

**Art History 404**

**Public Art in 20th Century Urban Space**

**Temple University, Department of Art History**

**Spring Semester 2007**

Tyler Campus

President's Hall, M002

Wednesday, 4:00-6:30 PM

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Office hours: Tuesday, 2:00-5:00 PM

\* E-mail is generally the best method of contact during non-office hours.

\* Please allow 48-hours for an e-mail response.

**GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION**

**Topic and Scope of the Course:** The challenges and contradictions of situating works of art in urban space have never been greater. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when traditional urban monuments began to lose both their visual effectiveness and their symbolic significance, artists have sought new ways of creating effective interventions in public space while also attempting to address a wide array of urban audiences. As the different media, especially painting, sculpture and architecture became increasingly autonomous in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the art and public space became increasingly difficult to coordinate. Even as aesthetic strategies diversified in the mid-twentieth century, drawing on such disparate movements as collage, assemblage and pop art, the forms and meanings of public space continued to shift, destabilizing any sense of continuous urban context or frame. Moreover, the diverse and cosmopolitan urban societies that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century increasingly lacked the kinds of common reference points that might define a unified public audience. Works that might be seen to properly provoke an elite museum-going audience might be seen as offensive when inserted into the everyday spaces of the city, especially when the works were paid for by public funds. Finally, the production of public art has been inseparably bound up with larger efforts to remake entire urban areas according to the interests and ideologies of particular groups, often revealing fundamental conflicts among these groups and their particular publics.

The first section of the course will be devoted to the problem of defining a public or publics in relation to works of art that are, by their nature, “exposed” – inhabiting spaces that are deemed public or common. What does it mean to speak of public art or public space? To what extent does it make sense to speak of a “public sphere” in such contexts? What kinds of private, including corporate and real estate interests, govern the limits and definitions of publicness? The second section of the course will deal with the aesthetic strategies involved in inserting works of art into pre-existing urban spaces with their own particular forms, histories and popular associations. How does public art intersect with the related art of urban design? What are the consequences of sculpture crossing over into the realm of architecture? What are the problems of attempting to represent neighborhood-based communities? How can public art critically intervene in pre-existing urban space? The final section of the course will focus on two well-documented examples of public art: Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc and Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Both examples proved exceptionally controversial, and the nature of these controversies will serve to illuminate a number of the main issues raised in the course.

**Purpose and Expectations of the Course:** This course is a graduate seminar, whose purpose is to combine historical research with creative approaches to public art and its meanings. The course will allow students to develop familiarity with the critical issues surrounding public art in urban space, while also applying that knowledge to a particular example of public art in Philadelphia. Students will be expected to keep a journal related to a particular artwork and to share the results of ongoing journal assignments with the rest of the class. Parallel to the journal project, students will be expected to develop a ten-page analytical paper related to critical issues in public art. This project may take the form of an art historical research project, a theoretical exercise, or a manifesto. In any case, however, the paper will need to be documented by evidence and supported by research. To that end, students will be encouraged to become familiar with various archives and libraries in the City of Philadelphia. One or more field trips may be arranged, according to the interests of the class. Students will also be expected to take an active role in class discussions, including introducing one of the readings during the semester.

**Class Format:** This course will be a seminar discussion course, with various times set aside for lectures and student presentations.

**Required Texts:** Articles and book chapters will be available for download via e-reserve. In addition to those listed below, other required readings may be added over the course of the semester.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **January 17: Course introduction**

### **January 24: Public Art?**

John Willett, "Art in Public," in *Art in a City*, pp. 89-113; Patricia Phillips, "Out of Order: The Public Art Machine," in *Artforum*, December 1988, pp. 92-96; Barbara Hoffman, "Law for Art's Sake in the Public Realm" in *Critical Inquiry*, Spring 1991, pp. 540-573; Malcolm Miles, "The Contradictions of Public Art," in *Art, Space and the City*, pp. 84-103.

*Assignment: Initial Survey of Public Artwork in Philadelphia (1<sup>st</sup> site visit)*

## PART I: DEFINING PUBLICS

### **January 31: Publics, the Public Sphere, and the City**

Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp. 1-26, 141-175; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, pp. 3-27; Rosalyn Deutsche, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy," in *Social Text*, 1992, pp. 34-53.

*Assignment: Historical Background of Site*

### **February 7: Symbolic Content and Public Interpretation**

Michele Bogart, "The Rise and Demise of *Civic Virtue*," in *Critical Issues in Public Art*, pp. 175-188; W.J.T. Mitchell, Summer 1990, "The Violence of Public Art: 'Do the Right Thing,'" in *Critical Inquiry*, pp. 880-899; Interviews: "John Ahearn on the Bronx Bronzes and Happier Tales" and, "Arthur Symes on Fighting the Bronx Bronzes," in Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art*, pp. 81-109.

*Assignment: Initial Survey of Site (2<sup>nd</sup> site visit)*

**February 14: Monuments, Anti-Monuments and Historical Memory**

Joe Kerr, "The Uncompleted Monument: London, War and the Architecture of Remembrance," in *The Unknown City*, pp. 68-90; James Young, "The Counter-Monument in Germany Today," in *Critical Inquiry*, pp. 267-296; M. Christine Boyer, "The Instruments of Memory" [excerpt], in *The City of Collective Memory*, pp. 367-401.

