Museums and Public Art?

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Edited by

Cher Krause Knight and Harriet F. Senie

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For our daughters:

Beatrix Marcel Knight – I love you the whole world.

and

Laura Kim Senie – like always!

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INTRODUCTION TO *MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ART?*

CHER KRAUSE KNIGHT AND HARRIET F. SENIE

In thinking about an appropriate title for this anthology we kept coming back to certain essential and foundational questions: Why have museums embraced public art when the two seem, at least at first glance, antithetical? Which circumstances encouraged such alliances and collaborations? What might museums and public art gain by such interrelationships, and what might they lose? Probably you have others that come to mind. It is our hope that by starting with a general question—hence the book's title—this volume will serve as a jumping off point for considering what has thus far been a largely unwritten history. The first apparent example we noticed of these "arranged marriages" dates back to the 1975 Mark di Suvero retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, then in its uptown location on Madison Avenue. In conjunction with his works displayed in the Museum, ten of di Suvero's large-scale sculptures were installed in locations around the city's five boroughs. For these outdoor installations the Museum collaborated with the Public Arts Council, the New York City organization started by Doris C. Freedman in 1971 to support an array of public art initiatives. (In 1977 Freedman merged the Council and City Walls, Inc., of which she was then president, to form the Public Art Fund.)[1] The sculptor helped select these specific locations for his works stating: "I want human sites, places where people go. For example, the Bronx Zoo. I like the people I've seen there."[2] Other sites included Prospect Park in Brooklyn and Conservatory Gardens in upper Manhattan. This was not, however, di Suvero's first citywide sculpture exhibition; that took place in Eindhoven in the Netherlands in 1972. Subsequently from 1972 to 1974 his works were displayed in the public spaces of Chalon-sur-Saone, a small industrial city in France.[3]

The subject of museums as related to public art had been on our minds for decades by the time we proposed a panel on the topic ("Museums and Public Art: Coexistence or Collaboration?") for the College Art Association (CAA) annual conference held in New York City, February 2015. In the

interim we had co-founded the international professional organization Public Art Dialogue in 2008 and co-founded and co-edited the journal of the same name first published by Routledge/Taylor & Francis in 2011, to provide venues and vehicles for the growing number of colleagues engaged in the teaching and production of, as well as writing about, public art. The call for papers for the CAA session noted that:

> [w]hile many museums have ignored public art as a distinct arena of art production and display, others have—either grudgingly or enthusiastically —embraced it…Hilde Hein suggests that public art embodying participatory experience can serve as a model for museums. This panel is interested in that paradigm, but certainly other models, too. We invite papers addressing specific examples of public art created in conjunction with museum exhibitions or through their public programs, but that take place beyond the museum or have some components outside of it…We are interested in who originates such public art initiatives, funds them, and most importantly, the philosophy behind them. Is their efficacy evaluated in the same way as other museum exhibitions and programs? Can public art ever be a "permanent" initiative in any museum? And finally, are the museum and public art ultimately at odds, or able to mutually benefit one another? We seek to uncover and begin to codify the unwritten history of how museums and public art have and continue to intersect.

Among the examples we mentioned in the call (in addition to the di Suvero retrospective) were walking tours organized by El Museo del Barrio that included public artworks in its neighborhood such as the *Spirit of Harlem* mural; and the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art's (ICA) celebrated but now defunct Vita Brevis, an in-house public art program that sponsored exciting temporary projects. The subject caught the attention of the editors at Cambridge Scholars Publishing who inquired whether we might be interested in collaborating on an anthology that became this volume. Happily the submissions to our panel were so good that we could immediately envision such a project and so soon began work on the book proposal. We asked our four speakers (Carole Anne Meehan, Kasia A. Ozga, Glenn Wallace, and Andrew Wasserman) to expand their talks into essays, and invited members of the audience to submit proposals for topics about which they wanted to write. Among these responses the submissions from Leila Daw, Erin Hanas, Nicholas Hartigan, Cristian Nae, Rebecca D. Pollack, Emily Warner, and Jennifer Wingate account for their essays found here. Additionally we invited contributions from Marit Dewhurst (who then collaborated with Susan McCullough and Jackie Du) and Jonathan Wallis, whom we knew through their respective work on the subject. We also asked Sierra Rooney to interview Carole Anne Meehan

about Vita Brevis as Rooney had written her Masters thesis on the program and Meehan had been its curator. And in addition to editing this volume, we have each contributed an essay. When reviewing essay proposals and editing content for the book we took care to assure that our contributors represented a distinct array of professions to provide a valuable range of perspectives; they include art historians, museum educators, public art curators and administrators, and artists.

