-city communities.

Protests of individual neighborhoods began to coalesce with the concerns of other community, professional, business and civic interests adjoined along the length of the Corridor. Under the banner of the Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis, the grass roots effort mounted against the bulldozer. Ultimately, in 1970, they were joined by Governor Francis W. Sargent who declared a moratorium on all new highway construction within Route 128. Sargent established the Boston Transportation Planning Review (BTPR) to conduct a through analysis of the regions transportation needs. In 1972, after countless meetings, public hearings, and commentary, the Governor determined that the Southwest Expressway should not be pursued. A year later, Mayor Kevin White and the Governor appointed a Southwest Corridor Development Coordinator to bring the public agencies and citizen groups together to organize
the new development plan.

As the 1979 Development Plan announces, "This was the first time in the history of the United States that a major expressway had been scrapped and the land and funding converted to other uses." The new uses would include a progressive mass transportation program, combined with improvements to existing arterial and local streets, new public open space and an Arts On The Line initiative -- this time with and in the interest of the communities on the Corridor. An elaborate organizational structure was invented to facilitate government control and community involvement. The MBTA organized community residents into a corridor-wide Working Committee during the earliest stages of the planning and design process when overall goals, objectives and uses were considered and urban design guidelines that applied to the entire corridor were created. From the outset, community consensus dictated that there should be public uses for land that was not needed for the subway line and stations.

As the project progressed to smaller scale design and planning issues, the forums for community participation shifted correspondingly. The Working Committee split into three task forces organized by the geographical boundaries of the major communities along the Corridor, the South End, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain. Anyone who lived, worked or owned property in any of the neighborhoods could participate. Out of these groups grew another level of community review -- eight localized Station Area Task Forces, one for each new station planned along the Orange Line route. These Task Forces where open to anyone within a quarter mile of the station. Separate Corridor-wide organizations addressed the park's development, and specialized groups arose as different topics warranted attention, including the Art Advisory Committee. (Places 7:3)

Arts In Transit: Education and Community Involvement

The process of selection and installation of art along the Orange Line was
conducted in a manner similar to the MBTA's previous acclaimed system-wide art project on the Red Line. Although the MBTA had been acquiring art work since 1969, the Arts On The Line project begun in 1978 was the first administrative effort to consolidate an arts program. In the resulting policy guide, entitled, "Arts On The Line", Robert Foster, the Chief Executive Officer of the MBTA said, "For all future MBTA art projects, a democratic yet professional artist selection process, similar to the one developed by Arts On The Line will be used. It is anticipated that, where possible, art will be included in all new and renovated stations."

The $1.5 million Orange Line arts program, called Arts In Transit: The Southwest Corridor, began in 1984, after station design for the nine new stations had been completed, and construction had begun. The program had two important features following in the prescribed footsteps of the Red Line program; a community arts education component and an extensive community involvement process utilized for the selection of artists. Between 1985 and 1988, three community education programs were offered in conjunction with beginning construction of the new Orange Line Stations. The first program was "The Artist's Lens: A Focus on Relocation", which was a photographic exhibition documenting life along the Southwest Corridor from 1897 to 1987. Five artist/photographers were selected to work with seven students from the Humphery Occupational Resource Center. The exhibition was displayed at the State Transportation Building and at the Boston Public Library.

Another program was a literary project highlighting Boston contemporary writers. This program offered a series of workshops for the public, taught by local poets. A Literary Review Panel was also established in order to select winning excerpts of both poetry and prose to be installed in each station. The third education program was an oral history project entitled "Sources of Strength: People and History Along the Southwest Corridor." The project included an intensive three-
day workshop for experienced oral historians at Roxbury Community College, an evening course in oral history designed for residents, the establishment of a permanent oral history archive at the Roxbury Community College, and a dramatic production based on collected stories, later made into a videotape.

One of the objectives of the arts education program was to generate increased communication and understanding between residents and artists. This function, along with the citizens’ campaign to stop construction of the Southwest Expressway through their neighborhoods, may have contributed to the high level of interest and participation of area residents in the planning and selection of artwork along the Orange Line.

In 1984, the MBTA designated UrbanArts to administer an artist selection process similar to the democratic process utilized on the Red Line. UrbanArts developed mailing lists of people with possible interest, gave presentations at community meetings, and advertised for interested residents in several area news publications. The Arts in Transit program boasts of directly involving over 1,000 local residents, artists and arts professionals in the full array of events. A site committee consisting of up to eight community representatives, the station architect and a representative of the MBTA was selected for each station. This committee developed individual community profiles of the area surrounding the station, and assisted with public presentation of commissioned art work.

The Southwest Corridor was divided into three sections and a five member Arts Panel was formed for each station section. The panels were comprised of an arts professional residing in the area, as well as from outside of Boston (representing a regional or national perspective), and arts professionals with knowledge of art history or the humanities, expertise in public art, arts administration, or relevant experience. The Arts Panels reviewed the information prepared by the site committees, determined the most appropriate method of artist selection, evaluated
artist's proposals and made final selections.

Ten permanent art works have been installed in the Orange Line stations, as well as several poetry monuments within the linear park. The artworks are quite varied including: *Transcendental Greens*, a polychrome aluminum serial sculpture by Dan George at the Forest Hills Station. The sculpture aims to turn the subway station into an enormous greenhouse, providing a dialogue between the architecture on the green surrounds of the station. Green Street Station in Jamaica Plain holds the sculpture, *Color Passages*, by Virginia Gunter, which uses the universal symbol of light to address the diverse complexion of the neighborhood. Malou Flato has created an exuberant ceramic mural at the Stony Brook Station, *Life Around Here*, designed to show a flow of people against a backdrop of the neighborhood's gardens, warehouses, and Victorian homes. *Faces in a Crowd*, by James Toatley, is a sculpture that through large faces hung on the wall addresses the quick glimpses that people take of one another on the train, also it may be read as "eyes" on the public space.

At Roxbury Crossing several fabric murals, entitled *Neighborhood*, were created by Susan Thompson, "This was truly a community project...For three months I worked with youths from United West End Settlements. I showed them how to take small sketches of the banners and blow them up to mural size..." Ruggles Station, considered a flagship of the line due to its proximity to proposed economic development parcels, has two very different art works. The first is an abstract aluminum sculpture by John Scott called, *Stony Brook Dance*, which swings high over the pedestrian through the atrium corridor of the station. Paul Goodnight's *Geome-a-tree* tile mural, on the other hand, confronts the viewer at the terminus of the station with images of members of the community, mixing African-American and Asian faces and symbols.
Tina Allen, Bronze Statue, Back Bay Station, MA.

Susan Thompson, Neighborhood, Roxbury Crossing Station, MA.
The Massachusetts Avenue Station holds the *Kinetic Sculpture* of Bruce Taylor, of which he says, "My predominant concerns as an artist are to create installations that relate visually and conceptually to the existing site while allowing for a shaping of a new environment." In the commuter surveys conducted by UrbanArts, it appears that many people have a difficult time perceiving the intended context of Taylor's work finding it abstract and mechanical. The Back Bay Station has two divergent works, the neon sculpture by Stephen Antonakos that draws the user into and through the station, and the bronze statue by Tina Allen squeezed into the commuter waiting room. While the neon is integrated (as best as possible given the lack of coordination between architect and artist), the bronze statue seems an afterthought, unfortunate since the subject is a Black porter commemorating the history of the early Black community in the South End. Finally, the New England Medical Center Station has a painted aluminum sculpture by Richard Gubernick, *Caravans*, which is an abstract work depicting movement.