*Assignment: Preliminary Paper Proposal (one page with bibliography)*

**February 21: Public Space and Private Interests:**

William H. Whyte, "The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces," in *The Public Face of Architecture*, pp. 292-310; Erika Doss, "Public Art in the Corporate Sphere," in *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs*, pp. 71-112; Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City" in *Writings on Cities*, pp. 147-159.

*Assignment: Historical Background of Artist and Other Works*

**February 28: Public Art and the Politics of Urban Restructuring**

Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in *October*, Winter 1988, pp. 3-52; Sharon Zukin, "Whose Culture? Whose City?" in *The Cultures of Cities*, pp. 1-48.

*Assignment: Public Interaction with Site and Artwork (3<sup>rd</sup> site visit)*

**March 7: [SPRING BREAK --- NO CLASS]**

PART II: FORMAL TACTICS

**March 14: Urban Design and Public Space**

Kevin Lynch, "The City Image and Its Elements," in *The Image of the City*, pp. 46-90; Fred Koetter and Colin Rowe, "The Crisis of Object: The Predicament of Texture," in *Perspecta*, 1980, pp. 108-141; J.B. Jackson, "The American Public Space," in *The Public Face of Architecture*, pp. 276-291.

*Assignment: Mental Map of Site and Artwork*

**March 21: Spatial Interventions at the Intersection of Sculpture and Architecture**

Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *October*, pp. 30-44; Michael North, "The Public as Sculpture: From Heavenly City to Mass Ornament" in *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 1990, pp. 860-879; Reinhold Martin, "Organicism's Other," in *Architecture and the Sciences*, pp. 175-195.

*Assignment: Points of View / Optical Survey (4<sup>th</sup> site visit)*

**March 28: Public Art and Representations of "Community"**

Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, pp. 171-203; Miwon Kwon, "From Site to Community in New Genre Public Art" and "The (Un)Sittings of Community" in *One Place after Another*, pp. 100-155; Mary Jane Jacob, "Outside the Loop," in *Culture in Action*, pp. 49-61.

*Assignment: Definition of Public(s) for Artwork*

**April 4: Visual Subversions and Public Provocations:**

Krzysztof Wodiczko, "Public Projections," in *October*, Autumn 1986, pp.3-22; Rosalyn Deutsche, "Krzysztof Wodiczko's 'Homeless Projection' and the Site of Urban 'Revitalization,'" in *October*, Autumn 1986, pp. 63-98; W.J.T. Mitchell; Barbara Kruger, "An Interview with Barbara Kruger," in *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 1991, pp. 434-448.

*Assignment: Preliminary Paper Report (verbal)*

PART III: CASE STUDIES

**April 11: Case Study – Richard Serra's Tilted Arc**

Harriet Senie, *The Tilted Arc Controversy, Dangerous Precedent?*, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 21-54; Dale McConathy, "Serra's Unofficial Monument" and documents related to the Serra case, in *Tilted Arc on Trial*, , pp. 3-17 and 141-153; Gregg Horowitz, "Public Art / Public Space: The Spectacle of the Tilted Arc Controversy," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Winter 1996, pp. 8-14.

*Assignment: Imaginary Debate*

**April 18: Case Study – Maya Lin's Vietnam Veteran's Memorial**

Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography," pp. 245-259; Daniel Abramson, "Maya Lin and the 1960s: Monuments, Time Lines and Minimalism," in *Critical Inquiry*, Summer 1996, pp. 679-709; Marital Sturken, "The Wall, the Screen, and the Image: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," in *Representations*, no. 35, 1991, pp. 118-142.

*Assignment: Journal conclusion*

**April 25: Student Presentations**

*Final paper and journal due in class.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**General Requirements:**

The course is a graduate seminar in art history, intended to combine rigorous theoretical knowledge with creative interpretations. Evaluations will be based on class participation, journal presentations, a project proposal, a final journal, and a final analytical paper of at least 10 pages. These papers will be presented as 15-minute oral presentations at the last seminar session. Course performance will be evaluated on a combination of: a formal project proposal; class participation, including journal presentations; the journal itself; and the quality of the research paper, both as submitted and as presented to the class.

**Relative weight of course requirements:**

- 1) Paper Proposal (10%)
- 2) Paper Presentation (15%)
- 3) Public Art Journal (25%)
- 4) Final Analytical Paper (35%)
- 5) Class Participation (15%)

**Policy on late assignments and class participation:**

Extensions and incompletes will only be granted in cases of documented personal emergencies. Since class participation is an essential component of the course, students may normally not miss more than 2 sessions without their final grades being negatively affected.

**Statement of Academic Rights and Responsibilities:**

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy statement on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities which can be accessed through the following link: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02).

**Exceptional Accommodations:**

Any student who has a documented need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should discuss the matter privately with me within the first two weeks of classes. The student should also contact Disability Resources and Services at (215) 204-1280.

**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**

This syllabus is subject to change, in the event of unforeseen circumstances, or in the case that changes will significantly enhance the quality of the course.