This anthology is divided into three main sections, and also includes a prologue and epilogue as well as this introduction to the entire volume. The **Prologue** by Harriet F. Senie considers the overarching circumstances that have fostered the current collaboration between museums and public art, how the museum field has changed, and how public art practices have evolved. Part One, **In, At or On the Museum**, considers the various ways museums have integrated public art into their physical facilities, and addresses if and how this proximity changes the museum and the public art. Part Two, **Elsewhere**, discusses projects that museums have sponsored in a variety of locations other than their own facilities, or those that function as their own museums, thereby increasing their audiences but perhaps also competing with regional public art agencies. Part Three, **In Between**, includes those projects that both relate to the museum's spaces and concepts in some way but also exist in sites that are at least partially removed from the institutional frame. Each of these three sections is preceded by an introduction written by the editors. The **Epilogue** by Carole Anne Meehan is a testament of faith in the value of public art and the benefits it bestows on its diverse and varying audiences.

We have followed certain conventions as to nomenclature throughout the volume. We make an essential distinction between lower case "museum" versus upper case "Museum." The former indicates a more general history or a concept of the institution that can be widely applied. "Museum" connotes a specific institution to which an author is referring. In cases where the given institution's proper name does not include "Museum" (as in Rooney and Meehan's conversation on the ICA), we have not capitalized "museum." Additionally as noted here by Rebecca D. Pollack in her study of London's Whitechapel Gallery, "museum" and "gallery" often have national or cultural variations in their usage. For example, as Pollock states:

> It is important to point out a lexical distinction between art institutions in North America and Great Britain. In North America the word "gallery" often indicates a private or commercial art space whereas a public art institution is more often labeled a "museum." In Great Britain, however, the word "gallery" refers to a public rather than a private or commercial

> gallery. A "museum" in Great Britain generally refers to an institution with collections that are historic, archaeological or scientific, rather than fine art.

Likewise Jennifer Wingate offers some useful examples to illuminate such terminology as her essay examines exhibition spaces that are either sited on a university campus or hosted by a nonprofit organization. Even when these kinds of spaces are designated as "galleries" (as is the case at Yale University, a site Wingate focuses upon), however, they typically operate more like "museums" in terms of their missions, non-commercial functions and stewardship of "cultural heritage."

Other helpful definitions and parameters are well explicated by Erin Hanas, who contributed an essay examining Wolf Vostell's *Fluxus Zug* (1981). Hanas clarifies an established understanding of "the museum" as specific to "the historic idea of the public European institution," descended from the French Revolution and Enlightenment philosophy. She adds that conventionally we expect the museum to function as "an institution that protects and conserves objects for the future, and that creates a setting in which visitors can view artworks and objects set apart from the everyday world." In contrast she notes that "by definition, public art does not typically reside within museums." Furthermore Hanas observes that "public art is intended to engage more directly with a community and be physically accessible and visible to those outside the walls of institutions." She argues, however, that Vostell's project effectively collapsed the supposedly binary categories of "the museum" and "public art," upending the notion that "art is separate from the spaces and activities of everyday life."

At the heart of this book are an uncomfortable dichotomy and an oblique assumption, both seemingly widespread, that museums are somehow decidedly different from other spaces and places that are generally agreed upon to be "public." But when you ask someone—and as we have asked ourselves many times—to discern the differences that set museums apart from sites commonly held to be public, the difficulties of this task become evident. What is lacking in the publicness of museums that prompts so many of us to think of them as other than public places? Is it a simple matter of what is inside and what is outside, which is not to say that unfettered physical access is enough to make us consider a place public. But as Kasia A. Ozga correctly observes in her essay "False Advertising?" there is a meaningful difference between the "controlled indoor environment" of the museum with its multiple rules and customs, and that of the "freer space" of the outdoors or the familiar places where we live and work.