**Project Assessment: "A Sense Of Place"**

In 1991, an investigation of the role of arts and humanities in creating a "sense of place" in urban neighborhoods and enhancing the quality of the built environment was initiated by UrbanArts and a newly formed Southwest Corridor Study Group (SCSG). The study used the Arts In Transit project as its case study, since the scope of the investigation was directly reflective of the goals set for the arts program. As part of the study, UrbanArts/SCSG interviewed many residents of the Southwest Corridor neighborhoods who had participated as artists, consultants, oral historians and members of the art selection committees. What was apparent from the interviews was that, for most, the search for a "sense of place" was not a search for a special theme to represent a community. Rather, it was a search for a sense of efficacy and purpose, of "thereness". As the report states: "Residents seemed to care less about themes represented through public art than about whether these themes established the fact *in public* that Southwest Corridor
residents were there, alive, and important. They cared that public art symbolized their commitment to the future." (UrbanArts, 1992)

A sense of place in the Arts In Transit project may have come to mean ownership of place, the right on the part of residents to define and redefine themselves and to exist into the future. Multiple senses of place exist within each community. Yet in neighborhoods along the Southwest Corridor, as residents participated in the selection of art and literature for their stations, or in collecting oral histories, or photographing the old elevated line, they expressed a common desire to lay claim to their space -- by recording its past and controlling its future. This level of awareness could never have been expressed through the placement of a single art product in a public space -- even a central and public space as a subway station. The awareness was built through an involved process of community building that contained temporal projects, educational programs, permanent artworks, and continuity of efforts.

One reservation I have concerning the nature of this community process is that the focus of the organizational work for the Corridor development was intuitively defined by community, neighborhood, and station locations. While this was an expedient method of organization, it impeded a discourse between the existing social and geographic boundaries, in fact, it may have intensified segregation that had been undone through the previous years of grass roots activism. Neighborhood Site Committees "chose a past" for each neighborhood in an effort to gain control over their future. This was accomplished in part by recommending themes to arts panels that emphasized harmony and an economically and socially vibrant history.

This positive vision contrasts with the media focus on crime and discord in an effort to establish a sense of personal and communal self esteem. But at the same time, it does not address the causes for the disempowerment and anger felt
in the community. The art and process attempts to be a panacea for social and political progress. Racism, unemployment, crime and a host of other problems intervene to underscore the role of political struggle in neighborhood life. Efforts to use the arts and humanities to enable residents to reflect upon and alter their environments does not necessarily deter conflict or generate a positive sense of place, although such efforts can open new channels of communication toward these goals.

The goals and expectations for the Art In Transit project were considerable: improve the quality of life in the Southwest Corridor neighborhoods, empower communities through active participation, and ensure representation of diverse populations and perspectives. The UrbanArts/SCSG study felt that in the aggregate, the goals were met. Participants expressed a high level of satisfaction with the final permanent works, as well as the process and educational program. There was a high level of community participation in the project despite the unnatural separation of the station design process from the public art selection. The selection process reflected the ethnic and racial diversity of the communities, and resulted in a range of artistic expressions including, but not limited to sculptures, banners, neon, and functional fixtures.

While the interviews conducted by UrbanArts resulted in few conclusive and objective observations, several critiques are worth noting. Placement of the work is critical to public notice and appreciation. For example, the literature installations which speak most clearly of the community identity, were installed in the park area and therefore are not accessible to people traveling through the transit Corridor. The study claims: "Permanent art installations contributed to community self esteem, but educational and off site projects contributed to community empowerment." In addition, the humanities projects were considered to have stimulated awareness and reflection upon the changes that have been introduced into the Southwest Corridor communities. This being the case, it is
interesting that the art is not more reflective of themes concerning the contested nature of the transit site, as well as central issues of the communities including housing conditions, crime, and employment.

The study made several recommendations that have implications for the Arts In Transit program and Community Art in general. At the local level, numerous recommendations were made for extending the life and impact of the program through continued educational and social programs. Temporary installations should be encouraged as way for local residents to express their feelings and concerns about the future of their neighborhood. This process will help establish local arts infrastructures without the commitment and funding necessary in establishing local art centers. For permanent work, the art process should begin in tandem with the design and construction process, and through collaborative efforts of artists, architects and engineers full integration of the work into the final designs of the space could be facilitated. Finally, the study urges for constructive press and improved public information about the beneficial efforts that have improved a series of diverse and troubled neighborhoods.

V. Interventional Art

Martha Rosler - If You Lived Here...

"What variety of means is available in the efforts to persuade and convince? How can one represent a city's "buried" life, the lives in fact of most city residents? How can one show the conditions of tenants' struggles, homelessness, alternatives to city planning as currently practiced - the subjects of "If You Lived Here..."? These are the central issues shaping this project." -- Martha Rosler (Wallis 1991, 31)

"If You Lived Here..." was a project organized by Martha Rosler with the Dia Art Foundation which focused on housing, homelessness, real estate and related issues, and the creation of art that engages a place and a social setting. The project included three installations at 77 Wooster Street, the New York Soho
gallery of the Dia Art Foundation, four public discussions, a Spectacolor lightboard message in Times Square, and a companion publication. It was the second half of a year-long project entitled, "Town Meeting" supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York State Council on the Arts. (The first half was a project called "Democracy", organized by Group Material in the Fall of 1988.)

The show’s title is taken from the advertisements posted outside the Charles River Park complex in Boston that replaced the West End community -- a dramatic transformation of an area, displacing thousands of residents, and altering the social and built environment completely. The two part advertisement ended with, "You’d be home now...", a direct irony for the displaced residents. In addition, "If You Lived Here..." addressed the audience attending the exhibit pointedly, since many attenders did live in the Soho community, and were therefore faced with the realities Rosler aggressively presented them about their neighborhood.

The three multi-media installations provided "direct evidence" on the following subjects: "Home Front", focused on housing policies, gentrification and displacement, and tenants’ rights, struggles and organization; "Homelessness: The Street and Other Venues" included works by homeless people and information on homeless advocacy groups and coalitions; and finally, "City: Visions and Revisions" focused on alternatives for city planning, featuring architects’ and planning groups’ projects and proposals. The Town Meetings allowed "direct speech" included discussions on housing, artists life/work space, homelessness, and planning.

"Discussions In Contemporary Culture" was published after the exhibit by the Dia Art Foundation as an integral final phase of the overall project. The resulting package, as articulated in the book’s introduction, is "part process, part discussion, part display of objects, part exposition, and part text". As such, the complete work of public art was a series of focused arguments concerning aspects of the way we
define and organize ourselves as members of communities, creating a discourse that can only be addressed through collaborative efforts.

The artists statement on the exhibition deals with the urban cycles of decline, decay and abandonment, through a discussion on gentrification and the role of artists. Rosler probes how routine and rapid the process of artistic gentrification has become, and the affect of the wealthy 1980's on the lives and goals of artists.

"These exhibitions and discussions are intended to suggest the interrelations between the city's political, financial, real estate and art systems. But they also address issues of housing and homelessness directly. These are directed at representing, questioning, and perhaps intervening in the situation of artists and their relation to society -- including the local and national conditions under which they live, produce, and exhibit work." (emphasis added) -- Martha Rosler

**Home Front**

This first exhibit incorporated the work of artists and community groups using video, film, photography, painting, installations, documentation and other displays that took a critical look at matters of home and neighborhood from the vantage point of experience as well as government policy. The exhibit incorporated 28 installations, and 20 videos or films which primarily documented interactive and interventionist efforts to raise awareness on issues of housing. The pieces where to inform viewers of action through artistic mediums, not only suggest issues through representational forms. The show featured a wooden hut-like reading room, a recreated Chinatown tenement kitchen, an archaeology of a gentrified Harlem building, the video of the Tompkins Square Riot, and several additional investigations into urban development projects.

The exhibition meant to establish an ambience quite different from that of the usual art gallery, as it was conceived as a set of representations of contested neighborhoods. The term "Home Front" suggested a war in which the fall-out was homelessness. The political response to the crises in housing was captured by
printed remarks by then Mayor Koch, statistical charts and real estate adds touting luxury living.

The associated town meeting with the Home Front installation included, "Housing: Gentrification, Dislocation and Fighting Back" and "Artists' Life/Work: Housing and Community for Artists". These discussions allowed a dialogue between neighbors who were and were not artists, on the double-edge sword of artist housing. Low income neighborhoods are attractive to artists who desire large, low rent spaces to work and live, yet their presence alters the surroundings and begins a process of gentrification, which then shuts out the original residents. The discussion revealed that many local non-artists saw the city's artist housing program as a "politically correct" way of pushing out low income people. The town meeting provided an opportunity for coalition building and mutual gain positions.

Homelessness: The Street and Other Venues:

"We are now ready to see "the homeless" as many different kinds of people, having in common simply being with out a home. We are now willing to pay more taxes to solve this appalling problem. We are learning that permanent, affordable housing in stable neighborhoods (along with job training and social services) -- not stop-gap measures -- is required." — Martha Rosler

Rosler is interested in fostering an understanding of the causes, conditions and remedies of homelessness, and addresses how a socially concerned artist avoids mealy aestheticising the victims of homelessness by using art in activism. Rosler suggests the complexity of the problem by providing a variety of voices, and the subtle art of exhibition itself. In the exhibit, works by well established artists flanked drawings by homeless children. Graphs and statistics on rising homelessness and real estate speculation served as counterpoints to photographs and videos of homeless individuals. In addition, a fact sheet on homelessness was distributed at the exhibition. This documentary tradition investigated art as a

social force instead of attempting to create valuable commercial art objects. It is reminiscent of the photographs by Jacob Riis that expedited the battle for social and political housing reform and the creation of advocacy planning. The exhibit was most critically involved in suggesting various pathways by which individuals can exercise power.

The exhibit creates several layers of spaces ranging from the expected gallery venue, to a stage set, to a headquarters in composing an active participatory public sphere. The gallery collection includes paintings, murals, and photographs depicting the lives of homeless created through collaborative efforts by artists and homeless. Children and members of Artists/Teachers Concerned displayed shadow-boxes, fabric murals, and story drawings to voice their visions. Also on display were posters designed for the street that transform "neutral" public architecture into radical statements.

Part of the gallery served as an office for Homeward Bound, a homeless run advocacy organization, who turned the space into a community center stocked with handouts, bins for food donations and clothes, a map locating shelters, and a library of relevant publications. Rosler installed a line of six beds intended as props on a stage symbolic of the dysfunctional shelter system -- and themselves providing the irony of available beds out of reach to the needy. In addition, a demonstration project was conducted on several Saturdays by the Mad Housers, a group of guerrilla architects from Atlanta, Georgia, who built huts in the gallery, changing the space from that of exhibition to that of production. The huts were later erected in public spaces around New York with the consent of the homeless individual interested in the new shelter. In each case the boundaries between the gallery and the public realm was tested, and the ability of artists to create new spaces was exhibited.

The exhibits slogan, by Peter Marcuse, was prominently posted, "Homelessness
exists not because the housing system is not working, but because that is the way it works." In this notion, the dichotomy of "us and them" that often informs discussions of homelessness was rendered useless.

City: Visions and Revisions
Rosler challenges the "vision" on which urban planning is supposed to be founded owing to the legacy of the Bronx, postmodernism, and the globalization of capital. Rosler admits that there are some who retain a visionary relation to city spaces, and pursue that vision through pro-active efforts, provocation, and commentary on the "real" conditions of urban life. The subjects of the installation were varied, including squatter shack communities in Bolivia, San Diego, and Tijuana each fighting to preserve their homes, the "casitas" movement in New York, and the efforts of communities to limit urban renewal endeavors such as the London Docklands Project and the 42nd Development Project. In each case, solutions to urban problems were offered including infill housing in the Bronx.

Given the gallery's profile location in Soho, the center of the New York art mecca and the first municipally mandated artist district, it is likely that anyone attending the show already had a raised consciousness about homelessness. Thus most interesting parts of the exhibit therefore, may have dealt with specific causes and solutions. By offering concrete information on the diverse conditions of homelessness, these works helped dispel the notion of its inevitability, while the presentation of specific initiatives made it clear that solutions are possible.

Clearly, the effort to blur the distinction between a gallery space as a world apart and the world at large was the crux of the exhibits success in creating a public statement. One review of the exhibit states, "The gallery setting, with its preselected audience and social isolation, provided a constant reminder of the continuing gap between art and life. The real problems and the real solutions remained, and remain, out there -- geographically only a few steps beyond the
gallery door, but in practical terms, on another planet." (Heartney 1989) In addition, The New York Times review (Sunday, June 18, 1989) states, that "it was risky to situate this project in the middle of the downtown art world. The art market has played a role in displacing poor people, most famously on the Lower East Side but also in Soho, not long ago a manufacturing center."

To address the issues of housing, homelessness and planning, Rosler turns to the broader notion of social space, that must be considered materially and as a set of processes. "The city, any city, is a set of relationships as well as congeries of built structures; it is a geo-political locale. More than simply an array of conflicting representations, a city is a site of production of productive significations." (Rosler, in Wallis 1991, 15) Her ideas are aligned with French social philosopher Henri Lefebvre who advances a strong capitalist rational over the production and use of urban space. Yet Rosler will latter extend her definition of the city to include that it is also a "set of unfolding historical processes", which I will return to shortly.

Although Rosler points to an "evaporation of sites of what formerly passed as a public world", she believes that there was always only a "myth of social comity". To argue her point -- the new supposed public spaces include the development of "urban fortress" like Battery Park City where entire areas of the city are run by "invisible crowd-control techniques", suburban malls, theme parks, increasingly expensive "public museums", and enclosed skywalks or underground systems. Rosler feels that the change in the nature of the street is purposeful and planned -- not merely a byproduct of unconnected developments.

Each development effort has increasingly relegated the street to become waste space left to the social fugitive and the unhoused. As street spaces diminish in their publicness, so do the participants of the street culture. Therefor, the homeless, prostitutes, even protesters, cease to be defined as members of the
public altering our understanding of democracy. "The lack of representation of poor and working class people in our public forums and in the halls of power is reflected in the wholesale erasure of their narratives from the city's history...and their neglect at the hands of public and private planners." (emphasis added) Through her work, Rosler attempts to combat this trend by encouraging grass roots populist planning, activism running the gambit from demonstrations to scholarly studies, and artistic intervention.

The artists has been positioned as both perpetrator and victim in the process of displacement and urban planning. They have eased the return of the middle class to the center city, but have also been displaced by the same forces of gentrification. In addition, percent-for-art programs have brought artists into the urban planning profession in the name of beautification projects and an improved quality of life. Rosler feels that Battery Park City exemplifies this sort of public art, for although it may present socially conscious art, the works are compromised by their context in a privately owned public realm. Artists may directly address the issues in which they are implicated through engaging in activism, this includes working with homeless people, producing posters and street works on urban issues, as well as other forms of political activism.

"One of the social functions of art is to crystallize an image or response to a blurred social picture, bringing its outlines into focus...Such critical practices temporarily check the flow of (what passes for) public discourse." (Rosler, Wallis 1991, 32) Here I return to Rosler's notion that the city embodies and enacts a history. As such, the role of documentary utilized by Rosler becomes an essential tool of artists. The documentary "shifts the terrain of argument from the art object -- the photograph, the film, the videotape, the picture book or magazine -- to the context, to the process of signification, and to social process." (Wallis 1991, 33) Yet the context of the exhibit is an art gallery, albeit partly transformed, and the context did provide an opportunity to suggest how art communities might take
on the issues raised.