This point raises related questions: Does someplace cease to be public once we have to pay to gain entrance or access to it? Or if its funding come from private rather than public sources, does that make the place less public? In her essay analyzing the rarity of murals in American museums Emily Warner notes that funding often played a major role in the perceived publicness of places, with the result that art museums' reliance upon private support (even if they also received some public funds) made them seem as if they functioned only to serve the financial and cultural interests of a privileged elite, removed from the concerns and experiences of everyday people.

Likewise Ozga suggests that if museums are purported to serve the "public good" then we expect them to operate apart from the art market. Yet it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate the activities of many museums from those of commercial galleries, although certainly art—both inside and outside of the museum—has always, in one way or another, served as a sort of "commodity." The situation has become more and more nuanced as trendy consumer brands (especially those aimed at the youth market) have established hip nonprofit art venues such as Red Bull Arts, a New York City experimental space founded in 2013 devoted to supporting projects ambitious in scope and scale. Or consider Fondazione Prada, an art and cultural institution started in 1993 by the famed fashion house, which has maintained an exhibition space in a historic palazzo on Venice's Grand Canal since 2011, and opened a massive permanent facility in 2015 at the site of a former Milanese distillery. To be cautious about such efforts is sensible, but many of the results so far have been impressive. For example, in addition to solo shows of contemporary art stars Fondazione Prada has also offered exhibition opportunities for emerging artists; hosted challenging site specific, temporary and permanent installations; undertaken progressive children's and educational programming; and supported artist-as-curator endeavors.

Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish "public art" from "museum art." Leila Daw, whose essay on her Sky Map skywriting project is included here, declares that in the late 1970s and 80s she was "unaware" of any split between the world of public art and that of museum and gallery art. That split became more obvious to her when she worked with the St. Louis Art Museum to literally launch Sky Maps, however, she soon realized that mutually beneficial relationships were possible. Indicating that the Museum had done more than provide her with the standard forms of institutional support, Daw proclaimed: "In short, it was the Museum that created the public for this public art." Certainly the artist's approach and intent are also central to matters of publicness as Cher Krause Knight

asserts in her study of Chris Burden. Although best known for performances staged for small audiences Burden transitioned into making large-scale sculptures and installations, proclaiming such works were "not about me as an individual artist, or my creation as an artist." He insisted that being recognized as the artist was not the point "because it means that the artwork is bigger than the maker."[4] But Burden also wanted to make sure the institutions with which he worked were likewise committed to his demanding artistic vision, requiring their extensive physical and fiscal resources to realize his works.

Many of the authors included in this book consider if it is the type of experiences a place offers that makes it public. Warner describes how the experiential qualities of museums were greatly scrutinized during the New Deal, the art programs of which became a cultural incubator for the United States. These programs used museums to host a variety of events spurred by their art initiatives. Yet the New Deal administrators favored Community Art Centers over museums as the Centers focused upon social engagement and firsthand experiences that would appeal to "an increasingly wide swath of society." As Warner contends, "public art in the 1930s became something decentralized, creative and even quotidian, integrated into everyday life; its audience was less a singular collective than a fluid and changing mass of consumers." To this end the essay on museum education by Susan McCullough, Marit Dewhurst and Jackie Du offers some instructive lessons for the intermingled futures of museums and public art. As these coauthors observe, community building is highlighted by museum educators not only because of the "logistical rationale" of audience development, but also as a "civic-minded goal" resulting from more egalitarian aspirations. In particular museum education represents a nexus of multiple disciplines (educational theory, visual studies, art history, studio art and community organizing among them) that emphasizes—as does much public art—dialogical exchanges over institutionally mandated meanings.

Ultimately the publicness of a museum might rest upon the messages it conveys about who and what is to be valued—protected and preserved—by its efforts and within its confines. As Nicholas Hartigan describes in his essay on sculpture maquettes these works often have a lower status within the museum, even though they can be "ideal sites for condensing meaning" as they evoke physical and phenomenological relationships through scale. But too frequently the maquette is dismissed by the museum as a proposal in progress or study tool, an "historical artifact" contingent upon a completed work and thus less worthy of our attention. In other words, in this case finished products are prized over processes. Sometimes we might

worry that the museum values institutional self-promotion above prompting dialogues that further cultural democracy. Even when a museum sponsors public art, it might do so as a stealth form of advertising to bolster its own appeal and the market worth of its holdings. This has the potential effect of neutering rather than nurturing institutional critique, especially as Ozga found that museums are less likely to sponsor public artworks that are "overtly political." It is essential to note, however, that museums are increasingly including "overtly political" content within their exhibition and programming agendas. As Cristian Nae illustrates in his study of "Museum in the Streets," Ljubljana's Museum of Modern Art used that exhibition to engage in "productive antagonism" that framed the "public sphere as a site of contestation and confrontation."

This political shift is representative of the movement toward dialogical practices in museums (first embraced by public artists) with less reliance upon the representational and discursive models that were previously favored. Such an evolution is largely indebted to the rise of social practice art over at least the last half of a century, allowing for ideological frictions "otherwise silenced by the hegemonic status quo" to surface. Social practice also emphasizes process over product, and the temporary event over the permanent object. As Nae observes the intention of such practice is often to "disrupt the routine behavior and order inscribed in public space," and thereby empower project participants. Tania Bruguera's Immigrant Movement International, chronicled and analyzed in this volume by Jonathan Wallis, is a prime example of social practice that blurs the lines between artwork and social work as it advocates for participants' sociopolitical agency in the public sphere. Here the role of the host institution (the Queens Museum) was to increase inclusion in its initiatives, provide ready access to information, and keep communication open. Such institutional support is especially necessary when a project is charting "unfamiliar territory," helping it to flourish with "important official backing, leverage and credibility." As Wallis points out, the Queens Museum is a "vanguard institution for public art collaborations and community engagement," run by a "remarkably diverse and innovative staff with skill sets and professional backgrounds that transcend the disciplines of art history and curatorial studies." Bruguera's "commitment to art as both a political and ethical force in society" coincides with a "public turn" in museum practice in which both the museum and public art function as "cultural gateways." As Laura Raicovich (current Director of the Queens Museum) observes, the future of the museum may be as "a commons," where public space and public resources productively coalesce.

To obtain the current generation's perspective on the question of whether museums are (perceived as) public spaces, in the spring of 2017 Senie queried a group of art history graduate students then enrolled in an exhibition analysis seminar at City College.[5] The general consensus was that museums were public spaces because they provided a variety of services and places for social activities, including bookstores, gift shops, cafes and restaurants, as well as an array of free public programs targeting children and families. One student credited the range of educational programming with promoting public discourse. Some thought that entrance fees were still prohibitive and doubted that the general public saw museums as welcoming places. Perhaps most astutely, one student cited the importance of museum ads, suggesting that they served as invitations to a wider audience. Overall museums were perceived as moving toward more, rather than less, openness and accessibility; in particular the attitudes of staff members as well as the inclusiveness of works on display (whether visitors could see themselves in or relate to the art) were judged to be critical in making visitors feel as comfortable as they might in more generally defined public spaces. Given these observations, it is essential to remember that public art produced in conjunction with museums is frequently tied to their educational rather than curatorial departments, a nuanced indication of its reduced status within the museum enterprise as aptly chronicled by McCullough, Dewhurst and Du. Thus their essay provides a contextual framework that correlates to many of the other essays in this volume.

It is important that we not lose sight of public art's potentiality. Too often it is used as a social or aesthetic overlay by government agencies and real estate developers (among others) who are reluctant or unsure of how to solve or even address long-term problems in the public sphere. But as Glenn Wallace asserts, public art holds promise for genuine urban renewal and sustainable living efforts. Not only may such art give voices usually edited out of these dialogues a place in them, but it can also challenge hierarchical divisions and bring together diverse areas of expertise. By productively disrupting the "familiar processes of urban planning and community consultation" public art, Wallace believes, can prompt people to become active citizens with a fuller sense of the roles they can play and the capacities they already possess. Jennifer Wingate concurs, demonstrating that public art initiatives can transform museums into sites for political activism and social engagement, offering examples in both cyberspace and physical space. She believes framing museums in relationship to public art practice (particularly dialogue based projects) will prompt a rethinking of their function in public culture, especially as

venues for sociopolitical awareness, expression and dissent. Wingate is particularly concerned with how art history and visual culture can be utilized to address racial inequities and bias and promote diversity and social justice. She concludes that the museum needs to share authority with the public and non-museum partners in order to "serve the public good and tackle contested social issues." Similarly Andrew Wasserman suggests that museums can use public art and architecture for effective and unexpected placemaking, helping to socially, culturally and economically revitalize neighborhoods and produce iconic buildings (as seen in the "Bilbao effect"). Yet he cautions to be wary of an institution that legitimizes and brands itself by repurposing the culture of a place and adopting the existing ethos to serve its own purposes. These observations reinforce the great responsibility that comes with "a culture driven process of gentrification": when "undifferentiated urban space is transformed into a legible urban space," as Wasserman explicates, designed to signal "both a geographical and cultural position." Awareness of such responsibility is necessary now more than ever, as museums feel pressure to lure crowds with mixed-use spaces and plush amenities in new "sky-box" buildings, where the art may even seem in danger of getting lost.[6]