**On Audience**

In "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers and Makers: Thoughts on Audience", Rosler generates her ideas concerning the nature of art audiences, as well as commonly held assumptions about the publicness of those audiences. Rosler asserts that art audiences are a sociologically definable entity -- privileged subjects of class and race. For Martha Rosler, the audience is "a shifting entity whose composition depends not only on who is out there but on whom you want to reach with a particular type of work, and why." (Rosler 1979, 323)

Rosler asserts that art museums are institutions that preserve privilege, and are therefore sites of political conflict. As such she uses "If You Lived Here..." to highlight urban political conflicts within the context of an art district and gallery setting. Due to the site she drew the regular visitors to Soho and the art press, and due to the format and subject matter, she also reached people outside the usual art audience. "The rejection of a belief in fixed audiences means that when artists who are interested in encouraging public debate take responsibility for the creation of publics as an integral part of their practice, they may actively try to reach new audiences, to bring constituencies with them." (Deutsche, in Wallis 1991)

In commenting on Rosler's work, Rosalyn Deutsche explores the two key factors that constitute physical places as social spaces; *difference and use*. Difference endows social spaces with distinct identities and values, allowing particular social groups to perceive and use the spaces by visitation, carrying on interrelations, and interpreting their cultural settings. Rosler attempts to construct an alternative social space by transforming the conventional perceptions and uses of the gallery site by the Soho art world audience, into a public realm. The exhibit built a wide network that emanated out of the gallery into political social places, including
Times Square. Through the use of the Spectacolor screen countless New Yorkers were exposed to messages concerning homelessness and housing. The consciousness of the passing audience was altered regardless of their awareness of the full exhibit, or their intended use of the 42nd Street space.

"If You Lived Here..." also envisioned a democratic social space. It brought together critical art practices seeking to create alternative spaces in the institutions of art with urban discourses that project an alternative city. Rosler and Deutsche agree that meaning does not emanate from the art alone but from its relationship with the viewer, as well as the institutional context within which it circulates and which mediates between it and the public. It is this interest in asserting a democratic space that allies the five case studies, and sets an agenda for public art that encompasses every traditional form of art. To be public, the art must confront the space, thereby securing its form, contents and appearance from the created forum. It may be insufficient for the art to be site-specific, as the political nature of many sites is not easily revealed, rather, the work must aim to produce a space of action and communication on the path to becoming a public realm.
Chapter 4
Spatial Context

"The process of placing works of art is almost like presenting questions to make viewers think as well as to move them. If the work continues to question and move people through generations, it becomes a classic."
(Nanjo, in On View 1990, 47)

What became clear in the Tilted Arc controversy was that different criteria were applied to museum and public art. Serra was severely criticized for doing in a public place what he had been doing previously with great success in various gallery and museum spaces. What is different is the physical context in which the work is seen and the public's expectations. The former is the subject of this chapter; the latter may be addressed through a myriad of ways including, community consultation and education as mentioned. Given this situation, Harriet Senie advances a challenge to urban design professionals:

Must the most powerful art experiences still be reserved for museum spaces and therefore primarily elite audiences? If Tilted Arc was impossible at Federal Plaza, are we to conclude that there is no room for a pure art experience in the public spaces of what is still considered one of the major art centers of the Western world? This raises issues of urban planning and design, and indeed, many artists today are addressing those concerns. (Art Journal, 1989)

As I have contemplated, an analysis of public art must address art issues including style, artistic intent, and appropriateness to site, as well as policy issues, including the program, goals and process utilized. In the case of the public art works I have considered, the central issue is spatial context. The unresolved problems of site specificity in public spaces include the possible frequent changes that take place over time on a site, the ability of some works to fit very well in a site other than the one for which it was originally designed, and the complex content created by the relationship among the site, work and audience. It is this last point which I intend to explore further through an analysis of the spatial contexts raised in the preceding case studies: street, plaza, district, corridor and trace.
In each environment the public art projects should produce or enhance the connections among people, places, and art. This does not have to be accomplished through a profusion of functional art, rather an integration of art into the pattern of everyday life. Art fosters places to be valued in a variety of ways; as they are individually experienced, as group settings, as support for social interaction and grounds for social struggle, as well as for qualities such as legibility, content, educativeness, and pleasure. (Lynch 1981, 366) The critical role of art within the spacial context is to focus the values of a social system, such as interaction, discourse, integration, and change, on the physical environment. A classical example would be Michelangelo’s David, in the City Hall square of Florence which provided a self image around which the local people rallied.

Roger Trancik, comments in, Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design, that, "The essence of place theory in spatial design lies in understanding the cultural and human characteristics of physical space. If in abstract, physical terms, space is a bounded or purposeful void with the potential of physically linking things, it only becomes place when it is given contextual meaning derived from cultural or regional content." Place theory asserts that every place is unique, taking on the character of its surroundings based on material substance, intangible cultural associations, and "a certain patina given by human use over time." Cultural associations develop from the fit between physical and cultural context and the needs and aspirations of the user.

One of the capacities of art may be to support urban designers to look beyond the local history of a place, feelings and needs of the community, traditions of indigenous materials and the political and economic needs of the neighborhood, to perceive what kind of place the space wants to be. There are a variety of ways in which spaces are created and understood that are critical to the dynamic among the work of public art, the context in which it resides, and the public’s perception of its success in enabling a public sphere. Robert Smithson’s earthworks - the
reclamation of unusable land for art, was an effort to create a "landscape of meaning", as Fredrick Law Olmstead's reclamation of land for Central Park:

"Olmstead's parks exist before they are finished, which means in fact they are never finished; they remain carriers of the unexpected and of contradiction on all levels of human activity, be it social, political or natural." -- Robert Smithson (Holt 1979, 127)

This "landscape of meaning" attempts to respond to historic context, human needs, and the essential qualities of place. The facets of spatial definition; of establishing or maintaining nodes, paths, landmarks, edges; of defining and connecting districts, monuments, and elements that give imageability to a city are fundamental physical tools. However, in the previous case studies, successful spatial design was (or could have been) helped by consideration of how artistic elements, site conditions and spaces fit together into an established urban context. The following discussion will revisit each case study through an analysis of the spatial context which they have created, or in which they have intervened. The key factors I will consider are the manner in which the definition and perception of the space has been altered by the art work, the dynamic of concentration and dispersement, and the ability for discovery. Each of these factors elucidates the role of art as a modifier and translator of the cultural content of places.

**Street**

Historically, streets and squares were the active and unifying structures of the city; today, they have lost much of their social function and physical quality. Streets and squares were always places to be, to spend time in, as well as paths through which to move and connect to varied parts of the city. Extensions of the home and places of neighborhood interaction, streets and blocks traditionally provided a systematic hierarchy from locally controlled territory to citywide communication routes. (Trancik, 105) In the *Livable Streets Project*, Donald Appleyard explores the physical and social complexities of street space and developed an ecology of street life that assesses the impact of traffic. Appleyard's studies are important to
an understanding of the street in context as a spatial entity for mixed use and social discourse. For an analysis of John Ahearn's work, Appleyard's assertion that street frontage is the delicate foil between the interlocked public and private lives of urban space is decisive.

As I have mentioned, Ahearn produces his work through an active participatory process that takes place on the street in character with the social expectations of interaction in the South Bronx. But beyond the process, the work itself altered the nature of the space in front of the 44th Police Precinct. The intersection of streets where the work was sited was considered a no man's land despite an adjacent subway station providing pedestrian flow, considerable vehicle traffic, area housing and the new "landmark" police station. The uses surrounding the site only drew people through the area, providing no destination or concentration of activity. In fact, the potential destination of the police station was a disincentive for residents to utilize the area. The bronze statues might have provided a necessary focus to the space.