Curator Carole Anne Meehan's commentary in this book, both in her engaging conversation with art historian Sierra Rooney as well as in the **Epilogue** she authored, provides cautions and encouragements about how museums and public art might intersect in the future. Meehan admits her own disappointments in much of public art, but remains optimistic about our prospects to make "the expectation of excellence for public art as routine as it is in the sphere of the museum." Among the cautions she highlights how public art is "misunderstood, embattled," and even seen as "opportunistic": "often presumed to have ulterior motives, while more expected types of museum programming are not likewise viewed with suspicion." In a related point she further explores this supposed divide, noting the expectancy of public art to generate "ongoing public benefit" compared to museums' frequently "presumed failures to embrace their communities." These outlooks are unfair and underscore the unrealistic anticipations for and defensive positioning of public art, its worthiness somehow in need of constant reassurance. Meehan also articulates the potential difficulties of convening people into collaborative "villages" to realize projects. While such collective efforts may transform participants into stakeholders sharing reciprocal trust and responsibility with artists, these working arrangements can also put community members "at risk of being perceived as just waiting around for whatever solution an artist or creative collective is offering." Meehan is also leery of the logistical and

conceptual challenges of formally assessing public art's impact, particularly when these cast art administrators in the roles of social scientists, an awkward situation that can lose rather than gain the trust of project participants. As she maintains, "if a project's full impact can be reliably measured this is rather indicative of limited reach, low ambition, or both."

Yet Meehan acknowledges that shared experiences between artists, participants and administrators can result in genuine camaraderie and even friendship. She also proclaims the importance of having lofty ambitions. Speaking of the ICA's (no longer extent) Vita Brevis public art program, she noted the intentions of program founder Jill Medvedow "to support enigmatic and poetic interventions into Boston's landscape, occurring in places…where one would not expect to find such things" and to provide "powerful encounters with works of art." These elements of surprise, wonder and delight, especially within an already lively cultural context, offer effective modes of public engagement. Meehan also advocates for a broader conception of public art, asserting kinship with museums that also "exist for the purpose of displaying art for public benefit" and reminding us that these institutions, "as incorporated charities, are also publicly supported." Such a wider understanding would enrich both public art and the museum, making their distinctions less prescriptive and their similarities more discernable. She suggests the following: reexamining "rote processes" and "formulaic methods" that are too concerned with avoiding controversy, and instead focusing upon public art's best possible outcomes; entrusting professionals to use their expertise to facilitate "qualitative debate" and decision making; offering better support for public artists; and having greater respect for audience comprehension. Rather than "assumptions of mediocrity" for public art and "expectations for excellence" from museums, she urges us to raise standards and direct energy and resources "toward the slow and confident incubation of excellence" in public art.

Overarching issues and questions, in addition to the many raised above, are addressed throughout the book but may still remain open to be expanded upon. Are museums truly public spaces, and if so, how will their publicness come to be defined? What distinguishes public art in its various forms from museum art? What may be gained and what could be lost through the collaborations between museums and public art? We hope you will form your own questions, and find some answers, as you read and think about *Museums and Public Art?*. As Meehan affirmed: "Great results can come about when intentions are clear and worthwhile, when all

involved are respected, and when there is true will—and patience—to enrich the places we share with beauty and meaning."

Notes

[1] For a history of the Public Art Fund see https://www.publicartfund.org/about/history, accessed 11 February 2017. Today the organization defines its mission as follows: "As the leader in its field, Public Art Fund brings dynamic contemporary art to a broad audience in New York City and beyond by mounting ambitious free exhibitions of international scope and impact that offer the public powerful experiences with art and the urban environment."

[2] Mark Di Suvero qtd. in Grace Glueck, "Art Notes: Big Outdoor Sculpture Show," *New York Times*, 29 June 1975, section II: 28.