The content and placement of the work tread on the line separating the private and public life of the community, therefore forcing a social interaction to take place in the street. Raymond, Corey and Daleesha were part of the street life that many in the community wished to keep hidden, or abolish. As "public" role models the monuments did not celebrate a common vision, instead they pointed to the perceived negative elements in the neighborhood. If the work had remained, it seems doubtful that it would have grown to be appreciated. Since the images were static and intended to be permanent they would continue to confront any positive changes that might take place in the area. Perhaps a series of temporary works might have assisted community members to rebuild the social nature of the street in a positive, non-combative manner.

Indeed, Ahearn changed people's perspective of the space at the intersection --
clearly, people came to understand that the space was an important entry and gateway to the neighborhood. In addition, the interaction at the site over the removal of the work displayed the intensity people feel toward symbolic statements, ownership of space and self determination. Members of the community realized the dual importance of the street location as a place for collective presentation as well as representation to the greater public traveling through the space. It is unreasonable to expect that a single artwork might create a "place" out of a politically charged space within a difficult urban context. Although increased discourse was not the primary intent of the work, it is a necessary first step in place creation on the street, bridging the social function and physical qualities of the space.

Plaza

"The Plaza is intended as an activity focus, at the heart of some intensive urban area. Typically, it will be paved, enclosed by high-density structures, and surrounded by streets, or in contact with them. It contains features meant to attract groups of people and to facilitate meetings: fountains, benches, shelters, and the like." (Lynch 1981, 443) In addition, the plaza carries the social and political significance of its open spaces and institutions around it. The open space becomes a forecourt which serves to unite, within a transitional space, the symbolic interior of the building with the greater urban context in which it sits. This is most obvious in religious spaces, such as in the Campo in Seina, and at highest risk in governmental spaces including the Boston City Hall plaza.

Richard Serra's work, does not enhance or frame a location, but creates a definite place. Its experience is not illusive and immaterial, but extremely tangible, man-made, and understandable. I think that a work is substantial, in terms of its context, when it does not embellish, decorate or point to specific buildings, nor does it add to a syntax that already exists. I think that sculpture, if it has any potential at all, has the potential to create its own place and space, and to work in
contradiction to the spaces and places where it is created in this sense. I am interested in work where the artist is the maker of an "anti-environment" which takes its own place and makes its own situation, or divides and declares its own area...I am interested in a sculpture which is non-utilitarian, non-functional...any use is a mis-use. I am not interested in sculpture which conventionalizes metaphors of content or assimilates architectonic spiritual sculptures, for there is no socially shared metaphysics. -- Richard Serra (Weyergraf 1980, 55)

Given this statement by Richard Serra, it is clear why there was antagonism between the space which Tilted Arc created, and the preconceived concept of the role of the plaza in the urban context. As spatial context, the plaza depends on the ability to attract people and facilitate interactions, and either relate or contest the surrounding context of buildings and streets. The work was primarily concerned with the sculptural orientation to space and place, rather than the social context expected by the users. The size and placement of the work demanded that every user reckon with the concentration of the plazas focus. The alternative gathering places and social experiences in the plaza paled by comparison.

I have addressed the irreconcilable matter of the expectation and need of public amenities in plaza spaces and the intentions of Serra's work in Chapter 3. Beside the specific dilemmas presented by Tilted Arc, the plaza was indisputably in need of a visual identity to match its functional importance. While the plaza is clearly bounded, within the space there is little concentration of attraction, the space is revealed at a single glance, and there is definitly no sense of discovery. The shared social experience is one of trying to find a place adaptive to interaction. One might have expected to find a monument or a series of functional works commissioned for the plaza that would provide the symbolic as well as social content desired by the users. Yet, in the end, satisfying the expectations of the public does not engender the level of discourse or revelation that was accomplished by Serra's work.
**District**

Although there are many emerging forms of districts, including the corridors and traces considered below, the district intended for this discussion is the classic bounded, single use and static area of a city. The physical characteristics of districts, as Kevin Lynch described them, are "thematic continuities which may consist of a variety of components: texture, space, form, detail, symbol, building type, use, activity, inhabitants, degree of maintenance, topography." Districts can be recognized by the user when they are in them due to a characteristic cluster which provides the thematic unity of the place. This thematic unit must also be distinctive by contrast to the rest of the city in order to be correctly recognizable. (Lynch 1960, 66-68)

Buster Simpson apparently concurred with the Lynch's notion of district imageability, as he used his artistic aptitude to continue the thematic layering of meaning through the Warehouse District. Simpson anchored his work to the highly recognizable and valued buildings by applying traditional associations to new projects that then created the needed visual strength and impact to the entire district. Although the forms of the benches, lighting, and monuments created were novel and unpredictable, the materials, textures and forms were recognizable as being from the districts' vocabulary. Therefore the content of the district resonates through a process where the community and viewer understands its history by observing and interacting with entirely new images.

Although the project consisted of numerous functional works distributed throughout several blocks which constitute the district, the work acts as a catalyst for cohesiveness in the area. As the audience discovers each piece the comprehensiveness of the district grows. This act of discovery also enables the viewer to disregard discordant elements such as vacant lots and empty storefronts. These places are incorporated into the theme through temporary programs that inhabit and alter the space, monuments which provide a clue for future
incorporated development, and artistic "screens". Whereas the boundaries of the
district may have been clear historically due to active commercial uses, now the
edges are diffuse, depending more on the gradual wane of Simpson’s pieces from
the main strip. The advantage of this situation is that it provides an opportunity
for flexible growth and continued invention that is desirable in a large urban
context.

Simpson has developed an excellent fit between audience and site through the
provision of new places for social interchange, causes for interaction between
people and the environment, and an educative content. But most importantly,
Simpson has provided a framework that both honors and entices change in the life
of a place through a theme that does not destroy or discourage the patina of
human use.

**Corridor**
The unique linear form and function of a corridor enables the creation of an
interlocking system of transportation, natural, cultural and recreational landscapes.
Corridors link places, while also slicing through districts, creating edges and
potentially lost spaces. In restructuring the lost space we must, in the opinion of
Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger,

> contribute to an environment which gives people more chances to impress
it with their own individual characteristics...enabling it to be taken over by
each person as an essentially familiar place...In this way, form and user
interpret and adapt to each other, each enhancing the other in a process of
mutual submission. (Trancik, 114)

The goal of this space then becomes part of the city as a whole and
accommodates diverse social patterns in overlapping and interpenetrating spaces.
In addition, Hertzberger intentionally left unfinished spaces in order to invite
neighborhood residents to customize their environment.

Corridors have an intrinsic tension between achieving continuity through
rendering a characteristic spatial quality and providing for concentrations of special uses and activities along its margins. This tension was purposefully addressed in the design of the Southwest Corridor Plan. The treatment of the subway tunnel and ground level of the stations would be treated with a consistent character, while the main levels of the stations would relate to the vernacular of the surrounding context. In fact, despite designating a specific architect for each station, coordinated planning, materials and budget have sanitized the designs, thus reinforcing the corridor rather than the place. In addition, the physical language of the open spaces also bolster the linear park over the neighborhood context. Therefore, as I have mentioned, the art was left to specifically address the community development of clustered spaces on the corridor.

Through the integration of art, among other resources, a corridor may provide a vehicle for the interpretation of the "story" of the place and a locus for organizing diverse resources with the potential to enhance area cultural, educational, and economic opportunities. As the Southwest Corridor passes through three distinct communities, the story might have concentrated on the different character and history of the places, the evolving role of each community in the fight against the expressway, and the current personality of each place. Through a greater integration of the art into the design and development of the stations and the open space, fuller content might have emerged that firmly anchored the nodes of the corridor. These nodes, in turn, would have proved a new context for the desired community dedication and economic development impacts desired by all those involved.

As it stands, much of the art throughout the Orange Line system celebrates the community and supplies new form, color, texture, and surprise to the stations. It is not my aim to diminish the attempts made to engage the community in a positive planning process, or the importance of designating resources of this type to an area that has been routinely ignored by municipal processes. But I do
contend that the Southwest Corridor was a critical missed opportunity to develop new places that evolve over time, encourage a diverse social discourse, and mend a highly contested lost space.

**Trace**

A Trace is an invention which links places, buildings, and activities around a concept or a constituency that has no physical organization. These linkages become a district of the mind, where an idea is the key connective force, and where selective recognition by constituencies, and not universal recognition, is the key to definition and participation. In addition, traces are generated by a variety of overlapping, rather than mutually exclusive, forces and unusual combinations of components. Portions of a trace may be temporary since even a brief presence of something in the environment has the potential to transform public perceptions of a place.

The conglomeration of events that comprised Martha Rosler's work provide a trace through the environment as well as a context to continue the development of the trace for individual experience. Formally, the gallery exhibition anchored the trace by drawing the initial constituency and presenting the idea. The work of the Mad Housers physically realized the ideas of the exhibition and drew the trace from the gallery setting to the new locations of the homeless huts. In addition, the Spectacolor messages afforded a layer of meaning from the exhibit to those who knew what they were viewing, as well as granting a new experience for the Times Square audience. The Town Meetings developed a social and intellectual context to understand the ideas of the other components of the work through a discourse. As a result of the work, I assume there was also a modification in the way viewers saw their surrounding environment, by this I mean that homeless people, shelters, and contested buildings also became part of the trace.

The notion of a trace as a design idea assists Rosler's intention to uncover the
city's "buried" life at the same time as furnishing a physical context to understand the content of the complete work. Rosler recognizes the layers of meaning in the environment and uses her work to expose them, if only briefly. It is her intention that once exposed the meanings will remain and become part of the public discourse. The trace empowers the landscape to play a social role, furnishing material for common memories and symbols that inform, bind a group together, and stimulate communication with one another. In addition to Rosler's work many other forms of interventional art fulfill the notion of a trace. Two examples include temporary art exhibitions such as "In Public: Seattle" which I will discuss in Chapter 5, and community art festivals each modifying the use of space by endowing the environment with definition of purpose, concentrated content and elements of discovery.

Due to this central principle of discovery, a trace can cause an artistic statement as powerful as a well situated monument or abstract sculpture. The temporary nature of the work encourages a confrontation with as well as an integration into the everyday environment. The art is supplemented by the surrounding context while it also encourages a new perspective of the space. This work has a strong educative value, as the art translates, reveals and elucidates spatial content that might otherwise go unseen.

I have not intended to correlate the typology of public art exclusively to the spatial contexts utilized by the case studies. In other words, monuments should not be excluded from street locations and reserved for plazas due to the critique of the South Bronx Bronzes, and districts may be marked by works other than functional art. While viewers have become accustomed to seeing monuments and abstract works set in civic plazas, and corporate building forecourt, there is great potential for these forms in the layering of content through districts, corridors and traces. Likewise, interventional art provides significant levels of discourse whether
on a single site or permeating the urban context.

Although I do not believe that there is a "kit of parts" to accomplish production of content laden places, some elementary design goals for the incorporation of art into public spaces might include the following ideas. Initiate unfailing efforts to make existing spaces positive places, rather than left-over spaces from the construction of buildings. Produce "outdoor rooms" that are established to accommodate a variety of different uses and activities. Create new paths along and through sites to assists in the manner in which people discover and understand the environment. Provide a focus of identification to the place whether it be through sculpture, program, or integrated aesthetic. Finally, do not underestimate the power of temporary works as a tool for determining the nature of the place desired and the building over time of a public content.

In closing this discussion of spatial context it is worth returning to the ideals of public space. In the words of Claude Lefort, "Public space has the virtue of belonging to no one, of being large enough to accommodate only those who recognize one another within it and who give it a meaning, and of allowing the questioning of right to spread." (Lefort 1988, 41)

The most public and civic space in many early American cities was the common. The common represented the site, the concept, and the enactment of the democratic process that resulted in the invention of a public. Therefore, public art is about the idea of the common -- the physical and mental landscape of American public life. The common was frequently a planned but sometimes a spontaneously arranged open space in cities and towns, but its lasting significance is not only in its morphology, but as a place where dynamic expressions of public life could be played out. This public area, used for everything from the grazing of livestock to the drilling of the militia, was the forum where information was
shared and public debate occurred. The common was not a place of conformity, predictability, or acquiescence, that we require of public spaces today. Rather it was a space of conflict, where one expected an ongoing dialogue between desire and civility. There is an opportunity in the sponsorship and production of public art to support the notion of the common in the articulation of a public purpose arrived at through dissent, transition and committed resolution.

There is currently a passionate plea for the creation of "meaningful" public spaces that would unify communities on the model of the public plazas and forums of historic Europe. But can a true gathering place be created in a society where there are no common beliefs? In addition, is this nostalgic model society relevant to today's American populace, and is it responsive to changes in lifestyle and population?
Chapter 5
Current Trends and Proposed Solutions

There appears to be three commonly discussed solutions to improving the manner in which public art is incorporated into the environment and able to promote places of discourse: temporary art, collaborative projects, and public art as "Culture in Action". It is worthwhile to discuss each effort briefly to assess a current direction in public art, and evaluate its potential for achieving the public realm set out in this thesis.

Temporary Art

Ephemeral public art provides a continuity for analysis of the conditions and changing configurations of public life, without mandating the status required to express eternal values to a broad audience with different backgrounds and often different verbal and visual imaginations. -- Patricia Phillips (Public Art Journal 1989, 335)

When evaluating proposals for art that will "last forever", it is not shocking that selection panels have often chosen a "safe" work. When faced with the expectation of eternity, it is not surprising that some artists also tend to be cautious. Therefore, the temporary is important because it represents an opportunity to be maverick, provocative, and urgent about immediate issues in ways that can endure and resonate. The power of the temporary asserts itself most productively and honestly in places where the pressure of the moment is implicit in the work. In these terms, the temporary is not about an absence of a long-term exhibition commitment of a sponsor, but about compressed intensity on the part of the artist.

One laudable example of a city wide temporary art program is "In Public: Seattle", organized by the Seattle Arts Commission in 1991, specifically designed to address the gap between the art and non-art public, and challenge subject matter appropriate for the private and public realm. For this exhibition, 37 artists and over 30 civic, community, and arts organizations were invited to intervene in the
ongoing process of daily life in Seattle. A local social historian/urban planner was made available to the artists, a third of whom were from the Seattle area, and artists were encouraged to explore a variety of community interactions. The works varied greatly in form, ranging from appropriated public address systems such as bus posters and newspapers to convey messages about AIDS, homelessness and the local Native American population, to an artists who worked in a community center and later exhibited his students works, to a new addition of Buster Simpson’s *Composting Commodes*.

The public was invited to participate in the "installation" through discovery during their normal movement about the city, as well as more formally. As the "In Public" guide states, "In picking up this guide, you become part of this great experiment of the city as stage." -- or perhaps, city as gallery. The Commission intended to create an experimental project that would allow artists to test out their ideas in public and to examine the city as a social rather than strictly a physical entity. It wanted to encourage temporary projects that would not be required to meet the exhausting bureaucratic demands of permanent works, and would be free to disintegrate, move, or be adopted by a community if there was interest. (In Public: Seattle Guide, 1991) Each of these goals encourages the audience to break from the usual role of passive viewer, to become co-producer, in an effort to generate the city as a revised social entity.