[3] At the time di Suvero had been living in Europe as a result of his opposition to the Vietnam War. See Jonathan Lippincott, "Sculpture in the Landscape," *Paris Review* Blog, 16 May 2016, accessed 4 July 2017, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/05/16/sculpture-in-the-landscape/. His exhibition France came about through the efforts of the nearby regional museum director Marcel Evrard, and the local mayor Roger Lagrance, who both saw the exhibition as a way to promote the city as "La premiere ville-musee de France." See Harriet F. Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture: Tradition, Transformation and Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 129-30. For a more detailed discussion of the French exhibition see Elizabeth C. Baker, "Mark di Suvero's Burgundian Season," *Art in America* 62 (May 1974): 59-63.

[4] Chris Burden qtd. in *Burden*, directed by Timothy Marrinan and Richard Dewey (Magnolia Pictures, 2016).

[5] Senie's sincere thanks are given to Baris Akgun, John A. Cash, Jr., Carolyn Keogh, Kripa Kewalramani, Amanda Lampel, Lindsay Mahalak, Christopher Parker, and Tuesday Smillie for their thoughtful answers to this complex question. She has taken the liberty of summarizing their responses here.

[6] James Panero, "The museum of the present," *New Criterion* 35.4 (December 2016): 19, accessed 14 December 2016, http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/The-museum-of-the-present-8547.

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PROLOGUE

MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC ART: THE EVOLUTION OF AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE

HARRIET F. SENIE

Setting the Stage

This prologue is a first step in casting a rather wide net over a largely unwritten history. First it considers some pertinent societal issues at play during the last five decades. Then it addresses the evolution of museum policies and the concurrent proliferation of public art in various forms. Finally it examines several examples of the collaboration between museums and public art agencies and artists to further track shifting paradigms in what at first seemed to be a rather unlikely pairing. Here I consider public art to be any work that is accessible free of charge to a general audience—something they encounter during their everyday lives that is not predicated on a trip to a museum. This would include museum and public art collaborations sited outside a museum as well as those at distance removed from it.

At the time of the international political upheavals of the late 1960s, the Civil Rights movement was in full swing in the United States and a feminist uprising was in the wings, resulting in what is broadly referred to today as identity politics. These broad societal changes were reflected in both museum exhibitions and policies and, arguably, prompted the emergence of public art both as a recognized and publicly funded cultural expression. Like all arranged marriages, the partnering of museums and public art answered mutual needs including—or perhaps most importantly—economic imperatives linked to arts funding sources at all levels of government and in the private sector. Previously ongoing deteriorating conditions in cities prompted then President Lyndon B. Johnson to create a range of "Great Society" programs; the Department of Housing and Urban

Development was started in 1965, and a year later the Model Cities Act was passed.[1] Public art became a federally funded enterprise in 1967 when the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) launched its Art in Public Places program with Alexander Calder's *La Grande Vitesse* in Grand Rapids, Michigan.[2] This matching grant initiative responded to local requests by different civic entities. At the same time various governmental percent-for-art programs allocated a percentage of construction costs for art. The federal General Services Administration (GSA) had such a program in place sporadically from 1963-1972, and continuously thereafter. Then, too, any number of corporations sponsored works of art that were installed outside their buildings. In 1969, a scant two years after the installation of the so-called “Grand Rapids Calder,” the Metropolitan Museum of Art (then under Director Thomas Hoving) mounted the ill-fated exhibition "Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900-1968," which prompted a huge protest by artists and others, an action interpreted by many as a signal that museums were being challenged by their publics as perhaps never before.

The Evolution of Museum Priorities

After World War II the number of American museums increased and so did competition for the expanding leisure market. As a result institutional focus shifted from museum collections to their visitors.[3] By 1971 Duncan Cameron noted that museums were considering themselves less as temples and more like forums. He explained that "those segments of society with the power to do so created [art] museums that were temples within which they enshrined those things that they held to be significant and valuable," but cautioned that those institutions that sought to stay relevant must also establish "forums for confrontation, experimentation, and debate."[4] In short, they should be safe places where dialogue about difficult and contentious issues might take place. As Kenneth Hudson observed by the end of the 1990s, museums were thought of "much less as treasure houses and much more as centers of activity and discussion."[5] Tracing the evolution of museums in a similar fashion, Stephen E. Weil noted that:

> [T]he American museum is under pressure to make public service its principal concern. Because it is also part of the American not-for-profit sector, the nature of the public service it will be expected to provide can be defined in more specific terms—it is to be through demonstrably effective programs that make a positive difference in the quality of individual and communal lives. Recast in marketing terms, the demand is that the American

> museum provide some verifiable added value to the lives of those it serves in exchange for their continued support.[6]

And as Michael M. Ames pointed out: "[C]ultural institutions, such as museums and universities…are increasingly being expected to meet the multiple demands of ethnically and socially diverse publics."[7] Steven Conn provided a nuanced analysis of these historically distinct museum publics in which he argued that the museum has always tried to engage its public, thereby challenging attacks posed by Michel Foucault and his followers about the exclusivity and controlling elements of this societal institution.[8]

The importance of museums as forums was manifested and reinforced in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.[9] The increasing emphasis that museums placed on civic dialogue coincided with—and necessitated—the growth and increased importance of their education departments. Weil dated this development "when educators started to gain a foothold in shaping [museum] policy and strategy" to the 1970s and 1980s.[10] By 1992 the American Association of Museums (AAM) had published *Excellence and Equity—Education and the Public Dimension of Museums.*[11] And a decade later in 2002 it published *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums*, which advocated for museums to become better citizens through dialogue and collaboration with their various communities.

Shifting paradigms in museums were implicit in what was called the "New Institutionalism" that emerged in the 1990s and evolved from various art forms categorized as "Institutional Critique." Such art practices started in the late 1960s and early 70s at the same time that public art began to proliferate under public patronage. According to Alexander Alberro such art challenged the museum by claiming that it was "not sufficiently committed to, let alone realizing or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicness that had brought [it] into being in the first place." Defining this critique as essentially modernist, he observed: "It was also dialectical: its aim was to intervene critically in the standing order of things, with an expectation that these interventions would produce actual changes in the relations of power and lead to genuine reconciliation."[12] As artists were challenging museums, many institutions also began to question their own practices from within. James Voorhies contextualized New Institutionalism as parallel to the development of relational art, a concept codified by curator Nicolas Bourriaud "to redefine the art institution and its role in shaping art and culture through expanded notions of the exhibition and social engagement." Bourriaud stated: "By 2006 [the museum had] pivoted its focus from the visual to greater emphasis on knowledge produced and alternative education strategies in which the spectator is not only subjected

to the curatorial technique but contributes to that very mode of address."[13] By the late 1990s, however, museums also had to consider the rise of blockbuster exhibitions and increased economic pressures. In the end Voorhies concluded that "major art institutions today are increasingly economic engines charged with supplying experiences for visitors who are consumers in what has emerged as a globalized culture industry."[14]

There is ongoing discussion about what the museum's main focus should be. Museum education professor Lois Silverman believes that: "At their very core, museums are institutions of social service."[15] By contrast, art historian and curator James Cuno sees this emphasis on museums as primarily social institutions as "the biggest problem facing art museums today—and the gravest threat to the quality of their scholarship," while Kevin Moore feels that it "may actually cause harm by masking real problems, patronizing people or diverting financial and human resources from more effective service vehicles."[16] More recently James Panero also challenges the emphasis on the viewer at the expense of the art and argues for getting back to the latter.[17] That said, it is this concern with public engagement that prompted museums to partner with public art.

The Evolution of Public Art

Museums were motivated to use public art to expand their audiences as well as their physical reach, but public art can take many different forms.[18] In addition to single object sculpture as exemplified by Calder's piece in Grand Rapids, it might also take the form of a multi-part work such as George Sugarman's *Baltimore Federal* (1975; a GSA commission sited in front of a federal building in Baltimore). Offering seating, this work also pointed toward another form of public art—that of street furniture, which is generally considered a feature of urban design. For example, Chris Burden's *Urban Lighting* (2008) in front of the Los Angeles County Museum is a sculptural work with an urban design function, in this case providing light. Composed of 202 vintage cast iron street lamps, it was perceived to create a positive civic image of the city.[19] Earlier Calder's sculpture had functioned in Grand Rapids in much the same way; it was even translated into a two-dimensional image used on the mayor's stationary and emblazoned on garbage trucks as a civic logo.