The exhibition guide asks the public for whom "In Public" was created to, "discuss, debate, be perplexed, wonder, laugh, be angry, reflect, meditate, and most of all enjoy." Given this solicitation, it is not surprising that the reception to "In Public" was mixed. The problem may have stemmed from the art public’s expectations about what the show was supposed to be. The exhibition included several projects that were "invisible" to the public, and several of those which were visible failed to conform to its audience’s expectations about public art. The ensuing controversy focused on two questions: "Is it art?" and "How much taxpayer money went into
this junk?" (Heartney 1993, 48) Yet, I would suggest that the content and context of the numerous works must have been well comprehended by the viewer, and successfully created a discourse about the use of public space to encourage exploration of uncomfortable issues, resulting in the unanswerable question -- "Is It Art?"

What is important about temporary art work is not simply the variety of art production that it brings to the streets and spaces of the city, but the forum they provide to explore the current meaning of public art. Because the work is part of the urban fabric for a short period of time, there if freedom to try new ideas, new forms and new methods of production. Although the work is short lived, it lingers in the memories of the viewer and creates a layer of meaning in the urban experience. Perhaps there is also a willingness to engage in sensitive ideas and current issues in ways that more enduring projects cannot. The highly compressed circumstances provide an opportunity to be courageous with content instead of daunted by longevity.

**Collaboration**

What actually constitutes collaboration is a complex matter; in practice it has involved everything from the addition of a sculpture to an already planned architectural project (as with the South Bronx Bronzes and Tilted Arc), to the teamwork of artists and designers from the early planning stages of a public commission (as with Buster Simpson’s work). Many artworks in public places have been completed in the first arrangement, but the second is still something of a novelty.

The sculptor Nancy Holt defines three forms of collaboration. The first is the "conceptual" collaboration between artist and architect, working autonomously, to create complementary works. The second, called "correlative," involves greater interaction in which the two professions inform the works of each other. The third is "cooperative" collaboration, and involves a working team of architects,
sculptors, landscape architects, fabricators, engineers, and community workers. (Marter, *Art Journal* 1989, 315) It is the third option that holds the most promise for the transformation of a site, combating the tendency to treat art as an afterthought to design, and addressing the disparity between the authority of artist and architect.

Public art administrators and other champions of collaboration have presented their approach as not only a more effective way to use public art funds but also as an important way of redeeming the process of public space design. This assumes that interested artists have a fundamental place in city planning, and in fact, artists have been described after collaborative efforts as "visionaries", "problem solvers", and "bridges to the community" -- terms planners would assuredly appreciate being applied to them. (Graves, *Public Art Review* 1993, 10) It appears that the most vocal advocates of collaboration have been artists interested in gaining control of new and varied projects and funds, and administrators who see an expansion of their sphere of influence.

In seeking to expand the role of artists, collaboration advocates run the risk of designating the arts the enormous task of compensating for all of the social, political, and spiritual inadequacies of the current process of creating public space. Urban design critics lament the loss of methods and rationale for developing new public spaces that reach beyond the mall, the theme park and the gated community common. Yet artists have been charged, along with architects and planners, to "humanize" the design of public spaces, as well as play the role of community advocate, mediator and designer. This condition demands new types of knowledge, access to resources and support systems to deal with the larger political, social, and economic influences at play in the larger context of public art and the design of public space.
As architect George Suyama noted in an issue of *Private Visions, Public Spaces*,

A successful collaboration provides a context for design professionals and
others to do work that transcends and dissolves the boundaries between
their disciplines in a way that produces a product that could not have been con-
ceived of individually...an alloy, a melting together of different materials
to develop something that has a greater strength than any of the
ingredients alone.

I would be remiss if I did not mention one of the earliest experiments of
collaboration between artists and architects -- the MIT Wiesner Building. In
1979, artists Kenneth Noland, Richard Fleischner, and the late Scott Burton
worked with I.M. Pei on the creation of a new campus media arts center. Their
respective input was directed at the coloration of the building’s skin, the sculpture
courtyard, and the interior and exterior furnishings. The artists in the project
were selected after the architect had begun designing the building, a condition
that most artists and arts administrators now view as an impediment to the artists
influence on the design. Although many agree that both the building and the site
have been enriched by the divergent perspectives and competing pressures
brought to bear, I.M. Pei’s architectural intent dominates the site. Central to the
ability of the collaboration to work was the need for a shared vision of the
relationship of the two disciplines -- does art invade built space, or become a
discrete and integrative aesthetic?

This debate is developed by Rosalyn Deutsche in a critique of Battery Park City,
considered by much of the art and planning disciplines to be one of collaborations
greatest successes. Deutsche specifically questions the relationship between
political economy and the rebirth of public art. How was the development
climate of the 1980s, focused on maximizing income for the few, to provide a
framework for public art and public spaces for the many? Deutsche criticized the
project as an emblem of the 1980s' view of public space as a commercial good
tied to real estate investment instead of a communal good held in the civic trust.
(Deutsche 1988, 34) Deutsche argues that Battery Park’s public art program drew
Richard Fleischner, *Untitled*, 1985, Weisner Building, MIT

Scott Burton, *Untitled*, 1985, Weisner Building, MIT, MA.
Mary Miss in collaboration with Stanton Ekstut and Susan Child, *South Cove*, 1988, Battery Park City, NY.
attention away from the debate on the inclusion of low income housing in the project, the use of public land resources, and public powers awarded to the Battery Park City Authority. In this way collaborations by prominent artists and designers helped to legitimize the creation of an elite enclave. Harriet Seine observes, "A comparison with the public found in nearby Battery Park, landing site of ferries to Staten Island and the Statue of Liberty, reveals just how unrepresentative of the population of New York the users of Battery Park City are." (Seine 1992, 91)

Given the dichotomous possibilities of art as occupier or aesthetic of public space, and the divergent opinions and repercussions of collaborative projects, this is fertile ground for new directions in public art. Certainly the Wiesner Building and Battery Park City represent only the most direct and obvious forms of collaboration, weighing the co-authorship of form most heavily and giving primacy to the aesthetic decision making process. New paths may include more broadly composed interdisciplinary teams as well as projects in which audiences help to shape efforts in creative ways. In these collaborations the *content* or program of the project may become central. Factoring in the contributions to the content of other professionals and community members will encourage a new way of structuring and evaluating collaborations, linking them to the traditions of community-based art practice.

Public spaces are the meeting places for a number of issues, as I have mentioned, and cannot be reduced to any one. Those places in which the vantage points of multiple disciplines are applied may reach a broader audience than spaces solely designed by urban design/architect/artist teams. The layering of voices that are employed on creation of a space may provide an array of points of access for users beyond aesthetic characteristics. (Graves, *Public Art Review* 1993, 13) This would provide what Rosalyn Deutsche has called a "critical urban discourse," a dialogue that acknowledges the social, economic, political and cultural dimensions
of a public realm.

Harriet Seine has reflected that, "The continuing pursuit of this utopian ideal [of collaboration] may represent an ongoing yearning for societal cohesiveness in a time of increasing fragmentation -- or at least an artistic unity of vision in a time of growing pluralism and individual isolation." (Seine 1992, 92) If this is the end product we seek: a public environment that reflects and sustains its citizens, then collaborations should reflect a wider range of society's members.

"Culture in Action"

Community participation and artwork responding to historical, social, and physical context has begun a dialogue that is transforming the history of modernism and 100 years of isolationist attitudes. (Pally, On View 1990, 46)

Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler describe their work as art intended "to be pragmatic, to deal with pre-existing social systems and to carry on a dialogue with the public." (Heartney 1993, 45) This approach to art as a valuable social tool is not new, but has moved into the forefront of the public art debate. "Culture in Action" is an upcoming program sponsored by an independent public art agency, Sculpture Chicago, that looked at the role of the community, participation and consensus in the creation of public art. At the root of this work, where the emphasis is on process over product, lies the question, what makes this art and not social work or community action? Is it art due to the integral role of the artist, or that the art community accepts it as such, or because the projects are spiritual as well as practical? As Eleanor Heartney points out, "There is indeed something paradoxical about the creation of art for which there is no product, artist or even audience in any conventional sense of the term." (Heartney 1993, 46)

Organized by Mary Jane Jacob, "Culture in Action" commissioned eight artists' groups to create projects that bridge the gap between art and specific local
communities. The artist-in-residence program concentrates on several levels of social interaction: Mark Dion will work with a group of African-American high school students to create an installation for a museum of ecology in Belize. Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler will design a paint chart in cooperation with the residents of a local housing project to engage people in the facts and values that constitute their lives and value systems. Simon Grennan and Christopher Sperandio are participating with the workers' union of a Nestle's Chocolate factory to create a worker-designed candy bar.

The Chicago based artist collaborative, Haha, will plant a hydroponic garden whose harvest will be supplied to an AIDS hospice. Suzanne Lacy will cap a series of community based performances dealing with the history of immigrant woman with a dinner for a group of woman leaders. Daniel Martinez and Vinzula Kara will look at issues of housing, labor and migration that have impacted a now predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood. Inigo Manglano-Ovalle's project will focus on the process of bridging social, generational, and cultural isolation within localized communities through a set of evening gatherings. In each of these efforts the artist acts as a catalyst, to give the members of the community with which they are working a voice of their own.

To heighten the resemblance to social science research, several of the artists will work with sociologists, urban planners, and other specialists to research the social issues at play. But the end result is not to produce research, rather public exchange toward an understanding of the new parameters of a community in a pluralistic society. In reporting on the project goals, Mary Jane Jacob stated,

To test out new methods of involving and collaborating with community members that go beyond the traditional mural-painting model, to engage others in the conception, execution, and ownership of public art. To do so, new strategies for art must be developed that involve the artist with community over time and may even create a sense of community where there was none; new modes of exchange between artist and audience need to be identified where public art can also be a vehicle for popular education; and new sites -- where art in the form of objects, dialogues, and
events can take place -- need to be created to bridge the gap between art and everyday life. (Yngvason, *Public Art Review* 1993, 5)

The success of these projects will not depend on whether the communities engaged will come to accept them, as was the case in the South Bronx bronzes and Arts In Transit. For without the active participation of the community from the beginning, the projects will not come to fruition. Rather, their success will be tested on whether the art plays a real role in the participant's daily lives and leaves them with a fuller sense of their cultural power.

I would designate each of these endeavors -- temporary art, collaborative projects, and participatory "Culture In Action" -- integrationist models for audience, place and process that contribute to new visions of art in public life. Each effort attempts to engage in an examination of established orders of permanence, hierarchy, and control often ensconced in monuments, abstract, and functional art forms. They involve communities beyond a selection process and educational program, to be included in the evolution and existence of the project, complementing diverse histories, and current discourses. Finally, they provide opportunities for assorted sponsorship and patronage given the variety of scale, form, and content.

There are also limitations to each of these methods in advancing a new public realm. In the creation of temporary projects an effort to construct a common vision can be circumvented, as the work is only a fleeting statement in the environment. The discourse involved in the commission, selection and production of a permanent work may challenge the community to articulate and understand their diversity in a manner exceeding that of a temporary piece. On the other hand, the collaborative project insists on permanence, heightening the importance of well defined goals and clarity of vision needed to integrate the work, artists and varied disciplines.
I am irresolute concerning the potential of "Culture In Action" pieces to create new public places, due to the weight of process over product. While the projects are well suited to assist in the social production of small scale communities, and empowerment of those without outlets, I am not convinced that these efforts translate to inter-communal affiliations, or the transformation of the physical realm. Yet clearly, this is a new strategy that address the conception, execution, and ownership of public art as it emerges out of the integration of audience, place and process, and as such it should continue to be supported and analyzed.

As a result of these opportunities and limitations, I would argue that the most successful new projects will originate out of a hybrid of these processes. In the case of a community that has not realized the potential empowerment possible through engagement with the arts, "Culture In Action" may play a vital first step in the creation of an involved and captivated community. Temporary works may then begin to expose the layers hidden in our environment, as the artist uses their vision to manifest the ideas percolating in the community into artistic mediums. Also, these works allow the community to proceed through a flexible and fluid period as the place is defined and redefined over time. Finally, through "cooperative collaboration" -- the most inclusive form of collaboration, permanent works may be planned and commissioned balancing the integration of a diverse discourse and the artistic vision.

This process necessitates a long term commitment of both the artist and the public in the production of innovative places. The role of the artist becomes one of translator, provocateur, and facilitator of the content of spaces and the ideas of the public. This role is then extended into that of the creator, channeling the content and ideas into understandable and commonly owned mediums. This process of designing public spaces hopes to recapture and promote the integration of art into all aspects of the public realm from social interaction to architectural vision.
Conclusion

Therefore, the public is not only a spacial construct. And thus a truly public art will derive its "publicness" not from its location, but from the nature of its engagement with the congested, cacophonous intersections of personal interests, collective values, social issues, political events, and wider cultural patterns that mark out our civic life. (Phillips 1988, 93)

Clearly, public art is not public just because it is out of doors, or in some identifiable civic space, or because it is something almost anyone can apprehend, or due to a government funding and approval process. It is public because it is a demonstration of art activities and strategies that take the idea of public as the origin and subject of analysis. A public art that truly explores the rich symbiotic topography of civic, social and cultural forces can utilize any tradition, occupy any spacial context, and be either temporal or permanent. It does not have to conform to formal parameters, for it does not find its meaning through its situation in a forum. Rather, it creates the forum for the dialogue between public ideas and private actions, between being a member of a community and remaining a individual. Wherever we might find that art, we would be inspired to extend its discourse into the variety of public and private domains we enter.

There are many opinions about the new directions public art will take over the next decade. I return to the interviews conducted by the "Public Art Review" to gain some perspective on the ideas of those working and commenting on the field. Nancy Princenthal, an art critic, comments,

Perhaps the most immediate result [of competing claims concerning what public art is] will be formal recognition of the de facto fragmentation of the field that accords equal respect to artist-designed amenities, artist-assisted community cultural activity, artist-led political and social activism, and art that insists on its independence from all such functions.

Many hope that artists will be recognized as facilitators and innovative problem solvers who the public expects will "excite us, inform us and move us forward". The incorporation of community participation in the planning of public art will continue, and will be challenged to resolve the tensions created by works that
seek to provoke and challenge viewers through raising uncomfortable public issues. (John Ahearn's South Bronx Bronzes at the 44th Precinct traffic triangle is a case in point.) Electronic media and technology will not only continue to inspire new forms of art, but will also shift our understanding of community and the public realm. Clearly, trends toward isolation and the devaluation of a public sphere will continue to be addressed.

But, in addition to the artistic matters and the social and political interactions with art, inevitable changes to the city form will alter the role of public art. The conventional and emerging public art sites today -- streets, plazas, districts, corridors and traces -- are based on pedestrian models of urban living. As people gather in different ways, through electronic media and networks, public art will have to respond to different modes and situations of interaction.

In many ways, Lucy Lippard summarizes the myriad of my hopes and aspirations for public art and public spaces in the next century,

Public art will play a role in everyday life, either locally meaningful or politically catalytic or just plain fun and pleasurable; it can reinforce or broaden a sense of community, raise consciousness, recall history, help make non-superficial aspects of its site visible, and sometimes decorate and inspire. Or perhaps art will be folded back into life to the point where it is everywhere and nowhere. (Public Art Review 1993, 9)

The problem of the future of public art and public spaces has to do with the presence or absence of a vision of the city that includes more than prestige locations, upscale real estate development, civic and corporate dominance, and elite opinion. If one hopes, as I do, for a more inclusive, pluralistic, civil and democratic society, one would want public art to be part of the urban fabric, to be dispersed, locally identified, diverse, and rooted in a visual, spacial, and human context.
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128