While public art in various forms was on the rise during the 1970s, in the 1980s the arts were a primary target for federal budget cuts. At the start of the decade the strong national arts coalition built by Nancy Hanks during her tenure as chair of the NEA (1969-77) was just starting to unravel; by 1989 the very future of the agency was in question. In 1980

the GSA's Art in Architecture selection panels were appointed by the NEA so that the same individuals often advised both agencies. After the controversy over Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, a GSA commission that was installed in 1981 and removed in 1989, the GSA appointed independent panels that included more local representation. In general the funding guidelines of the NEA's Art in Public Places program provide a good indicator of the shifting paradigms of public art. Increasingly the agency focused on collaboration and process. In the 1987 press release announcing that year's grants, Richard Andrews (director of the Visual Arts Program, 1985-87; previously director of Seattle's lauded public art program) stressed the diversity of responses to public places "from freestanding object, sculpture which is furniture, or `site specific' art to the creation of place itself." By the end of the decade the NEA was embroiled in the so-called culture wars engendered by identity politics. It was sharply attacked by representatives of the religious right for supporting exhibitions that featured controversial works by photographers Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe. Most tellingly in 1991 in response to recent congressional budget cuts combined with complaints from selection panels about the quality of submissions, the NEA proposed combining its Art in Public Places category with that of Visual Forums. Significantly both museums and public art were now beginning to define themselves in a similar fashion. That year the restructured NEA program funded, among other things, a neighborhood park for senior citizens in North Philadelphia and the redesign and transformation of a World War II firing range into a place for art on one of the University of California campuses. The following year (1992) NEA-funded projects emphasized social problems and multiculturalism. These included the design of temporary billboards in Detroit with an anti-drug message; a memorial in Salem, Massachusetts, to those who were persecuted and executed during the 1692 witch trials; and the final stage of a Zuni Kachina mural on the interior walls of a restored seventeenth-century mission in Zuni, New Mexico. The sociopolitical focus and community collaboration that characterized these projects coincided with those of social practice public art.[20]

The 1990s were marked by critical changes in both museums and public art. For example, at the start of the decade the Whitney Museum of American Art (WMAA) articulated three specific goals: “(1) to dismiss the notion of a homogeneous national culture, (2) to place the revised (but unspecified) notion of American art against a `global' context, and (3) to achieve these two goals through the examination of international ‘influences’."[21] Subsequently the 1993 Whitney Biennial focused on the inclusion of minorities; many in the press called it the "Muliticultural

Biennial." Chon A. Noriega speculated that this was a response both to the contentious political climate and perhaps the speculation that then President George Bush would be reelected, as well as the weak art market. All this, he concluded, led to the "conflation of ‘new genre’ art, political thematics, and notions of cultural diversity."[22] "New genre art" was precisely the term Suzanne Lacy had given to the emerging forms of public art that she surveyed in *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1994). She defined this art as primarily conversation focused upon addressing local problems.[23] Around the same time Mary Jane Jacob curated "Culture in Action" in Chicago, a temporary public art exhibition pairing artists with local communities to produce works that reflected their sociopolitical concerns.[24] The goals of museums (especially those devoted to modern and contemporary art) and those of public art now increasingly appeared to coincide.

Notable Collaborations

The collaborations discussed below are restricted to those that I have viewed directly or have both read about extensively and discussed with individuals who experienced them. Throughout I reference the websites of public art agencies and museums in order to convey their stated institutional goals. While many take the form of object sculptures that are extensions of museum exhibitions, there are also museum/public art partnerships independent of retrospectives; these consisted of various forms of public art in sites that are not necessarily in proximity to the museum (such as those discussed in the **Elsewhere** section in this volume). More recently and most significantly museums have embraced methods that are central to social practice public art. As noted above the emphasis on civic engagement is common to the goals of both. Susan McCollough, Marit Dewhurst and Jackie Du discuss this development in their essay in this book, observing that museum education departments are increasingly taking the lead and even commissioning art of this nature.

Sculptures and Murals

The first time I became aware of a museum and public art collaboration was the Mark di Suvero retrospective in 1975 organized by the WMAA. Working together with the Public Art Fund (PAF) the Museum placed a number of di Suvero's sculptures in city parks spanning the five boroughs where they could be enjoyed by a range of individuals who might never have visited or even been aware of the museum exhibition. This extended